ANXIOUS *for*

NOTHING

FINDING CALM *in a* CHAOTIC WORLD

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**Meditate on These Things**

Read Philippians 4:4-9

OPENING REFLECTION

**"The challenges are great. But our God is greater."**

Friends. We find ourselves in a sober moment. These are uncertain times around the world and fears are rising. People who have never felt anxious before are suddenly weighed down with worry and are not sure what to do next.

Do you need encouragement right about now? Are you feeling anxious and uncertain? Do you find yourself in a season of isolation as events cancel, schools shift online, and churches close their doors to large gatherings?

When I need to stay calm, I turn to this Scripture: “Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus” (Phil 4:4-9, NIV).

**Less Fret, More Faith.**

Rejoice in the Lord Always

God uses everything to accomplish his will.

Read Genesis 39-40

1. Joseph encountered setback after setback. Even before he suffered injustice from Potiphar’s wife and neglect in prison, Joseph was sold by his own brothers into slavery. Few people have been more “forgotten.”

Do you feel forgotten? In what areas of your life is this most poignant?

How does the command to “rejoice in the Lord always” (Phil. 4:4) make you feel? (It’s okay to be honest if it makes you angry or feel misunderstood!)

1. “Is God aware? Does he care? Deism says no. God created the universe and then abandoned it. Pantheism says no. Creation has no story or purpose unto itself; it is only a part of God. Atheism says no. Not surprisingly, the philosophy that dismisses the existence of a god will, in turn, dismiss the possibility of a divine plan. Christianity, on the other hand, says Yes, there is a God. Yes, this God is personally and powerfully involved in his creation.” How you see God interacting with his creation is crucial to your feelings toward him in hard circumstances.

How would you describe God’s interaction with creation?

What do you base this on?

1. “He is before all things, and in him all things hold together (Col. 1:17 NIV). Were he to step back, the creation would collapse. His resignation would spell our evaporation. ‘For in him we live and move and have our being’ (Acts 17:28 NIV).”

Read Colossians 1 and Acts 17.

How do they inform your theology of God’s participation in our daily lives?

1. From what we read of Joseph, he seemed to be repeatedly faithful despite the difficult circumstances that consistently followed him.

Why do you think God allowed Joseph to endure rejection, injustice, and loss—not just once, but repeatedly?

Have you ever responded like Joseph and yet felt as if God allowed so much pain that good couldn’t come from it? If so, how did that shape your view of God’s character?

Do you think that staying faithful deserves a reward? Does God owe you for your perseverance? Be honest with yourself. Why or why not?

1. Think about your life and the lives of other believers you know. Has any good come from terrible circumstances?

Take one such circumstance, and make a list of any light that has come from the darkness of the situation.

How do you reconcile tragedies in the news with your understanding of a loving God?

1. The ability to “rejoice always” must come from something outside our sphere of experience. Life is too hard and too painful to supply enough temporary moments of elation to sustain te ability to rejoice always. If Joseph had decided to rejoice always based on his brief experiences of joy, it never would have lasted.

It’s all about perspective. Are you placing an inordinate amount of you affection, identity, and purpose in something you may lose?

If you believe in Jesus and are considered a child of God, this life is miniscule in comparison to eternity. How can you refocus your attention and direct your affection, identity, and purpose toward what is to come?

Does the concept of an eternity with no pain, hurt, or loss give you consolation for this life and whatever you are facing here and now? Does the future you are promised create any joy in your soul? Why or why not?

1. Refer back to question 1. With the reminder of the things that make you feel forgotten, read these scriptures:

Isaiah 49:15-16

Isaiah 53

If God was willing to give his own Son to die on our behalf, do you really believed he has forgotten you?

If Jesus was willing to endure for you every affliction known to humanity, do you really believe your trials (excruciating as they may be) are because he does not love you?

Sometimes tragedy makes no sense. We may have to wait for eternity to know the answer to the question why. But we do know he loves us and has engraved us on the palm of his hands.

Take time to meditate on this truth.

1. Rejoicing doesn’t always look like what we may think. It doesn’t have to be a smiling face and an upbeat personality.
2. Each day presents an opportunity to choose. “If the story of Hoseph teaches us anything, it is this: we have a choice. We can wear our hurt or our hope. We can outfit ourselves in our misfortune, or we can clothe ourselves in God’s providence. We can cave in to the pandemonium of life, or we can lean into the perfect plan of God. And we can believe this promise: “In all things God works for the good of those who love him. Who have been called according to his purpose” (Rom. 8:28 NIV).

How can you make it a point to choose hope? What do you need to relinquish to do this?

Anxiety will come, but when it comes, what will you choose to rejoice over?

Meditation

1. When peace, like a river, attendeth my way,  
   When sorrows like sea billows roll;  
   Whatever my lot, Thou hast taught me to say,  
   It is well, it is well with my soul.
   * *Refrain:*  
     It is well with my soul,  
     It is well, it is well with my soul.
2. Though Satan should buffet, though trials should come,  
   Let this blest assurance control,  
   That Christ hath regarded my helpless estate,  
   And hath shed His own blood for my soul.
3. My sin—oh, the bliss of this glorious thought!—  
   My sin, not in part but the whole,  
   Is nailed to the cross, and I bear it no more,  
   Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, O my soul!
4. For me, be it Christ, be it Christ hence to live:  
   If Jordan above me shall roll,  
   No pang shall be mine, for in death as in life  
   Thou wilt whisper Thy peace to my soul.
5. But, Lord, ’tis for Thee, for Thy coming we wait,  
   The sky, not the grave, is our goal;  
   Oh, trump of the angel! Oh, voice of the Lord!  
   Blessed hope, blessed rest of my soul!
6. And Lord, haste the day when the faith shall be sight,  
   The clouds be rolled back as a scroll;  
   The trump shall resound, and the Lord shall descend,  
   Even so, it is well with my soul.

Usually I give you scriptures to read to back up the lesson today I want to give you a story of the man who penned this song.

Life can be so unpredictable—joys and sorrows, beautiful blessings and distressing difficulties can come unexpectedly. Our life’s dreams and plans can change in an instant. We all know this to be true. So how can we find peace amid such turbulence?

Horatio Spafford knew something about life’s unexpected challenges. He was a successful attorney and real estate investor who lost a fortune in the great Chicago fire of 1871. Around the same time, his beloved four-year-old son died of scarlet fever.

Thinking a vacation would do his family some good, he sent his wife and four daughters on a ship to England, planning to join them after he finished some pressing business at home. However, while crossing the Atlantic Ocean, the ship was involved in a terrible collision and sunk. More than 200 people lost their lives, including all four of Horatio Spafford’s precious daughters. His wife, Anna, survived the tragedy. Upon arriving in England, she sent a telegram to her husband that began: “Saved alone. What shall I do?”

Horatio immediately set sail for England. At one point during his voyage, the captain of the ship, aware of the tragedy that had struck the Spafford family, summoned Horatio to tell him that they were now passing over the spot where the shipwreck had occurred.1

As Horatio thought about his daughters, words of comfort and hope filled his heart and mind. He wrote them down, and they have since become a well-beloved hymn:

God Bless you this week!