

## MONSTERS IN OUR MIDST

### "FACING THE MONSTER OF ANXIETY"

#### PSALM 46:1-11

#### **This Week's Core Competency**

**Peace** – I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, others, and me. Philippians 4:6-7 *Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. 7 And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*

According to Paul, peace is a fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22). In other words, it's a virtue that is produced by the Holy Spirit rather than one we can muster on our own. And while it's the Spirit's doing, I take it he uses *means* to accomplish it; he doesn't just "zap" us with peace. For example, in the same way the Spirit uses suffering to produce patient endurance (Ro 5:3), he uses other secondary means to produce peace (while the Greek word in Ro 5:3 is different from the one in Gal 5:22, the character quality is the same).

Generally speaking, the Spirit uses what we *believe* together with what we *do* to transform us. By the way, our formation may be *intentional*, i.e., driven by spiritual disciplines we practice, or *unintentional*, i.e., driven by things that happen to us. The Spirit uses both. When it comes to producing peace in us, it seems to me that one Core Belief and one Core Practice, in particular, are especially relevant to our development of this virtue. The Core Belief is Personal God: "I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life."

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***Our true security is in God, not in God plus anything else.***

– Derek Kidner

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Psalm 46 confirms the relevance of this belief. In the opening stanza of this psalm, God's people "will not fear" as a result of the fact that God is their "refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble." As they confess their belief in a Personal God who stands ready to help them in times of trouble, they experience a calm assurance that can only be found in him. Remembering his works on their behalf in the past (v. 8) and acknowledging that he will be exalted among the nations in the future (v. 10), both of which confirm that the Most High is their God, have the same effect. The gist of their belief is summarized best by the psalm's refrain, "The LORD Almighty is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress."

The Core Practice is Prayer: "I pray to God to know him, to lay my requests before him, and to find direction for my daily life." This Core Practice also includes the companion disciplines of solitude and silence. Psalm 142 confirms the relevance of this practice. When David found himself threatened and alone, he turned to the Lord in prayer and in so doing transformed his loneliness into solitude. First, he declared by faith, "You are my refuge, my portion in the land of the living." And then he prayed, "Listen to my cry, for I am in desperate need; rescue me from those who pursue me . . . set me free from my prison." The difference between loneliness and solitude is simple yet profound. The first involves being alone; the second being alone *with God*. When David turned from his weakness to the Lord's strength, his bitter isolation morphed into sweet solitude in the Lord's presence. That solitude, in turn, led to praise and further intimacy with God. The Spirit will use our belief in a personal God and our practice of prayer, solitude, and silence to give us peace.

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# day 1 ENCOUNTER – read God’s word to put yourself in touch with him.

## Psalm 46:1-11

For the director of music. Of the Sons of Korah. According to *alamoth*. A song.

1 God is our refuge and strength,  
an ever-present help in trouble.  
2 Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way  
and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea,  
3 though its waters roar and foam  
and the mountains quake with their surging.  
"Selah"

4 There is a river whose streams make glad the city  
of God,  
the holy place where the Most High dwells.  
5 God is within her, she will not fall;  
God will help her at break of day.  
6 Nations are in uproar, kingdoms fall;  
he lifts his voice, the earth melts.  
7 The LORD Almighty is with us;  
the God of Jacob is our fortress. "Selah"

8 Come and see the works of the LORD,  
the desolations he has brought on the earth.  
9 He makes wars cease to the ends of the earth;  
he breaks the bow and shatters the spear,  
he burns the shields with fire.  
10 "Be still, and know that I am God;  
I will be exalted among the nations,  
I will be exalted in the earth."

11 The LORD Almighty is with us;  
the God of Jacob is our fortress. "Selah"

## Cf., another translation

For the choir director: A song of the descendants of Korah, to be sung by soprano voices.

