

**Stressed in My
Circumstances****Core Competency**
Peace
Psalm 46**Core Competencies****Core Beliefs**

- Trinity
- Salvation by Grace
- Authority of Bible
- Personal God
- Identity in Christ
- Church
- Humanity
- Compassion
- Eternity
- Stewardship

Core Practices

- Worship Prayer
- Bible Study
- Single-Mindedness
- Biblical Community
- Spiritual Gifts
- Giving Away My Time
- Giving Away My Money
- Giving Away My Faith
- Giving Away My Life

Core Virtues

- Love
- Joy
- **Peace**
- Patience
- Kindness/Goodness
- Faithfulness
- Gentleness
- Self-Control
- Hope

Dear Fellow Stressed-Out Friends,

Last week we had the great reminder that we need to slow down. Again, like most of the disciplines, it is easier said than done.

This week we have the opportunity to dive into the topic of being *Stressed in My Circumstances*. As believers, we don't like to admit that at times our circumstances get the best of us. We think for some reason, since we have decided to trust in Jesus, we would never again have to worry about things or people here on earth. Yet, like most areas of our faith development, it really is a process. What may not cause you stress puts someone in your Home Group or Community Group right over the edge.

Unless we live lives of isolation and in a vacuum, we will have stress. While the waves of the world may be crashing in around us or what we thought was safe and secure is now unstable and scary, we must stand firm on God's promises. May this week be a reminder to us all that His presence in our lives and circumstances is not dependant on external circumstances, but rather on the reality that our faith is in the living Christ who conquered death and rose from the grave.

One of the ways we can rise above our circumstances is to live our lives in authentic biblical community. It's how God wired us, and it's a gift from Him. Living our lives in the power of the resurrection is made easier as we live in the blessing of community.

Slowing down with you in order to experience God's presence,

*Juno***Engaging Our Minds & Hearts****Day 1**

God reveals Himself to us through His Word. As you spend time this week reading the various passages, allow the Holy Spirit to show you who God is, His various attributes and character. There is a chorus of a song that goes, "When I can't see Your hand, I'll trust Your heart." Spend time now, telling God that it is your desire to know Him and to know His heart, so when those stressful times and circumstances come into your life and you can't see His hand, you will still be able to be at **peace** with Him, with others and with life.

This week's core scripture passage is **Psalm 46**. We will begin our study time reading this passage several times. If you have internet capabilities, you can go to www.biblegateway.com to access a variety of versions. As you read through this passage, mark the following things in three distinctive ways (colors or symbols):

- 1) "God" and all pronouns that refer to Him
- 2) "our", "we", "us"
- 3) any words that describe the circumstances referred to in this passage

After marking these things, begin lists on separate sheets of paper (you will be adding to these lists throughout the week). One list will contain everything you see this week about **God's Ways, Attributes, or Character**. Start another list of the **Variety of Circumstances** that are described in the passages that we look at this week. Finally, begin a list **about Yourself and How God Desires You to Respond** to your circumstances.

Before you stop for the day, record what you see as the main theme(s) of this passage.

Day 2

Today's Passage: Psalm 46

Pray first!

This psalm, written as a song, contains poetic and picturesque language. Read it through again. Take each "stressful" event or circumstance that is pictured or described and relate that "picture" to real life situations that bring stress in your life.

Look again at the passage. Note the words that speak to us about how to deal with the stresses of life. Make a list of the words and commands. Next to each one, write down how these truths would speak peace into your life.

Day 3

Today's Passages: Cross References

Pray first!

When the circumstances of life are becoming overwhelming and are robbing us of our peace, it is imperative that we "be still and know that He is God." Today you will look at cross references that will help you to learn about God's sovereignty. It is only when we understand the sovereignty and character of God that we can be at peace regardless of the circumstances. As you read through each of these passages, mark every reference to God (including pronouns). Add what you have seen to your list of **God's Ways, Attributes, or Character**.

Daniel 4:34-35

³⁴ At the end of the days I, Nebuchadnezzar, lifted my eyes to heaven, and my reason returned to me, and I blessed the Most High, and praised and honored Him who lives forever, for His dominion is an everlasting dominion, and His kingdom endures from generation to generation; ³⁵ all the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing, and He does according to His will among the host of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay His hand or say to Him, "What have you done?"

Isaiah 55:8-9

⁸ For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, declares the LORD. ⁹For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways and My thoughts than your thoughts.

Romans 11:33-36

³³ Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and how inscrutable His ways! ³⁴ “For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been His counselor?” ³⁵ “Or who has given a gift to Him that he might be repaid?” ³⁶ For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be glory forever. Amen.

