

F O C U S
on
WINNING
in
L I F E

Let Your Purpose Prioritize Your Life

Dr. Matt Williams

This is a chapter from the book Focus on Winning in Life by Matt Williams provided by Student Leadership Conferences. We hope the chapter will be a help and blessing to you as you study it personally, with a group or as a family. Be sure to use the discussion questions provided to further enhance your study.

LET YOUR PURPOSE PRIORITIZE YOUR LIFE: BE PRAYERFUL, JOYFUL, THANKFUL

Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice. Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand. Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your request be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

Philippians 4:4–7

A SIMPLE FORMULA FOR SUCCESS:

BE JOYFUL + BE PRAYERFUL + BE THANKFUL = PEACE AND CONTENTMENT

Be Joyful—Why should I be joyful? What if I don't feel like

being joyful? Because of who God is and what He has done.

It's not about what I feel! It's all about Him! As I reflect on God's goodness, God's mercy in my life, God's blessing on our family, and God's working in the lives of others over the years, 1 Corinthians 2:9 continually comes to mind: "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him." Yes, you just read this verse at the end of the last

chapter. But it relates to the Philippians 4 passage also. That's what being joyful is all about.

Be Prayerful—We are not to be anxious and worry about things. Instead we are to bring everything to God in prayer. This does not come easy to me. I am a worrier by nature. I have a tendency to worry, to spend time thinking some of the worst things that could happen. I was raised by parents who were worriers, and my sister and I acquired the habit of worrying also, which did not add enjoyment to our outlook on life. These Scriptures remind me to bring everything to God in prayer—yes, everything.

Other key scriptures on prayer:

- **The Lord's prayer is our model—Matthew 6:9–13**
 - o Pray “Our Father”—6:9
 - o Pray for daily needs—6:11
 - o Pray for forgiveness—6:12
- **You can approach God boldly through Jesus— Hebrews 4:14–16**
 - You can cast all your anxiety on the Lord—1 Peter 4:6–7
 - You should pray continually—1 Thessalonians 5:17–18
 - Dare to pray great things like Elijah—James 5:17–18
 - God hears and answers prayer—Psalm 34:15–18
 - The prayer of the righteous has great power—James 5:16

I have found that when I rejoice in the Lord for the past and bring all concerns, cares, fears, and frustrations to God in the present, it reminds me of God's presence with me through it all.

Be Thankful—The importance of thanksgiving in our prayer life and daily attitudes cannot be overemphasized. God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble (proud people are not thankful people). We live in a very ungrateful society today, and many people are not thankful for the blessings bestowed on them by our God. And when we see ungrateful Christians, it is so sad. Many are angry, even bitter, over something not going the way they desired, or they had an unfulfilled expectation in the home, at work, or at church.

When you find yourself not grateful and thankful, not rejoicing in God's goodness, you must repent of this sin. Be a grateful, thankful Christian for all of God's blessings. Surround yourself with grateful, thankful Christians—it's contagious! Bring this attitude of thanksgiving into your prayer life. Praise God for who He is and be thankful for His many blessings before bringing your requests to Him. This will add to your joy.

BE JOYFUL + BE PRAYERFUL + BE THANKFUL = PEACE AND CONTENTMENT

We have peace with God when we put our faith and trust in Him. We cannot be joyful, prayerful, or thankful without true faith. “Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” (Romans 5:1). The Philippians 4 passage at the beginning of this chapter shows us that we can have the peace of God as a result of being joyful, prayerful, and thankful. This is a simple formula for genuine success. This peace of God surpasses our understanding—it is beyond explanation, but it is definitely available as we seek to live a life of peace and fulfillment, as we walk moment by moment, day by day, living joyfully, praying unceasingly, and walking thankfully.

A GOOD RULE TO FOLLOW

Be worried for nothing; be prayerful in all things; be thankful for everything.

ARE YOU FOCUSED?

What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a

price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.

1 Corinthians 6:19–20

FOR FURTHER STUDY

Look for illustrations in Scripture of Joyful believers—why were they joyful? Begin with Acts 2:42–47.

