

How to Avoid Stressing Out



Van Moody

*“If you do **THESE THINGS**
you will experience God’s peace
which is far more wonderful than
the human mind can understand.*

*His peace will keep your
thoughts quiet and your heart at
rest as you trust in Christ Jesus.”*

Philippians 4:7 (LB)

1 REFUSE TO WORRY ABOUT ANYTHING

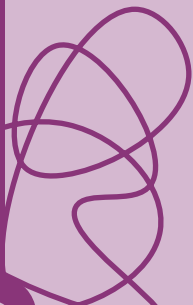


Philippians 4:6 (NLT) commands us to “*never worry about anything...*” On the topic of worry, the Bible is clear, and yet, we all know how challenging never worrying can truly be. We all face difficulties and problems, we all have struggles and needs. God tells us to never worry about anything because He has promised to meet all our needs. In 1 Peter 5:7, Scripture instructs us to “*cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.*” God doesn’t want us to worry; He doesn’t want us to carry the burden of our problems and concerns.

God cares for us and promises peace to all who know Christ as Savior. For those who have accepted Christ, Jesus promises, “*...Come to me. Get away with me and you’ll recover your life. I’ll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me—watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won’t lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you’ll learn to live freely and lightly*” (Matthew 11:28-30 (MSG)). Are you ready? Let’s learn how to avoid stressing out – God’s way!

WORRY IS UNREASONABLE

Even though we live in the affluence of America, we stress out and worry. As we just learned, worry is sin and the opposite of faith. In Matthew 6:25, Jesus commanded, “*Don’t worry about your life, what you’ll eat*



or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes?" In fact, if you continue reading Matthew 6, you'll see He commands us not to worry two more times.

According to Christ, worry is unreasonable for believers. If we believe He rose from the dead and He can save us, restoring our relationship with God and giving us eternal life in heaven, but He can't handle our day to day, what we are really saying is we don't have very much faith in Him or His promises. God knows our needs, He knows what is coming in our lives, and He has promised to take care of us – so instead of stress and worry, we need to put our trust in Him and His promises.

WORRY IS UNNATURAL

In Matthew 6:26-29, Jesus explains, *"Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life? And why do you worry about clothes? See how the flowers of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these."* Jesus tells us worry

and stress are unnatural because God has already promised to provide for us, to meet every need, to give us peace.

WORRY IS UNHELPFUL

In the above passage, Jesus asks (verse 27), *“Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life?”* Simply put, Jesus is making a strong point that worrying is unhelpful and accomplishes nothing! Life is already busy enough without stress and worry which waste precious time. Worry has never solved a problem or delivered a solution, but God has and does it all the time!

WORRY IS UNNECESSARY

Jesus, in Matthew 6:30, says, *“If God cares so wonderfully for flowers that are here today and gone tomorrow, won't he more surely care for you, O you of little faith?”* In truth worry is unnecessary. It is the opposite of trusting in God and is founded in having “little faith.” A better use of our time is in giving over our burdens to God in prayer, because as Jesus reminds us, “He will certainly care for you.” We have to replace worry and stress with faith and trust. God is truly in control, taking better care of us than we could ever do ourselves.

2 PRAY ABOUT EVERYTHING!



After the admonishment in Philippians 4:6 (NLT) to *“never worry about anything”* Paul offers the perfect solution, *“instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done.”* Rather than a 24/7/365 prayer, Paul is encouraging us to develop an attitude of prayer, giving all our concerns over to God. When we live aware of God’s presence in our lives, we can trust Him with every worry in every moment of our lives. God is present in the details, He is attentive to every situation, and He cares about everything we are facing. When we take the initiative and pray about everything we gain the opportunity to live the abundant life He promises to believers.

So, just how do we “pray about everything?” We simply have to turn our focus to God, growing our relationship and enhancing the strength of our connection with Him. We also have to ask, telling God everything that we need. James explains it clearly, *“Yet you don’t have what you want because you don’t ask God for it”* (James 4:2). God lives within us, which means He is always with us and when we are stressed, anxious, or worried, all we have to do is ask Him for help. He always answers and works on our behalf in every circumstance so pray about everything, believing the truth of Romans 8:32 which reminds us, *“since he did not spare even his own Son but gave him up for us all, won’t he also give us everything else?”* God gave His own Son for us, is there anything else he wouldn’t gladly and freely give us?

3 THANK GOD IN ALL THINGS!



In Philippians 4:6, we are encouraged to not only tell God what we need but also to “*thank him for all he has done.*” Why? When we thank Him we are reminded of answered prayers and our confidence grows to keep asking and keep praying. Thankfulness also helps us get rid of worry. God’s Word tells us to always ask with a thankful heart. When we are thankful for what we have, our focus is there and not on the things which are out of our control.

In 1 Thessalonians 5:18, Paul tells us, “*In everything give thanks, for THIS is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you!*” The verse tells us to give thanks – gratitude, appreciation, recognition, praise, and credit where credit is due. Notice it doesn’t say **for** everything but **in** everything. This is not telling us to be thankful for the bad in our lives or for the evil in our world. Give thanks **in** all circumstances not **for** all circumstances – there is a big difference! The Greek word translated as “in” is *pos* which means “any, all, everything, anyone, all the time, anywhere, everywhere, the whole thing. God expects us to be grateful **in every circumstance** – no exceptions, no excuses, and no exemptions.

