

When Anxiety Has Worn Out His Welcome

Philippians 4:4-7

I Will Choose Joy from Philippians #7

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

The oldest and strongest emotion in the history of humanity isn't admiration, adoration, or amusement. It's not surprise, sadness, or shame. It has permanently occupied space in the minds of kings, queens, peasants, and paupers alike. It has falsely arrested and held many extroverts and introverts captive against their wills. It's tried, measured, and adjudicated life sentences of paralysis with no hope of parole to leaders of businesses, churches and homes. It is that thin stream of fear that trickles through our minds known as anxiety.

You and I know that emotion as old as time itself very well; most especially when he shows up for dinner in our minds uninvited. And then he has the nerve to ask us if his cousins Fast Heart Rate, Rapid Breathing and Cold Sweat can also join us. Anxiety never even bothers to ask us if he has worn out his welcome in our lives. He's only concerned with interfering in our daily living.

The truth about our old friend anxiety is that he's not evil. He'll actually help us find the exit when we are trapped inside a burning building or if there's an immediate, pressing, danger in our lives. But where he has worn out his welcome in our lives is when he shows us an exit when there's no pressing threat of immediate danger. Yes, friend, he's worn out his welcome when we persistently and excessively worry about everyday situations to the point that it immobilizes us from walking forward in general. He's worn out his welcome he robs us not only of the joy of the Lord, but the joy and blessing of life itself.

If anyone had a right to anxiety, it was Paul since his execution was approaching. But instead of being anxious, he did something rare: He rejoiced in the Lord. And in so doing, he let anxiety know it had worn out his welcome in Paul's life. Let's look at it in Philippians 4:4-7

4 Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! **5** Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. **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.

When Anxiety Has Worn Out His Welcome and Has to Go:

1. When Praise Becomes Conditional

Man With No Arms or Legs Sitting In a Wheel Chair Singing At the Top of His Lungs at Cumberland Farms: (1) Gives me a lift, when I hear you singing in your condition (2) Friend, when I stopped thinking about what I had lost and began concentrating on all I had left, I found much for which I could rejoice and be happy.

The Command to Rejoice: Stated twice and empathic in the language of the NT; meaning “surely I say to you...oh yes, surely.”

Meaning of Rejoice: To show great joy, exuberance, or delight

What it Doesn't Say: To always show great joy, exuberance, or delight.

What it Does Say: To always show great joy, exuberance, or delight when it comes to one certain thing. That's Jesus.

How Can We Rejoice When It Comes to That One Certain Thing: (1) Rejoice Because: because He lives; because He has saved us; because we will never be put to shame; (2) Rejoice Even Though: rejoice even though Paul sits in prison (1:13); rejoice even though he's maligned by his enemies; rejoice even though Paul hears reports of sin and strife among his friends (4:2).

CS Lewis: “I know now, Lord, why you utter no answer. You are yourself the answer. Before your face questions die away. What other answer would suffice.”

App: When your worry and anxiousness manifests itself in your life to a greater degree than rejoicing, then your anxiety is out of place.

2. When Fear Becomes Sinful

Once Upon a Time, There Lived a Professional Thief By the Name of Black Bart: (1) 1875-1883 robbed 29 different stagecoaches on the Wells Fargo stage line. (2) Did it all without firing a single shot; (3) Didn't take a hostage and ever chased by the police. (4) Just the hood that hid his face was enough to paralyze his victims.

There Are Two Types of Fear in the Bible, One Is Virtuous, the Other Is An Emotion: (1) Fear of the Lord – It's the type of fear that leads to wisdom; (2) Anxiousness (A Fancy Word for Fear) – Mental distress or uneasiness because of fear of danger or misfortune of some kind.

When Anxiousness Has It's Rightful Place: (1) When there's an immediate threat of danger. If you are swimming in the ocean and see a shark, it wouldn't be a good idea to quote "be anxious for nothing." It would behoove you to get out of the water.

When Anxiousness Becomes Sinful: (1) Worry to the point that it renders you immobile. (2) Fear to the point that mental distress overcomes you.

Why Anxiousness Becomes Sinful: This is anxiety that's brought about not by present circumstances or the future. It's brought about by you trying to control your present circumstances and/or the future. When we do that, anxiety has no rightful place in our lives.

3. When Prayer Becomes Rare

Rare Sight at Florida's Gatorland Preserve: (1) Her name is Pearl; (2) She's an alligator; (3) But not just any old Alligator, Pearl is an albino alligator; (4) Her skin lacks pigmentation melanin and her body is pure white with pink eyes; (5) Life is hard for these rare animals because they cannot easy survive in swampy surroundings.

Replacement Spirituality: (1) If my normal tendency is to be anxious when the building isn't burning down, then the Lord wants me to replace that emotion with something that will calm my spirit. (2) That is prayer and supplication.

That Means When My Prayers Are Rare, My Tendency to Be Anxious Will Increase: You cannot formulate how to solve a problem so you worry about it instead of praying about it and asking God how to deal with it.

But When My Prayers Are Constant, My Tendency to Be Anxious Will Decrease: because prayer is a way of solving a problem that you can't solve yourself

The Only Bad Request Is One Never Asked (Matthew 7:7-11): ⁷ "Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. ⁸ For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened. ⁹ "Which of you, if your son asks for bread, will give him a stone? ¹⁰ Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? ¹¹ If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him!

4. When Peace Becomes Elusive

Karate Kid Line and Common House Hold Fly: (1) Man who catch fly with chopstick can accomplish anything; (2) I can't catch fly with chopstick; or with a fly catcher; (3) Or a fly swatter. (4) Nothing works. (5) Household fly to me is the most elusive living creature on the planet.

Biblical Definition of Peace: (1) The Hebrew Word – Shalom; (2) A state of calmness, completeness and rest.

Anxiety and Peace Can't Occupy the Same Space: (1) Calmness, completeness and rest is the exact opposite of (2) Anxiousness, worriedness, mental distress, and fear.

That Means We Always Operate According to One of Two Realities: (1) If peace is elusive, Then anxiety is constant; (2) If calmness, completeness and rest is constant then anxiety is elusive.

One of Those Two Are On the Run In Our Lives: (1) If anxiety is on the run, it means that we have the shalom of God guarding our hearts and minds in the midst of some of the greatest conflict we can ever face; (2) If peace is on the run, anxiety has taken up residence and you have to tell it that he's worn out his welcome.