

# Don't Just Do Something; Stand There

by John Vissers

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of being still and trusting in God amidst life's chaos and challenges.*

**Duration:** 27:12

**Scripture:** Exodus 14:13-14, Psalm 46:10, Proverbs 3:5-6, Isaiah 40:31, Matthew 6:33, Romans 8:28, Philippians 4:6-7

**Topics:** "Christian Life"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the common experience of panic and struggle when faced with difficult situations. He uses examples of personal repair mishaps and a song lyric to illustrate this point. The speaker emphasizes the importance of finding stillness and knowing that God is the only one who can fill the void in our lives. He references the story of the Israelites trapped between the Egyptians and the Red Sea, highlighting God's message to them to be still and trust in His deliverance. The speaker concludes by urging the congregation to embrace stillness and trust in God amidst the challenges of their fast-paced world.

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## Transcript

Let us hear the word of God this morning from the 46th Psalm, Psalm 46. God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. Therefore, we will not fear, though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea, though its waters roar and foam and the mountains quake with their surging.

There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy place where the Most High dwells. God is within her, she will not fall. God will help her at break of day.

Nations are in uproar, kingdoms fall. He lifts his voice, the earth melts. The Lord Almighty is with us.

The God of Jacob is our fortress. Come and see the works of the Lord, the desolations he has brought on the earth. He makes war cease to the ends of the earth.

He breaks the bow and shatters the spear. He burns the shields with fire. Be still and know that I am God.

I will be exalted among the nations. I will be exalted in the earth. The Lord Almighty is with us.

The God of Jacob is our fortress. Amen. And may God bless to us this reading from his word.

Let us pray. Prepare our hearts and our minds, O Lord, to receive your word this morning. O Lord, we ask you this morning, silence within us any voice but your voice, that hearing your word we may also obey your will for our lives, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen. Be still and know that I am God. I will be exalted among the nations.

I will be exalted in the earth. When I was an undergraduate student at the university, I enrolled in swimming lessons at Hart House in order to be qualified as a lifeguard. I did this especially since I was directing a summer camp, a Christian camp, and I wanted to be prepared to supervise the waterfront if called upon.

And among the things I learned was how to rescue someone in distress in the water, a person who was drowning. The first option was always to try to reach a drowning person with a lifebuoy or some other kind of rescue device. But if the person was too far out, then it was necessary to swim out and to try to bring the person back and to guide them back to the safety of shore.

But here I discovered you had to be very careful because often a drowning person is struggling, often a drowning person is panicky, and if he gets hold of you in the midst of that panic and struggle, then you too may go down. You may both go down. So the first job is to get the drowning person to calm down, to be still, to stop struggling, and then calmly and quietly gently lead him back to the safety of shore, to try to get him to trust you and to follow your lead back.

Because if he continues to struggle and panic, soon he'll wear himself out and the danger of drowning will be even greater. What is true in the rescue of a drowning person, I suggest, is also true in many other areas of life. We all know the feeling of panic when we face a difficult situation.

We often struggle and we go off in different directions, perhaps a hundred different directions at once, and we end up sometimes making the problem much worse than when we started out. Sometimes in less serious situations, this can be rather humorous. On the rare occasion when I undertake odd repair jobs around the house, I inevitably find myself in such circumstances.

Once when I was repairing a bracket on a screen door, I couldn't get one of the screws out properly, and I kept struggling and fighting with it until I finally put the screwdriver through the screen. Well, that solved the bracket problem. Now we had to get a whole new screen door.

And what is true in the routine experiences of daily life, I suggest to you, is also true sometimes in our relationship with God. And that's what Psalm 46 is all about this morning. You see, this psalm is a rich declaration of faith, and it begins with the familiar words, God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble.

Or as it might be translated, God is a well-trying help in times of trouble. And then the psalm ends with a bold affirmation, the Lord Almighty is with us, the God of Jacob is our fortress. And the entire psalm speaks of God in the third person, except for verse 10.

In verse 10, God speaks in the first person, in the imperative. And we find these words, be still and know that I am God. I will be exalted among the nations.

I will be exalted in the earth. Now when we read verse 10, it suggests to us sometimes retreat to a quiet, secluded spot, far removed from the pressures of life. We read that verse and it signals to us solitude and

silence, a place where I can be still, a place of hiding, a place of escape, a place where I can get away from it all, from the busyness, from the pressure, from the ringing phone.

