

In the Middle

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How can we live “hard-pressed” without being crushed?

But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us. ⁸We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; ⁹persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed. 2 Corinthians 4:7-9

Focus matters.

So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal. 2 Corinthians 4:18

Gratitude is an opportunity to experience the peace of God.

Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. Colossians 3:15

Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. ⁷And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Philippians 4:6-7

- Anxiety is grasping for control of what we do not have in the future.
- Gratitude is giving thanks for what we do have in the present.

Growing in gratitude...**1. I will focus on the goodness of God.**

Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows. James 1:17

2. I will focus on giving thanks where I am, right now.

Joshua also set up another pile of twelve stones in the middle of the Jordan, at the place where the priests who carried the Ark of the Covenant were standing. And they are there to this day. Joshua 4:9

Let's Connect

Describe someone who is bursting with gratitude?

Let's Talk About It

When we're feeling hard pressed on every side, intentionally shifting our focus from the challenges of the present moment to things we're grateful for, builds an internal strength in us. Choosing to be grateful diffuses anxiety and opens our hearts to experience a greater measure of God's peace. Shifting our focus to gratitude is a choice to focus on the goodness of God and give Him thanks right where we're at – in the messy middle.

2 Corinthians 4:7-9, 17-18; Colossians 3:15-17; Philippians 4:4-7; James 1:17; Joshua 4:1-9

- Which part of the message made an impact, caught your attention or challenged you?
- Read 2 Corinthians 4:7-9, 17-18. Where are you currently *hard-pressed*? How does what you focus on affect you and keep you from getting *crushed*?
- Read Colossians 3:15-17 & Philippians 4:4-7. What might greater gratitude unlock in your life? How have you experienced the link between gratitude and experiencing a greater measure of the peace of God?
- What did you learn about gratitude from Kris' interview Rachel? How can you apply this to your life? What are some things you're grateful for in this season?
- Read James 1:17 and Joshua 4:9. Why is it hard to give thanks *in the middle*? What step can you take this week to intentionally shift your focus from the things that *aren't working out* to be grateful for *what you have* and *where you're at*?

Take a Step

- Spend time reading the Bible and applying SOAP this week: **Day 1:** Psalm 9, Acts 22; **Day 2:** Psalm 46, Acts 23; **Day 3:** Psalm 57, Acts 24; **Day 4:** Psalm 73, Acts 25; **Day 5:** Psalm 75, Acts 26; **Day 6:** Psalm 100, Acts 27; **Day 7:** Psalm 126, Acts 28.

Here's My Prayer

- Lord, every good thing comes from You. You have given me far more than I could ever earn and certainly more than I deserve. God help me to focus on Your goodness and give You praise for every good thing You have given. I choose to focus on giving thanks *where I am*, right now. In Jesus' name.