



Community Group Discussion Guide

October 20, 2024

Psalm 76 | The Warrior Judge

MOTIVATE

- ⇒ **Starter question: What is a characteristic of God with which you sometimes struggle? Why do you think this characteristic of His is a struggle for you?**

DISCUSS

Found in Book 3 of Psalms, Psalm 76 is considered to be a Zion Psalm because it celebrates God's presence on Mount Zion—the place where God chose to be the defining point of His presence with and among Israel (see [Psalms Overview](#) for more information). From Zion, God rules over all, yet remains accessible and present to His people. Zion can also refer to Mount Zion on which Jerusalem is built, the city of Jerusalem, the temple in Jerusalem, heaven, the City of David, or the City of the God. Spiritually, Zion is anywhere the believer seeks out God's presence.

- ⇒ **Do Christians today have an equivalent to what Zion meant to the Israelites?**

Written by Asaph to the choirmaster, this song was written to be accompanied by stringed instruments. Asaph was a Levitical priest and a chief worship leader. He wrote twelve psalms: Psalm 50, 73-83. Enlisted initially by King David, Asaph was the father of a clan of musicians who served throughout the history of the tabernacle and the temple. Many of Asaph's psalms have to do with the judgment of God as well as calling God's people to fervent worship.

Psalm 76 extends the discussion Asaph began in Psalm 74 concerning the crisis of exile to Babylon and the fall of Jerusalem. Psalm 75 picks up on this discussion and argues that God's hand will stretch out in judgment against Israel's enemies, but in His time and according to His plans and purposes. Psalm 76 continues the response to the lament over the loss of the temple by pointing out that God still dwells in Jerusalem and that He is still mighty in battle regardless of the appearance of the present circumstance.¹ Many Bible commentators believe the historical background for this psalm was God's destruction of Sennacherib's Assyrian army, resulting in the miraculous slaying of 185,000 enemy soldiers ([2 Kings 18–19](#); [Isaiah 36–37](#)).²

- ⇒ **Why is it vital to our faith that we always remember God “is still mighty in battle regardless of the appearance of the present circumstance?”**
- ⇒ **Can you give a personal example of a time when He confirmed this to you?**

Psalm 76:1-3 In Judah God is known; his name is great in Israel. **2** His abode has been established in Salem, his dwelling place in Zion. **3** There he broke the flashing arrows, the shield, the sword, and the weapons of war. Selah

(Note: The term selah is a musical term that may mean pause, silence, crescendo, musical interlude, or indicate a change of instrument.)

Judah was the name of the Southern Kingdom before its inhabitants went into Babylonian captivity. Israel was the Northern Kingdom whose inhabitants were taken by Assyria. With a radiant display of His glory, God made His greatness and His name known to all the Israelites by His severe judgments on His enemies and through His defense of Jerusalem. God's name depicts the fullness of His holy character. He remains in complete control regardless of what His people and His enemies may think.

¹ Grant, J. A. (2018). [Psalms 73–89](#). In T. Muck (Ed.), *Psalms* (Vol. 2, pp. 110–111). Zondervan.

² Lawson, S. J. (2006). [Psalms 76–150](#) (M. Anders, Ed.; Vol. 12, pp. 4–5). Holman Reference.

⇒ **Discuss this quote: God’s people are to base our knowledge of Him on His spoken word rather than on our apprehension of our current experience.**³

God’s earthly home is His temple in Salem, a shortened form of Jerusalem, used interchangeably with Zion. These descriptive words picture the temple as the field tent of a conquering general, the place where God established His residence in Jerusalem and His glory was most manifested on earth. Zion was a place of Israel’s hopes for salvation and triumph. Regardless of the geographic location of the exiled people and the fact that the temple was destroyed, God’s greatness remained unchanged, and His choice of dwelling place remained the same.

In Zion, God clearly revealed Himself by destroying all the weapons of war brought against Jerusalem: the flaming arrows launched by invaders’ bows over the city’s defensive walls as well as the shields and the swords of the enemies’ soldiers. Through this display of divine judgment, God made himself known to Israel as a powerful dispenser of holy anger.