1 God is our refuge and strength,  
always ready to help in times of trouble.  
2 So we will not fear when earthquakes come  
and the mountains crumble into the sea.  
3 Let the oceans roar and foam.  
Let the mountains tremble as the waters surge!  
Interlude

4 A river brings joy to the city of our God,  
the sacred home of the Most High.  
5 God dwells in that city; it cannot be destroyed.  
From the very break of day, God will protect it.  
6 The nations are in chaos,  
and their kingdoms crumble!  
God's voice thunders,  
and the earth melts!  
7 The LORD of Heaven's Armies is here among us;  
the God of Israel is our fortress. Interlude

8 Come, see the glorious works of the LORD:  
See how he brings destruction upon the world.  
9 He causes wars to end throughout the earth.  
He breaks the bow and snaps the spear;  
he burns the shields with fire.  
10 "Be still, and know that I am God!  
I will be honored by every nation.  
I will be honored throughout the world."

11 The LORD of Heaven's Armies is here among us;  
the God of Israel is our fortress. Interlude (NLT)

## EXAMINE – what the passage says before you decide what it means.

- \* Circle "*alamoth*" in the superscription to Ps 46.
- \* Underline "refuge," "strength," and "help" in v. 1, and "fortress" in vv. 7, 11.
- \* Box "therefore" indicating *result* in v. 2.
- \* Box "though" introducing a *hypothetical* or *potential* situation.
- \* Bracket the verbs "give way," "fall," "roar and foam," and "quake" in vv. 2, 3.
- \* Circle "Selah" in vv. 3, 7, 11.
- \* Circle "river" in v. 4.
- \* Underline "city of God" in v. 4.
- \* Bracket v. 6a.
- \* Highlight vv. 7, 11.
- \* Circle "desolations" in v. 8.
- \* Circle "know" in v. 10.
- \* Highlight v. 10b,c in a different color.

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## day 2

**EXPLORE** – the answer to these questions to better understand what the passage means.

Consult the explanation of the message and the notes to follow if you need help.

1. To whom do the pronouns "our" in verse 1 and "we" in verse 2 refer?
2. Explain the *relationship* of verses 2 and 3 to verse 1.
3. The imagery of verses 2 and 3 is dramatic. What would you say it portrays?
4. There is no literal "river" in Jerusalem, so explain the meaning of the *metaphor*.
5. To whom does the pronoun "her" in verse 5 refer?
6. Put what verse 6 means in your own words.
7. To whom does the pronoun "us" in verses 7 and 11 refer?
8. What do you infer about the peace mentioned in verses 8 and 9?
9. Who is God telling to "be still and know" in verse 10?
10. **Discussion:** On what basis can a psalm in which none of the plural pronouns refer to the church possibly be relevant to Christians? Talk about it.

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## day 3

# EXAMINE – an explanation of the message to better understand the meaning of the passage.

"The eye of a hurricane is a remarkable place. Fierce, destructive winds spiral around it at terrifying speeds. Torrential rains encircle it, bringing floods and pounding waves. But within the eye itself, everything is calm and peaceful—a quiet refuge in the midst of the storm. Psalm 46 describes such a place, a spiritual haven from the destructive forces that sometimes surround us" (Jack Kuhatschek, *Peace: Overcoming Anxiety and Conflict*, 23).

About Psalm 46 one commentator writes: "God as our fortress (vv. 7, 11)—as a 'Mighty Fortress' (thanks to Martin Luther)—has been an image comforting believers living in turmoil through the centuries. Psalm 46 is one of the Songs of Zion (also 48, 76, 84, 87, 132). Psalms 46, 48, and 76 follow the same pattern: (a) a confession that 'God is . . . in Zion,' (b) a report that God has stilled Zion's attackers, and (c) imperatives to acknowledge God as sovereign protector—not the usual hymnic imperatives to join in verbal praise (46:8, 10; 48:12-13; 76:11). Like Psalm 48, it appears to be a liturgy punctuated by 'we/our/us' confessions about God in the opening verses and in the refrain of verses 7 and 11. It is possible these may have been sung by a choir representing the congregation" (Craig C. Broyles, *Psalms*, NIBC, 208). The "pattern" in Psalm 46 identified by this author is marked by the repetition of "Selah" at the end of each stanza.

