

Faculty Work Comprehensive List

6-12-2015

Do Not Be Anxious... Rejoice!

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Recommended Citation

Mulder, D. J. (2015). Do Not Be Anxious... Rejoice!. Retrieved from https://digitalcollections.dordt.edu/faculty_work/358

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Do Not Be Anxious... Rejoice!

Abstract

"We do not need to be our worries. We need not be our anxieties or fears."

Posting about God's comfort in times of fear from *In All Things* - an online hub committed to the claim that the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ has implications for the entire world.

<http://inallthings.org/do-not-be-anxious-rejoice/>

Keywords

In All Things, God, fear, worry, peace

Disciplines

Christianity

Comments

In All Things is a publication of the [Andreas Center for Reformed Scholarship and Service at Dordt College](#).

Do Not Be Anxious... Rejoice!

 inallthings.org/do-not-be-anxious-rejoice/

Dave Mulder

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

Those who know me well will probably color me as an optimist. My general attitude is positive: I tend to look for the best in situations, and in people. My students often point out my enthusiasm and energy—and how I talk not just with my hands, but with my whole body. A former colleague even described me as “whimsical.”¹

And I would agree with this, generally. I take joy in even the little things in life.

That said, there is more to me than my ebullient exterior. It's not that I am not truly joyful—I am! Internally, however, I am sometimes plagued with self-doubt. I expect a lot of myself, and I'm hard on myself when I don't measure up to my own expectations. I worry that I won't be good enough, or that people will see me as a fraud, or that my students won't respond to my teaching, or that I'll say the wrong thing and end up looking foolish.

Honestly, I worry a lot. I think I am a worrier by nature.

How often—when confronted with a new, or puzzling, or challenging situation—is my first response one of apprehension? Why do I feel such anxiety? Why am I so afraid? Paul's admonishment in Philippians 4:6, “Do not be anxious about anything,” sometimes has a hollow ring to it for me. Because I *do* worry. I *do* have anxieties. I *am* afraid sometimes.

But if we take Paul's whole message here to heart, we see that there is more to the story. Paul continues, “...in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.” I'm encouraged in this: though I may feel anxiety, I am here *invited* to turn these over to the Lord. He wants to hear my prayers, and I can be thankful, even in those anxious moments, that there is a God who hears my prayers, and answers me.

Notice too that this passage doesn't really say we shouldn't *feel* worried, or anxious, or fearful. Those are normal human emotions, after all. But, we are assured here that we do not need to *be* our worries. We need not be our anxieties or fears.² Over and over again, throughout the Old and New Testaments we are encouraged, “Be not afraid.” (I love the way this is phrased in the old King James Version.) Jesus has the power to drive out fear, and the power to replace it with peace. In John 14:27, the Lord says, “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you... Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.”

I believe this is what Paul is getting at in his words to the Philippians (and to me.) When I am anxious I am invited, even encouraged, to give my worries over to the Lord. His peace “which transcends all understanding” will comfort me in my times of fear. And thus, even in those anxious, fearful times, I can

truly rejoice!

Footnotes

1. This was part of an English lesson where my colleague was defining the word “whimsical” for our middle school students. I popped into her mind as an example. I believe she meant it as a compliment, and I took it that way. ↩
2. This idea came to me through the writings of Parker J. Palmer. In his excellent book [The Courage to Teach: Exploring the Inner Landscape of a Teacher's Life](#), he explores the idea of being “fearful” in our teaching, but not *being our fears*. I highly recommend it! ↩