

# STORM SHELTER

## A STUDY IN PSALMS

### THE SHELTER OF GOD'S PEACE

**BIG IDEA:** God is the source of peace in the midst of turmoil.

**DATE:** September 21, 2025

**SCRIPTURE:** Psalm 46:1-11

### OPENING QUESTION

#### A Moment of Peace

Help your group experience a moment of peace. Invite group members to put away all their stuff and close their eyes and simply rest – both physically and mentally – for two minutes. Start by leading them in taking a deep breath in and deep breath out. And repeat – inhale, exhale. Set the timer on your phone so you really go the full two minutes and invite them to usher in peace.

Ask them to describe what they experienced during these two minutes. Was it challenging being still and quiet for that time? Did your mind start to wander about your to-do list? Did you feel at peace?

*SHARE: Today we are going to look at God being our source of peace in the midst of turmoil.*

### THE SETTING

Based on the inscription of this psalm, it's a choir anthem for congregational worship. Based on the content, it is somewhat akin to the hymn "A Mighty Fortress is our God" (which was inspired by this psalm) or "It is Well with My Soul." The psalm celebrates God's great strength in all situations and identifies why His people can experience peace and security, specifically in times of trouble.

### SCRIPTURE READING

#### Psalm 46:1-11 (HCSB)

"God is our refuge and strength, a helper who is always found in times of trouble. <sup>2</sup>Therefore, we will not be afraid, though the earth trembles and the mountains topple into the depths of the seas, <sup>3</sup>though its waters roar and foam and the mountains quake with its turmoil.

<sup>4</sup>There is a river – its streams delight the city of God, the holy dwelling place of the Most High.

<sup>5</sup>God is within her; she will not be toppled. God will help her when the morning dawns. <sup>6</sup>Nations rage, kingdoms topple; the earth melts when He lifts His voice.

<sup>7</sup>The Lord of Hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our stronghold. <sup>8</sup>Come, see the works of the Lord, who brings devastation on earth. <sup>9</sup>He makes wars cease throughout the earth. He shatters bows and cuts spears to pieces; He burns up the chariots. <sup>10</sup>"Stop your fighting – and know that I am God, exalted among the nations, exalted on the earth." <sup>11</sup>Yahweh of Hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our stronghold."

## DISCUSSION

### READ PSALM 46:1-11

What emotions do you experience when you read Psalm 46? Verse 10 is more widely translated as "Be still, and know that I am God!"

Peace is a rare commodity in our culture today. The thought of being still and resting in the One who wants to be our peace instead of fighting for peace can be foreign. But God wants to be our Refuge, our Strength, and our Helper. He can always be found in times of trouble. Not before or after the turmoil, but in the midst of the chaos. God is the One who can deliver *true* peace. And as believers, we are the place He wants His peace to reside.

### REREAD PSALM 46:1-3

**Have people circle up in groups of 3-4 (or around their tables) to answer these questions:**

- ❖ Where do *you* go to experience peace? Besides God, where do most people seek peace?
- ❖ What are some things *you* tend to cling to instead of God?
- ❖ On a scale of 1-10 with 1 being "I'm fighting for peace" and 10 being "I am able to be still and know that He is God" - How would you rate yourself? Explain your answers (if you are comfortable.)
- ❖ God is our Refuge, Strength and Helper. Which of these three resonates with you right now and in what way? How are they different?

### READ Psalm 46:4-7

**SHARE:** In verse 2-3, the psalmist used tumultuous images of water: deep seas and roaring waters. In verse 4, he turned to the refreshing nature of water on a river or a stream. The Bible often refers to God's presence as a cool stream or where our thirst is satisfied. In the midst of raging waters, He is our calm stream.

The psalms are flooded with references to water in different forms. Write down any emotions you feel in connection with the images below. *(One example is provided to help you get started.)*



**FEAR**



**PEACE**



**SATISFACTION**

## READ Psalm 46:8-11

God is not just a *little* bigger than our circumstances or the world. He is the *all-powerful* Lord and Almighty Ruler over all things! He has the absolute ability to cease the roaring commotion in your heart and mind.

**Have your group think through the following scenarios.**

**ASK: How would you typically react in each scenario?**

- Out of town family is coming to visit for a week.
- The project at work is coming apart at the seams and due soon.
- It's Saturday night and your teenager is over an hour late coming home and they won't answer their phone.
- You're overwhelmed by the violence in the world.

*Discuss these application questions together:*

- What practical steps can we take to seek God instead of our own ideas for peace in the moment? (Encourage them to go beyond the usual answers such as "pray", "read the Bible", etc. Those are key but help them think outside the box, too.)
- Do you know someone going through a particularly challenging time?
- What actions can you take this week to share your source of peace with them?