The opening stanza (vv. 1-3) contains a confession of faith (v. 1) followed by an assertion of its *explicit* consequences (vv. 2-3). The confession is expressed in complementary metaphors followed by a clause that explains their significance. God is Israel's "refuge" and "strength." As his people's refuge he defends and shelters them from their enemies. As their strength, he makes them victorious over their enemies. In other words, he is their *defense* as well as their *offense*. In a nutshell, as the next line says, he is "always ready to help in times of trouble" (GNT). Consequently, his people will not fear no matter what happens. Even if the continents break up and sink beneath the surging waters of the sea, they will not be afraid. Faced with creation's demise, they will find solace in their God. Practically speaking, "The psalm dares us to believe in God when the ground falls out from underneath us" (209).

The second stanza (vv. 4-7) contains an affirmation (v. 4) followed by an assertion of its

*implicit* consequences (vv. 5-7). The Most High, like a river the source of his people's life and blessings, dwells in the "holy place," the inner sanctuary of the temple, located in "the city of God." His unique presence in Jerusalem guarantees its security and the security of Israel. Nations may roar against her, but kingdoms that do so fall as a consequence of his judgment. God lifts his thunderous voice and "the earth melts," not literally but in fear as he routs Jerusalem's enemies leaving the earth desolate in the wake of his fiery judgment (v. 8). "The tumult of the nations and God's thundering voice depict a terrifying scene, but within the city we hear the psalm's refrain, 'the Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress (lit. 'our high refuge' from the underlying chaos)" (210).

The closing stanza (vv. 7-11) contains an invitation (v. 8-9) followed by command and prophetic announcement (v. 10). God's people are invited to consider his exploits. He brings judgment and establishes peace. While "the works of the Lord" include all his works in the past, the fact that he "makes wars cease to the ends of the earth" implies a future work that will bring peace to the whole world. God's victories in the past are but a foretaste of things finally to come when Christ returns. One commentator explains: "Every victory, every subjugation of a hostile nation, and every stroke on the canvas of the history of redemption bring more clearly into focus that the Lord's very plan for humankind includes the cessation of wars and the era of peace. His wars and his judgments of the nations have as a final end the removal of evil instigators, troublemakers, rebels, and expressions of hostility in whatever form" (Willem A. VanGemeren, *Psalms*, EBC, rev. ed., 5: 407). This future era of universal peace will accompany God's exaltation among the nations in the person of messiah (Isa 9:6; 11:1-9; Eze 37:21-28; Lk 1:32-33; 2:14).

The world is filled with plenty to worry about. It's filled with environmental, economic, social, and geopolitical concerns, in general, not to mention the escalation of conflicts around the world, e.g., the current war in Syria that threatens to engulf the Middle East. What's more, we all face individual concerns, in particular, regarding our health and finances, our families and friends, our jobs and our future, e.g., will our son's marriage survive? will I

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have enough money to retire? These are the things for which Christians most frequently request prayer: health, finances, job, and relationships. Needless to say, all these concerns create anxiety. This psalm teaches us that the One who holds the

future in his hands, holds his people in them as well. Confessing we believe that he is our refuge, strength, and fortress is easy; bringing our hearts to feel that confessed security is monumental.

## *The Message of the Passage*

*"A mighty fortress is our God, a bulwark never failing" in whom we place our confidence in troublesome times.*

day **4** **EMBRACE** – how God spoke to you in his word.

Our desire is to not be merely hearers of the word, but doers of the word as James teaches in James 1:22. Try some of the challenges below to apply what you have learned this week.

- **Journal your thoughts on the passage:**

–Write about how God revealed himself to you . . .

–Write about how God wants you to change you . . .

–Write about how God wants to use you to change your world . . .

**“Facing the Monster of Anxiety”**  
(Use the space below for Sunday’s message notes)

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# notes STUDY – the commentaries to answer the questions.