⇒ **Rather than the Israelites’ exile being due to God’s weakness or inability to deliver, how was it part of God’s design for their restoration?**
 ⇒ **What does this reveal about God’s character?**

Psalm 76:4-6 Glorious are you, more majestic than the mountains full of prey. **5** The stouthearted were stripped of their spoil; they sank into sleep; all the men of war were unable to use their hands. **6** At your rebuke, O God of Jacob, both rider and horse lay stunned.

Far from apologizing for God’s wrath, the psalmist proclaimed that God’s display of divine judgment revealed the light of God’s holiness and majesty, illuminating Himself to His people. In this, God was shown to be more majestic than mountains rich with game. Two possible interpretations of this are:

1. Israel’s oppressors are pictured as towering, intimidating mountains who have invaded the land to attack God’s people. But instead, God preyed upon them, devouring them in vengeance as if He were hunting wild game.⁴
2. God’s power is incomparable—even the majesty of the mountains pales in comparison. “Mountains full of prey” may refer to an ancient image that presented the divine Judge as a lion. The words used for “dwelling” in verse 2 could also refer to the lairs of wild animals, and the language of “breaking” the weapons of war in verse 3 could be applied to the effect of a lion’s attack. Israel’s God is by nature more glorious than the mountains and stronger than the lion.⁵

Although the invading warriors were valiant men of war, they were plundered by God. At His rebuke they were soundly defeated and destroyed, rendering helpless both soldiers and their war horses. God’s wrath so obliterated the enemies’ soldiers that none were left to fight.

⇒ **How does minimizing or explaining away God’s wrath falsely represent Him?**
 ⇒ **If you were to explain the wrath of God to someone who is unfamiliar with this characteristic of His, what would you say?**

Psalm 76:7-9 But you, you are to be feared! Who can stand before you when once your anger is roused? **8** From the heavens you uttered judgment; the earth feared and was still, **9** when God arose to establish judgment, to save all the humble of the earth.

God is to be feared as Warrior in verses 4–6 and as Judge in verses 7-9. For the unbeliever, fear of God is an anxious dread over the realization of God’s impending judgment on sin. For the believer, fear of God is an awe and reverence that focuses on His majesty, holiness, and glory. But all must ask, as the psalmist did, “Who can stand before You once Your anger is roused?” The imagery of verse 7 tells the reader that any individual who might enter the real presence of God would simply be struck down

³ Grant, J. A. (2018). [Psalms 73–89](#). In T. Muck (Ed.), *Psalms* (Vol. 2, pp. 111–112). Zondervan.

⁴ Lawson, S. J. (2006). [Psalms 76–150](#) (M. Anders, Ed.; Vol. 12, p. 5). Holman Reference.

⁵ Grant, J. A. (2018). [Psalms 73–89](#). In T. Muck (Ed.), *Psalms* (Vol. 2, pp. 112–113). Zondervan.

by the inherently awesome reality of His being, especially were He to be seen when angry. The assurance for the reader is plain: the awe-inspiring power of God the Judge is unquestionable, even if at any given moment in time it seems concealed from His people.

Whenever God speaks His decree of judgment from heaven, the earth and its inhabitants are hushed to silence by the inherent power and wisdom of the divine word. They wait in silence for the outworking of divine justice against His enemies.⁶ Once again, the imagery speaks of the humble and awestruck response to the living God.

In accordance with His nature, God also exercises judgment on behalf of the poor and humble, working to end violence, bring wholeness, and restore the oppressed.

- ⇒ **Discuss this quote: Divine wrath has become taboo in modern society, and Christians by and large have accepted the taboo and conditioned themselves never to raise the matter.⁷**
- ⇒ **Why must any true knowledge of God be grounded in a clear understanding that His wrath is a necessary attribute of His holiness?**
- ⇒ **How do you reconcile the love of God with the wrath of God?**

Psalm 76:10-12 Surely the wrath of man shall praise you; the remnant of wrath you will put on like a belt. **11** Make your vows to the LORD your God and perform them; let all around him bring gifts to him who is to be feared, **12** who cuts off the spirit of princes, who is to be feared by the kings of the earth.

