

Rejoice in the Lord...Always¹

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; do not be anxious 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 your minds in Christ Jesus.

Philippians 4:4-7, ESV

Life follows many twists and turns sometimes winding down a path of disappointment, loss or pain. Our lives do not always follow the well-orchestrated tune we wish it to play out—the chords become dissonant and the music darkens our lives rather than brightening it. Finding a reason to rejoice or give thanks at times seems laughable. To top it all off, the Bible tells us to not worry or be anxious. Now we are anxious about being anxious. How do we escape this trap? If you are burdened and heavy laden, let me assure that Christ will give peace and rest to all who seek him. Let me offer a few suggestions on where to begin:

1. Bring the music of God's word into your life is the place to begin. Skim the Psalms looking for psalms that speak to your situation. Whether you cry out from the pit of despair, seek vengeance or simply need to sing God's praises, there is a psalm for you. Read over and ask God to help cast the worry aside. Embed his words deeply into the recesses of your heart so neither hurtful circumstance nor worry will conquer your gentle spirit and kind-heartedness.
2. Sing to God—a favorite hymn or prayer. Forget about the quality of your voice. This is about changing the quality of our hearts so we do not allow bitterness to invade our souls. *"Do not be overcome with evil, but overcome evil with good"* (Romans 12:21).
3. Look for reasons to thank God and others for the good they have worked in your life. In looking for the good in your situation, you are beginning to change
4. "Let your gentleness be known to everyone." When life becomes hard, so may way. If ever there is a time to nurture the quality of gentleness it is during life's most stressful moments.
5. God is standing by. Whether it is Stephen's glimpse of Jesus standing in concern as he is being stoned to death or God's long-awaited "yes" to our prayers, God bring good from even our life's worst occasion. Hope in God.
6. Take the matter up with God, re-take it again, then re-take it to him again and again. Let God worry for you—because I can tell you with every fiber of my being—no matter how dark the path has gotten and how hopeless my way, he has always cared and works for our good.
7. Allow God's peace and love guard your hearts and minds. Bask in the gospel story as you read of how God loved us more than his dearest Son. If God can bring so much good from so much evil hurled at Jesus on the cross, cannot he do the same for us?

"But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life" (Titus 3:4-7).

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¹ I beg the reader's indulgence as I begin a series on worry and anxiety aimed for my own welfare. I hope that my ramblings on the subject will help others along the way.