

Daily Devotional Guide

Monday – Read Philippians 4:4-5. Paul reminds us not once, but twice to “Rejoice” in the Lord at all times. Many read this and feel it is unrealistic. How can one be joyful all the time? It is important to remember that joy is different from happiness. Happiness is dependent upon the circumstances of life, but joy comes from the presence of God. Verse 5 says, “The Lord is near.” Because God is always with us and empowering us through all the circumstances of life we can always be joyful. Be aware of God’s presence with you throughout your day.

Tuesday – Read Philippians 4:6. This one verse packs a punch. In this verse we find the cure to worry and anxious concern. It is quite simple, really. The cure is prayer and thanksgiving. Whenever you are worried about something, your first move is to get on your knees and give God your concerns. Your next move is to give thanks to God for all the good things in your life. Start making those your first two moves when you are worried and be amazed how your worries will disappear.

Wednesday – Read Philippians 4:7. Then reread yesterday’s guide. In verse 7 Paul describes for us what occurs when we make those first two “moves” when we are worried. Paul says that God’s peace will “guard” our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. This is a powerful image of a soldier standing watch, protecting something special from the enemy. It will not allow anything detrimental to come in. This is what occurs when we make prayer and thanksgiving a regular habit. The peace of God keeps the life-taking energy of worry away from us.

Thursday – Read Philippians 4:8. Paul does a beautiful thing in this verse. He gives us direction as to what to think and pray about. He lifts up powerful virtues and qualities for us to ponder and reflect upon. Paul knew the power of our thoughts. Thoughts determine our attitudes and attitudes determine our behavior. The best way to embody these virtues is to begin thinking about what they look like. Soon we will embody what we think about. Choose a virtue and begin thinking about what it looks like and ask God to give you the power to live it out.

Friday – Read Philippians 4:9. Paul reminds us of how important it is to find someone to look up to. Paul asked the Christians in Philippi to look to him as a role model. We all need someone to look up to. It is like playing a sport with someone who is better than us. It makes us play better. Do you have a strong person of faith that you can spend time with? Is there someone you admire you would like to learn from? Call that person up and go to lunch and discover what it is they do that makes them faithful and successful. Every day is a day to learn.



PASADENA COMMUNITY CHURCH

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Pasadena Community Church

Always Look for the Rainbow

~ Worry ~

Sunday, January 29, 2012

Sermon by: Dr. Charley Reeb, Senior Pastor

Scripture Lesson: Philippians 4: 4 - 13

Perhaps the biggest issue I come across in people is worry. Worry can enslave people. Worry can become an obstacle to the life God desires for us. God never intended for his children to live in fear. In fact, the Bible says, “Perfect love casts out fear” (1st John 4:18). God intended for us to live with joy, freedom, courage, and fulfillment.

Jesus often saw fear in those that he loved. Jesus constantly confronted the problem of fear in his ministry. If you look through the gospels you see that his teachings are replete with the phrases: “Fear not! Don’t be over anxious. Do not let your heart be troubled. Do not let it be afraid. Do not worry.” And, of course, Jesus asked the poignant question, “Why are you so afraid?”

What I am about to share with you are solid biblical principles that will enable you to win over worry and live with peace and joy. If you apply these principles, you will experience a dramatic positive change in your life and go to the next level in your faith.

Before I share these life changing principles, I need to give you a disclaimer: there is a difference between healthy concern and worry. Jesus was concerned enough about the world that he died for it. You were concerned enough about your safety that you put a seatbelt on when you drove to worship today. You are concerned enough about your spiritual health that you showed up for worship. These are healthy concerns and this is not what I am talking about today.

What I am addressing today is that kind of

worry that paralyzes people and sucks the joy and energy out of people’s lives. The Greek word “worry” in the New Testament denotes an obsessive worry, a paralyzing worry. Jesus spoke of this neurotic worry when he told the parable of the sower and mentioned the seeds that fell among thorns. He said the worries of the world “choked” that good seed. Fear chokes many people. I have seen fear paralyze people. I have seen fear steal the joy from people’s lives. I have seen fear stilt creativity and energy. I have seen fear put people into a frenzy. I have seen fear weaken churches. There are overriding fears that control and destroy the lives of people.

But you know what? Worry does not have to ruin your life. You have a choice as to how you will handle worry. You can handle worry or worry can handle you. It is up to you. What I am about to share with you will change your life for the better if you will let it. Ready to stand up to worry and chase it away?

The Rainbow of Joy

Paul wrote in verses 4 and 5, “**Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say Rejoice. Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near.**”

Let’s not forget that Paul was in a Roman prison when he wrote these bold words. Perhaps we stand back from these words from Paul and wonder how he could say them considering his situation. He did not know whether he was going to live or die from day to day. Yet, he was still able to say, “Rejoice always!” How?

Paul had a different perspective than most

people. He knew the difference between happiness and joy. Most people in the world are obsessed with happiness. Ask most people what they desire and they will say it is happiness. This is a mistake because happiness is dependent upon circumstances and the fickle behavior of people. You've heard the phrase, "If momma ain't happy, ain't nobody happy." What about, "Happy wife, happy life!" I rest my case. This is why so many people worry because their lives are based on the unpredictability of life.

