

What Do You Do When the Storm Persists?

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You shelter in place. You trust Jesus alone as your Savior, comforter and refuge from the storm. You keep your eyes steadfast on Him.

When the storms of life persist, you take comfort and refuge in God alone. Jesus, our Prince of Peace, promises His comfort and security through every circumstance. His peace transcends the chaos of the moment; in His everlasting arms, we are secure.

Our generation is being challenged in an unprecedented manner. COVID-19 is inflicting havoc. Many are asking, “When will the suffering and distress of this virus end? When will things get back to normal?”

None of us know for sure, but as we pray fervently, follow the guidance of health experts and government leaders, this storm will eventually end. Remember, Jesus promises despite the trials and circumstances of life, we can be at rest in Him—always.

David wrote of this type of trust when he fled from Saul to hide in a wilderness cave,

“Be gracious to me, O God, be gracious to me! For my soul seeks refuge in You; in the shadow of Your wings I will make my refuge, until the ruinous storm passes by” (Ps. 57:1).

David was in a hard place—wrongly accused, persecuted and fearing for his life. Through this severe trial, he learned how to trust God in difficulty. David learned, through the trials and battles he faced, that he could trust God always.

David declared assertively, “One thing I have asked from the Lord, that will I seek after—for me to dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to see the beauty of the Lord” (Ps. 27:4a, b).

“The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom will I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life; of whom will I be afraid” (Ps. 27:1).

Jesus Is our Peace

Before I continue, you should know that this article is adapted from my book, *Fulfill Your Dreams*, Chapter 7, “Worry-Free Living.” More about this book on my website, .

The foundation for peace is Jesus—He is our peace. Peter encourages us to “Throw all your anxiety onto him, because he cares about you” (1 Pet. 5:7, CEB). The first principle to live free of worry and fear is to understand God never intended for you and me to “carry” these emotions. As Peter stated, we are to throw or cast them, upon the Lord.

Author John L. Mason, in his book *An Enemy Called Average*, wrote, “Fear and worry are interest paid in advance on something you may never own.” Truth.

Before His crucifixion, Jesus shared the Passover meal with His 12 disciples. He knew Judas was about to betray Him and that soon He would return to His Father. In John 14, Jesus discussed His departure with the disciples to prepare and empower them to walk in His peace.

Jesus said to them, “Let not your heart be troubled” (John 14:1a, MEV).

The English word “troubled” in this verse is translated from the Greek word *tarassō*, which means “distressed” or “agitated.” It can also mean “to cause acute emotional distress or turbulence—to cause great mental distress.”

The Greek word *tarassō* describes a severe inner distress and agitation, and the root cause of this distress is worry and fear about circumstances.

In the case of the disciples in John 14, their emotional distress was caused by worry and fear of the departure of Jesus. They did not understand it was better for Jesus to depart. Once crucified, resurrected and ascended, Jesus would send the promise of the Father, the Holy Spirit, to dwell in and with them—and likewise in and with all who believe (John 14:16-18).

In John 14:6, Jesus declared, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.” Notice Jesus is the way, but the destination is the Father. Jesus’ ultimate mission is to bring us to the bosom of the Father, and it will be enough for us—“Philip said to Him, ‘Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us’” (John 14:8, NASB).

The English word “enough” is from the Greek *arkéō*, “meaning to be content or satisfied, filled with unfailing strength.” It also means to ward off negative things from the world, such as fear and worry—which are the opposite of faith and peace.

Philip and the other disciples wanted assurance of what Jesus taught and said to them. Let us see Father God, and we will be confident and strengthened. They still didn’t grasp that Jesus and the Father were one, nor did they understand the Holy Spirit would come to fill all who believe with God’s presence and strength.

The revelation of the Father’s love for you will strengthen and sustain you against worry and fear—He is enough. As you gaze upon the face of God, circumstances look different, and you reflect His presence and peace.

Jesus declared to the disciples, “Peace I leave with you; My [perfect] peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I

give to you. Do not let your heart be troubled, nor let it be afraid. [Let My perfect peace calm you in every circumstance and give you courage and strength for every challenge]" (John 14:27, AMPCE).

Jesus told the disciples not to worry, and He assured them He would care for and give them His peace. *What happened? They worried and became fearful.*

We do the same. Like those first disciples, we often allow worry and fear to dominate our thinking and emotions when circumstances seem contrary to God's promises. The coronavirus is refining and defining us. Through the crisis, we have an opportunity to grow stronger—more radiant in Christ!

The Effects of Stress and Worry

Worry causes stress and fear. Your body can process small amounts of stress; however, excessive stress—whether real or perceived—can create emotional, mental and physical problems.

Proverbs tells us, "A peaceful heart leads to a healthy body" (Prov. 14:30a, NLT). Conversely, a heart filled with worry and fear can open the door to health issues.

Prolonged stress depletes your immune system. Stress hinders your ability to emotionally process the demands of life and weakens your body. Stress can create unhealthy fear and phobias. Fear can cause you to panic and freeze in crisis! Unresolved stress and fear hinder you from living in God's peace.

In her book *Who Switched Off My Brain?*, Dr. Caroline Leaf, cognitive neuroscience researcher, states that 87% of the illnesses plaguing people today are a direct result of their negative thought life.

