

Rejoice in All Circumstances: Godly Thinking

Reflect

1. Do most people make decisions based on their feelings or their thoughts?
2. What or who has the most influence on your opinions? Your actions?
3. What has more influence in your life, your emotions, or your thoughts?

Read Your Bible

Philippians 4:4-9

Apply God's Word to Your Life

1. Have you ever been filled with anxiety or worry and what did that feel like?
2. What does it look like to rejoice in the Lord always?

3. How does prayer help us not be anxious?

4. What is the peace of God? Is the peace of God dependent on your circumstances? Why or why not?

5. Have you ever experienced God's peace? How does Jesus bring us peace?

6. Paul encourages us to "think about" what is true, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent, and praiseworthy. Is this easy or hard to do? What are some praiseworthy things in your life right now?

7. Does God's word determine your thoughts?

8. What does it look like to put God's word into practice?

Conclusion

The Apostle Paul has some compelling and convicting encouragement for us in this text. He is writing to the church in Philippi that is facing increased persecution and asking them to stay united and humble. When the heat and pressure is on in my life, this is hard. Stress and pain, because of our sin state, want to drive us to the broken crisp-fried edges of our personalities and temperaments. It is really easy for me to worry, to be anxious, to let my anger make me grumpy, and to become overly critical of myself and others. Obviously, this has a downward flushing effect on my soul, and sadly on the people that I love around me. But Paul calls us out of the toilet. He says, when the going gets tough, Rejoice in the Lord! When anxiety creeps up on you, pray, write it out to God, ask for what you need, and be thankful! Paul's experience has given him profound wisdom. He has been persecuted and he has faced impossible odds. In all this, he has learned that if he hands it over to God in worship and prayer that the Lord will bring a peace that will guard our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus! This is good news. He then encourages us that the key to this, is to not get blinded by all the problems, the stressors, the things that are wrong, and to be critical. Rather, to keep our focus on all that true, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent, and praiseworthy. In other words, what you have your focus on will determine the condition of your heart. I need to hear this. Life and work have certainly had some challenges. But the truth is

that there is so much more that is good. Perhaps an exercise worth doing is to spend some time with God and make a list of all that you are worried and stressed out about, and then make a list of all that is good. If you are honest, I believe that the praiseworthy will far outweigh the challenges of the day. Even in our darkest moments, if we keep our eyes fixed on Jesus, whatever this world may throw at us pales in comparison to His love. Be aware of the power Your thoughts (what you focus on) have over your emotions. Be careful of how your emotions and actions influence those around us.

Pray

Lord, may the peace that passes understanding found in Your Son, Jesus Christ, be upon us! Guide our thoughts. Help us to focus on what is praiseworthy and true. To keep our eyes, our hearts and our minds fixed on Your love for us on the cross. May our minds not be conformed to the patterns of this world but be transformed by Your Holy Spirit power and perfect love. In Jesus' Name! Amen.