

Digging Deeper – The Struggle Is Real (Anxiety/Mental Health)

Philippians 4:6-7; 1 Peter 5:6-11

November 5, 2023

The struggle is real. Family after family within the body have suffered debilitating illnesses, both physically and emotionally. God never intended for man to undergo such things. There is a principle of God that is found in Genesis during the creation. In Genesis 2:18 we read, “Then the LORD God said, “It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him.” Here’s the principle: God wants *good* for man. He demonstrates this principle as soon as man separates himself from his Creator by initiating the promise of salvation for mankind. The scriptures clearly demonstrate God’s desire to reestablish that original relationship with man. John 3:16 – 17 tells us “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.”

We sing, “God is so good, God is so good. God is so good, He’s so good to me.” That is a principle of the statement of God’s goodness. We need to not only sing it but proclaim it to one another.

DAY ONE: Preparing for the Struggle

Anxiety is an emotion which is characterized by an unpleasant state of inner turmoil and includes feelings of dread over anticipated events. Anxiety is different from fear in that fear is defined as the emotional response to a real threat, whereas anxiety is the anticipation of a future threat. (Crocq MA (September 2015). "A history of anxiety: from Hippocrates to DSM")

How can we best prepare ourselves for the struggle life presents us? God’s Word is our best tool not only for defense against the attacks of Satan, but to also prepare us for those attacks. Remember we are told “Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.” Satan is not only responsible for the gulf that separates men from God, but his desire is to destroy God’s creation – mankind!

So how do we prepare ourselves? The psalmist gives us insight in Psalm 119. Look up and read verses 9 – 16.

Store up God’s Word not only so you will not sin against him but so you will be prepared for the struggle before you.

Please also keep in mind that there are sometimes physical or chemical imbalances within us that God has prepared doctors and medications for you to bring help. These should not be overlooked in the struggle we face. Allowing doctors to work along side of God is not a failure rather it is a testimony to the goodness of God as he has designed us in such a way that medicines and doctors can bring help.

DAY TWO: God’s Provision for the Struggle

There are ample passages for us to pursue to see God’s provision for the struggle. Let’s look at one that is familiar to us all – Psalm 23. Take the time to read it today.

“The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want” (Psalm 23:1) This is more than an introduction to a beautiful Psalm; it is a promise to you. There is never a time in a believer’s life that this is not true. He is always our shepherd. Anxiety is often experienced as we sense want in our lives.

Read Matthew 6:25 – 34. Do you see God’s hand available when he says, “For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all.”?

A song from the past can speak volumes to our hearts. Read it and let it speak to you today.

1 When we walk with the Lord
In the light of His Word,
What a glory He sheds on our way;
While we do His good will,
He abides with us still,
And with all who will trust and obey.

Trust and obey,
For there’s no other way
To be happy in Jesus,
But to trust and obey.

2 Not a shadow can rise,
Not a cloud in the skies,
But His smile quickly drives it away;
Not a doubt or a fear,
Not a sigh or a tear,
Can abide while we trust and obey.

3 Not a burden we bear,
Not a sorrow we share,
But our toil He doth richly repay;
Not a grief or a loss,
Not a frown or a cross,
But is blest if we trust and obey.

4 But we never can prove
The delights of His love,
Until all on the altar we lay;
For the favor He shows,
And the joy He bestows,
Are for them who will trust and obey.

5 Then in fellowship sweet
We will sit at His feet,
Or we’ll walk by His side in the way;
What He says we will do;

Where He sends, we will go,
Never fear, only trust and obey.

DAY THREE: The Body Faces the Struggle

You are not alone! You are an integral part of the Body of Christ! What does that mean to you? To me, I am reminded I am not alone. Not only is Christ with me, but I am part of a great fellowship of men and women who care for me.

Do you trust that? Are you committed to being a part of that for your brother or sister in Christ? Can you walk with your brother or sister in Christ as they face the struggle?

Romans 12:5 “so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.” Read Romans 12:9 – 21. As you read these words do you sense God has a plan not only for you but for those who walk with you as believers.

Peter also reminds us of God’s partnership in this body. 1 Peter 5:7 tells us God cares for us. And then in verse 9 he reminds us we are part of a brotherhood. Finally in verse 10 he tells us God will restore us. There are times you will be the strength for your brother or sister in Christ. There will be time when they will be strength for you. It is no wonder that Peter would finish this passage with these words: “To Him be the dominion (power, authority, rule) forever and ever. Amen (so be it). (1 Peter 5:11, The Amplified Bible)

DAY FOUR: Grace and Peace

I have asked many, what do you think is the opposite of anxiety? The answer almost unanimously was *PEACE*. As I thought of that I was reminded of how often the scriptures united *peace* with *grace*. Here is a list from the New Testament. I would encourage you to look up each one. It won’t take long, but let God say something to you through the exercise.

Romans 1:7, 1 Corinthians 1:3, 2 Corinthians 1:2, Galatians 1:3, Ephesians 1:2, Philippians 1:2, Colossians 1:2, 1 Thessalonians 1:1, 2 Thessalonians 1:2, 1 Timothy 1:2, 2 Timothy 1:2, Titus 1:4, Philemon 3, 1 Peter 1:2, 2 Peter 1:2, 2 John 3, Revelation 1:4.

As we experience grace, its companion comes alongside – peace. For today let God speak through his word to you. May his peace come to you as you experience his grace.

DAY FIVE: The Power of Prayer

An important resource for every believer is prayer. R. A. Torrey said, *Prayer in every care and anxiety and need of life, with thanksgiving, is the means that God has appointed for our obtaining freedom from all anxiety, and the peace of God which passeth all understanding.*

We need to develop our prayer life. One of the benefits of strengthening our prayer life is when we are under assault, we realize that is not the time to learn how to pray! Communication with the God of heaven should not merely be “Help!” While that is a prayer that God can and does answer, does going to God only with our request for help show our love for Him? Do prayers for help alone really demonstrate our relationship with Christ?

Paul gives us some instruction when he tells us to pray with ceasing 1 Thessalonians 5:17. Here it is – “give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.” 1 Thessalonians 5:18

He concludes this thought with these words “Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.
²⁴ He who calls you is faithful; he will surely do it. (5:23-24). Claim his promise today.

The last promise for today – For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. Romans 8:6

Cast your burden on the Lord, and he will sustain you; he will never permit the righteous to be moved.
Psalm 55:22