

Saturday, April 18, 2020

Turn off the outside "noise" for a couple of minutes and consider this message from God's Word.  
I am praying that it calms your spirit and encourages your heart.

PHILIPPIANS 4:8-9 (TNIV)

<sup>8</sup> Finally, brothers and sisters,  
whatever is **true**, whatever is **noble**, whatever is **right**,  
whatever is **pure**, whatever is **lovely**, whatever is **admirable** —  
if anything is **excellent** or **praiseworthy** —  
***think about such things.***

<sup>9</sup> Whatever you have learned  
or received  
or heard from me,  
or seen in me—  
***put it into practice.***

And **THE GOD OF PEACE** will be with you.

— PART 10 —

*I found that when a passage of Scripture has been very familiar to me for a long time — such as this passage! — if I will simply **slow down** . . . take my time . . . and read thoughtfully and reflectively, it can become alive to me in new and fresh ways.*

We get to **CHOOSE** what we allow our minds to **FOCUS** on. And Paul encourages us to **concentrate our attention** on some very specific things. Like...

*"whatever is **TRUE** . . . **think about these things**" —  
"whatever is **NOBLE** . . . **think about these things**" —  
"whatever is **RIGHT** . . . **think about these things**" —  
"whatever is **PURE** . . . **think about these things**" —  
"whatever is **LOVELY** . . . **think about these things**" —  
"whatever is **ADMIRABLE** . . . **think about these things**" —  
"if anything is **EXCELLENT**" . . . **think about these things**" —  
"if anything is **PRAISEWORTHY**" . . . **think about these things**" —*

In the culture we live in today, there are many things that are truly **worth praising**, wouldn't you agree? **But frankly, I find it easier to find things worth criticizing!**  
***How about you?***

For example, just today we heard New York Governor Cuomo criticizing President Trump over his handling of the coronavirus crisis...while at the same time President Trump was tweeting criticisms of Governor Cuomo for **his** handling of the coronavirus crisis! Oy vey.

**Apparently we ALL seem to find it easier to find things worth criticizing! *How about you?***

And here I am taking time to criticize **both** of them...for criticizing each other!

Have both leaders had some **struggles** and made some **mistakes** addressing this horrific pandemic? Of course! They're human, just like us. But **both have also made some very helpful decisions** to try to stem the tide of this pernicious virus.

What's amazing to me is how easy it is for me to find things to **CRITICIZE**, and how challenging it seems to be for me to find things to **PRAISE!**

***How about you?***

At the same time, I suspect that many of us spend more time and energy **COMPLAINING** about our political leaders at this time that we do **PRAYING** for these imperfect, fallible, *human* leaders — people who are probably all trying their level best to do what is right and helpful to save lives and lessen the impact of this ugly virus! People who are in great need of God's wisdom and help!

1 TIMOTHY 2 (NIV)

**<sup>1</sup> I urge, then, FIRST OF ALL, that petitions, prayers, intercession and THANKSGIVING be made for ALL people —**

**<sup>2</sup> for kings and ALL THOSE IN AUTHORITY,**  
that we may live peaceful and quiet lives  
in all godliness and holiness.

**<sup>3</sup> This is good, and pleases God our Savior...**

I think Paul advises us to “think” this way because he knows that the “**ATTITUDE OF GRATITUDE**” has the power to reorient our perspective. After all, earlier in v. 4 he said that when we add **THANKSGIVING** to our prayers and petitions, God's peace will come and “guard our hearts and our minds in Christ Jesus”!

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So Lord, may we focus today on “whatever is **praiseworthy**” — as opposed to what is **blameworthy** — and spend some time **praying and interceding** for **ALL** people in positions of leadership right now...and maybe even **giving thanks for them?** (For they are facing challenges and decisions that I thank God **we** don't have to make!)

Pastor Doug

P.S. Praise God for his goodness and grace in allowing us to share our first **online EASTER CELEBRATION!** But I sure miss being together in person, don't you? I miss all your beautiful faces! **I hope you'll join us tomorrow morning online!**

I praise God today for the **praiseworthy** ministry taking place by the people and staff of **BETHANY** and also the teachers and staff of **WEST COVINA CHRISTIAN SCHOOL**. You are **all** working with great integrity and faithfulness as we seek to reach out to our community and serve the students God has entrusted to us! You are a bright light shining in the darkness of this crisis. I am deeply proud of you!

We would love to hear from you! How are you doing right now? And we would love to pray for you! Email us at [info@bethanyonline.net](mailto:info@bethanyonline.net)

P.P.S. Keep checking our “ENCOURAGEMENT FOR TODAY” webpage — we will try to post fresh encouragement **every day** during this crisis!

P.P.P.S. And watch our **LIVE-STREAM Worship Service** this coming Sunday at 10:30 A.M. for more encouragement.