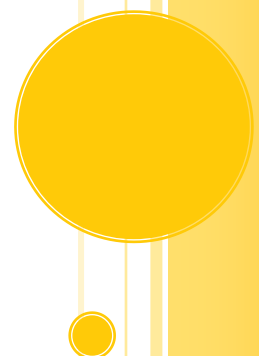


FAITH IN UNCERTAIN TIMES

How to Live Like a Christian During a Crisis

Pastor Joe Pantaleo, Laura Pantaleo, and Louis Boyd



FAITH IN UNCERTAIN TIMES

How to Live Like a Christian During a Crisis

Day 1 — 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

Rejoice!

*“¹⁶ **Rejoice always**, ¹⁷ pray continually, ¹⁸ give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.”
- 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 (NIV)⁴*

Written by Louis Boyd

If you turn on the news or scroll through social media, there is a good chance that you will come away from the screen discouraged, disappointed, and saddened when you hear of the latest updates regarding the spread of the corona virus, deaths, unemployment, etc. Being down and discouraged is a natural reaction to the isolation and uncertainty that many of us are feeling. The key is that we must not let our circumstances fuel those emotions in us and allow those feelings to linger and grow. Paul tells us to rejoice always. That is, have joy at all times. Joy is a gladness of our heart in something or someone. But you could ask, “how can I rejoice when we are bored, isolated, fearful, discouraged, and even depressed about what I am seeing in the world?” An answer to this is to focus on the fact that God is in control. This situation has not caught God by surprise. He knows all things and is in control of the events on Earth.

Now, if you are anything like me, you may say, “yes, the Lord is in control, but we do not know what He may bring us through!” After all, Paul experienced shipwreck and God permitted that to happen (Acts 27). So, there is more to being able to rejoice than knowing God

“Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!”

– Philippians 4:4

is in control. Being able to rejoice during uncertain times comes by knowing the destination which God is bringing the Christian too.

That destination is to be molded to the character of Jesus. This is the “good” that God works in the life of the believer no matter the circumstances (Romans 8:28-29). Also, joy comes from knowing what God will do in the end for this world. The Christian has a hope. A hope that looks forward and is certain. That hope is the New Heavens and New Earth where God will be with His people. There, we will be like Christ. Every tear will be wiped away and there will no longer be any suffering or death. This is what produces joy, looking forward to the hope that we have.

So how can you have joy? Start by knowing what God has planned for the believer and look forward to it (Romans 8:18-25, 28-29; Revelation 21-22).

Questions

- What do the people in your life hope in?

- What is your hope?

- Read Romans 8:28 – What does this verse tell you about God? How can this verse bring you comfort?

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Day 2 — 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

Pray!

*“¹⁶ Rejoice always, ¹⁷ **pray continually**, ¹⁸ give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.”
- 1 Thessalonians 5:14 (NIV)*

Written by Pastor Joe Pantaleo

When I was younger, I used to pray at dinner every day and would pray in my bed before going to sleep every night. Not only did I pray, but I prayed the same prayers every time. It was always one of those – “God is good. God is great. Thank you for this food. Amen” type of prayers. My whole family would pray these types of prayers. In fact, my sister and I would race to see who could say the dinner prayer faster. It was like prayer was a game or an inconvenience that had to be done before you could eat your food or go to sleep. After years of saying those prayers, the power of prayer was lost to me. It became routine. It became boring.

Many people go their whole lives praying rote, memorized prayers. Catholics pray through the Rosary by saying 53 “Hail Mary” and 6 “Our Father” prayers. Many protestants fall into the “God is good. God is Great” routine. But what if prayer was more than a routine that you had to do before dinner and bed? What if prayer was meant to be a conversation, instead of an incantation?

*“pray continually”
– 1 Thessalonians 5:14*

The truth about prayer is that it is meant to be a conversation! It’s an opportunity for us to bring our praise, needs, wants, and repentance to God. In Philippians 4:6, we are told to present our requests to God. This is exciting because it means that God WANTS to hear from us! As children of God, we

can be confident in the fact that our Good Heavenly Father delights in hearing from His children. So much so that He invites us to talk with Him and bring our requests to Him.

Jesus told this parable in Luke 11:11-13 ““Now suppose one of you fathers is asked by his son for a fish; he will not give him a snake instead of a fish, will he? Or if he is asked for an egg, he will not give him a scorpion, will he? If you then being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your Heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him?”

Our God LOVES to answer prayer!

Questions

- How has this pandemic affected your prayer life?

- How can you create a habit of genuine prayer?

- Read James 4:8 – How can you pray in such a way that you draw near to God?

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Day 3 — 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

Be Thankful!

*“¹⁶ Rejoice always, ¹⁷ pray continually, ¹⁸ **give thanks in all circumstances**; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.”*
- 1 Thessalonians 5:14 (NIV)

Written by Louis Boyd

Have you ever wondered what God’s will for you is. I believe that is a question which a lot of Christians ask, and they do so out of a heart that wants to do obey the Lord. Most often, this comes out when we are faced with big decisions such as, “should I date this person, where should I go to college, what should I study, help me find the one I will marry” and so forth. Though these are very important questions and God’s word can help us in these areas, the focus of God’s will for a believer is to make them more like Christ so that God will be glorified.

The message of 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18, to rejoice, pray, and be thankful are God’s will for a believer! We have looked at being joyful and praying continually, but what about being thankful? Being thankful is an attitude of our heart when we appreciate someone, something, or some act that a person did for us. When someone brings me food that I wasn’t expecting, I am thankful for what they have done. Likewise, God desires for us to always give thanks, but we are often guilty of being thankless.

