

Worship Team Expedition Weekly Devotional



Week 8: Facing Our Fears

What are you worried about today?

If you have trouble coming up with anything maybe you should be writing this devotional! But if you're anything like me, you probably can come up with something that's on your mind, something that is giving you a little anxiety. Or maybe a lot of anxiety. So, go ahead and name it, bring it out into God's light and let's see what He wants to do with it. Fill in this blank in your mind: right now I'm feeling fearful or anxious about _____.

How does it feel to admit that? It might be a little scary to do, but when we name our fears and bring them out into the open, we do the important work of facing them, talking to God about them and getting His input on how to respond. If we avoid doing that, we can be pushed around by fears we don't even realize are there and miss God's best. And un-named fears can quietly grow bigger. We don't want that! OK, now that we've bravely brought our anxiety into the light, let's look at what God says in His Word:

⁶ Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. ⁷ And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

-Philippians 4:6-7

OK, wait a minute. Do not be anxious about *anything*? We just admitted our anxiety and God says to not be anxious? What's going on here?!

I don't think God is asking us to avoid reality on this earth and pretend we never have any moments of worry. But I do think God is telling us the way we can avoid *staying* in those kinds of moments so we don't let our fears pull us in different directions and ultimately paralyze us.

The second part of verse 6 and verse 7 provides us with some instructions and a promise. We are— in every situation— to pray, petition, and present requests with thanksgiving. And then God promises us that His peace will guard us. Whoah. Let's unpack this a bit more...

Prayer, petition and requests: God wants us to bring what's on our minds and hearts to Him. Tell Him all about it! Pour out your heart to Him and share what's really in there. People that walk closely with the Lord don't hold anything back. Read the Psalms,

there's a lot of passion in there and it ain't always pretty. The word petition (or supplication in some translations) can mean a group of people bringing a request to God. For the tough things you are facing in life, reach out to the family of believers around you so they can share your burden and pray with you. This is a really big deal! We are not designed to handle life's challenges alone; lean on trusted Christ followers in your life to hold you up and pray with you. God's design for the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:26) is that we are connected, that we care for one another. We need each other, so reach out and ask people to pray with you. The prayer support of others has been a massive blessing to me in the challenging, anxious moments of my life.

Thanksgiving– there is tremendous power in gratitude. When we find something to be thankful for, it shifts our focus from fear to God's goodness. Our anxieties and trouble can be really noisy and distracting; let's not allow those worries to eclipse God's blessings. Camp out in your mind on God's faithfulness, His mercies in your life. How has He come through for you? Thank Him for that. What hope do you have for the future? Thank Him for that.

The amazing part of this scripture is that if we will pray, petition, present our requests, all while thanking God, He promises that His peace, which transcends all understanding, will guard our hearts and minds. This peace goes beyond our understanding, it is peace that doesn't make sense on the surface, the kind of peace that can put you at ease even in the middle of circumstances that normally rattle people.

And get this– God doesn't just offer peace, He offers protection! The word guard (or keep) is a military term suggesting a garrison or a fort– God will defend your soul against its enemies. Wow.

It is significant to me that Paul was in chains when he wrote this. Locked up in a third world prison, he was in a tough situation facing a very uncertain future and yet he wrote about rejoicing (verse 5) and God's peace. This wasn't a person at ease expounding on some theory, he knew from experience– very difficult experience– that the way out of fear is to bring our anxiety to the Lord and receive His supernatural peace and protection.

So, I'm encouraging you as I encourage myself with these words today– bring God what's on your heart, make your requests with thanksgiving and receive His peace and shelter. How about taking a few moments to do that right now?

Questions For Thought

What am I anxious about today?

What are some ways God has come through for me in a big way before?

As I bring God my fears & worries and present my requests to Him with thanksgiving, what do I hear Him saying to me in response?