## Sons of Korah

"Sons of Korah' refers to the Levitical choir made up of the descendants of Korah appointed by David to serve in the temple liturgy" (*The NIV Study Bible*, 1985, note on Ps 42 title).

## alamoth

"According to The Sheminith (Pss 6 and 12) is a companion term in 1 Chronicles 15:21 to **According to Alamoth** (Ps 46; 1 Chr. 15:20). The passage in Chronicles, describing the bringing of the Ark to Jerusalem, tells of eight Levites who were 'to play harps according to Alamoth', and six who were 'to lead with lyres according to the Sheminith'. Alamoth (*'alamot*) means 'girls'; Sheminith (*seminith*) means 'eighth'. Although the latter is very enigmatic to us (the eighth string? The eighth and crowning ritual act?), the majority opinion is that Alamoth means the treble range, and Seminit therefore the tenor or bass" (Derek Kidner, *Psalms 1-72*, TOTC, vol. 15, 55-56). Although the Hebrew word means "maidens," one commentator writes: "that the Psalm was sung by a female choir must be rejected because such did not exist in the Temple. Nor is the alternative acceptable that it signifies soprano voices of boys" [cf., NLT]. He argues from 1Chr 15:20 that it refers to "instruments with a tone of high pitch" (A. Cohen, *The Psalms*, SBB, 144).

## v. 1 **refuge, strength, help**

"This great God is 'ever-present' with his people. His presence in protecting the people of God is described by three metaphors and one explanatory clause. The metaphors are 'refuge,' 'strength,' and 'fortress' [vv. 7, 11]. These three words function as synonyms designating the source and effectiveness or Israel's strength, God is their 'strength' (cf. 29:11; 68:35; 71:7; Isa 26:1). As their strength he is like a 'refuge' where one finds rest and asylum (cf. 14:6; 61:3; 62:7-8; 71:7; 73:28; 91:2, 9; 142:5; Isa 25:4; Jer 17:17). His strength is also evident when they find protection in him as a 'fortress.' Fortresses were strongholds built on isolated, elevated places (cf. Isa 33:16) to provide protection against enemies (cf. 9:9; 18:2; 48:3; 59:9, 16-17)" (VanGemeren, 404).

## vv. 2, 3 **give way . . . quake**

"This is not only a powerful word-picture, built up of the two things that are most immutable and impregnable, the earth and the mountains, over against the symbol of what is most restless and menacing, the sea; it begins to contemplate the end of the whole created scheme, by which the earth, the mountains and the waters were set in place, as described in, e.g., 104:5-9" (Kidner, 192). "It is just possible that the author had in mind the world catastrophe which would (so it was believed) precede the messianic age (so Oesterley, Weiser)" (A. A. Anderson, *Psalms 1-72*, NCBC, 356). "The world catastrophes are the 'woes' of the day of the Lord heralding the messianic age (cf. Isa 24:18-23; Jer 4:24; Na 1:5) . . . This psalm expresses Israel's confidence in the Lord's protection when he shakes the world so as to effect significant political, cultural, and economic changes" (VanGemeren, 405).

## v. 3 **Selah**

"This occurs 71 times (and a further three times in Hab. 3), predominantly in Books I-III of the Psalter. Probably it is the signal for an interlude (cf. LXX) or change of musical accompaniment" (51); cf., "interlude" (NLT).

## v. 4 **river**

"The Hebrew *nahar* (see on 72:8) is a perennial stream (cf. 74:15, 107:33) but there was no such river in Jerusalem, unless the writer had in mind the tunnel of Hezekiah, or the spring of Gihon (cf. Guthrie, ISS, p. 93)" (Anderson, 357). Consequently, commentators generally take the reference figuratively. "Thus, this river of Psalm 46 is probably an image depicting **the holy place** (i.e., the sanctuary) **where the Most High dwells** as the source of life for the city of God. This image is developed later in Ezekiel's vision of a new temple after the restoration from exile (47:1-12)" (Broyles, 209).