Her research indicates "toxic emotions can cause migraines, hypertension, strokes, cancer, skin problems, diabetes,

infections and allergies.”

She concludes that our thoughts affect us physically and emotionally. Her studies indicate fear triggers 1,400 known physical and chemical responses and activates 30 different hormones and neurotransmitters.

Proverbs describes the effects of unresolved anxiety or worry in your life, “Anxiety in the heart of man causes depression, but a good word makes it glad.” (Prov. 12:25, NKJV).

Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines anxiety as a “painful or apprehensive uneasiness of mind usually over an impending or anticipated ill. A fearful concern or interest.” No surprise then that the writer of Proverbs indicated anxiety can lead to depression.

Of course, not all depression is caused by anxiety, worry and fear. Some forms are a result of physiological and brain chemical disorders. However, many struggle with depression due to dominating issues of worry and anxiety.

Allowing worry to rule in your heart can lead to stress, fear and, as just stated, forms of depression. Remember, you have a choice: trust God or live in worry. For the Christian, worry is a characteristic of unbelief, a manifestation of a lack of faith in God’s promises. Persistent anxiety breeds fear.

Did you know that 40% of what you worry about will never happen? Alternatively, are you aware that 30% of what concerns you are things from the past that cannot be changed? Likewise, do you realize that only 10% of what you worry about are considered significant issues? Did you know that 12% are about health-related issues that will never happen?

This means that an overwhelming 92% of what you—and everyone else—spend so much time worrying over will never take place. Based on these percentages, only 8% of worry can be considered legitimate. Regarding these legitimate concerns, we can trust

in God's provision for peace and joy during life's challenges.

Benjamin Franklin said simply, "Do not anticipate trouble or *worry* about what may *never happen*. Keep in the sunlight." Good advice, as most of what we worry about will never happen.

When worry and fear control you, you rob yourself of the authority God has given you as His child and as a citizen of heaven. John states, "Yet to all who received Him, He gave the power to become sons of God" (John 1:12a, MEV). In Christ, you have been given the right to be God's adopted child with the authority of His name!

But, unchecked negative thinking, emotions and words create ungodly beliefs in the mind that can empower demonic forces against you (2 Cor. 10:4-5). Jesus has stripped the devil of his authority and commissioned you with His authority; however, the enemy regains power over you through your unbelief and agreement with his falsehoods. When you agree with the enemy's lies, you relinquish the authority Jesus has entrusted to you and by default, you empower the enemy.

Learning to live out of your relationship with God and the truth of His Word empowers you to live free of worry and fear. Further, you will be confident, when battles rage around you!

The prophet Isaiah wrote,

"You will keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on You, because he trusts in You" (Isa. 26:3).

The English word *steadfast* is from the Hebrew *sā·măḵ* meaning to lean upon, to take hold of, and it means to do whatever is necessary to sustain an active focus.

The word "peace" is from the Hebrew *šā·lôm* meaning peace, prosperity, that is, an intact state of favorable circumstance (1 Sam. 1:17); 2. LN – completeness, i.e., the state of a totality of a collection (Jer. 13:19); 3. LN 21.9– safeness,

salvation, i.e., a state of being free from danger (Gen. 28:21); 4. LN – health, i.e., a state of lack of disease and a wholeness or well-being (Ps. 38:4[EB 3]); 5. LN – satisfaction, contentment, that is, the state of having one's basic needs or more being met and so being content (Ex, 18:23).

Concentrating upon the truth of God's promises will create peace (šā·lôm) in your life. An abiding relationship with Jesus grows your confidence that God will keep His promises.

Most of us are aware of God's promises in His Word to protect, deliver and provide for us, but few act in faith upon them.

However, during challenging circumstances, many see God as a distant friend, a harsh judge or an unloving Father. God is none of these; He is a good Father. Lack of relationship and intimacy with God creates underdeveloped faith and trust. Sometimes, the dysfunction of parents or other authority figures distorts our view of God.

But as you spend time with God through prayer, worship and His Word, your relationship deepens, faith and trust grow, and worry flees. Learning to trust God and His promises despite present circumstances is vital to remaining in God's peace, growing in faith and living victoriously in life.

The cautions Jesus gave the 12 disciples still hold true for us today. Peace is to be the standard characteristic for the follower of Christ. Unfortunately, many remain tormented by worry and fear instead of abiding in God's peace because of a lack of trust in His promises.

Final Thoughts

As a believer, you have been united with Christ and adopted into God's family. You are no longer an orphan or a fearful slave, but a beloved child of God, a citizen of His kingdom with all of God's rights and privileges.

As Jesus is, so are you now, completely accepted and loved by the Father, an heir of God and a joint heir with Christ. The fact that He defeated the powers of darkness and ascended to the throne empowers you to walk in His authority. The basis of your peace is the reality that Jesus has overcome the world.

You can live in Christ and His victory, free from fear and worry. Do not allow your present circumstances to rob you of your security in Christ. Jesus is the essence of your existence—your peace flows from Him. Your security and success are found in God, and He has empowered you to do the impossible in your generation because He is with you.

Keep your heart at peace by staying focused on Jesus, the Prince of Peace. Sow life to your body by staying in agreement with Him. Let His peace guard your heart so you can be equipped to live the abundant life He has promised to you.
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