It reminds us of our secret vision of serenity and peace where we can escape. Perhaps that image of a desert island which we all have in the back of our minds when the pressures become so great and we'd like to just get away from it all and escape and run away from the pressures of life. But the text, Psalm 46 verse 10, is rooted in the opposite because it recalls a trying and difficult, crucial situation in the history of Israel.

A time when their faith was being sorely tested. A time when Jerusalem was being threatened by enemies, both from within and from without. Israel was under attack.

David's kingdom was under siege and only the Lord's intervention in the affairs of his people could deliver them. And it's in this context that Psalm 46 is an affirmation of God's help in the midst of the crisis, God's presence in the midst of the chaos, in the thick of it all, when the temptation is to do more, to panic, to get at it, God says to Israel, be still and know that I am God. I will be exalted among the nations.

I will be exalted in the earth. And the phrase be still might be translated as stop striving. Cease your struggling.

Stop fighting against God. Quit kicking against the goad. Don't make things worse or putting it in a very straightforward manner.

Let God be God. God will accomplish his purposes. God will act.

God will do it. God will be exalted among the nations. God will be exalted in the earth.

His name will be glorified. Let God be God. Psalm 46 also reminds us, I think, of Exodus 14, where we read of the people of Israel being pursued by the Egyptians.

You remember that frightening event in their history. And they began to doubt that the promised deliverance would become a reality in their lives. They questioned the leadership of Moses.

They grumbled against God and doom seemed imminent as they were caught between the pursuing Egyptians and the wall of the Red Sea. And what is God's word to them in Exodus 14? We hear it on the lips of Moses in verses 13 and 14. Do not be afraid.

Stand firm and you will see the deliverance the Lord will bring you today. The Lord will fight for you. You need only, you need only be still.

Be still and know that I am God. I want to suggest to you this morning that this is a word. That you and I desperately need to hear in our lives.

And this is a word that we need to hear as a congregation of God's people. This is a word that all of God's people need to hear as we seek to Jesus Christ in our culture, in our fast-paced changing world, where the Christian church is often under siege, where we are being challenged on all fronts, where there are difficulties and where there are problems. This is the word of God we need to hear.

Be still and know that I am God. I will be exalted among the nations. Don't just do something, stand there.

Don't just do something, stand there. You see, when the circumstances of life overwhelm us, the temptation is always to do more. The temptation is always to try and fix it quickly.

And we live in a world where stillness is rare. We live in a world where, in fact, silence scares us, where silence threatens us. We live in a world where solitude seldom finds us.

Most of us live life filled with noise and activity, with busyness. We're always listening to the radio or to the television or to the CD player or to the incessant chatter of others. We're always busy with activity to fill the empty moments.

We seem to schedule every second of every minute, of every hour, of every day, of every week, of every month, of every year. We have our calendars and our day timers and our schedules, and they're always filled with something. We have to fill our life with busyness.

Every problem requires an immediate solution. Every activity should yield an immediate result, an immediate payoff. Always doing something.

And sadly, my friends, the Church is often not much different from the world in this regard. You see, we can fill our Christian lives with busy work and delude ourselves into thinking that we are doing the Lord's will. And we can schedule every minute of the Church week and yet never spend time with God.

And we can engage in the petty battles of the Church and believe that we are fighting the good fight. And we can be constantly going to and fro and frenzied activity for God without ever really knowing God or listening to God or loving God with all of our hearts. Perhaps some of you have heard the wonderful revision of the nursery rhyme, Mary Had a Little Lamb.

It goes like this. Mary had a little lamb. It was given her to keep, and then it joined the local church and died for lack of sleep.

We are living at a time when there is a tremendous spiritual hunger in our culture. But people are not looking for busy activity. People are looking to meet God.

In their recently released CD, the non-Christian group, and I might add the sometimes blatantly anti-Christian musical group, The Eagles, have a song called Learn to Be Still. These are the words. It's just another day in paradise as you stumble to your bed.

You'd give anything to silence those voices ringing in your head. You thought you could find happiness just over that green hill. You thought you would be satisfied, but you never will.

Learn to be still. We are like sheep without a shepherd. We don't know how to be alone.

So we wander around this desert and we wind up following the wrong God's home. But the flock cries out for another, and they keep answering the bell. And one more starry-eyed Messiah meets a violent farewell.

