

FRIDAY 5.3.19 Philippians 4:4-7

Paul advised, “Don’t be anxious about anything.” Almost as if he heard us saying, “How?” he added, “rather, bring up all of your requests to God in your prayers and petitions, along with giving thanks” (verse 6). What are some things that trigger ugly, anxiety-producing thoughts in you? How can you incorporate Paul’s wisdom about taking those things to God in prayer for fully into your daily life?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, I want to turn my worries into prayers. I lay before you all the things that worry me today, and I open my heart to your gifts of peace and contentment. Amen.

SATURDAY 5.4.19 1 Peter 5:6-10

What does it mean for you to cast all your anxiety on God? In what ways have you learned to trust that God cares for you? In what parts of life, if any, is it still hard for you to trust that? Read John 21:15-19 to see why Peter could say with such confidence that God will restore you, and make you steadfast, strong, and firm. Are there failures from which you want God to Restore you? Are there areas in which you wish to be more steadfast or strong? Ask God in prayer to work with you to make restoration and strength a reality for you in 2019.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, keep me clear-headed, keep me alert. Let me use those qualities to let you carry my anxieties, rather than trying to carry them myself. Amen.

Family Activity: For this activity, you will need a Bible, a sheet of blank wrapping paper or newsprint to cover a doorway in your home, a marker and some tape. Gather together and have someone read Isaiah 41:10 aloud. Discuss why at times it is difficult to be brave, strong and full of faith. Write down everyone’s fears, obstacles and roadblocks on the large piece of paper. When everyone has responded, tape the paper to the doorway. Join together to break through the paper covered in fears and barriers and walk through to the other side. Pray together and ask God to help you remember He is always you, even through the unsure and scary times.



**April 28, 2019 - Unafraid - Living with Courage Hope
“An Age of High Anxiety”**

Scripture: Psalm 56:3-4 and Philippians 4:4-7

When I am afraid, I put my trust in you. ⁴ In God, whose word I praise, in God I trust; I am not afraid; what can flesh do to me?

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. ⁵Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. ⁶Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. ⁷And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

⇒ Our age of high anxiety - what worries you most?

- Positive signs that we will live longer, yet we are more afraid than ever (Daniel Gardner)
- We are created with a fight-or-flight “smoke detector” in our brain - the amygdala
- Sometimes our inner smoke detector goes haywire - fear takes over

⇒ Dealing with fear - advice from therapists, counsel from Scripture

- Exposure therapy - facing your fears - lessons from amusement parks and ski hills
- Scripture - over 400 verses on fear - Gen. 3:10; Exod.3:6, 14:10; Numbers 13:32-33
- Exodus 14:13-14; Isaiah 41:10, Psalm 56:3-4, Philippians 4:4-7 - do not be afraid refrain
- Thundershirts, singing, prayer - ways to overcome fear

Your notes:

MONDAY 4.29.19 Psalm 56:3-4, 10-11

In 1933 a deep economic depression gripped the United States. In his inaugural address, new President Franklin Roosevelt said, “Let me assert my firm belief that the only thing we have to fear is fear itself—nameless, unreasoning, unjustified terror which paralyzes needed efforts to convert retreat into advance.” President Roosevelt was, knowingly or not, following a Biblical tradition. Psalm 56’s expression of deep trust in God was repeated in Psalm 118, sung at the end of Passover *seders*, and quoted in Hebrews 13:5-8. Trusting God’s unfailing love, the psalmist, Jesus and the early Christians all asked, “What can anyone do to me?”

When we read the questions, “What can anyone do to me?” our first thought may be, “People could do plenty to me.” Only as we look below life’s surface does the psalmist’s questions make more sense. What bad, perhaps even malicious, obstacles has God’s presence helped you survive, or even turned to a good purpose? How does that affect your ability to trust God moving forward?

Prayer: Lord God, I want to learn to live with the same kind of trust the psalmist expressed. Teach me each day how to put my trust in you whenever I am afraid. Amen.

TUESDAY 4.30.19 Isaiah 41:8-10, 13

Through Isaiah the prophet, God pledged to strengthen and help any descendant of Abraham willing to join in God’s redemptive mission for the world. Later, the apostle Paul, who counted on God’s strength for his life mission, extended Isaiah’s promise to all Christ followers. “If you belong to Christ, then indeed you are Abraham’s descendants,” he wrote.

Many scholars believe chapter 40 on in the book of Isaiah spoke to Israelites living through the bitter experience of defeat and exile in Babylon. Few things could make people feel more powerless. What situations are you facing that leave you feeling powerless and afraid? Read today’s passage again, and put your name in place of “Israel,” “Jacob” and “Abraham.” As you do, ask God to speak courage to your heart.

Prayer: Lord God, I wish all the bad in our world would just go away right now—but it won’t. But you promise that you can and will ultimately make it all come out right. Give me courage to do my part in working with you. Amen.

WEDNESDAY 5.1.19 Matthew 6:25-27

Today’s passage may feel radical at first, utterly against simple common sense. That must have been even more of a challenge for Jesus’ first hearers. “Jesus’ audience would have been ordinary peasant people who had to worry about their next meal all the time, yet Jesus tell them not to worry about anything. He asks them instead to view the world with new eyes, in order to see all around them evidence of God’s care and provision.”

Worry generally focuses our energy and attention either on the past or on the future. Jesus called us into the present, the only “time” we can directly affect and use to meet with God. Practice pausing your worries and concerns, and sensing God’s presence with you. Keep doing this (whether you call it meditating, going to your happy place or some other name you choose) until you are able to ‘be’ with God anytime, day or night—in the present moment.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, you modeled a life of peace and trust. Help me to keep learning how to live a life in which my energy can focus on your purposes rather than my fears. Amen.

THURSDAY 5.2.19 John 14:25-27

Describing Jesus’ last night before the cross, John wrote the ominous words, “When Judas took the bread, he left immediately. And it was night” (John 13:30). But the darkness didn’t overcome Jesus, the light of the world. With evil people plotting and Easter’s light only visible by faith, Jesus told his followers that he was leaving them his peace. His peace rested on the Holy Spirit’s presence with them, “not as the world gives.” If they could grasp it firmly, they could find Jesus’ peace even at times of great fear.

The “fight or flight” response to danger seems to be hard-wired into our brains. Do you believe Jesus promised to wipe that out, or can he just give us a better way to deal with it when something triggers it? Are there places of dark fear and anxiety in your life today? How can Christ’s love and care free your heart and mind to live in the peace he came to give you?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, thank you for offering me a peace that isn’t temporary, that nothing can take away from me. Now please help me to live into that peace more each day. Amen.