

The **ENTRUSTED Leader's Workbook**
***“Barnabas”* Edition**

Seven Core Values that Impact Every Leader-to-Follower Relationship:
HEART-MISSION-APPROACH-STABILITY-LIFESTYLE-FORTITUDE-WORLDVIEW

Lesson Nineteen: Prayers that Lead to Peace and Courage

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Lesson Nineteen: Prayers that Lead to Peace and Courage

CORE VALUE: The FORTITUDE for leading built on the love and sovereignty of God and the discipline of prayer.

BIBLE VERSE(S): Philippians 4:4-7

ONE SIMPLE TRUTH: Prayer remedies anxiety and creates a peace (fortitude) which guards a leader's mind and heart from dysfunctional thoughts and feelings.

APPLICATION: Pray about all circumstances, including the ones you face as a marketplace leader.

Introduction:

Anxiety chokes the life out of a leader. Anxious thoughts leave a leader feeling emotionally, physically, intellectually, and spiritually exhausted. The leader who unduly worries about immediate circumstances often wallows in self-doubt and inactivity. The very thought of a situation which might exceed one's ability to control produces an apprehension that stops a leader in his or her tracks. The leader who suffers from stress runs the risk of making poor and impulsive decisions. Anxiety slowly erodes one's ability to lead others boldly and effectively.

The ill effects of worry compromises and damages a leader's relationship with his or her followers. In contrast, mutual respect characterizes a healthy leader-to-follower relationship. The leader who treats others with gentleness gains respect with those who follow. Internal anxiety very often erupts from a leader in the form of harsh treatment of others. Emotionally dysfunctional leaders often take out their insecure feelings on innocent followers. Leaders with pent up stress sometimes lose control and lash out with

mean-spirited communication and behavior. These misdeeds and other anxiety related behaviors negatively impact the leader's relationship with his or her followers.

Anxiety indicates an immature faith in God. Worry exhibits a warning sign that a leader has placed his or her trust in an entity other than God. Self-reliance stems from pride and leads a person desiring control. When a leader loses a sense of control anxiety starts to build. God-reliance stems from humility and leads a person to trust. When faith in God becomes real, peace and joy take over a person's heart. Anxiety and worry imply that God lacks love and control (sovereignty). Peace indicates that a person feels secure of God's love and control.

Fortitude for leading comes from prayer. Prayer frees a leader from anxiety and worry. A leader, who claims to be a follower of Jesus Christ, must pray about every situation! Prayer creates intimacy with God and deepens a leader's understanding of God's love. Time alone with the Lord God Almighty broadens one's view of his infinite sovereign control of all circumstances. Fortitude and peace come from the power of prayer. Prayer provides an antidote for anxiety. Read Phil 4:4-7 and answer the following questions.

“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 everything, 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 NIV)

Questions of the Biblical Text¹ (Philippians 4:4-7)

What does Paul command followers of Jesus to rejoice in and how often?

In light of Paul’s command to rejoice in the Lord’s presence at all times, what impact should difficult circumstances have on a leader’s joy and what does the presence of anxiety and worry suggest about a leader facing a tough situation?

What does Paul want all people to see in the life of a follower of Jesus? Explain how this perception impacts a leader’s relationship with followers?

Paul states that a follower of Jesus Christ should not suffer from the ill effects of anxiety. Discuss how anxiety affects you as a leader and what you do to counteract it.

Paul states that a follower of Jesus Christ should pray about “everything”. Do you think “everything” includes circumstances you face as a marketplace leader? Discuss how you integrate prayer into your role as a leader in the marketplace.

¹ Unless otherwise noted the questions listed in *The ENTRUSTED Leader’s Workbook* are based on: *The Holy Bible: New International Version* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996, c1984)

Anxiety attacks the mind and the heart of a leader. What does Paul say the result of a disciplined prayer life is?

Which do you value more: peace of heart and mind which transcends all the circumstances you face regardless of their outcome or the resolution of circumstances that generate anxiety in your life? Explain your answer.

Commentary

Paul commands his readers to “Rejoice!” He repeats this statement to underscore the importance of being filled with joy and gladness regardless of one’s circumstances. An intimate relationship with the Lord God Almighty provides the basis for such rejoicing even in the face of persecution and trials. The context of rejoicing for Paul contemplated the presence of adversity, not the absence of troublesome circumstances. Real faith in God changes a person’s vantage point from which he or she views difficulty from one’s finite capacity to cope with stress to God’s infinite sovereign control and unconditional love. Paul commands followers of Jesus Christ to “Rejoice in the Lord

always,” (NIV) not just when things are going well and we feel in control of our surroundings.