Learn to be still. Or James Taylor, the quintessential singer of the baby boom generation, has a song called Shed a Little Light in which he says this, There is a feeling like a clenching of a fist. There is a hunger in the center of the chest.

There is a passage through the darkness and the mist. And though the body sleeps, the heart will never rest. O Lord, shed a little light so that we can see.

And you see, sadly, in their search for stillness, many people slide into a morass of self-indulgence. Failure to find life in the world leads to a search within. But being still is not enough.

People need to be still and know that God is God. People need to know that God is the only one who can fill the vacuum in their life. The spiritual hunger of our culture and the yearning of our generation perhaps is best summed up by the Canadian author Douglas Copeland in his little book *Life After God*.

He says this, and he's not a Christian, as far as I know. He says, My secret is that I need God. That I am sick and can no longer make it alone.

I need God to help me give because I no longer seem to be capable of giving. To help me be kind as I no longer seem capable of kindness. To help me love as I seem beyond being able to love.

You see, people are looking for an authentic relationship with God. It is important to be still, yes, but that's only the beginning. We are to be still and to know that God is God.

And the church of Jesus Christ ought to be the place where that happens. Where people can meet Jesus Christ in his risen power in the stillness of worship. Where we can experience the power and presence of the Holy Spirit.

Where we can hear the still, small voice of the Spirit speaking to us through the scriptures. You see, people are looking for a place to find God without feeling overwhelmed. Where they can learn to read the Bible and learn to pray without feeling manipulated.

Where they can find genuine fellowship without feeling like they're simply joining a volunteer organization. Where they can learn to love Jesus Christ without feeling that they're simply being co-opted into another religious movement. People need space for God.

And if we expect others to be still and to know God and to find God, then we need to develop a community of faith which knows what it is to be still. Which knows what it is to know God, to trust in God, to believe in God that God will be exalted among the nations. Are we that kind of community? Can we become that kind of a church where there is space for God? Can we be still and know that God is God? Can we take time to listen together and discern the Lord's will for our fellowship? Can we learn that when the problems increase, the answer is not necessarily to throw more activity at them, but to be still and know that God is God.

You see, my deep conviction is, as your new pastor, that the future of this church does not depend on my ideas or my plans or my strategies or my programs. It doesn't depend on your plans and your strategies and your programs. But what it depends upon is this, as we together be still before God and listen to what God would say to us, as we worship God, as we know God, as we let God be God in our midst, and as we let him reveal himself to us, God will be exalted.

God's glory will be made known. You see, this text, Psalm 46, verse 10, reminds us that it is sometimes better to just stand there than to do something. That it is, as I have said before, better to limp along the path of God's word than to dash with all speed outside it.

When we face difficult situations, it is better to be still and know that God is God. When the odds seem to overwhelm us, it is better to be still and to know that God is present. When we gather week by week as a congregation in worship in this place, it is better to be still and to know that God is God.

Let us covenant together as God's people to make this a place, to make this sanctuary a place, to make this congregation a fellowship, where we will learn to wait upon the Lord together, where we will wait upon God to reveal his plans and his purpose, so that we may experience the deliverance of our God. And let us encourage one another in our own lives to know what it is to experience the fact that God is God. In the quiet early moments this week, in bed as you awaken before perhaps the family awakens, take a moment at the beginning of your day and be still and know that God is God.

Or in the solitude of your morning cup of coffee before you begin your work for the day, take a moment and be still and know that God is God. Or in the bumper-to-bumper rush hour traffic on the 401 this week, take a moment in the midst of the confusion and the chaos to be still and to know God. And when you face a problem or a decision and your first instinct is to panic and to become frantic, be still and know that God is God.

When your stresses are greater and seem greater than your strengths, be still and know that God is God. This week, at home, at work, at play, don't just do something but stand there. Be still and know that I am God.

I will be exalted among the nations. I will be exalted in the earth. Let God be God.

Amen. Let us pray. Lord, we confess that in the busyness of our lives, even our Christian lives, that sometimes we do not take the time to be still before you and to know your presence and your power in our lives, to know your will for our lives.

And we confess, Lord, that sometimes even in worship, we are not still before you. Help us to be still and to know that you are God. Reveal yourself to us individually and reveal yourself to us as a congregation so that knowing who you are, knowing your character, your glory, your will, we might indeed serve you in strength and in power according to your will.

Speak to us even now in the close of this service, we pray, through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

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