

YOU ASKED FOR IT

Part 2: How to Keep from Stressing Out
Philippians 4:6-13

Written by Pastor Steve Norman
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Words of Encouragement Days 78-84



The Bible has much to say about the issues we deal with each and every day. **YOU ASKED FOR IT** is a series that looks at a few of those issues:

- **How to deal with stress**
- **Getting over what people think about me**
- **Learning to be who God wants me to be**
- **Recognizing God's voice**
- **Discovering my true identity in Jesus**

So what does the Bible say about us? It says we are created by God as complex, multifaceted, not easy to understand, and not easy to explain people. And with good reason! Layer upon layer, God made us unique. During this series, we'll take a deeper look at those complexities and **discover a sense** of who we were **made to be**.

YOU ASKED FOR IT sermon series is based on some of the most requested "How To" answers from God's Word for some of life's most perplexing issues.

This Week's Memory Verse:

***"A heart at peace gives life to the body,
but envy rots the bones."
Proverbs 14:30***

MEETING WITH GOD – Day 78

"The old system under the law of Moses was only a shadow, a dim preview of the good things to come, not the good things themselves. The sacrifices under that system were repeated again and again, year after year, but they were never able to provide perfect cleansing for those who came to worship." Hebrews 10:1 (NLT)

ONCE FOR ALL

KALLI looked puzzled. With her forehead scrunched up and half of her upper lip raised, her whole face curled up in a big question mark. "Some of this Old Testament stuff is really strange," she said to her friend. "I mean, as Christians are we supposed to follow the Old Testament—or not?"

"Well, let's start with the really big difference," her friend said, "You've probably noticed that Christians don't follow the Old Testament practice of sacrificing animals to get right with God."

"Yeah," she said, nodding. "No one ever told me to bring a pet cow or pigeon to church—and leave it here. But why did God tell people to sacrifice animals? And if animals got people right with God in the Old Testament, why did Jesus have to die?"

Her friend explained that in the Old Testament, people offered grain and birds and animals as acts of worship. A truly special sacrifice happened each year on the Day of Atonement (see Leviticus 23:28). Yet these sacrifices had to be repeated year after year, because they didn't cleanse people from their sin. Worshipers were still guilty. Something more was needed.

Jesus was that "something more." When Jesus came to earth, He did away with the sacrifices of Old Testament faith by paying the penalty for our sins once and for all. When Jesus died, He did for us what we couldn't do for ourselves. As Christians we trust in Jesus as God's payment for our sins. His death on the cross means we don't need to please God by trying to be perfect or by paying for our sins with our life or by shedding the blood of animals.

Sometimes as Christians we wish we could fast forward past the Old Testament and jump straight to Jesus. But the whole Old Testament was written for our instruction (see 1 Corinthians 10:11). And the sacrifices of Old Testament times were a picture of how Jesus would give His life to bring us forgiveness. God used hundreds of years of sacrifices to paint a picture of the awfulness of sin and humankind's deep need for a real Savior. He must think those are important lessons for us to learn!

TODAY'S PRAYER

Lord, I am so grateful that Your love for me never changes. Thank you for providing Jesus as the perfect and complete sacrifice, paying the debt once for all for my sins. I know that I can sometimes take that sacrifice for granted and forget just how much it cost You to pay the price for my sin. So today, may my heart of worship be acceptable to You as I live my life for You. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Love the way Jesus loves!

Pastor Steve

MEETING WITH GOD – Day 79

Just a note: While Pastor Steve is recovering from a medical procedure this week, people from Crossroads Church will be sharing some thoughts from God's Word. We hope you enjoy this week's devotionals.

"But He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me." 2 Corinthians 12:9 (NIV)

GOD'S STRENGTH SEASON

I know many people who would define this year as hard. It seems as though this year has lasted three years already. Living through a pandemic, losing loved ones and friends, sickness, and struggles that feel overwhelming. I know so many people around me who have just lost hope.

Even though this is a hard season, I can hear a gentle whisper, "My grace is enough".

"But this is hard, LORD", I say in my head.

"It's still enough" I hear.

Here's the thing. God's grace is sufficient enough whether we think it is or not. This made me question my perspective today. What am I focusing on? Am I focused on how hard this season is or that God has given me a perfect portion of His grace for today. If I feel weak right now, am I focusing on the fact that His strength is made perfect in me at this very moment?

I have to make sure that I have the right perspective of my weaknesses right now. If I become thankful for my weakness, if I praise God for my weaknesses because His strength is reigning in me, His power will rest on me. That means I don't have to look at this as a hard season, I can choose to look at it as God's Strength season.

