



The Scrolls

Helping **CENTRAL BIBLE CHURCH** Families Belong, Become and Go Beyond V23 N1 January 3, 2021

RIGHTSIDE UP

"All Is Not Lost"

Psalms 46:1-11

THIS WEEK'S CORE COMPETENCY

Peace

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

"Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."

1 Peter 1:3-4



Where are hope and peace found in troubled times?

The Core Competencies are an interrelated set of Central Beliefs, Central Practices, and Central Virtues. They are interrelated in that Beliefs coupled with Practices generally contribute to the development of Virtues through the work of the Holy Spirit. More specifically, individual Beliefs, Practices, and Virtues are interrelated. For example, Hope, "a growing anticipation of God's promises and my secure eternity with him," and Peace, "freedom from anxiety because things are right between God, myself and others," are both Central Virtues linked to the sense of security gained through the Central Belief, Personal God, "believing God is involved in and cares about my daily life," and the Central Practice, Worship, "worshiping God for who he is and what he has done for me." This observation leads to the conclusion that individual texts generally relate to more than one Core Competency, and explains why Psalm 46 specifically relates to all the above: Personal God, Hope, Peace, and Worship.

About the psalm, *The NIV Study Bible* says: "**Ps 46** A celebration of the security of Jerusalem as the city of God (the inspiration of Martin Luther's great hymn 'A Mighty Fortress Is Our God' see vv. 7, 11). Thematically this psalm is closely related to Ps 48 (see also Ps 76; 87), while Ps 47 celebrates God's victorious reign over all the earth (see introduction to Ps 46-48). It probably predates the exile. However, as a song concerning the 'city of God' (v. 4), it remained for Israel a song of hope celebrating the certain triumph of God's kingdom. It was originally liturgical and sung at the temple: The citizens of Jerusalem (or the Levitical choir in their stead) apparently sang the opening stanza (vv. 1-3) and the responses (vv. 7, 11), while the Levitical leader of the liturgy probably sang the second and third stanzas (vv. 4-6, 8-10)" (note on Ps 46).

A number of verses that use the personal pronouns "our," "we," and "us" in this Psalm speak to the fact that the LORD is a Personal

God. The psalmist opens by saying, "God is *our* refuge and strength" (v. 1), and as a result, "*we* will not fear" (v. 2). In verse 7, he adds, "The LORD Almighty is with *us*," explaining, "the God of Jacob is *our* fortress." Then he repeats these same words in the closing verse (v. 11). What's more, God acts with intention characteristic of a person. For example, he "dwells" in Jerusalem (v. 4), "helps" her when she's threatened by enemies (v. 5), and "makes wars cease" to bring peace (v. 9).

By definition, the psalm is an expression of Worship by the psalmist, who invites his readers to do the same. Worship is our response to who God is and what he has done. And according to the psalmist, he is "the Most High" (v. 4) and "the LORD Almighty" (v. 7). What's more, he himself says that he is the only true "God" and that he will be "exalted among the nations" and "in the earth" (v. 10).

Together the Belief Personal God coupled with the Practice Worship gives the LORD's people the Virtues of Peace and Hope. According to the first stanza (vv. 1-3), since God is their refuge, strength, and helper, they will not fear in the face of dire circumstances. Even if the "continents break up and sink beneath the surging waters of the seas—i.e., though the creation itself may seem to become uncreated (see 104:6-9; Ge 1:9-10) and all may appear to be going down before the onslaught of the primeval deep" (note on 46:1-3), they will experience Peace. According to the second (vv. 4-6), since God is with them to help them "at the break of day," a figurative reference to when cities were most vulnerable to attack, they can have Hope, for he is able to defeat their attackers. And according to the third (vv. 6-9), since God is their fortress, they can have Hope, for he will triumph over their enemies, put an end to war, and inaugurate his kingdom and bring in an era of Peace. This will result in worldwide recognition that he is God.

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.*
- 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.*
- 8 *Come and see what the LORD has done,
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 *He says, "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.*

After reading the text, practice your Observation skills
by noting the following:

- Circle "*alamoth*" in the superscription.
- 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 in v. 2.
- Bracket the verbs "give way," "fall," "roar and foam," and "quake" in vv. 2, 3.
- Circle "river" in v. 4.
- Underline "city of God" in v. 4.
- Bracket "at the break of day" in v. 5.
- Underline v. 6.
- Highlight vv. 7, 11.
- Circle "desolations" in v. 8.
- Circle "know" in v. 10a.
- Highlight v. 10b, c in a different color.

What one word would you use to describe the **TONE** of this passage? (i.e., stern, joyful, cautious, etc.)

What word or idea stands out to you in this passage?

What one thing you do not understand in this passage?

Try to summarize the **THEME** of this passage in one word. If you were going to describe these verses, you might say, "This text is about _____."



DIG DEEPER

Answer the questions to help you apply the passage and prepare for discussion

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. Explain the significance of “at the break of day” in v. 5.
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 pronouns refer to the church possibly be relevant to Christians? Talk about it.

Commentary On The Text

“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). It’s a haven that offers hope.

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” (Broyles, 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 Jerusa-

lem 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)” (Broyles, 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., this year it’s the worldwide war against COVID-19. 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 I have enough money to retire? These are 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, giving us hope and peace.

