

# **Be Anxious for Nothing God's Prescription for Anxiety**

Philippians 4:4-9

As we continue this series on God's prescription for anxiety, I want clarify one thing. We are not necessarily talking about the severe panic attacks or anxiety attacks that some people have. They often have a physiological element and are not necessarily caused or controlled by how you think about situations. That type of panic attack may or may not be related to anxiety about your situation. So the things God is teaching us in this text may not be the full answer to such panic attacks, although it could help. God is showing us how we can live a life of calm, peaceful reliance and trust in the Lord.

There are also many coping mechanism like deep breathing, or having a ball to squeeze or some activity or exercise to occupy your mind. Those can all be very helpful to relieve the immediate symptoms of anxiety. But God teaches us here how to avoid anxiety by looking to Him.

With that in mind, let's read

## **God's Prescription for Anxiety!**

Philippians 4:4-9

*"4 Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!*

*5 Let your gentleness be known to all men. The Lord is at hand.*

*6 Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; 7 and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.*

*8 Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things. 9 The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you."*

We pray: Dear Father, send your Holy Spirit to work powerfully through Your word to give us all a greater calm and enjoyment of the "Peace of God which surpasses all understanding." And enable us to be a source of calm for others. Amen.

## **My dear brothers and sisters in Christ,**

What typically happens when you are stressed to the max – you have some pressing commitments that you are anxious about and nothing seems to be going right? Isn't that when you get irritable, and quick to snap at those around you? If someone says or

does something that you perceive to be critical of you, or hindering you from doing what you need to do, are you likely to bite their head off?

If you are like that, how do your actions and words in those moments affect others? Doesn't that make everyone around you get stressed out and on edge? I remember well, when our children were little. If I would be stressed out and a little on edge, our children would be much more fussy and cry a lot.

On the other hand, if you are in a tense situation or even a scary situation and there is someone there who is calm and unafraid, doesn't that do a lot to calm everyone else down? That type of calm reaction is contagious and puts others at ease.

That is what the second verse of our text is all about. **“Let your gentleness be known to all men.”** The Greek word translated “gentleness” is an intensive form of the word for “reasonable.” It refers to a person who reacts “reasonably,” that is they don't over react to situations. They are "gentle" in the sense of truly fair and moderate. So in this case, it is someone who when they are in a tense and stressful situation, they remain calm and reasonable. They don't start snapping at others, but know that God is in control and so they calmly think things through and deal with the situation. Their calm, gentle nature helps to calm others down also, rather than creating more anxiety.

How can we cultivate and maintain this kind of gentleness in stressful situations? What does Paul tell us? **“Let Your Gentleness be Known to All, the Lord is at hand.”** You're not alone. The Lord is near. If we keep that simple and wonderful truth in mind, it will go a long way to keep us calm and responding in a reasonable, gentle manner in all situations. It is only when we forget that the Lord is right by our side, that we get panicked and stressed. So remember **“the Lord is at hand.”**

Let's look at an example of this from Jesus' ministry. It's the familiar account of Jesus feeding the 5000. Let's consider the disciples reaction as it is recorded in Mark 6:

The day began when the apostles came back from going through all the towns of Galilee. They told Jesus what they had done and taught. Then Jesus said, **“Come aside by yourselves to a deserted place and rest a while. For there were many coming and going, and they did not even have time to eat.”** vs. 31. But the multitudes saw them leave, and ran to where Jesus and the disciples were going. When they got there, there was the multitude to greet them – 5000 men plus women and children. It could have easily been over 10,000 people waiting for them there. Not exactly what they had planned. But we read, Jesus **“was moved with compassion for them, because they were like sheep not having a shepherd. So He began to teach them many things.”** vs. 34

Now listen to the disciples' reaction. They endured the crowds all day, then they said, **“This is a deserted place, and already the hour is late. Send them away, that they may go into the surrounding country and villages and buy themselves bread; for they have nothing to eat.”** vs. 35&36 The disciples had had enough. Just get rid of the crowd, they told Jesus. They made it sound like they were concerned for the people, but remember, they hadn't eaten yet either. So Jesus, just get rid of these people already!

That's when Jesus said, **“You give them something to eat.”** John tells us that Jesus was just testing them. He already knew what He would do. The disciples did not pass the test. They responded, **“Shall we go and buy two hundred denarii worth of bread and**

give them something to eat?” Doesn’t that sounds like the exasperation and angst was increasing. What do you mean Jesus, how can we give them something to eat? We don’t have enough money to buy food for such a large crowd. What are you thinking?

Isn’t that how we react when we feel like we are being asked to do the impossible? But they were forgetting one very important thing – Jesus was at hand. He was standing beside them. By this time, they had experienced Jesus’ power in a multitude of ways. They saw Him heal the sick, drive out demons, calm the storms even raise the dead. Did any of them ever think, if Jesus could do all these things maybe, just maybe He could handle this situation, too?