## v. 4 **Most High**

Heb. *Elyon*. Simply put, without identifying Yahweh with the Canaanite god, the Israelites identified Yahweh as the Creator, the one whom the Canaanites called "El Elyon." "This divine title (*'elyon*) pictures God as the exalted ruler of the universe who vindicates the innocent and judges the wicked. See especially Pss 7:17; 9:2; 18:13; 21:7; 47:2)" (the NET Bible, 14tn on Ps 46:4).

## v. 6 **melts**

Verse 6 closely parallels verses 2-3. As 'the earth give[s] way,' so here **the earth melts**. As 'the mountains fall,' so here **kingdoms fall**. As 'waters roar,' so here **nations are in uproar** (cf. 65:7). The chaos of cosmic collapse and the chaos of political and military upheaval are thus presented as parallel forces. What is striking, however, is how the city of God stands contrary to these forces. By contrast, **she will not fall**" (Broyles, 210).

## v. 7 **fortress**

Cf., "high stronghold" (NEB); "citadel" (NJB).

## v. 9 **wars cease**

"Although the outcome is peace, the process is judgment. The reassuring words, he makes wars cease . . . , are set in a context not of gentle persuasion but of a world devastated and forcibly disarmed (8, 9b). This sequence, with tranquility on the far side of judgment, agrees with Old Testament prophecy and apocalypse, and with the New Testament (e.g., Isa. 6:10-13; 9:5; Dan. 12:1; 2 Pet. 3:12f)" (Kidner, 194-95).

## v. 10 **be still**

"This may be addressed to the nations who are exhorted to abandon their futile hostilities against God (2:10), or, more likely, it is a command directed to the people of God who are counseled to reject all foreign alliances and to depend entirely upon Yahweh (cf. Isa. 30:15)" (Anderson, 360).

### Family Talk

Encouragement from one parent's heart to another

There is no question that we live in a stressed-out society. Many of us are juggling numerous responsibilities and trying to keep all the balls in the air at the same time. Some may think that this stress is an "adult-thing" but studies have showed that kids are stressed-out too! A recent poll on kidshealth.org asked kids what they were most stressed about. They said homework/school performance (36%), family issues (32%) and friends/gossip/teasing (21%). Our kids are definitely feeling the pressure of living in a fast-paced, performance-based culture. How can we help our kids handle stress better? (1) Encourage them to talk about it. Ask questions about how they are feeling? (2) Look at your family's schedule. Busyness is a huge stress inducer. Limit activities if the calendar is too full. (3) Make sure your child is getting enough sleep, exercise and eating right. (4) Pray for your child and with your child. Point them to scripture like today's passage. The writer of Psalm 46 was severely stressed out when he called out to God for help. Despite the chaos going on around him and in the world, he chose to be still and remember the good things God had done. Take some time as a family to be still and reflect on the goodness of God. It will put things in perspective and relieve some of that stress!

#### What Does The Bible Say

Weekly Verse: Psalm 46:1-11

1. Fill in the blank: God is our \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_, an ever-present help in trouble. (v.1)
2. What other way does he describe God in verse 7?
3. What does God say to the psalmist in verse 10?

#### What Do You Think

1. How do you think the psalmist felt when he was writing this psalm?
2. Why is it important to be still before God?
3. God is our fortress. What is a fortress? Look it up and write it in your own words.

#### What R U Going To Do

Make some time this week and find a place to be still either with your family or alone. Go outside and look at the stars. Lay on your bed with soft music playing. Spend some time with God and then record: Where do you go? \_\_\_\_\_ How did it feel to be still? \_\_\_\_\_.

### MEMORY TIME

Core Comp

Peace: I live without worry because things are good between God, others, and me.

Memory Verse

Psalm 46:10 *Be still and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in all the earth.*

### KIDPIX COUPON

I memorized CC \_\_\_\_\_ and Verse \_\_\_\_\_. Family completed **Say** \_\_\_\_\_ **Think** \_\_\_\_\_ **Do** \_\_\_\_\_

Child's name \_\_\_\_\_ Grade \_\_\_\_\_ Parent's signature \_\_\_\_\_

Earn tokens by completing the Bible study portion of this page.  
Questions: Kids@pantego.org

# 30 CORE COMPETENCIES

## 10 CORE BELIEFS

### **Trinity** *2 Corinthians 13:14*

I believe the God of the Bible is the only true God - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

### **Salvation By Grace** *Ephesians 2:8-9*

I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.