In the middle of uncertain times, we may very well ask, “how can I be thankful in these circumstances?” Note that we are not thankful for all things. We do not thank God for evil in the world.

*“give thanks in all
circumstances...” —
1 Thessalonians 5:18*

Note that Paul was thankful to God for how the Philippians helped him in his need (Philippians 1:3).

Remember that Paul was in prison when he wrote to the Philippians. So, we can be thankful to God in all things but not for all things. The key is to remember the hope that we have. This is why we can be thankful no matter what happens to us. We have a hope that goes beyond death and right into the presence of God. This is why we can give thanks in all circumstances, God has redeemed us and given us a hope. Thank Him for the hope you have today and thank someone personally in your own life for what they have done.

Questions

- What are you thankful for in this time?

- What can you thank God for as you pray?

- Who can you tell “thank you” today?

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Day 4 — 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

God's Will For You

*"¹⁶ Rejoice always, ¹⁷ pray continually, ¹⁸ give thanks in all circumstances; **for this is God's will for you** in Christ Jesus."*

- 1 Thessalonians 5:14 (NIV)

Written by Laura Pantaleo

When Paul wrote this letter to the Thessalonian church, the Christians at this church were going through an intense, difficult time. They'd lost loved ones, they experienced constant persecution, and struggled with lack of understanding of their faith. Despite those hardships, Paul writes to tell them that it's God's will for them to rejoice, pray, and give thanks constantly. That's not exactly the most encouraging thing to hear where you're going through such loss and struggle ... or is it? In I Thessalonians 3:3, Paul says that these people were actually appointed for these hard times. God chose these people to go through those experiences, not because He wanted to punish them or make them suffer, but because He wanted to sanctify them; He wanted relationship with them!

In the same way, God has a beautiful purpose for you during this difficult time we find ourselves in. God is not surprised that this pandemic is going on; He isn't surprised that school got canceled or you're stuck at home without social interaction for what seems like an eternity. In fact, He appointed this time in our lives, not as a punishment, but as a way to draw us to Him and free us from sin! Romans 5:3-4 says, "We rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope." It is God's will that we find joy amidst this pandemic! Rejoicing through the difficult things will never let us down. It is God's will that we pray to Him constantly. How amazing is that? GOD the Creator of the Universe, Lord of all, wants to talk

to you all. day. long. He wants to hear about the good, the bad, and ugly in your life, and you will never annoy Him!

Finally, it is God's will that we give thanks to Him no matter what. There is always something to be thankful about. And if things get so bad that you can literally think of nothing to thank God for, then take a deep breath, and thank Him for that. I've found that the more I intentionally thank God for things, the more I rejoice, and then the more I pray. Obeying God in these ways will truly change your life

*"... for this is God's will
for you..."*

– 1 Thessalonians 5:18

Questions

- Which is harder for you: rejoicing always, praying continually, or being thankful in all circumstances? Why?

- Why do you think obedience to God's will for you will produce joy and peace in your life?

- Read Romans 5:3-4 – How have you grown during this difficult time?

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Day 4 — 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

In Christ Jesus

*“¹⁶ Rejoice always, ¹⁷ pray continually, ¹⁸ give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God’s will for you **in Christ Jesus.**”*

- 1 Thessalonians 5:14 (NIV)

Written by Laura Pantaleo

In Christ Jesus. These three little words literally make ALL the difference for this passage! As we’ve studied this week, it’s God’s will for us to rejoice always, pray without ceasing, and give thanks in all circumstances, but it is actually impossible for us to do those things without Christ Jesus in our lives. You see, in Ephesians 2 it says that we were dead in our trespasses and sins. In Isaiah, God refers to our good deeds as filthy rags. People that are dead in sin cannot do good things to glorify God. Any “good deed” they do is still viewed as sin because at the heart of the good deed, they desire to glorify themselves rather than God. It is impossible to earn God’s favor through good things we do because we are tainted by sin (Hebrews 11:6).

That’s why the life and work of Christ Jesus is so important for us! Jesus came down to earth, God in flesh, and lived the perfect life none of us can live. He was tempted in every way, just as we are, but yet he did not sin (Hebrews 4:15). Romans 6:23 teaches us that the wages of sin is death. Jesus knew that the only way mankind would be saved from their sins and be able to live in communion with God forever was if he laid down his perfect life for us. So on the darkest day of all of history, the day we now recognize as Good Friday, the perfect, holy Jesus Christ was murdered on a cross, a horrific and painful death. Isaiah 53:5 says, “He was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed.” Jesus laid down his life for us, taking on the punishment for our sins, so that we can now live in freedom!

Romans 10:9 says, “if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.” We were dead in our trespasses and sins, but if you trust in Jesus Christ for your salvation, then you are made alive with Christ for by grace you have been saved!

“... in Christ Jesus”
– 1 Thessalonians 5:18

That’s why those three little words- in Christ Jesus- are so important! Because we are only made alive through Christ Jesus; we are only able to rejoice, pray, and give thanks when we approach the Throne of Grace through Jesus Christ and there find the forgiveness of our sins.

Questions

- How can the phrase “in Christ Jesus” give you hope today/this week?

- Read James 2:26 – How does this verse, in addition to the devotional today, affect the way you think you should live your life?

- Read Hebrews 11:6 – Why do you think it’s impossible for people to please God without faith?

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Rest, Reflect, & Pray

Today, look back through the week. Take some time to flip through the Bible studies from this week and reflect on what God said to you through those studies.

Use the space below to re-write the scripture that stood out to you the most this week

Write down why that scripture stood out to you.

What is the biggest thing that God taught you through this week?