Isaiah 14:24, 27

²⁴ The LORD of Hosts has sworn: “As I have planned, so shall it be, and as I have purposed, so shall it stand.” ²⁷ For the LORD of Hosts has purposed, and who will annul it? His hand is stretched out, and who will turn it back?

Deuteronomy 32:39

³⁹ “See now that I, even I, am He, and there is no god beside Me; I kill and I make alive; I wound and I heal; and there is none that can deliver out of My hand.

Revelation 1:17-18

¹⁷ When I saw Him, I fell at His feet as though dead. But He laid His right hand on me, saying, “Fear not, I am the First and the Last,¹⁸ and the Living One. I died, and behold I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of death and Hades.

Isaiah 45:5-7

⁵ I am the LORD, and there is no other, besides Me there is no God; I equip you, though you do not know Me, ⁶ that people may know, from the rising of the sun and from the west, that there is none besides Me; I am the LORD, and there is no other. ⁷ I form light and create darkness, I make well-being and create calamity, I am the LORD, who does all these things.

Ecclesiastes 7:13-14

¹³ Consider the work of God: who can make straight what He has made crooked? ¹⁴ In the day of prosperity be joyful, and in the day of adversity consider: God has made the one as well as the other, so that man may not find out anything that will be after him.

Psalms 31:14-15

¹⁴ But I trust in you, O LORD; I say, “You are my God.” ¹⁵ My times are in Your hand; rescue me from the hand of my enemies and from my persecutors!

Deuteronomy 32:3-4

³ For I will proclaim the name of the LORD; ascribe greatness to our God! ⁴ The Rock, His work is perfect, for all His ways are justice. A God of faithfulness and without iniquity, just and upright is He.

2 Thessalonians 1:6-9

⁶ Since indeed God considers it just to repay with affliction those who afflict you, ⁷ and to grant relief to you who are afflicted as well as to us, when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels ⁸ in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. ⁹ They will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His might.

2 Peter 3:9

⁹ The Lord is not slow to fulfill His promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.

Psalms 37:39-40

³⁹ But the salvation of the righteous is from the LORD; He is their strength in time of trouble. ⁴⁰ The LORD helps them and delivers them; He delivers them from the wicked and saves them, Because they take refuge in Him.

Day 4

Pray first!

Today you will continue to look at cross references that will help you to learn about God's sovereignty. Continue to mark every reference to God (including pronouns) and add to your list of **God's ways, attributes, or character**. Also mark any pronouns that might refer to you (such as our, we, us, I, me, my) Add to your list, which you began on Day 1, regarding **how God desires you to respond to your circumstances**. Lastly, mark any words that describe the circumstances and add this to your list of **various circumstances**.

2 Corinthians 1:3-5

³Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, ⁴ who comforts us in all our affliction so that we will be able to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. ⁵For just as the sufferings of Christ are ours in abundance, so also our comfort is abundant through Christ.

2 Corinthians 12:9-10

⁹And He has said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness." Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me. ¹⁰Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong.

James 1:2-4

²Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, ³knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. ⁴And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

1 Peter 1:1-7

¹Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who reside as aliens, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, who are chosen ²according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, by the sanctifying work of the Spirit, to obey Jesus Christ and be sprinkled with His blood: May grace and peace be yours in the fullest measure. ³Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, ⁵who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. ⁶In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials, ⁷so that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

Romans 5:1-5

¹Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, ²through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand; and we exult in hope of the glory of God. ³And not only this, but we also exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; ⁴and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope; ⁵and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.

John 16:33

³³"These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world."

1 John 5:4-5

⁴For whatever is born of God overcomes the world; and this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. ⁵Who is the one who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?

Hebrews 4:15-16

¹⁵For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin. ¹⁶Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

Day 5

One of the core competencies that reflects our growth in Christ-likeness is the virtue of **Peace**. The key verse for this virtue is **Philippians 4:6-7**, “**Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, 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.**”

Prayerfully read over the following Assessment Statements for the core virtue of peace.

- I know God has forgiven me because of what Jesus has done.
- I am not angry with God, myself or others.
- I forgive people who deeply hurt me.
- I have an inner peace from God.

Read the following illustrations of peace. Then spend some time with the Prince of Peace in personal reflection and evaluation. Allow Him to speak to your heart.