Verse 10 seems to be talking about human wrath rather than God's, and it gives a different perspective on the machinations of men. In the light of the preceding verses the psalmist is indicating that, ultimately, the anger-filled rebellion of humankind serves God's purposes by giving scope for the full display of His sovereign power. When God does so, those who rebel against Him are ultimately compelled to confess His greatness.⁸

- ⇒ **Have you ever considered that God's wrath results in bringing glory and praise to Him?**
- ⇒ **How does God's wrath point even those who reject Him to the greatness and reality of His being?**
- ⇒ **Discuss this quote: Not only does God save His own people by bringing human rebellion to an end but in doing so He also brings about the transformation of those very people who rebel against Him.⁹**

In light of this terrifying display of divine vengeance, all who name the name of God should carefully consider His wrath and renew their allegiance to Him. Both vows and offerings should be brought as an act of adoration and submission to Him who will subdue even the mightiest of men and will be feared by the kings of the earth.

- ⇒ **Why should we be diligent in responding properly to the Warrior-Judge God?**
- ⇒ **How does verse 11 present the missional nature of our proper response to God?**

One of the key lessons from Psalm 76 is the importance of remembering God's works in the past as we consider the challenges we face in the present. One element of the psalmist's response to Israel's Babylonian exile was to direct the people's attention to God's remarkable work of salvation in the past. The point of the reminder is quite simple: God had saved Jerusalem from impossibly powerful military attacks before, and He is perfectly capable of doing so again; therefore, the fact that He stayed His hand in the present must be part of His purposes for His people.¹⁰

⁶ Grant, J. A. (2018). [Psalms 73–89](#). In T. Muck (Ed.), *Psalms* (Vol. 2, pp. 113–116). Zondervan.

⁷ Lawson, S. J. (2006). [Psalms 76–150](#) (M. Anders, Ed.; Vol. 12, p. 4). Holman Reference.

⁸ Grant, J. A. (2018). [Psalms 73–89](#). In T. Muck (Ed.), *Psalms* (Vol. 2, pp. 113–116). Zondervan.

⁹ Grant, J. A. (2018). [Psalms 73–89](#). In T. Muck (Ed.), *Psalms* (Vol. 2, pp. 113–116). Zondervan.

¹⁰ Grant, J. A. (2018). [Psalms 73–89](#). In T. Muck (Ed.), *Psalms* (Vol. 2, p. 119). Zondervan.

- ⇒ **How does a reminder of God’s work in the past have an impact on your perception of your present circumstances?**

TRANSFORM

1. Make personal application: God’s judgment is certain and no one can withstand His wrath. A god who does not or cannot judge is not much of a god. Equally, a god who judges capriciously and out of spite is not to be trusted. In Psalm 76, the psalmist depicts Israel’s God as the One who acts decisively in power when needed but also as the God who meets with His people and dwells with them.¹¹

- ⇒ **Discuss this quote: Though God’s children will never experience the wrath reserved for His enemies, Scripture makes it clear that God does not turn a blind eye toward the sin of believers (Hebrews 12:5–11).¹²**
- ⇒ **Why must you remember that although you have been delivered from the dread of God, you haven’t been delivered from the discipline of God?**
- ⇒ **Why and how must you strive to constantly renew your commitment to obey and serve Him?**

2. Pray: Ask God to lead you to give Him the fear and holy reverence due His name. Praise Him that He is the God whom no enemy can stand against. Pray for those upon whom God’s wrath is presently active due to their rebellion and opposition.

STUDY

Resources used, compiled from, and quoted:

- Holman New Testament Commentary, Psalms 76-150, pages 4-7.
- The NIV Application Commentary, Psalms 73-150, pages 110-120.
- Shepherd’s Notes, Psalm 51-100, pages 43-44.

¹¹ Grant, J. A. (2018). [Psalms 73–89](#). In T. Muck (Ed.), *Psalms* (Vol. 2, p. 118). Zondervan.

¹² Lawson, S. J. (2006). [Psalms 76–150](#) (M. Anders, Ed.; Vol. 12, pp. 6–7). Holman Reference.