

STAYING CALM: SESSION TWO

JOY IN CHRIST...the antidote to anxiety isn't MEDICATION, a WEEK IN MAUI, yoga, or a massage; it is JOY. Staying CALM starts with "C" celebrating WHO GOD IS. Joy is a learned skill/spiritual discipline, training our inner worlds, not the result of outward conditions. It isn't connected to our status, our standard of living, having a joyful spouse or joyful friends. Joyful people don't have it all; they are devoted to something greater than personal security/happiness. Our JOY IN CHRIST isn't meant to be driven by moods or life changes. How can we be more joyful people? Learn to celebrate all of life. Find cause for celebration every day.

FROM A PRISON CELL....in jail, bruised from beatings, isolated from the outside world, awaiting trial where he'd be found guilty, yet Paul says: Rejoice in the Lord always. Dealing with anxiety begins there: in praising God always, not occasional praise but continuous praise, not situational joy based on favorable situations. Always rejoicing! Rejoice always, Paul says, he isn't a TIME STATEMENT, but a THEOLOGICAL STATEMENT. Let the Emperor rage; let persecutions come. Take away his freedom. Paul held firm: THE LORD WAS NEAR. Why was he so confident? Paul knew what he believed/whom he trusted. If anxiety takes hold of us, our doubts start to run wild; we question the stability of our beliefs
IS ANYONE IN CONTROL OF THE WORLD? DOES LIFE HAVE A PURPOSE?

CORE CONVICTIONS...our beliefs are core convictions, the TENT POLES that support us when life's storms blow. If they are strong, we'll stand; if they are weak, storms will prevail. Faith isn't the ABSENCE OF DOUBT; it is trusting despite doubts. Rather than deny uncertainty, we embrace it. EMBRACE UNCERTAINTY IN YOUR RELATIONSHIPS: IT'S CALLED ROMANCE. EMBRACE IT IN YOUR EMOTIONS: IT'S CALLED JOY. EMBRACE IT IN YOUR FAITH: IT'S CALLED DESTINY.

Paul had his dark moments. Circle the questions in his letters; they point to inner battles he waged. Paul clung to one core conviction: GOD IS IN CHARGE. HE IS SOVEREIGN. HE GOVERNS/PRESERVES ALL LIFE
When we are anxious, that belief is huge. Our confidence is in God, not our coping skills. A faith that can't be TESTED is a faith that can't BE TRUSTED. If anxiety drives us, SAFETY becomes OUR GOD. We all have a 1st response to a perceived threat. For the Disciples, it was panic. Each time he left them, they panicked. Anxiety creates more heretics than bad theology. We act as if we serve a limited God. We reflect the WORLD'S CHAOS, not CHRIST'S PEACE. To stay calm, what we believe about God matters. Start here: nothing is impossible with God.