But Joy is different. Joy always trumps happiness. Where happiness is dependent upon circumstances, joy comes from the presence of God. This is what Paul had discovered. He had all he needed to have joy. This is why he said, "The Lord is near." When you have the presence of God, you can be joyful anywhere! You have joy and it does not matter if the boss is in a bad mood, or if your neighbor is nagging you, or if it is raining or cold, or if you are stuck in traffic. The Lord is with you, and the Lord's presence gives you all you need to have joy. Circumstances and people will disappoint you, but God will never disappoint you.

This joy is what Paul was referring to later in our text when he wrote, "I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation (Philippians 4:12)." What is the secret? Well, it is not really a secret. Paul made it clear in verse 13, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."

Change your perspective. Look for the rainbow of joy and rely on the presence of the Lord.

The Rainbow of Prayer

Paul wrote in verses 6 and 7, "**Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.**"

Let me ask you a question. What is the first thing you do when worry takes root in you? Do you sit and stew? Do you call up friends and

make them miserable too? Do you go to the fridge? Stressed spelled backwards is "desserts," you know! All of us have default habits we have developed that snap into place when we are worried, and many of these habits are not very healthy.

I often ask people who are worried, "What is the first thing you did when you started to worry about this?" They usually give me a list of things. You know what I rarely find in their list? I never find the words, "I prayed about it." The most common advice I give to people who are paralyzed by worry is for them to spend the next seven days praying to God about their worries. I ask them to spend ten minutes with God each day for a week, giving to God their fears. Not once has someone come back to me and said, "It didn't work!"

This is why Paul says that the first thing we must do when we are worried is to pray. He tells us not to worry but to give our worries to God. You see, peace is the fruit of continual prayer. As we pray we must remember three things about God – the love of God that desires what is best for us – the wisdom of God that knows what is best for us – the power of God that provides what is best for us.

J. Arthur Rank, an English executive, decided to do all of his worrying one day a week. He chose Wednesdays. When anything happened that gave him anxiety, he would write it down and put it in his worry box and forget about it until next Wednesday. The interesting thing was that on the following Wednesday when he opened his worry box, he found that most of the things that had disturbed him the past six days were already settled. It would have been useless to have worried about them.

The lesson in Rank's story is this: *Fix what we can control; give God what we can't control.* The truth is most of us worry about things we have no control over. And most of us worry about things that we could easily solve. The problem is that we spend most of our energy and resources on those things we can't control instead of those things we can control.

Today, write down your list of worries.

Circle the ones you can control, and take action on them. Next, cross out the ones you can't control and write next to them, "Given to God." Right now, think of something you are worried about that you can't control. Have you thought of it? Now, say to God, "Take it from here, Lord!"

When we develop this habit, a "peace that passes all understanding" is given to us. What this means is that this peace is not something the human mind can produce. Only God can give it to us. And this peace stands like a "guard" over our hearts and minds and will not allow any negative idea or thought to come in.

The Rainbow of Attitude

Paul is clear in verse 8: "**Finally, beloved, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.**"

Paul is reminding us of one of the greatest gifts God has given us: our minds. But few people use this gift effectively which is the cause of much unneeded suffering in the world.

I'm about to tell you one of the greatest truths in the universe. This truth is seen throughout Bible and the wisdom of history. Every successful person knows this truth and applies it. Ready? Here it is: WE BECOME WHAT WE THINK ABOUT.

Our thoughts determine our attitude and our attitude determines our actions. The irony is that people who are chronic worriers use their minds to think about what they don't want and who they don't want to be before God instead of thinking about what they do want and who they do want to be. Worry is simply sustained thought on something we don't want, so why do we do it?

This is why Paul gives us this list of virtues. Paul is saying, "Instead of dwelling on your worries and fears, reflect on these positive virtues. Here is the list. Think about these things and you will become these things!" CHANGE

YOUR THOUGHTS, CHANGE YOUR LIFE!

I want to share with you my favorite quote. It sits prominently on my desk in my study as a reminder. These words stare at me as I write sermons, return emails and phone calls, and plan my work in the church. Besides the words of the Bible, these words have had the biggest influence on my life. Imprint them on your minds:

"The longer I live, the more I realize the impact of attitude on life.

Attitude, to me, is more important than facts. It is more important than the past, than education, than money, than circumstances, than failures, than successes, than what other people think or say or do. It is more important than appearance, giftedness or skill. It will make or break a company... a church... a home.

The remarkable thing is we have a choice every day regarding the attitude we will embrace for that day. We cannot change our past... we cannot change the fact that people will act in a certain way. We cannot change the inevitable. The only thing we can do is play on the one string we have, and that is our attitude... I am convinced that life is 10% what happens to me and 90% how I react to it.

And so it is with you... we are in charge of our attitudes."

- Chuck Swindoll

You want to win over worry? Look for the rainbow of joy. Look for the rainbow of prayer. Look for the rainbow of attitude. When you do, Paul's promise in verse 9 is that the "God of peace will be with you." This peace is not the absence of trouble; it is the power of God that will provide you with the grace you need to overcome worry. I dare you to apply these principles and watch what happens. Amen.