

RESPONDING TO DISCOURAGEMENT

“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 4:6-7 (NIV)

It is believed that Paul wrote this letter from an Ephesian jail to a church who needed encouragement in their walk of faith and service to the Lord. In this process of walking out our faith, challenges and troubles come. For Paul, it was an imprisonment designed to punish him for his proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Out of this physically depressing situation, he offered a solution and made the firm statement, *“Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say, Rejoice”*. For us it could be any one of a million things that has the same effect upon us that Paul is addressing in this church:

How To Respond To Discouragement.

From this passage, listen to what he says:

1. **Regardless** of what you face, don't take on the care, worry, mental hardship, or outright fear that you are controlled by anything other than the Shepherd's care.
2. The **mechanisms** are: prayer, supplication, and thanksgiving.
 - a. Prayer is verbal communication with the Father, from your heart.
 - b. Supplication, its Greek root (**deo**) refers to binding or to tie in bonds. Literally, your praying serves to bind the cause of your distress, it's an automatic response of the Holy Spirit to bring deliverance to you.
 - c. Thanksgiving is an act of faith that expresses appreciation for the answer to what you have asked God for, before you see any evidence. (An attitude of rejoicing makes thanksgiving easier.)
3. God's **peace** will elevate your perception from a problem-oriented situation to a solution-oriented, impending deliverance kind of thinking.
4. And in the process, He will set a military **guard** around your heart to protect it from being controlled by doubt and fear that God won't come through for you.

So, at the risk of setting up hoops for us to jump through or creating a formula to follow, two things are important to consider here:

1. **Attitude:** Rejoicing is a manifestation of joy that is imparted when fellowship with the Father is a constant, not a momentary referral point, when faced with crises of various kinds. This joy creates an attitude of rejoicing in all things!
2. **"Known" requests:** This word "known" Paul uses expresses far more than a verbal communication to the Father regarding a crisis. It is making known requests that are given within the environment of a relationship characterized by close fellowship. These kinds of requests are not simply sporadic expressions of need. So, make a commitment to run after the Father with the purpose of cultivating a healthy, personal relationship with Him in prayer-fellowship.