Word Studies/Notes

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 of 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). Each of these metaphors relates to a people in need. Only when they are in distress do they need his special protection (cf. 22:19; 27:9; 40:13; 44:26; 63:7). They always need him, but they experience his presence especially when they go through a period filled with anguish and distress (cf. 23:4). Then he is close to them (v.1; cf. Dt 4:7)” (Willem A. VanGemeren, *Psalms*, EBC, rev. ed., 5: 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 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).

v. 4 *river*

“The Hebrew *nāhār* (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)” (A. A. Anderson, *Psalms* 1-72, NCBC, 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)” (Craig C. Broyles, *Psalms*, NIBC, 209).

v. 4 *city of God*

I.e., Jerusalem, the city where the holy place is located “where the Most High dwells” (v. 4b).

v. 4 *Most High*

Heb. *Elyon*. “In Canaanite religious thought, El the creator was the supreme deity of the Canaanite pantheon. Melchizedek, the priest-king of Salem, served El Elyon (NIV, ‘God Most High’) whom Melchizedek knew as ‘Creator of heaven and earth’ (Ge 14:19) . . . Israel believed that only Yahweh is El Elyon (‘God Most high,’ cf. Ge 14:22)” (VanGemeren, 152). 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. 5 *break of day*

Cf., “when morning dawns” (NASB), i.e., when attacks against cities were typically launched.

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. 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).



APPLY THE TEXT

CENTRAL MESSAGE OF THE TEXT

“A mighty fortress is our God, a bulwark never failing” in whom we find hope and peace in troubling times.

CENTRAL MESSAGE FOR YOUR LIFE

(Rewrite the Central Message above to personally apply to your own life)



3 LIVING QUESTIONS

The “Living Questions” are simple questions we may ask of any text in order to apply the Bible to our life. Answer the questions below as personally as you can.

1. What does this passage teach me about God?
2. What does this passage teach me about myself?
3. What does this passage lead me to do?



FAMILY TALK

They say every child is different. I don't know exactly who they are, but they couldn't be more correct. When my daughter entered kindergarten, I discovered something about her that was different from her two older brothers. She was quite a bit more cautious (this is a good thing) and also carried a little more anxiety (this could sometimes be challenging). For example, as long as she was one of the first to arrive at school, she could enter the classroom with no issues. But if we ran behind or if I dropped her brothers off first and the classroom was full of kids, she would go into a complete panic. What really made her anxious; was it the unknown? After all, it was the same class and same kids whether she arrived early or late. She had a hard time remembering how she played and learned with these exact kids every day for the past several weeks. What makes your kids anxious? What about you; what's your trigger? Chances are on some level you also feel anxious when the future is unknown. Coming off the heels of 2020 can I just say it feels like we've been put through a meat grinder. Quite frankly, the year might change, but our circumstances won't. Will we still be anxious? Are we afraid to hope? God didn't go on vacation in 2020; He is still on the throne. He is with us, our refuge and strength, our ever-present help. Rather than focusing on the negative circumstances of the past, let's focus on all that God has brought us through and look toward our future with hope.

What Does The Bible Say?

Read Psalm 46:1-11.

1. Write definitions for refuge, strength, and help. How is God like each of these?
2. Why should we not fear?
3. What does "Be still" really mean?

What Do You Think?

Read v 10. Does "Be still" mean we shouldn't do anything? Why or why not?

What Do You Do?

Turn on anything and everything in your house that makes noise and try to read Psalm 46. Now turn everything off and read it again. Which was easier?

CORE COMPETENCY: Peace

I live without worry because things are good between God, myself and others.

MEMORY VERSE: Psalm 46:1

God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble.

KidPIX COUPON

Earn 1 KidPIX Token by completing the CENTRAL Kids Bible Study on this page and another token by memorizing and reciting the memory verse for this week.

Questions: kids@wearecentral.org

- _____ I completed my Bible Study
- _____ I memorized this week's verse
- _____ I brought my Bible to church
- _____ I brought a friend



CHILD'S NAME

GRADE PARENT SIGNATURE

OUR CORE COMPETENCIES

CENTRAL BELIEFS

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.

Church (Ephesians 4:15-16)
I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.

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.

The Holy Spirit (Romans 8:9)
I believe the Holy Spirit convicts, calls, converts and changes me as a child of God.

Humanity (John 3:16)
I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Identity in Christ (John 1:12)
I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.

Jesus Christ (Hebrews 1:1-4)
I believe Jesus Christ is the Son of God who became man, died for sinners and rose from the dead.

Life Purpose (Acts 20:24)
I believe I am a steward of God's resources and have been redeemed to participate in His Kingdom purposes for His glory.

Personal God (Psalm 121:1-2)
I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.

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.



CENTRAL VIRTUES

Love (1 John 4:10-12)
I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.

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.

Patience (Proverbs 14:29)
I take a long time to overheat and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.

Kindness/Goodness (1 Thessalonians 5:15)
I choose to do the right things in my relationships with 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.

Gentleness (Philippians 4:5)
I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.

Self-Control (Titus 2:11-13)
I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.

Grace (Colossians 3:13)
I demonstrate forgiveness, mercy and generosity to others, even when they have offended me.

Hope (1 Peter 1:3-5)
I have a growing anticipation of God's promises and my secure eternity with Him.

Humility (Philippians 2:3-4)
I choose to esteem others above myself.



CENTRAL PRACTICES

Bible Study (Hebrews 4:12)
I study the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.

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.

Compassion (Psalm 82:3-4)
I seek to serve the last, the least and the lost in my community.

Disciple-Making (2 Timothy 2:2)
I multiply godly beliefs, virtues and practices in others to encourage their spiritual growth in Christ.

Evangelism (Acts 1:8)
I share Jesus with others through personal proclamation and demonstration of the gospel.

Generosity (2 Corinthians 9:6-11)
I gladly give my resources to fulfill God's purposes.

Prayer (Psalm 66:16-20)
I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him 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.

Worship (Psalm 95:1-7)
I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.

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