

But...

...what about the climate crisis?

A bible study for young people and youth groups

COP 26 is underway, and all eyes are on our world leaders as they gather in Glasgow to discuss ways to tackle the climate emergency.

It is widely accepted that the effects of climate change will impact young people more than anyone, as the choices and changes we make (or don't make!) now will have effects for decades, and even centuries to come. But, despite the bold efforts (and colourful language!) of activists such as Greta Thunberg, young people have the least power when it comes to effecting change on a global political scale.

Being powerless in the face of danger is never comfortable. But as Christians we know that we are never truly powerless, no matter what happens.



Turn to Psalm 46

In verse 1 of Psalm 46, what three things does God give to us in times of trouble?



Verses 2 and 3 describe an earthquake. Have you ever been in an earthquake yourself? It is a very unsettling experience! The one thing we think we can rely on - the very ground under our feet - suddenly doesn't feel very reliable at all. In verses 2 - 5 the psalmist compares the vulnerability of the Earth to the steadfastness of another place. What do you think the other place might be?

In verse 6, what does the Word of God, ultimately, have the power to do?



There are some people who say that we do not have to look after the planet, because one day God will re-create the world anyway, (see Revelation 21). What do you think God would say to this? (Hint: try looking at Genesis 1:28 and Genesis 2:15)

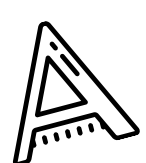
The Psalm has shown God's power over creation, but in verse 9, what (or who!) does God also have power over?



What is the purpose of creation in verse 10?

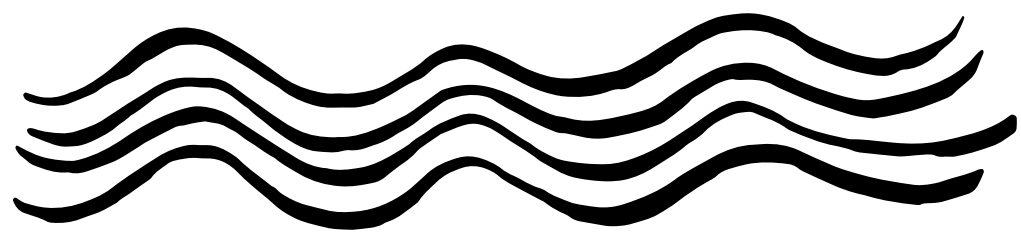
Compare verse 11 at the end of the Psalm to verse 1 at the beginning. They are like two safe riverbanks with turbulent waters in between. This is called a chiastic structure (related to the word chasm) and it is used often in the psalms. Psalm 104 is another chiasm. What do you think Psalm 104 is about?

Compare Psalm 104:31 to Psalm 46:10. Who does creation belong to?



Whilst the climate emergency is a serious problem, we are never truly powerless if we turn to God for help. After all, God loves creation, and all the people in it. Young or old, we can trust that God will provide refuge, strength and help to anyone who seeks to be a good steward of creation.

In Deep



Responding in Prayer



Why not write your own chiastic psalm about creation and the climate crisis?

For your first line, write a short statement, the cry of your heart. Look at the opening lines of some other psalms for ideas.

Then, in the body of your psalm, set out what you are praying for line-by-line. Start with some things about creation that you want to thank God for.

In your next section, tell God what you want to be forgiven for.

Now include some lines praying for other people.

And include some more prayers of thanks and worship at the end.

Psalms often use parallelisms, i.e., pairs of lines that say the same thing two different ways. Most of the sentences in Psalm 46 are parallelisms, but verses 7 and 10 are particularly good examples. Can you turn your own line-by-line prayers into parallelisms?

To conclude, re-state your opening line to create the chiasm.

God, do not abandon your creation,
Do not let us, your people, destroy what you have made.

For your Word made everything perfect,
The world was in harmony, and you said is was good.

Forgive your people, who snatched it as their own possession;
Forgive the tenants who turned away the landlord.

Let our generation be the ones to unclench their fists;
May we be the ones to offer back what is already yours.

For you can renew all things;
Your Word can both create and recreate.

God, you will not abandon your creation;
You will not let us, your people, destroy what you have made.

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