As a leader you will face adversity. Just as David faced Goliath you will encounter “giant” situations that appear to exceed your leadership experience and/or skill. Saul and his men responded to Goliath with fear and panic. Difficult situations should not diminish a leader’s joy or result in irrational decisions and actions. The presence of anxiety and worry in the heart and mind of a leader suggests too much dependence on self and too little faith in God. When adversity comes, faith in God’s love and sovereignty frees a leader from the stress and worry of trusting in one’s own abilities alone.

Gentleness should mark the life of every follower of Jesus Christ. Every person you encounter should get the sense that you deal with others fairly, equitably, and mildly. The Greek word used by the Apostle Paul is *epieikes*. Strong defines this term as: “...equitable, fair, mild, gentle.”² The leader who others view as fair, equitable, and mild has laid the groundwork for a healthy relationship with those who follow. The leader whom others view as unfair, inequitable, and harsh will soon lose the respect and credibility of those who follow. Gentleness comes from a heart fixed on God and others. The lack of gentleness when dealing with others indicates a heart fixed on self. *Epieikes* is much more than being tender and nurturing, this term carries the idea of always doing the right and fair thing in regard to others even if the right thing is not to one’s own

²James Strong, *The Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible : Showing Every Word of the Test of the Common English Version of the Canonical Books, and Every Occurrence of Each Word in Regular Order.*, electronic ed. (Ontario: Woodside Bible Fellowship., 1996), G1933.

advantage. The gentle, (fair, equitable, mild), and selfless leader fosters healthy relationships with those who follow.

The Apostle Paul states that a follower of Jesus Christ should not suffer from the ill effects of anxiety. A continuous barrage of anxious thoughts and feelings can literally damage a person's physical and mental well being. Constant worry opens the door for insecurity and doubt which causes a leader to second guess his or her decision making. Anxiety can poison the leader-to-follower relationship in a number of ways. Anxious leaders often treat his or her followers harshly and unfairly. A leader burdened stress or anxiety often gravitates to self-serving decisions and actions. These and other such harmful attitudes and actions on the part of a leader result in damage to the leader-to-follower relationship.

Paul commands his readers: "Do not be anxious about anything..." (NIV) The Greek word for anxious is *merimnao*. Strong defines the term as: "...to be anxious...to be troubled with cares...to seek to promote one's interests."³ Paul wrote these words in the imperative, as a command to be followed, not a self-help suggestion for peaceful living. One may ask: How can this be? How can I control my feelings of anxiety? After all, who doesn't want freedom from the troubled feelings of one's cares?

In this passage, there are two key insights that will help a leader counteract the dysfunctional feelings associated with anxious thoughts. The first insights relate to the link between self-centered thoughts and stressful feelings. A *merimnao* (anxious) person promotes his or her self interests ahead of all others. Feelings of stress, worry, and

³James Strong, *The Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible : Showing Every Word of the Test of the Common English Version of the Canonical Books, and Every Occurrence of Each Word in Regular Order.*, electronic ed. (Ontario: Woodside Bible Fellowship., 1996), G3309.

anxiety typically well up in a person's heart when thoughts arise that suggest one's interests are being threatened. Freedom from the bondage of worry starts when a person relinquishes control of one's interest to God and trusts him fully regardless of the apparent circumstances.

The second key to offsetting anxiety relates to a disciplined prayer life. Paul states that followers of Jesus Christ should pray about everything. This command to pray about everything stands in stark contrast to Paul's previous command to not be anxious about anything. Prayer provides freedom from anxiety! This antidote for anxiety extends to all circumstances. No matter what a leader faces in the marketplace, the opportunity for prayer exists. As a follower of Jesus Christ who leads in the marketplace you should pray about everything, especially any situation that produces anxiety.

The topic of how to pray effectively goes beyond the scope of this lesson. Many good books exist which strive to improve a Christian's prayer life. The relevant point for a leader concerns the need to adopt the discipline of regularly going before God to thankfully pray and make requests of God for circumstances that relate to the marketplace and generate anxiety. Pray about everything!

Anxiety attacks a person's mind and heart. The leader who carries a responsibility for the lives of others becomes particularly vulnerable to this threat. Paul tells followers of Jesus Christ that the natural result of a disciplined prayer life remains two-fold. The prayerful leader experiences a peace from God that transcends all understanding. Note that Paul did not say that prayer necessarily changes our circumstances thereby reducing our stress. Prayer changes our view of circumstances from our finite temporal perspective

to God's miraculous and infinite perspective. Focusing on God's love and sovereign power results in peace.

