

INTRO

- What is a place or activity you go to that's peaceful for you?

READ

Philippians 4:4-9

REFLECT & RESPOND

We interact in life through the integration of our thoughts, actions, and emotions. We have capacity to control our thoughts and actions, but less so with our emotions. To influence our emotional state, we need to change our thoughts and actions.

As Paul writes this passage from jail, he gives us great practical wisdom on how to find God's peace in particularly stressful times.

“Rejoice in the Lord always” - v4

This is an action we are instructed to do always in every situation. It's not hypocrisy to act joyful or thankful when you don't feel like it — it's an act of faith.

Qu: how can you sincerely rejoice when you don't feel like it?

“Let your gentleness be known” - v5

Gentleness is a way to behave even when we're stressed on the inside. Our internal anxiety is not an excuse for acting out harshly towards others.

Qu: when you are stressed or anxious, what do you notice about how you begin to behave towards others?

“Do not be anxious about anything” - v6

This verse can be misunderstood and wrongly applied to those suffering with anxiety. It's not denying our anxiety; rather it's telling us what's possible when we bring what's causing our anxiety to God and trust him with it. Having a non-anxious presence in the world right now,

might just be the most effective form of evangelism!

Qu: what do you think is the connection between prayer and not being anxious about anything?

“And the peace of God will guard your hearts and minds” - v7

In other words, when we think and act in ways consistent with Scripture, we should expect our feelings to align with that. For example, the action of prayer in v6 helps with our anxious feelings through God's peace.

“Think about these things...practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.” - v8-9

As we allow God's word to shape our thinking and actions, God's peaceful presence will become more real to us, helping build our resistance and resilience to deal with whatever stressful situations life throws at us.

Qu: where do you feel challenged to change your current thinking and/or behaviour towards the ongoing stress of the pandemic/isolation?

RESPOND & PRAY

- Put this scripture passage into practice through prayer and thanksgiving, letting any anxious situations or requests be made known to God.
- Pray for opportunity to encourage others who are struggling emotionally right now.