True Peace

Two painters were asked to paint a picture illustrating peace. The first painted a beautiful evening scene in the foreground of which was a lake, its surface absolutely calm and unruffled. Trees surrounded it, meadows stretched away to the distant cattle gently browsing; a little cottage, the setting sun—all spoke of perfect rest. The second painter drew a wild, stormy scene. Heavy black clouds hung overhead; in the center of the picture an immense waterfall poured forth huge volumes of water covered with foam. One could almost hear its unceasing roar. Yet, perhaps the first thing to strike the eye was a small bird, perched in a cleft of a huge rock, absolutely sheltered from all danger, pouring forth its sweet notes of joy. It is the second painter who could describe the peace that passes all understanding which is the Lord Jesus Christ, the wisdom of God in the heart of the redeemed. **One can only have peace with himself if he has peace with God.**¹

Peace in the Storm

A story is told by William Gilbert of how Dante, wandering one day over the mountains of Lunigiana, eventually drew near to a lone, secluded monastery. It was at a time when his mind was wracked with internal conflict and was seeking refuge from the strife. So he loudly knocked at the monastery gate. It was opened by a monk, who in a single glance at the sad, pale face, read its pathetic message of misery and sorrow. “What do you seek here?” said he. With a gesture of despair, the poet replied, “Peace.” It was the same old craving followed by the same old search. But neither the solitary places, nor the anchorite’s cell ever brought true peace to the afflicted heart. **Peace comes** not from without but **from within**. We can have it in the winter of age or the spring of youth; in the lowly cottage or the stately mansion; in distressing pain or in buoyant health. The secret of it is in comradeship with Christ. You can have peace in the midst of the storm, if you have Christ. He is the shelter from the tempest, the soul’s haven of rest. If we have learned to value His friendship, we have mastered the secret of the “peace which passes all understanding.”²

Engage the Context

Psalm 46

This is a psalm about God’s sovereignty over the nations. At the time this psalm was composed, Israel was under duress from a number of different kings. This psalm inspired the people of Israel to stay strong and not fear in the face of impending destruction because of their God. The psalm is beautiful Hebrew poetry. It breaks down into three sections (1-3, 4-7, 8-11) with the word *Selah* dividing the sections.

¹AMG Bible Illustrations. 2000 (electronic ed.). Logos Library System; Bible Illustrations Series. Chattanooga: AMG Publishers.

²Ibid.

Feedback

What is helpful?
What could be better?
What is missing?
Is it helping you be more prepared for Sunday?

Send your feedback to
engage@gccaz.org

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

- ◆ The Korahites were one of the major guilds of Temple singers (2 Chron. 20:19) whose name appears in the superscriptions of Ps. 42; 44-49; 84-85 and 87-88. They were also Temple gatekeepers (1 Chron. 9:19; 26:1, 19) and bakers (1 Chron. 9:31). Numbers 16 reports that the eponymous ancestor of the family, Korah, together with two hundred and fifty leaders of the people, led a revolt against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness.¹

¹ God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble.

- ◆ Note the following about the names of God. ELOHIM is translated “God.” This is the impersonal name for the Divine and reminds us of God’s sovereignty. YAHWEH, is the personal name for the Divine and is translated LORD. YAHWEH is the name God revealed to Moses as he passed before him. It is the covenant name of God with His people. Elohim is used in the first 6 verses as the psalmist tells about the sovereignty and power of God over the nations. Yahweh is used predominantly in verses 7-11 to denote the nearness of God.
- ◆ This psalm is written by the community of God, for the community of God. Notice the plural “our” of the psalm.

² Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea,

- ◆ Because the psalmist is so sure about the attributes of God listed in verse 1, he can have no fear when the world around him crashes in.

³ though its waters roar and foam and the mountains quake with their surging. *Selah*

- ◆ We are unsure of the exact definition of this word, “Selah.” However, it most likely means “pause” or “musical interlude.” Basically, as the psalm was being read in the public worship service, there would be a pause or a time of reflection on what was just stated before moving on.

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.

- ◆ If read too quickly, English translations can miss the beauty of the Hebrew poetry here. Notice the verbs in verse 3 (roar, foam, quake, surging). The main verb in verse 4 stands in opposition to these noisy verbs: “make glad.” Another way to translate it is “rejoice.” While the world is in turmoil, the people of God are safe in their city, rejoicing over the protection of their God.

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*

- ◆ LORD Almighty is literally YAHWEH Sabaoth or “Lord of Hosts.” This name of God implies that He has direction over an army of angels who stand ready.
- ◆ God of Jacob reminds us that God does not forget His promises to His people.

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.

- ◆ God’s people worry about their enemies closing in on them, but God stops not only them, but destroys their weapons as well.

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*

- ◆ “Be still” is literally “cease striving.” God encouraged Israel to quit being self-reliant in striving against the other nations, but rather to rest assured in the power of God.
- ◆ A common idea running through the Old Testament (and the New) is that God is exalted when His people are exalted. The survival of Israel displayed God’s power and sovereignty.

¹Achtemeier, P. J., Harper & Row, P., & Society of Biblical Literature. (1985). *Harper's Bible dictionary*. Includes index. (1st ed.). San Francisco: Harper & Row.