

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

These questions are designed to help you talk about God's word and Pastor Brian's message with friends and family. You of course can use your own questions, but we'd like to give you this tool to encourage Biblical fellowship and discipleship in your circle of relationships. **Enjoy discovering more about Him!**

"THE STORIES WE TELL OURSELVES: I HAVE TO HOLD IT ALL TOGETHER" | PSALM 46: 1-11 | PASTOR BRIAN BELL

WARM-UP QUESTION:

- What is something that is your responsibility that wears you out?

"The False Story"

Many believe that things will fall apart if they stop managing it all. They believe constant worry and exhaustion shows care.

- What are things people try to control that only God can really make happen?
- What are people afraid of happening if they stop controlling something?

"God Is Our Refuge When Life Feels Unstable" Psalm 46: 1-3

God is our safe place, strength, and help so that we don't need to fear, even if the whole world is falling apart.

- What are examples of God providing strength and help during a chaotic time?
- Why is faith in God's control different than pretending everything is fine?

"God Is Present Among His People" Psalm 46: 4-7

God is the source of life and joy and protection for His people because He is with them.

- What are ways to experience God's presence?

"God Remains Sovereign Over What We Cannot Control" Psalm 46: 8-11

When we are still and rest, we are showing faith that God is still working while we do nothing. God asks us to surrender to Him.

- Why is it hard to surrender control?
- What are you supposed to surrender to God?

REFLECTION AND APPLICATION QUESTIONS:

A false story many believe is that they must hold everything together for things to turn it ok and to show they are worthy. Psalm 46 reminds us that God is present among His people, even when all is chaos, and He is in charge over what we cannot control.

- What are ways you have been struggling with trying to hold it all together?
- What is something you can surrender to God this week?
- Ask Jesus to give you the faith and strength to be still and rest in His presence.

The Stories We Tell Ourselves

08-23-26

4. I Have to Hold Everything Together

I. Announce:

- A. Welcome to those **online** and those out in the **FH**.
- B. **Slide1-7 AP:** Foundations. Men's Study. WSS Conference. MOMS. R&R.
 - 1. Missions Prayer. Women's Christmas Meeting.
- C. **Slide8 Worship Night:** Join us for our Worship Night on Wed, **Sept 2nd** at 6:30pm here in the Sanct. Just like last time, *we're inviting everyone to **bring a verse that's been on your heart** and **be ready to share***. An evening of *Songs, Scripture, prayer, and encouragement* from one another. (not live-streamed)
- D. **Slide9a** Rohingya opportunity ...
- E. **Slide10 Prayer:** Col.1:16,17 *all things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together.*

II. Intro: I Have to Hold Everything Together - Ps.46.

- A. **Recap:** I am Not what I Achieve - I am What I Received. (from God)
 I am Not What Others Think - In Christ, I am Known and Loved.
 I will Be Happy When _____ - my life doesn't begin *someday*, Christ meets me today.
Slide11 I do Not Hold Everything Together - God is my Refuge.
 5th Week: My Past Defines Me - *Dan*.
 1. Big idea: Faithfulness means **carrying** what God has given us, not **controlling** what belongs to God.
- B. You can be **responsible** *without* pretending to be **Sovereign**!

III. Slide12 1. THE FALSE STORY

- A. *"If I stop managing everything, everything will fall apart."*
- B. This story often disguises itself as **Responsibility**. We convince ourselves that constant worry proves we **care**, and that exhaustion proves we are **faithful**.

1. Yet beneath our activity *may be a fear* that everything ultimately depends upon **us**.
2. But this story produces chronic **anxiety**, an inability to **rest**, frustration with people we cannot manage, and **resentment** toward those who do not carry things as **we** think they should. It leaves us **exhausted** because there is always *one more outcome to secure*.