## SUMMARIZE & CHALLENGE

You are going to face turmoil every day. That's not a pleasant reality, but it's true. Fortunately, you can actively choose to make a resolution in the face of turmoil. Be intentional to let God work a revolution in your life – a revolution of His peace and presence. We *can* experience God's supernatural peace as we trust in His goodness and power.

Close this time by reading some of the verses of Martin Luther's "A Mighty Fortress is Our God" (found in the Leader Guide only below.) Luther wrote this hymn as he was leading the Reformation and being persecuted by the Catholic Church for his views on salvation by grace alone. He was literally and spiritually facing a storm.

### "A Mighty Fortress is Our God"

*A mighty fortress is our God, a bulwark never failing;  
Our helper He, amid the flood of mortal ills prevailing;  
For still our ancient foe doth seek to work us woe;  
His craft and power are great, and, armed with cruel hate,  
On earth is not his equal.*

*Did we in our own strength confide, our striving would be losing,  
Were not the right Man on our side, the Man of God's own choosing:  
Dost ask who that may be? Christ Jesus, it is He;  
Lord Sabaoth, His Name, from age to age the same,  
And He must win the battle.*

*And though this world, with devils filled, should threaten to undo us,  
We will not fear, for God hath willed His truth to triumph through us;  
The Prince of Darkness grim, we tremble not for him;*

*His rage we can endure, for lo, his doom is sure,  
One little word shall fell him.*

*That word above all earthly powers, no thanks to them, abideth;  
The Spirit and the gifts are ours through Him Who with us sideth;  
Let goods and kindred go, this mortal life also;  
The body they may kill: God's truth abideth still,  
His kingdom is forever.*

## COMMENTARY

### ***Psalm 46:1-3***

**[VERSE 1]** The essential character of Psalm 46 is clearly seen in the opening verse. The psalmist, one of the sons of Korah, began with an affirmation that **God is our refuge and strength**. The rest of the psalm uses powerful imagery and metaphor to communicate this basic theological theme. Psalm 46 starts off with a two-part confession of confidence in verse 1, followed by a statement of result or consequence in verses 2-3. The confession contains two statements about the character of God. First, God is identified as **our refuge and strength**. In the Old Testament the term **refuge** has the meaning of a "place of refuge" or "shelter." The close connection of the term **strength** with **refuge** have led some to suggest that strength would be better translated "protection." In either case, the picture is of complete shelter or protection in God. The theme reappears in the refrain in verses 7 and 11.

Second, God is described as a **helper who is always found in times of trouble**. God's presence is an ever-present help. It's the kind of help that can be found when you most need it. In this case, God is ready to be found (Isa. 55:6). The specific times of trouble are not identified, but the illustration of the calamity in the next two verses will suggest a worst-case scenario.

**[VERSE 2]** A statement of consequence and an illustration of a fearful calamity follow the confession of trust and confidence. The confession and the result are linked by a strong **therefore**. Since the confession (**God is our refuge and strength**) is true, then we have nothing to fear regardless of what calamity may befall the world around us. Indeed, God is our shelter and protection; **therefore, we will not be afraid**. Why should we? If God truly is our refuge and protection, then our peace and protection are assured. Psalm 46 challenges us to have confident faith in God.

**[VERSE 3]** Here, the statement of consequence is followed by an illustration of calamity in the rest of verses 2-3. In this frightening word-picture, the psalmist depicted the demise of two of the most stable objects of earth's geography. In this massive quake, **the earth trembles and the mountains topple** into the seas. The waters of the seas **roar and foam**, and **the mountains quake** in response. Such a cataclysmic event has been understood in different ways. Some scholars regard the poetic description of a natural catastrophe, a fearful earthquake. Some propose that the psalmist envisioned a moment of "uncreation"<sup>1</sup> when the chaotic waters attempt to break the boundaries set for them at creation (Gen. 1:9-10; Ps 104:5-9). Regardless of the nature of the calamity contemplated, the psalmist presented a confident trust that God is our shelter and protection. Even if the world should end, **we will not be afraid** because nothing is able to overwhelm God.

## *Psalm 46:4-7*

**[VERSE 4]** The second unit begins with a surprise word (v. 4). It simply says *a river*. But this **river** is not like the roaring and foam of the menacing sea that seeks to topple the mountains. Rather, this river provides life-giving waters that satisfy and give joy. Indeed, **its streams delight** or satisfy **the city of God**. God provided this sustaining care for His city when He subdued the chaotic waters (Ps. 104:6-9) and transformed them into the life-giving waters needed by his people (Ps. 104:10-16; Ps. 65:9).

