

# THE FIRST 15

Wednesday, September 25, 2024

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Today is Wednesday, September 25 and we are studying what the Bible says about worry.

## OPENING PRAYER

*Holy and loving God, I worship You in the stillness of this day with a thankful heart. Help me hear the message You have for me. Speak to me through the power of Your Holy Spirit in the name of Jesus Christ my Lord. In a world full of uncertainty and anxiety, You promise hope, peace, joy and gratitude. Teach me the secret of living in Your presence and abiding with You in all circumstances. Amen.*

## SCRIPTURE

***Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Philippians 4:4-7***

## REFLECTION

In Philippians chapter four, Paul gives us the secret formula for dealing with the human condition of worry and anxiety. Look closely, there is an important part of the formula we don't want to miss. Paul says, "Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God." Bring your requests to God *with thanksgiving!*

I have noticed that gratitude lifts my spirits. Counting blessings is a helpful antidote for worry, uncertainty, fear, and even anxiety and depression. God knows gratitude is good for us. The Bible encourages us to pray and bring God all our requests, and we are to do so with thanksgiving. Our first waking moments while we are still lying in bed can be thoughts of gratitude. The last moments at night before falling asleep can be counting the blessings of the past day. What are you thankful for? Give thanks for the opportunity to pray. Give thanks that God hears your prayers. Thank God for answering past prayers. Thank God for what He has already done and what He is in the process of doing. Thank God that He is near and you are never alone in struggles, circumstances and difficulties.

Make a "gratitude list" and regularly give God thanks for everything you've listed. You will be surprised how daily focusing on your blessings will reduce worry, stress and anxiety. It is the cure for a negative spirit, critical thought pattern, grumpy outlook or downcast perspective. When we follow Paul's formula over time we will observe the following transformation. Our "worry list" becomes a "prayer list" and our "prayer list" becomes a "gratitude list". That is Paul's secret formula!

When Paul wrote these words his life was far from joyful and rosy. He had a lot to worry and be anxious about. Paul wrote the letter to the church at Philippi from prison awaiting trial and possible execution. He was enduring arduous circumstances. He wrote to a church that was enduring active opposition and whose members were under the threat of death. Despite these harsh circumstances, the epistle overflows with thanksgiving and joy and expresses confidence in God's goodness. Paul's words encourage me to be thankful in all circumstances. Of all the people in the world, Christians have the greatest reason to be happy. The gift of Jesus Christ living in my heart is what I need to be content and experience joy. That is the source of gratitude - new life in Jesus Christ and victory over sin and death.

**Ask:** How might I practice a week of keeping a "gratitude list" and counting my blessings? What would it look like to bring my worry list and prayer requests to God *with thanksgiving*?

**Pause and Pray**

## **CLOSING PRAYER**

*Holy and loving God, I rejoice in Your holy name. Thank You for reminding me how near You are to me in every situation. You instruct me to not be anxious or worry, but turn to You in prayer and present my requests. Help me to do so with a thankful heart and guard me in the precious peace of Jesus. Bring the peace that passes understanding. I praise You for the greatest gift of all, Your Son, my savior Jesus Christ. It is in His great love that I find salvation, redemption and victory over sin and death. I praise and thank You always. Amen.*