C. What are you carrying today that God never asked you to control?

IV. Slide13 2. GOD IS OUR REFUGE WHEN LIFE FEELS UNSTABLE (Ps.46:1-3)

A. *1 God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. 2 Therefore we will not fear though the earth give way, though the mountains be moved into the heart of the sea, 3 though its waters roar and foam, though the mountains tremble at its swelling.* Selah

1. I just taught this Ps. a few Wed's backing in our *Strong in the Storm* series; The Refuge Who Stands. We are returning to it today, but from a different point of view. That's one of the beautiful things about Scripture. We do not exhaust its meaning. We return to familiar passages in new seasons, carrying new questions, needs, and experiences. Today, Ps.46 speaks directly to the exhausting belief that *we must hold everything together*.
2. Howard Hendricks was famous for teaching his DTS students to slow down and really observe Scripture. He would ask his students to come up with **10** observations from Acts 1:8. Then **10** more. Until they had identified more than **100**. ["We often stop looking long before we've really seen what's there"]

B. The psalm begins with a confession: "*God is our refuge and strength, an very present help in trouble.*"

1. The psalmist **does not say** that God keeps His people **from** ever experiencing trouble. He says that God is **present within** it.

C. The language is deliberately extreme. *The earth gives way, the mountains fall into the sea, and the waters roar.* Everything that appears stable is suddenly **moving**.

1. **But** Faith does not deny the shaking. Faith identifies a refuge within it. Biblical peace does not come from believing that *nothing bad will happen*. It comes from knowing that **God remains unshaken** when everything else shakes.

D. Our security is not found in an **unchanging** world, **but** in an **unchanging** God.

V. Slide14 **3. GOD IS PRESENT AMONG HIS PEOPLE (Ps.46:4-7)**

A. *4 There is **a river** whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy habitation of the Most High. 5 God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved; God will help her when morning dawns. 6 The nations rage, the kingdoms totter; he utters his voice, the earth melts. 7 The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress.* Selah

B. The **scene shifts** from *roaring seas* to *a life giving river* flowing through the city of God. Jerusalem did not have a great river like many ancient cities. The river then is a picture of **God's** sustaining presence. [Babylon & Egypt did]

1. A river flowed through **Eden**. **Ezekiel** saw a river flowing from the Temple bringing life wherever it went. **Jesus** later promised that *rivers of living water* would flow from those who *believed in Him* through the Holy Spirit. Finally, **Revelation** ends with *the river of the water of life* flowing from the throne of God. *From Gen to Rev - God Himself is the source of life, joy, and refreshment.*

C. *God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved.* The city is secure **not because** its walls are high, its **army** is powerful, or its **leaders** have planned for every possibility. Its security comes from the presence of God.

D. *The nations rage, the kingdoms totter; he utters his voice, the earth melts.* Human power makes noise, **but** God has the final word.

E. The repeated declaration anchors the psalm: *The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress.* The God who commands heaven's armies is also the God who remains close to *flawed people* like Jacob.

1. God doesn't identify Himself with Jacob **because Jacob was impressive. Jacob was flawed, fearful, and often faithless.** Yet God willingly attached His Name to him. That means the same God stands with ordinary, struggling people ... like us!

F. We are not held together by *our strength*. We are held by **the presence of God**.

VI. Slide 15 **4. GOD REMAINS SOVEREIGN OVER WHAT WE CANNOT CONTROL (Ps.46:8-11)**

A. 8 **Come**, behold the works of the LORD, how he has brought desolations on the earth. 9 He makes wars cease to the end of the earth; he breaks the bow and shatters the spear; he burns the chariots 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 of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress. Selah

B. **Sleeping is an act of faith** - every night we become *semi-unconscious* for several hours, while the world continues **without our** supervision. The sun rises, hearts keep beating, and God continues His work. (sleep is a daily confession that we are *creatures, not the Creator*). So, rest says, *God is still God while I am doing nothing*.

C. The psalmist invites us to look at the works of the Lord. God ends wars, breaks bows, shatters spears, and burns shields. The instruments of **human violence and control cannot** compete with His authority.

D. Then comes the familiar command, *Be still, and know that I am God*. This is more than an invitation to enjoy a quiet private moment. In context, it is a **command to stop striving, release our grasp, and recognize God's rule**.

1. We might paraphrase it this way: **Stop fighting as though everything depends upon you. Release your grip. Remember who is God.**

E. **Being still** does not mean becoming *passive or indifferent*. It means refusing to take God's place. We continue to obey, serve, plan, pray, and act, but we surrender the results to Him.