### **Authority of the Bible** *2 Timothy 3:16-17*

I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.

### **Personal God** *Psalms 121:1-2*

I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.

### **Identity in Christ** *John 1:12*

I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.

### **Church** *Ephesians 4:15-16*

I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.

### **Humanity** *John 3:16*

I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.

### **Compassion** *Psalms 82:3-4*

I believe God calls all Christians to show compassion to those in need.

### **Eternity** *John 14:1-4*

I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish His eternal kingdom.

### **Stewardship** *1 Timothy 6:17-19*

I believe that everything I am or own belongs to God.

## 10 CORE PRACTICES

### **Worship** *Psalms 95:1-7*

I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.

### **Prayer** *Psalms 66:16-20*

I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.

### **Bible Study** *Hebrews 4:12*

I read the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.

### **Single-mindedness** *Matthew 6:33*

I focus on God and His priorities for my life.

### **Spiritual Gifts** *Romans 12:4-6*

I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.

### **Biblical Community** *Acts 2:44-47*

I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world.

### **Giving Away My Time** *Colossians 3:17*

I give away my time to fulfill God's purposes.

### **Giving Away My Money**

*2 Corinthians 8:7*

I give away my money to fulfill God's purposes.

### **Giving Away My Faith** *Ephesians*

*6:19-20*

I give away my faith to fulfill God's purposes.

### **Giving Away My Life** *Romans 12:1*

I give away my life to fulfill God's purposes.

## 10 CORE VIRTUES

### **Joy** *John 15:11*

I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.

### **Peace** *Philippians 4:6-7*

I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, myself, and others.

### **Faithfulness** *Proverbs 3:3-4*

I have established a good name with God and with others based on my long-term loyalty to those relationships.

### **Self-Control** *Titus 2:11-13*

I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.

### **Humility** *Philippians 2:3, 4*

I choose to esteem others above myself.

### **Love** *1 John 4:10-12*

I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.

### **Patience** *Proverbs 14:29*

I take a long time to overheat and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.

### **Kindness/Goodness** *1 Thess. 5:15*

I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others.

### **Gentleness** *Philippians 4:5*

I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.

### **Hope** *Hebrews 6:19-20*

I can cope with the hardships of life and with death because of the hope I have in Jesus Christ.

## About the Authors

**Tom Bulick** (M.A. in Educational Leadership, Eastern Michigan University, Th.M. in Old Testament, and Ph.D. in Bible Exposition, Dallas Theological Seminary). For more than forty years, Tom has served as pastor, faculty member, and administrator. Tom was Vice President for Student Life and Associate Professor of Religious Studies at Trinity Western University (Vancouver, B.C.) for twelve years before accepting the position of Spiritual Formation Pastor at Pantego Bible Church in 1998. He and his wife Ruth have one son, Zach.

**Wendy Hollabaugh** (B.S.W. University of Texas at Arlington) is the Children's Minister at Pantego Bible Church. Wendy has over ten years of experience in Children's Ministry. She has a passion for leading families to connect with God and each other. She enjoys creating compelling environments where kids fall in love with God and His Truth. Wendy and her husband, Greg, are also involved in their own personal youth ministry as they are training their three teenagers, Hannah, Aaron and Noah.



8001 Anderson Blvd.  
Ft. Worth, TX 76120  
1-866-PANTEGO  
Fax 817-275-6403  
www.pantego.org

The mission of THE SCROLLS is to help you develop the beliefs, practices, and virtues of a follower of Jesus Christ called The 30 Core Competencies through your own active reading of the Bible. Send any questions or comments you may have about this lesson to Tom Bulick. His e-mail address is [tbulick@pantego.org](mailto:tbulick@pantego.org).