The writer may also be thinking of the river that flowed through the garden of Eden (Gen. 2:10). The psalmist also identified **the city of God** with the **holy dwelling place of the Most High**. To the poet, the **holy dwelling place** referred to the tabernacle (the same Hebrew word is used here) or the temple and indicated that God resided in the city. This is confirmed in the first part of verse 5: **God is within her**. Literally, this means “God is in her midst.” Consequently, the peace and security of the city is not due to a well-trained army or strong walls; its tranquility is the direct result of God’s presence.

**[VERSE 5]** The use of similar verbs and phrases in verses 5 and 6, creates several connecting points with verses 1-3. Because **God is within her**, the city **will not be toppled**. In contrast to the stability of God’s city, the mountains (v. 2) and **kingdoms** (v. 6) **topple** in turmoil. **God will help** the city quickly at the break of day in the same way God is a “helper” who could be found in troubling times (v. 1).

**[VERSE 6]** In verse 6, the psalmist continued the use of parallels. Thus, **the earth melts** is parallel to “the earth trembles” in verse 2. Two different verbs are used here. However, in the same two verses, “the mountains topple” corresponds to **kingdoms topple** and uses the same verb. Interestingly, the psalmist used the same verb in comparing the **rage** of the nations (v. 6) with the “roar” of the chaotic waters (v. 3). These parallels are not coincidental. Where the calamities envisioned in verses 2-3 are cataclysmic, the catastrophes of verses 5-6 are local. The psalmist added them here to contrast the turmoil of unstable human nations with the peace and stability of the city of God. The **nations** may **rage** (roar) and **kingdoms topple**, but God will judge their chaotic might when **He lifts His voice**. At the sound of His voice, the earth, the very base of human might, **melts** away (1 Sam. 7:10; Joel 3:16).

**[VERSE 7]** The two parallel divine titles **the Lord of Hosts** [or Yahweh] and the **God of Jacob** point back to Israel’s ancient traditions. The first refers to protective nature of the “hosts” of God (1 Sam. 17:45; 1 Kings 22:19), and the second to God’s protective promise of grace to the patriarch Jacob (Gen. 28:13-15). Like the divine titles, the second half of each phrase also echoes central themes of the psalm. The presence of God is affirmed in the preposition **with us** (Isa. 7:14), and His protection is declared in the phrase **our stronghold**. The use of the term **stronghold** implies inaccessible height.

## *Psalm 46:8-11*

The third stanza of Psalm 46 renews the thrust launched in verse 1 and revisited in verse 7: that of radical trust in the Lord. We can have peace regardless of what natural or national calamity may fall because these things are not greater than our God. Psalm 46 highlights this last point by weaving together the themes of the previous two sections into this last stanza. This feat is accomplished poetically by using two sets of imperatives (commands) to set the stage for the final repetition of the refrain containing the confession of trust in verse 11. The first set of imperatives



presents the psalmist inviting the faithful to consider the present and future reality of the confession of trust (vv. 8-9). The second set delivers the prophetic voice of God and His ultimate will (v. 10).

**[VERSE 8]** The psalmist commanded the faithful to **come** and **see** the present and future **works of the Lord**. This is the first set of imperatives. The Hebrew verb translated **see** is one connected most often with the oracles of a seer or prophet. The faithful are to consider this—to “foresee” the **works** of God. The outcome of the invitation is peace, but the call to **come** and **see** is not a tranquil or gentle summons. Instead, it is to consider the process of God’s judgment. God will bring **devastation on the earth**. The word **devastation** is plural and refers to horrifying and atrocious events. The psalmist pictured Yahweh here as the Divine Warrior who will fight for His people.

**[VERSE 9]** Yahweh is the warrior who **makes wars cease** unto the ends of the earth. As a fighter, Yahweh **shatters bows and cuts spears to pieces**. He is the one who **burns up the chariots**. The psalmist was not implying that all nations bring their weapons to God and lay them in a heap for destruction. Rather, these are combat phrases. As the leader of the heavenly armies, God fights for and protects His people. The judgment comes in the battle when rebellious nations attack His people.

**[VERSE 10]** The second set of imperatives or commands occurs in verse 10. The conquering King raises His thunderous voice (v. 6) and demands the cessation of hostilities. **“Stop your fighting,”** God demands. This is a rebuke to the raging and restless world. No act of humanity, no rebellion is greater than God. In two short phrases, God declares Himself to be **exalted among the nations** and **exalted on the earth**. To speak of exaltation is befitting of kingship, particularly that of the **Lord** (Pss. 99:1-5,9; 113:4-5; 145:1) The prophetic voice of God declares His ultimate will, and the peoples of the world will **know that I am God**.

**[VERSE 11]** The final repetition of the refrain underscores the primary theme of Psalm 46. Yahweh is the source of peace in the midst of the storm. He is our refuge, strength, and stronghold. We can trust in His protective care in any calamity or turmoil because nothing is greater than our God.

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