TODAY'S PRAYER

Heavenly Father, I confess that I do not always see my hard seasons as blessings. Please forgive me for complaining and not trusting You in my hard seasons. I thank You for my weaknesses. I thank You that You use my weaknesses to show Your strength. I thank You that Your power will rest on me when I boast about my weaknesses. Thank You for Your grace. Help me to shift my perspective from what I am going through to who You are in me. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Love the way Jesus loves!

Christina Vereen

MEETING WITH GOD – Day 80

Just a note: While Pastor Steve is recovering from a medical procedure this week, people from Crossroads Church will be sharing some thoughts from God's Word. We hope you enjoy this week's devotionals.

*"Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen."
Ephesians 4:29*

IF YOU DON'T HAVE ANYTHING NICE TO SAY . . .

I'm sure we have all heard the expression "If you don't have anything nice to say, don't say anything." I know I've heard it said by parents, teachers, principals, guidance counselors . . . you get the idea. I didn't know that when I heard it I was receiving biblical advice, but I was.

As children, we don't have a full understanding of how our words can affect others. As adults, we sometimes need to be reminded of habits that need breaking. Insults and gossiping are a couple of easy examples of "unwholesome talk". Other examples are offensive jokes, just ask yourself "would Jesus laugh?", and talk of doom and gloom, which shows a lack of faith and helps no one. Standing up for ourselves when we are verbally attacked can best be done by not sinking to the level of the person attacking us.

We don't always consider how powerful our words can be. They can bring hope, happiness, love, encouragement and truth. Words can also cause despair, sadness, hatred, discouragement and lies. The choice is ours. If we can't find the right words... just listen.

TODAY'S PRAYER

Heavenly Father, Thank you for sharing your wisdom with us. Please guide my words to lift up and encourage those who listen, and speak to my heart about the ways I can better represent you in the way I communicate with others. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Love the way Jesus loves!

Tom Nance

MEETING WITH GOD – Day 81

Just a note: While Pastor Steve is recovering from a medical procedure this week, people from Crossroads Church will be sharing some thoughts from God's Word. We hope you enjoy this week's devotionals.

“Commit your work to the Lord, and your plans will be established.” Proverbs 16:3

PRAY YOUR WAY THROUGH

HERE'S some wise advice: Daily wake up saying, "Thank you, Lord!" (Even though I can still use a couple of hours and/or minutes more of sleep.) Take some time to appreciate a new day . . . your Gift of Life.

Then as you begin your day, remember that whatever you have planned to accomplish, God is there with you. You just need to learn to “hear” Him with your heart and mind. The Holy Spirit is also with you. And your Heavenly Father is always there providing you with the resources you need to get the job done. That does not mean you won't stumble along the way or encounter difficulties. But it does mean you can be sure, ALL the time, you can call upon the counsel and resources of Almighty God to help you.

Whatever you need, you can rely on our Savior, our Creator, to meet your needs. Remember, He knows all of our needs, so just bring them on to Him! He loves to hear from us, and He wants a relationship with us. It's never too late to begin. Whether you need wisdom, inspiration, confidence, healing, strength, or plain tenacity, you will find your answer in Him.

TODAY'S PRAYER

Heavenly Father, I come before you humbly. Forgive my sins of today as I strive to be better each day. I strive to be closer to you and desire more and more to grow in a deep relationship with you, Lord.

We lift up your son, our Pastor Steve, our Shepherd. Protect him, Lord. We ask for healing. He is our leader. You have chosen him for us to guide us on the road to you. Even when he is in pain, Lord, he is there for us, like you, Lord, with a loving yearning for us to get closer to you with your Holy Word. Bring the right medical staff to him, to comfort and bring his body to full strength. We ask in your precious Holy Name, Amen.

Love the way Jesus loves!

Dee Durham

MEETING WITH GOD – Day 82

Just a note: While Pastor Steve is recovering from a medical procedure this week, people from Crossroads Church will be sharing some thoughts from God's Word. We hope you enjoy this week's devotionals.

"And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." Philippians 4:7 (NASB)

PEACE IN THE PIECES

SOMETIMES I have so much swirling around in my head, it's hard to hear God speak. On one side, I know that all God needs to do is just speak – no whisper – a word, and instantly the waves are made calm, healing takes place, the chaos becomes silenced, simply because He is God and He is who He says He is. And yet, on the other side, my heart still feels anxious. Why? Why am I still anxious when I have God's promise that He is who He says He is? Why do I feel restless when I have the knowledge and have seen over and over that God is bigger than anything life throws my way. That there are NEVER any surprises with Him. Why does my soul feel downcast and weary when, time and time again, God has shown up? Sure, He does not always show up in the way I've wanted Him to or thought He should, but He has always shown up. I think it comes down to head knowledge versus heart knowledge and, at least for me, my continued decision on whether or not to hold on to faith and trust that, even when it doesn't seem like it or feel like it, God is still working, moving, and He's still in control.

