



THE COUNSELOR

WEEK ONE - WHY ARE YOU SO AFRAID?

1. What makes you afraid? How have the things you fear changed over the years of your life?
2. Read Psalm 46:1-3. What 3 things is God to us in times of trouble?

A refuge is a place where you can take shelter in times of danger or stress. Isn't this a beautiful picture of our God? Proverbs 18:10 tells us that "the name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous man runs into it and is safe."

3. When you feel vulnerable, who or what do you turn to for help? On the scale below, mark how often you turn to God first when you are afraid or feel threatened? (No one else has to see your answer.)

Never-----Sometimes-----Always

In Psalm 46:1 the words that are translated "a very present help" have a richer meaning in the original Hebrew. They mean He "has proved himself" – God has shown himself to be reliable in the past, and now we can know that He is a help to us in difficult situations whenever we might encounter them. We can have confidence.

4. Think about this for a moment. How would your reaction to fears in your life be different if you really believed that God, the Creator of the entire universe, was present to help you through your current difficulty? How would this change your prayer life?

Many Bible scholars believe that Psalm 46 was written as a set of songs glorifying God after He had miraculously delivered the city of Jerusalem from the mighty Assyrian army. The Assyrians were led by King Sennacherib, conquering everything that lay in their path. The inhabitants of Jerusalem were understandably terrified, especially the Jewish King Hezekiah. However, Hezekiah had confidence that the Lord would deliver the people, even though they were surrounded on all sides and facing impossible odds.

5. Read Isaiah 37:14-20. What does Hezekiah do when he is afraid? And even though he is fearful, what does Hezekiah remember and proclaim about God? How can you apply this to your life?
6. Read Isaiah 37:33-38. Now this is a dramatic account. You can just see the Angel of the Lord moving through the enemy camp at night, delivering God's people from either certain

death or imprisonment. And this Angel takes NO prisoners. We often say that God is love and He is! But He is also powerful and mighty, and He hears the cries of his people. What stands out to you in this account from Isaiah? Is this glimpse of God's might something new to you? How do you feel about God's demonstration of power here?

7. Where in your life have you seen God do something amazing in a situation that looked hopeless? How did this build your confidence that God would be present with you in future troubles?

Often, humans have a very short attention span, and we easily forget the highs of the "mountains" when we pass through the emotional lows of the valleys. It is easy not to remember how God has blessed us when the next storm of life is encountered.

8. Read Mark 4:35-41. Prior to this evening, the followers of Jesus have seen him do unbelievable things – healing fevers, casting out demons, curing leprosy, raising a paralyzed man to walk, and restoring a man's withered hand. Yet when a great storm comes up on the Sea of Galilee, they are helpless in the face of their fears. The storm is furious and fierce, a powerful windstorm that causes waves to break over the sides of the boat, nearly swamping it. Are you or someone you know going through a storm in life? Is it threatening to sink you? Do you wonder, like the disciples did, if Jesus cares if you drown in this storm? What fears are surfacing as a result?

It seems as if the disciples were scared of the storm, but, also, of Jesus when they saw his power to calm the wind and waves (Mark 4:41.)

9. In addition to being scared of the storm, are you afraid that God might just have the power to stop it?

Yet for all of the disciples' fears, Jesus is in the boat with them. And whatever storm you are experiencing in your life, Jesus is IN the boat WITH YOU too. Even the very name by which Jesus is called - Immanuel means "God with us." Remember that whenever you feel afraid, Jesus is walking right beside you in your crisis.

NEXT STEP

What is the one fear that you struggle with the most? What is one step that you can take to overcome this fear and have more confidence that God is an ever-present help in your life?

DAILY BIBLE READINGS

Day 1: Mark 4:35-41

Day 2: Psalm 46:1-11

Day 3: Isaiah 41:9-13

Day 4: Psalm 107:28-32

Day 5: 2 Timothy 1:7

Day 6: Hebrews 13:5-6

Day 7: Deuteronomy 31:6

