Week 1: Hymn Study

Read the story, sing the hymn, then talk and listen

A Mighty Fortress Is Our God

Words: Martin Luther (1483-1546)
Date: Written 1527-1529
Music: Tune EIN FESTE BURG, also by Luther. Best-known English version: Frederic H. Hedge, 1853.

The story behind the hymn

Martin Luther was a German monk and teacher whose writings helped begin the Protestant Reformation. He wanted ordinary people to sing praise to God in their own language, so he wrote hymns in German for whole congregations to sing together. He wrote both the words and the melody of this hymn sometime between 1527 and 1529. Those were hard years: in 1527 a deadly plague reached his town of Wittenberg, and Luther stayed to care for the sick. The hymn begins with the thought of Psalm 46, that God is a strong refuge. It became so loved that it is often called the battle hymn of the Reformation. Most English speakers know it from the translation made in 1853 by Frederic H. Hedge, an American minister.

Talk about it

1. Luther wanted everyone to sing in their own language. Why does that matter?

2. A fortress is a strong, safe place. What other pictures does the Bible use for God's protection?

3. Read Psalm 46 together. Which words remind you of this hymn?

Listen & notice

Speed: ☐ slow ☐ medium ☐ fast

It feels: ☐ joyful ☐ peaceful ☐ strong ☐ thoughtful ☐ sad

I heard: ☐ organ ☐ piano ☐ guitar ☐ choir ☐ voices only

A word or idea that repeats: _____

This hymn makes me think of: _____

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