Faith doesn't always make sense. Faith doesn't always seem logical. Yet faith is one of those things that can bring ultimate Peace and rest. So as I continue to hold tight to the promises God has given me, as I continue to lay my burdens down at His feet and try to let Him take care of those things that feel bigger than me and bigger than what I can bear, I am suddenly aware of this undeniable Peace that only He can give.

TODAY'S PRAYER

Father God, as I go about my day, please help me to remember that you are bigger than anything I may face. As I deal with things that create uncertainty in my life, help me to remember that you are the calm in the storm. May I constantly look to you and remember my faith, my hope, and my trust just need to be in you alone. Thank you for being my Peace when things fall to pieces. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Love the way Jesus loves!

Amy Varghese

MEETING WITH GOD – Day 83

Just a note: While Pastor Steve is recovering from a medical procedure this week, people from Crossroads Church will be sharing some thoughts from God's Word. We hope you enjoy this week's devotionals.

*To become envious is definitely a sin, and is defined as such in God's word. "For where envy and self-seeking exist, confusion and every evil thing are there."
James 3:16*

RELY ON GOD

WHEN I was younger, I struggled with envy. Envy often led me to questions like: Why wasn't I taller? Why couldn't I have a car like someone else? Why couldn't I have a bigger house? Why couldn't I . . . you can fill in the blank with any number of questions. The issue was clear. Envy caused me to look at what others had and wish for something different. It took many years and maturity to overcome envy as a child, but as an adult I still have times when I have to pray about it.

Envy and jealousy are evil, not godly characteristics. They strip us of our self esteem and make us overwork to obtain those fancy cars and houses and so many other things. When we strive to obtain them, we can often lose touch with God as our lives become one of obtaining material things instead of being content with what we have and relying on God to provide for our needs.

TODAY'S PRAYER

Thank you, Lord, for making me grateful and at peace with what I have. Thank you for allowing me to see what's truly important, my relationship with you. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

Love the way Jesus loves!

Sharon Reynolds

MEETING WITH GOD – Day 84

"Then he said to Thomas, 'Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe.'" John 20:27

POOR DOUBTING THOMAS

NOT many people have nice things to say about the disciple Thomas. After Jesus rose from the dead, he appeared to the disciples behind closed doors, but Thomas wasn't with them. So when the disciples told Thomas that Jesus was alive, he didn't believe them. "I won't believe it," he said, "unless I see the nail wounds in his hands, put my fingers into them, and place my hand into the wound in his side" (John 20:25).

When Jesus later appeared to Thomas, the Lord took him up on his offer. He said to Thomas, "Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe." (John 20:27).

Okay, so Thomas wasn't as bad as Judas, the one who betrayed Jesus. He might not even have been as awful as Peter, who denied the Lord three times. But of all the disciples—the twelve men closest to Jesus during his three years of teaching and preaching—Thomas is usually lumped in among the bad boys.

Many people put Thomas down because of his doubt. But they forget one fact: None of the other disciples believed until they, too, had seen evidence of the resurrection. Everyone else had already seen Jesus' hands and side. What's more, Jesus didn't say to Thomas, "You were a really bad disciple for doubting me." Instead, he showed his disciple the evidence and *then* said, "Stop doubting." And finally, when Thomas did see the evidence, he uttered

one of the loudest confessions of faith in history, calling Jesus "my Lord and my God!" (John 20:28).

For some reason we think that doubt is totally bad. "Real Christians don't doubt," we say. That's a myth. Doubt is actually the starting point of faith. In the Bible's original language of Greek, the meaning of "doubter" is "inquirer." An "inquirer" is someone inquiring, asking, or hunting for answers. Sure, there are dishonest doubts people use to distract others from trusting Jesus. Yet there are honest questions about faith.

You can learn these lessons from an honest doubter named Thomas: Doubt is natural. It's okay to be honest about your doubts. And if you're truly looking for answers, your doubts should be replaced by faith when Jesus shows you the truth. Jesus doesn't want you to hide your doubts from him. He loves you. He even understands your questions.

TODAY'S PRAYER

Lord, I know that doubt is natural. In my times of doubt, help me to look to you in faith. Show me more of yourself when it's hard to trust you and help me believe. Thank you that you do not leave me in a place of doubt, but promise to come alongside and show me the truth. Then, as truth is revealed, grow my faith so I believe you at your word and learn to trust you more and more. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Love the way Jesus loves!

Pastor Steve