Praying believers—why were they praying? Begin with Acts 4:13–24.

Thankful believers—why were they thankful? Begin with Acts 4:29–37.

Can you find other illustrations of each of the above? Do a word study on:

Joy/Joyful

Prayer/Prayerful Thanksgiving/Thankful

A SIMPLE FORMULA FOR SUCCESS

Philippians 4:4-7

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Be Joyful –

- Read v.4 - How Can I Be Joyful Today? Think on God's Power/God's Promises/God's Presence/God's Provision. Think on God's Mercy/His Grace/His Goodness in your life. Now what are some things you can rejoice in the Lord about today?
- Read v.5 – Let Your Reasonableness Be Known to All. The Lord is Near. LET FAITH ENDURE. James 5:7-9 - How can you apply this verse in your life?

2. Be Prayerful –

- You can cast all your anxiety on the Lord. I Peter 4:6,7
- You should pray continually I Thes 5:17,18 - When we rejoice in the Lord for the past and bring all concerns, cares, fears, and frustrations to God in the present, it reminds us of His presence with us today. What can you praise God for today? Who needs your prayer today? Who can you pray with today?

3. Be Thankful – The importance of thanksgiving in our prayer life and daily attitudes cannot be overemphasized. How can you show an attitude of gratitude today?

Further Thoughts on Philippians 4

By Mark Davis; Faith Baptist Bible College

Have you ever been at the mall and overheard a stressed-out mom yell, “Euodia, Syntyche, get over here right now!?” Neither have I and probably for good reason. You won’t find these names in any baby book or “top 100 names of the year” book. Why? In the book of Philippians these two can’t seem to get along. Paul mentions them as having “labored side by side” with him in ministry, and their names are written in the book of life, but for some reason they could not get along.

Earlier in the book Paul exhorted the Philippians to be “striving together for the faith of the gospel” (1:27) and to be “of one mind” (2:2), which was a challenge for these two.

While we don’t know what caused their situation specifically, we do know what could have prevented it: a personal application of Philippians 4:4–7.

In verses 4–7 Paul tells us to rejoice, stop worrying, and to pray. The result? “The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.” That supernatural peace is the same peace that Jesus offered in John 14:27: “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.” This peace cannot be arrived at by human effort, it’s a by-product of the working of God in the life of the believer.

On our journey to be at peace both vertically and horizontally, Paul first tells us to rejoice. That can be difficult for me as I am a pessimist by nature! Years of rooting for the Chicago Bulls and Bears have left their mark on my life! But as we take our focus off our circumstances which can only bring temporary happiness, (happiness is based on what’s happening to us, joy is a godly optimism that supersedes our circumstances) and instead focus in on the one who has divinely appointed the events of our lives, we can rejoice.

Part of the process is being “reasonable” (which could also be translated gracious, friendly, kind) towards all in light of the fact that God is near. He is both near physically (He’s everywhere and very aware!) and also near in that He really is coming back soon.

This truth naturally leads us to be thankful people of

prayer. Again, this doesn’t come easy for me! I tend to focus in on what I wish I had instead of what God has blessed me with. Take a minute to look around your room: Pictures of family, youth group trips and extra-curricular opportunities are probably everywhere. We are so blessed! I need to work on being more thankful.

When it comes to prayer, we should have more than just one set aside time during the day to pray; we should have a consistent attitude of prayer throughout the day. It’s easy for us to pray for that last-second field goal to go through or for that big fish not to break the line, but why not pray with a friend or co-worker about a specific situation that has

presented itself? You don't have to make a school-wide announcement and cancel classes for the day! Bow by your locker, take an extra minute at lunch, or right after practice to bring that request to God. He loves it when you do.

The result of this process? Peace! Notice the result isn't that you will know exactly what God is thinking or what the outcome of your situation will be. Instead, it says you will have peace. It's what the world is looking for and what we can personally experience even in life's most difficult moments.



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