

MID-MORNING FEATURING DR. MITCHELL KRUSE
November 15, 2011
Philippians Part Four: Joy in Giving (Philippians 4:1-23)
NEXT SHOW: DECEMBER 20

Have you ever worried? Are you worrying right now? When we worry, we misalign our hearts (mind, will, emotions, and spirit). It often looks like this: our minds are focused on the future, afraid that we cannot control it; our wills reside in the present, frustrated that our expectations are not met; our emotions are locked in the past from prior hurts; while our spirits remain hindered in our vertical connection to God. When one piece of the heart is out of alignment, the whole thing hurts. Just like a misaligned spine needs adjustment, so our hearts need to be realigned in Christ. Worry is the problem; prayer is the solution; and peace is the result.

The Apostle Paul shared in Philippians 4:1-9 that *prayer offers peace for worried hearts*. Paul pleaded for peace in relationships and offered his prescription for (1) peace with God, (2) peace with others, and (3) peace within ourselves.

Peace with God

First, Paul prescribed peace with God, and he communicated how: “Rejoice in the Lord always” (Philippians 4:4). Notice that he did not say, “Sometimes.” Too often, we allow anxiety to overcome us, and we go on autopilot, trusting in ourselves, rather than God. This robs us of the joy and peace found only in Christ, who discovered joy in suffering for us (Hebrews 12:2).

STREET SMARTS FOR THE RESTORATION ROAD...

Next time you worry, first thank God for the opportunity to find joy in Him, as you identify with the sufferings of Christ.

Peace with Others

Second, Paul prescribed peace with others. Paul instructed: “Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near” (Philippians 4:5). God’s proximity to us is as close as the air that is in and around us. When we have peace with Him in our hearts, He frees us to have peace with others through gentleness, rather than harshness. Gentleness is power under the Spirit’s control. Solomon, an advocate of gentleness, taught there is joy for those who promote peace (Proverbs 12:20), continuing that an anxious heart weighs a man down, but a kind word cheers him up (Proverbs 12:25).

STREET SMARTS FOR THE RESTORATION ROAD...

Next time you worry, not only thank God for the opportunity to find joy in Him, but also surrender any harshness to the Holy Spirit and be soft with others even when it’s difficult to do so. Use kind words to promote peace and joy.

Peace within Ourselves

Third, Paul prescribed peace within ourselves. He wrote that we should not worry about anything. Rather, we should pray about everything so that Christ would align our hearts with His, giving us perfect peace (Philippians 4:6-7). Anxiety’s misaligned inner being divides trust between God and ourselves, which actually pains our hearts. Prayer is worry’s antidote because it places our trust solely in Christ.

STREET SMARTS FOR THE RESTORATION ROAD...

Next time you worry, pray—go online with God and upload your requests to Him. He will download His presence, and you will experience the peace of your heart aligned with His.

Christ-like Qualities

Finally, Paul summarized a list of Christ-like qualities to ponder and put into practice (Philippians 4:8-9). Interestingly, the opposite characteristics are traits of Satan. That's why we should focus on what is *true* (John 14:6), rather than *false* (John 8:44); *noble* (James 2:7), not *useless* (2 Corinthians 2:11); *right* (Philippians 1:11; 3:9), as opposed to *wicked* (Acts 13:10); *pure* (1 John 3:3), instead of *mixed* (2 Corinthians 11:14); *lovely* (Ephesians 2:14; 1 Corinthians 13:6), rather than *selfish* (James 3:15-16); *admirable* (Luke 4:18), over *shameful* (1 Peter 5:8-10); *excellent* (Hebrews 5:9; 7:28), in lieu of *mediocre* (1 John 3:8); and *praiseworthy* (Philippians 2:10-11) over *accusatory* (Revelation 12:10). Paul vividly anchored the scale for our thoughts.

STREET SMARTS FOR THE RESTORATION ROAD...

Memorize this list of Christ-like character traits, remembering that *we practice what we ponder, and practice makes perfect peace.*

Contentment

What is the secret to contentment? Two thousand years ago, stoic philosophers referred to contentment as "self-sufficiency," or "to be independent of external circumstances." Contentment literally means "to be held together." Inside each of us is a desire to hold it all together. Paul closed his letter to the church at Philippi describing the secret to attaining this inner peace: *trust in the Giver, not the gifts* (Philippians 4:10-23).

Trust in the Giver

First, Paul taught that the secret to freedom from allowing circumstances to control our emotions is to *trust in the Giver, Christ* (Philippians 4:10-13). Paul thanked the church for their gift to his ministry to advance the kingdom of Christ. He noted that he had learned, whether in plenty or in want, that the secret to contentment was that he could do all things through Christ who gave him strength (Philippians 4:13). We must grasp the power of the word, "through." Every circumstance, whether we win, lose, or draw, is an opportunity to grow in our intimacy with Christ, as we live *through* our Restorer. True inner peace comes only in Christ. In essence, Paul described contentment as Christ-sufficiency.

STREET SMARTS FOR THE RESTORATION ROAD...

Do you trust in the Giver or the gifts? How many times have you stopped during your day and asked God for His guidance in making decisions? Try the *Philippians 4:13 Experiment* and do everything through Christ, who will restore your heart.

Don't Trust in the Gifts

Second, Paul warned the church to *not trust in the gifts* (Philippians 4:14-23). Charlatan philosophers of Paul's day would stand on street corners of cities like Philippi, gathering followers with their good looks, expensive clothes, and articulate speech, in hopes of laying siege to the money of the unsuspecting citizens. Paul painted the church's gift to him as radically different from money given to the selfish philosophers because he did not benefit financially. Instead, the money was used to advance the kingdom of Christ. Paul called followers of Christ to be content enough to give their time, talent, and treasures to this cause, describing this generosity as a fragrant offering pleasing to the Giver of life and its resources (Philippians 4:18). He concluded with a powerful promise from the teachings of Jesus: "My God will meet all our needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:19). Paul believed in God's restoration of hearts and resources.

STREET SMARTS FOR THE RESTORATION ROAD...

When you find yourself behaving as if you are trusting in the gifts and not the Giver, ask God to transform your heart. Trust in Christ the Giver, not the gifts, by being content enough to give your time, talent, and treasures to someone in need to advance His kingdom. You might give to a church, a Christian school, a youth organization, or even spend time with a young person needing guidance.

Conclusion

Worry is the problem; prayer is the solution; and peace is the result. When we take up Paul's challenge, we can experience peace with God, peace with others, and peace within ourselves, discovering true contentment in Christ-sufficiency. Fully surrendering our lives to Christ brings us joy that empowers us to trust in the Giver, not the gifts, generously sharing with others in need because we believe in God's restoration of our hearts and our resources.