

## Anxious for Nothing: Session 3

## Present Your Requests to God

Let's begin by re-reading our passage in Philippians 4:4-8.

Last week, our focus was on "Let your gentleness be evident to all". How did you do with that? Were you able to specifically remember to remain gentle in a situation? Where did you succeed? Where did you fail?

This week we will focus on Philippians 4:6 *"In every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God"*

- Your first thought might be "Really? Pray with thanksgiving in every situation? Can Paul be serious? Surely if he had written to be thankful in *most* situations, that is something we can at least try to do... but every?"

In her book *The Hiding Place*, Corrie ten Boom tells a remarkable story. During World War II, she and her sister Betsie lived in three different concentration camps. The entire ten Boom family had been arrested for providing a safe haven to Jews and Nazi rebels. It's estimated they saved eight hundred lives before being caught and sent away.

Corrie describes how the barracks of the Ravensbruck concentration camp in Germany was infested with fleas. The sisters were forced to sleep on wooden platforms with straw on top, but the straw was dirty, smelly, and crawling with the skin-biting pests.

When Corrie's sister Betsie reminded her that 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 says "In every thing give thanks, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus" Corrie didn't think that was possible, but then they realized that the flea infestation kept the guards out of their barracks, allowing Corrie and Betsie to read the Bible aloud twice a day for any woman who wanted to hear. More and more women found the light of Christ in the darkest of places because of fleas.

As difficult as it might be, there is a reason to be grateful in every circumstance.

Let's watch today's video presentation by Max Lucado. In it he begins by talking about Debbie; a woman whose father left home when she was 6 years old; whom she didn't hear from in over 20 years, and how she learned to overcome resentment when she made a decision that changed her life.

- SEE VIDEO - 21 minutes

Lucado points to the story of Jesus walking on the water in Matthew 14:22-33. When the winds had come up, Peter is trying to save his neck. He's aware that he's going down and Jesus is staying up and it doesn't take Peter too long to figure out where he'd rather be. "Lord if it is you, tell me to come out to you on the water (vs 28)." Jesus invites Peter to come. Peter doesn't need to be told twice. First few steps go well, as long as he focuses on Christ. But when he shifts his gaze to the force of the storm and gives in to his anxiety, he starts to sink. Peter cries out, "Lord save me". Not eloquent, but effective!

1. Can you think of a time when you cried out to God, perhaps in despair?
2. Lucado talks about making requests to God *specific*. For the most part, are your “requests to God” general in nature or specific?
3. The video points to three reasons why it is important to be specific with our requests.
  - A specific prayer is a serious prayer.
  - A specific prayer provides an opportunity to see God at work.
  - A specific prayer creates a lighter load.
4. 1 Peter 5:7, “Cast all your anxiety on him for he cares for you.” What picture comes to mind through the word “cast”? Why is that such a good word?
5. Note two other essential words in Phil 4:6, “*with thanksgiving*”. Why is thankfulness so important?
6. Do you agree? “Thankfulness improves self-esteem, enhances relationships, quality of sleep, and longevity. If it came in a pill form, it would be deemed a miracle cure.”
7. Consider the hymn, “Count Your Blessings”. What blessings can you name that God has given you?
8. When we are thankful “Anxiety grabs its bag and slips out the back door.” Can you relate to a time when anxiety left *because* you were thankful?
9. Read Paul’s testimony in Philippians 4:11-13 and how he “learned to be content”.
10. Paul had so little (and such extremely hard situations) but was content. How? Why?
11. Paul focused on a different set of priorities... what he had in Christ was far greater than what he didn’t have in the world. Phil 1:21. All he wanted was more of Christ – and was satisfied.
12. Lucado says materialism is a race you can not win. It will just set you up for anxiety if you choose to participate in it. Define yourself by stuff and you will feel good when you have a lot and bad when you don’t. The cycle is predictable.
  - Applies to Car / Marriage / Children / New Job / Retirement.... and more.
  - In each case joy comes and then diminishes, leaving us discontent and wounded.
  - Paul gives us a different strategy... be content with what you have.
13. How would you rate your own level of contentment?
14. “When you choose to be thankful in all circumstances and make your requests known to God peace and gratitude and contentment will eventually prevail.”
15. “What you have in Christ is greater than anything you don’t have in life.”