F. Surrender is not giving up on our responsibilities. It is giving up our illusion of sovereignty.

1. **Illust:** You've had or seen *a plastic pretend steering wheel* **that** a small child has in the back seat - **pretending to steer the car, while the parent controls the actual vehicle** (the child turns left and right, convinced the car moves because of their efforts).
 - a) **That resembles our illusion of control.** We *participate, make decisions, and take responsibility*, **but** we are **not** governing the universe. We have a role in the journey, **but** we are **NOT** in the driver's seat.

VII.Slide16 5. RESPONSIBILITY AND CONTROL ARE NOT THE SAME

- A. **Illust:** The Dishwasher Test. *Is this you?* - I know I have **control issues** because **I can let** someone else load the dishwasher; **I just can't** let them finish loading it without providing correction, supervision, and a brief seminar. :)
 1. We call it having a **system**. Everyone else calls it **control**.
- B. **God gives us real responsibilities.** We are called to make *wise decisions, keep promises, care for people, speak truth, and act faithfully*. **But God** does not make us responsible for *every response, result, or future possibility*.
 1. **Control** says, "I must guarantee the outcome." **Faithfulness** says, "*I will obey God and entrust the outcome to him.*"
 2. **Control** attempts to carry tomorrow before it arrives. **Faithfulness** receives enough grace for **today**.
 3. **Control** tries to manage other people. **Faithfulness** loves them, speaks honestly, establishes healthy boundaries, & leaves room for **God** to work.
- C. Are you being **faithful**, **or** are you trying to **guarantee** what only **God** can determine?

VIII.Slide17a 6. THREE CIRCLES OF RESPONSIBILITY

- A. **What I Control.**
 1. **I can control** *my choices, words, attention, attitude, boundaries, and obedience*. These are the places where **God** calls **me** to **act faithfully**.

B. Slide17b **What I Influence.**

1. **I can influence** *relationships, plans, conversations, and environments.*
I can offer *wisdom, encouragement, correction, and care*; **but I cannot determine how others respond.**

C. Slide17c **What I Entrust to God.**

1. **I must entrust** *outcomes, other people's choices, the future, unanswered questions, and circumstances beyond my reach* to **God.**
2. **Anxiety** often grows when we take something from this 3rd category **and** treat it as though it belongs in the 1st.

D. **Take action** where you have responsibility, offer wise **influence** where possible, and **consciously surrender** the rest to God.

IX. Slide18a **7. APPLICATION**

A. **What am I afraid will happen if I stop trying to control this?**

1. **Illust.** Before leaving for vacation, some people pack a suitcase. Others prepare as if they are *relocating permanently to a country without stores.*
 - a) **Planning is wise.** But sometimes our **preparation** is an attempt to *guarantee that nothing uncomfortable can happen.*
2. **Maybe you tell yourself, I don't worry, I simply conduct detailed rehearsals of disasters that have not happened.**
 - a) See we often *rename anxiety* as **preparation** *because preparation sounds more responsible.*

B. Notice how **control** appears in **your** life. It may look like constant **planning**, rehearsing conversations, checking repeatedly, rescuing others, refusing help, **or** becoming angry when plans change.

1. Slide18b Identify **the next faithful action** **God** has actually given **you**. Do that one thing **rather than** trying to solve *the entire future*.
2. **Turn worry into prayer.** Name the person, outcome, or situation **you cannot control** **and** *place it specifically into God's care.*

3. **Practice rest** as an act of trust. Stopping, reminds us that God continues to govern the world *while we sleep*.

C. RESPONSE

- D. **Join me: make a fist** and consider what **you** are gripping. (it may be a child, a relationship, a diagnosis, a financial concern, a decision, or an uncertain future).
1. **Now slowly open your hands while praying:** *God, show me what is mine to carry. Give me courage to act faithfully. Show me what belongs to You. Give me grace to release it.* - An open hand *does not mean* that we no longer care. It means that we have placed *what we care about* into **stronger hands**.
- E. **Psalm 46** reminds us that **God** is **present** when the earth gives way, **present** among his people, **and sovereign** over what we cannot control.
1. We do not have to hold everything together because we are being held by the One who does. Amen!
- F. **Do** what faithfulness requires - **release** what control demands - **and trust the God who remains our Refuge**.

G. Keywords: control, responsibility, present.

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