In Philippians 4:12b-13, Paul tells us, “*I have learned the secret of living in every situation, whether it is with a full stomach or empty, with plenty or little. For I can do everything through Christ, who gives me strength.*” Do you see it? The truth of the matter is contentment is not



found in our circumstances, but rather in recognizing Christ is the one who give us the strength no matter what circumstances we may experience. Through Him, we can give thanks in everything.

There's more back in Thessalonians, ***“In everything give thanks, for THIS is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you!”*** We often say, “I need to know God’s will” or “I need to know what God wants me to do with my life.” Well there it is – “In everything give thanks, for THIS is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you!” What are we supposed to do? Start with the most important step “giving thanks in all circumstances” and God will show us the rest!

4 THINK ABOUT GOOD THINGS!



Philippians 4:8 encourages us, “*Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.*” When think about good things and fill our minds with all that is true, good, right, pure, respected, beautiful, excellent, and honorable, we can overcome worry and anxiety. When we stress, and react to those stresses, every aspect of our health is affected. But God promises when we focus on Him and His wisdom, He will give of peace of mind as promised.

Why is thinking about good things so challenging? In Mark 7:20-23 (TLB) Jesus explains, “*And then he added, “It is the thought-life that pollutes. For from within, out of men’s hearts, come evil thoughts of lust, theft, murder, adultery, wanting what belongs to others, wickedness, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, pride, and all other folly. All these vile things come from within; they are what pollute you and make you unfit for God.”* Our thoughts tend to stray to our former sin nature, the things of the world, and then we worry and stress.

It is the reason Paul tells us in Colossians 3:1-4, “*Therefore, since you have been raised with Christ, **strive for the things above**, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. **Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.** For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is your*



life, appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.” The world seeks to distract us, to drag us down, to tempt us, promising whatever will move our focus from Christ. When we focus on earthly things, we often forget who we are in Christ and allow stress, worry, and anxiety into our lives. But, when we set our minds on the good things, the things above, we can remember God’s promises and His blessings and are better able to serve Him and find our joy in Him.

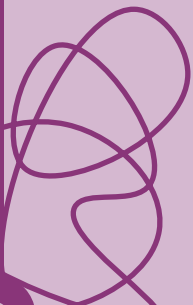
As we “*set our mind on things above*” we will find we can, “*Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, for to this you were called as members of one body. And be thankful*” (Colossians 3:15). When we focus on the challenges of the world, we experience worry and strife, but when we turn our focus on Christ and good things, we experience the truth of Isaiah 26:3, “*You Lord, will keep in perfect peace all who trust in you, and whose thoughts are fixed ON YOU!*”

5 BE CONTENT WITH ANYTHING!



To be content is to be in a continual state of happiness, satisfaction, or fulfillment. To be discontent is the opposite. God's Word urges us to be content with everything, all our circumstances. It is a big challenge because we often face difficult circumstances like illness or loss that we don't want or because we want the good things others have and we don't. We may want the better paying job our neighbor has, wonder why we haven't had children when all our friends have, try to keep up with friends and neighbors by racking up debt, question why a member of our family got the cancer diagnosis, envy our neighbor's new car, think life would be better if we'd married someone else, and the list goes on and on. The problem is discontent and it comes from focusing on our circumstances rather than God.

In Philippians 4:11-12 (LB), Paul explains the significance of contentment and shares with us how we can be content, *"Not that I was ever in need, for I have learned how to get along happily whether I have much or little. I know how to live on almost nothing or with everything. I have learned the secret of contentment in every situation, whether it be a full stomach or hunger, plenty or want; for I can do everything God asks me to with the help of Christ who gives me the strength and power."* We already learned our contentment is not found in our



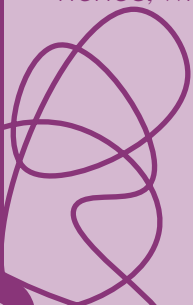
circumstances – where we live, what we eat, what we do - but in trusting Christ to help us in all our circumstances.




When we focus on the bad things in the world (and there are plenty of bad things happening) we can't be content. If we long for what others have, we can't be content. But when we believe and put our faith in God, we can be content with anything! The Bible has much to say about contentment and peace of mind. The writer of Proverbs 14:30 (TEV) tells us, *"Peace of mind makes the body healthy, but envy is like a cancer."* In Ecclesiastes 4:6 (TEV) we learn, *"It's better to only have a little with peace of mind, than to be busy all the time with both hands, trying to catch the wind."*

How can we be content and have peace of mind? Paul told us in Philippians 4:13, in Christ, we have the strength and power to face whatever comes our way and remain content. God cares for us day to day, whether we are full or hungry, whether we have a little or a lot, whatever our circumstances, we can trust the truth of Philippians 4:19, *"And this same God who takes care of me will supply all your needs from his glorious riches, which have been given to us in Christ Jesus."*

Knowing that God has promised to take care of us and supply all of our needs, we can believe, breathe easy, and avoid stressing out. We can trust the Words of Jesus when He told us worry is unreasonable, unnatural, unhelpful, and unnecessary. When we do feel stress





and worry, we know we can pray about everything, regardless of the circumstances, thanking God in all things. As we pray, we refocus our mind to think about good things and be content in all circumstances because of God's promises to us!

***“Obey God and be at
peace with Him;
this is the way to
happiness.”***

Job 22:21 (NCV)

