

ANXIOUS FOR NOTHING

As the call to prayer rang out from the mosque two doors down, my heart sank a little. In a post-9/11 world, alone in a country far away from home, I knew that if I ran into trouble as a Christian minister and missionary, there would be no one to rescue me. Deep down inside I was anxious for security and familiarity. But, as I watched the men of the community walk past my home to their time of prayer, I knew I was being unfaithful. No fear, either realized or imagined, should stop me from proclaiming the Word of God boldly in that place. If the Lord is the Lord and He is with me, the words of Paul to the Philippians should be my mantra: "Do not be anxious about anything." I repeated these words over and over again to myself every day I was in that place.

Anxiety isn't anything new. It is actually quite common. It can be about the necessities or the complexities of life. Anxiety is man's way of trying to manage what he or she feels is out of control. Jesus was aware of this aspect of human nature. In his Sermon on the Mount, he addressed a crowd of people who were obviously worried about the necessities of life. The concern was that their anxiety would skew their focus on the emerging Kingdom (Matt. 6:25-34). Anxiety causes focus and priorities to shift.

Paul's concern for the Christians in Philippi is no different. He doesn't want their Kingdom focus to be replaced by their worry about their environment. He says in Philippians 4:6a *do not be anxious about anything*. However difficult, these instructions are perfect for the crisis they are in. As we have seen, Paul started with a focus on Jesus (v. 4), he encourages them to remain calm (v. 5a) and reminds them the Lord is near (v. 5b).

Paul isn't the only person preaching this message to the New Testament church. Peter starts out his first epistle in the first five verses explaining that when things are upside down and inside out, and you are scared to death and feel like freaking out... **YOU NEED TO KNOW THAT YOU ARE SECURE. COMPLETELY SECURE in JESUS!**

Easier said than done? Thankfully, Paul, like his Savior, models how to remain calm in the midst of a storm around him. Reading of his missionary journeys throughout the known world, we learn how he remained as cool as a cucumber despite being in prison, surviving an angry riot, dodging death threats, and otherwise being rejected for carrying the Gospel message.

A few days later, I stood in a grocery store parking lot. As I scanned the area around me, I noticed a very agitated man moving in my direction. The closer he got, the more I realized he was approaching me aggressively, screaming obscenities about my nationality and faith while balling up his fists. Had Paul's words not been lodged in my heart and mind, I may have resorted to fight or flight. Instead, I was able to graciously wave hello, smile, sit down calmly inside my ride, and continue my day.

Although it is hard, especially in the dark world we live in, we don't have to be anxious about anything. Why? JESUS!

Eyes Up!
Ryan