Another benefit of prayer actually comes from the first result of peace. This peace that surpasses all understanding: "...will guard your hearts and your minds..." (Philippians 4:7 NIV) The Greek word for guard is *phroureo* (froo-**reh**-o). Strong defines this term as follows: "[*phroureo* /froo- **reh**- o/]...to guard, protect by a military guard, either to prevent hostile invasion, or to keep the inhabitants of a besieged city from flight."⁴ Prayer serves to stand guard over a leader's emotions (heart) and thoughts (mind). Prayer reorients a leader's heart and mind off self and onto God. Prayer produces peace that literally protects a leader from the invasion of insecure thoughts that result in fear and anxiety.

Prayer connects a leader with the love of the God who: "...so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." (John 3:16 NIV) The God who loved you enough to sacrifice his own Son stands ready to extend the comfort of his love into the most difficult of circumstances. Prayer reminds a leader that God cares what happens and will not abandon one to his or her own strength to resolve difficult circumstances. Prayer keeps fresh in a follower of Christ's heart and mind that God is actively working, that God has a unique plan for a leader's life that includes stressful situations, and that nothing can separate us from the love of God. Pray connects a leader to God's infinite love that enables one to peacefully endure hardship. Consider the words of the Apostle Paul from Romans 8:28-39:

⁴James Strong, *The Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible : Showing Every Word of the Test of the Common English Version of the Canonical Books, and Every Occurrence of Each Word in Regular Order.*, electronic ed. (Ontario: Woodside Bible Fellowship., 1996), G5432.

“And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.

What, then, shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus, who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? As it is written:

‘For your sake we face death all day long;
we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.’

No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (NIV)

Prayer connects a leader with the infinite power of the God who created the universe and is the sovereign king and ruler of heaven and earth. God answers to no other being, and he works his plan for mankind according to his own will. No circumstances exist outside his knowledge or control. God’s power extends over every detail of every situation, and nothing happens except what he allows to happen according to his plans and purposes. God is all powerful and sovereign. Prayer helps align one’s heart and mind to the reality that no matter how stressful a situation seems, all circumstances exist within God’s sovereign control and is part of his will for a person’s life. Consider the Apostle Paul’s words to this effect in Ephesians 1:11-12: “In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will, in order that we, who were the first to hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory. (NIV)

Fortitude for leading rests on the knowledge that God loves you and that he is actively controlling all circumstances according to his plan and for his glory. Prayer brings to mind God’s love and sovereign control. Prayer reminds a believer of these realities and generates peace that chases away fear, doubt, stress, worry, and anxiety.

Application

A disciplined prayer life yields the fruit of peace for a leader. Order, routine, and focus characterize a disciplined prayer life. Paul said to pray about everything. The discipline of prayer easily applies to a leader’s life and routine. To get started, all you need do is organize your prayers in an orderly fashion. Remember Paul said that prayer can be extended to “everything”. Anything that causes you anxiety should be taken to God in prayer in as specific terms as possible. Once the leader prays, the knowledge of God’s love and sovereign control over all stressful situations leads to peace, even if the circumstances never change.

Personal Application

In the space below, list “Everything” that is currently generating anxious thoughts and feelings in your life as a leader. Be as specific a possible. Establish a routine to pray for these items on a regular basis. (For example: Take five minutes at the start of every work day to pray for these and any other stressful circumstances you will face in a day.)

(Insert additional pages if necessary)

Conclusion

Anxiety disables a leader. Stress contributes to poor decisions, misguided initiatives, and dysfunctional behavior on the part of a leader. Anxious thoughts cause self-doubt and indecisiveness. Worry creates a passive leader. Anxiety can compromise the leader-to-follower relationship thereby reducing a leader's effectiveness in leading others.

The Apostle Paul commands followers of Christ, including leaders, to NOT be anxious about anything. No situation or circumstance, regardless of its level of difficulty, should cause a leader who follows Christ to experience stress and worry. Anxious thoughts and feelings come from a lack of trust and faith in The Lord God Almighty. One of the remedies for anxiety is prayer. Prayer exercises one's faith and trust in God.

The Apostle Paul also commanded followers of Christ, including leaders, to pray about everything. No situation or circumstance, regardless of its perceived eternal insignificance, should be excluded from one's prayer list. Present every request to God, especially items that cause you to experience anxious thoughts and feelings.

Prayer does not obligate God to improve difficult circumstances in our favor. Praying about everything may not change a stressful situation, but prayer will change one's perspective of the situation at hand. Prayer gets a leader's eyes off the finite limits of self and onto God's love, sovereignty, and infinite power. In the midst of anxious moments, prayer generates a peace that surpasses all understanding and guards one's heart and mind from anxious thoughts and feelings.

Authentic fortitude for leading rests on the peace of mind that God loves you and that he is in complete control of every detail of your life. Nothing happens outside God's

perfect plan for your life, even painful trials and tribulations. A disciplined prayer life connects a leader to God and bolsters one's courage and confidence. Pray about everything you face as a leader in order to experience God's peace that surpasses all understanding.