Not one of them even considered that. Not one of them said, “What are we worried about? We can’t feed them all, but Jesus can and He is right here with us.” Instead the disciples counted their resources. We can’t afford to buy food for all these people. We have 5 loaves and 2 small fish, but what is that among so many? It’s not enough to even give everyone a small bite. So their anxiety grew and they had the audacity to tell the creator of the world that nothing could be done because there wasn’t enough money!

After all their angst and stress about this, Jesus simply divided the 5 loaves and 2 fish up until everyone had enough to eat and there were 12 baskets of food left over. How silly of them to get so uptight about this.

Does that sound familiar? How often are we faced with challenges and troubles that we don't know how to handle? We count our abilities and our resources and come up short. We look at what WE can produce and what WE can afford, and are filled with anxiety when that’s not enough. Do we fret about it and worry and never stop to think that “The Lord is at hand?” We become irritated and short with people and then our anxiety spreads.

There is a better way. The Lord is at hand! Really! The one who has “all power in heaven and on earth” is right there beside you, ready to help. Jesus allows these challenges and struggles to test us. How often do we fail the test? When will we learn, there is no trouble in this world that Jesus can’t take care of. “Call upon Me in the day of trouble. I will deliver you and you shall glorify Me.” He says.

Thank the Lord that He is so patient and forgiving with us. Let’s stop our fretting and just accept His invitation: “Rejoice in the Lord ALWAYS. And again I say rejoice! Let your gentleness be known to all, the Lord IS at hand. Be anxious for nothing.”

Amen.

And the Peace of God which surpasses all understanding, will guard your heart and mind through Christ Jesus. Amen.

# Be Anxious for Nothing

## Bible Discussion

### Lesson 2

#### Review the Lesson of the Day.

“Let your Gentleness be known to all.”

What effect does it have on others around you if you fly off the handle in stressful situations?

How will it affect you and others if you simply say, “Let’s put this in perspective, God is with us, He will see us through”?

Give examples of how a calm, gentle reasonable reaction has calmed you or others in panic situations.

“The Lord is at hand.”

Do you remember this when you are in a panic situation?

Do you think the Lord is testing you like He did His disciples?

Do you think it would be easier to remember if you could see Jesus beside you?

*It would seem like it, but the disciples show us that doesn't really help. Faith works the same whether we see Jesus or not.*

A short time after Jesus fed the 5000, Jesus and the disciples found themselves in the same situation. This time with 4000 men. Did they learn their lesson and respond better this time? *Not a bit!*

When Jesus does bring you through a difficult situation, how can you learn from it to grow in your calm trust?

*Start by recognizing the Lord's hand in your delivery. Don't just think, "Whew, I got through that one." Thank Jesus for delivering you.*

*Then remember that and think about it often. Next time stressful situation comes, remember, Jesus delivered me last time, trust Him!*

How did the disciples respond to stressful, dangerous situations after Pentecost?

What does that tell you?

*Pray for the Spirit.*

Read 2 Corinthians 11:24-28

Any one of those events could have caused Paul to react in a less than gentle manner toward God or toward others. Faced with hatred, he was determined to show gentleness in return. How did he do that?

*He entrusted himself and the situations to the Lord. Knew God would take care of it. He would bring justice in the end.*

Now Read 2 Corinthians 12:7-10

What does that teach you about calm, gentle, reasonable reaction to stress?

*As we saw with the disciples when we feel weak and helpless we get stressed. If we learn to See Christ at work in those times, letting His strength become the focus in our weakness, we will react very differently.*

Read Philippians 1:19-26

What would Paul's attitude about life and death do for you to face frightening situations without fear?

## **Our Exercise Plan**

### **For Week Two**

Are you like a wife who says she wants her husband to take charge and be the head of the family, but when he makes some decision for the family, she objects and doesn't like his idea? She isn't ready to really let him take charge. Do you say God is in control, but then complain when He doesn't control things the way you would like?

List the things that you find difficult to leave in God's control.

Relinquish your hold on those things and ask God to help you entrust them to Him. Be ready to accept what He does and know that it will be good.

Then rejoice in His perfect decisions.

#### **Monday - Read Psalm 118**

What do verses 5-9 do to give you a calm reliance on God?

How might you apply verses 10-18 to your life?

How does verse 18 encourage you?

How do verses 19-29 connect our comfort and strength with Jesus' Resurrection?

#### **Tuesday - Read John 16:19-33**

The disciples were filled with sorrow when Jesus was taken from them and crucified. Do you have a similar reaction when you lose sight of the fact that "The Lord is at hand?" How can we "see [Him] again" and have a joy that no one can take away? vs. 22

How does it help you to hear Jesus say, "In the world you will have tribulation."

Then hear Jesus say, "Take heart, I have overcome the world." vs. 33

#### **Wednesday - Read Psalm 37:1-20**

Ponder how to delight yourself in the Lord and commit your way to the Lord, vs. 4-6 and consider how that will affect your life.

#### **Thursday - Read Psalm 37:21-40**

Consider how the contrast between the wicked and the righteous in these verses gives you courage and strength.

#### **Friday - Read 1 Kings 17**

When you think of the miraculous ways God provided for Elijah, do you just think "Wow, that's amazing," or do you consider "If God did that for Elijah, He can certainly provide for me"?