

HOW TO HAVE A DAILY QUIET TIME

The QT Guide is designed to help you MOVE with God through Bible Reading, reflection and prayer. It can be completed in about 7 minutes.

½ Minute Preparing Your Heart: Invest the first 30 seconds preparing your heart. You might pray, “Lord, cleanse my heart so You can speak to me through the Scriptures. Make my mind alert, my soul active, and my heart responsive. Surround me with Your presence during this time.”

4 Minutes Listening To God: Take the next four minutes to read the Bible. Your greatest need is to hear a word from God. Allow the Word to strike fire in your heart. Meet the Author!

2.5 Minutes Talking To God: After God has spoken through His Book, then speak to Him in prayer.

DAY 1

Philippians 4:4, Psalms 105:3

Rejoice in the Lord Always

Anxiety is a meteor shower of what-ifs. *What if I don't close the sale? What if we can't afford braces for the kids? What if my kids have crooked teeth? What if crooked teeth keep them from having friends . . . a career . . . a spouse?* Anxiety is living life in a minor key with major concerns.

Is your heart weighed down with worry? Could you use some calm? If so, you aren't alone. Conquering anxiety and worry require some work on your part, but it's not God's will that you lead a life of perpetual anxiety. God loves his children. He oversees your world. He monitors your life.

In Philippians 4:4, Paul offers what could be considered a “prescription” for anxiety and worries. Interestingly, this prescription begins with a call to “rejoice in the Lord always.” Paul used every tool in the box on this verse to get his readers' attention. First, he uses a verb tense so they would hear, “continually, habitually rejoice!” And if the verb tense wasn't enough, he removed the expiration date: “Rejoice in the Lord *always*.” And if that wasn't enough, he repeated the command: “*Again* I will say, rejoice!”

But how do you obey this command? By recognizing the sovereignty of God. The most stressed-out people are control freaks. The more they try to control the world, the more they realize they cannot. Life becomes a cycle of anxiety, failure; anxiety, failure; anxiety, failure. But when you recognize heaven has an occupied throne, you allow the Lord to be in control. God then calms your fears, not by removing the problem, but by revealing his divine power and presence. Your anxiety decreases as your understanding of God, your Father, increases.

The next time you fear the future, rejoice in the Lord's sovereignty. Rejoice in what he has accomplished. Rejoice that he is able to do what you cannot do. Fill your mind with thoughts of him. Where others see the problems of the world and wring their hands, see those problems and bend your knees. Intentionally lift up your mind to thoughts about your king. Don't get lost in your troubles. Dare

to believe that good things will happen. Examine what sustains your belief, and make sure your belief in God is founded in trusting that he is in control.

Your Father's hands are open, so place yourself entirely in his care. As you do, you will find it is possible—yes, possible!—to be anxious for nothing.

Respond:

How is rejoicing a choice? What does rejoicing in the Lord look like to you?

How would you describe your confidence in God's control over your life? What are some ways you have seen God's sovereign hand at work in your life?

How can spending time each day in God's presence help you rejoice in the Lord *always*?

DAY 2

Philippians 4:5, John 16:33

Let Your Gentleness Be Evident to All

Unchecked anxiety can unleash angry outbursts, rash accusations, and fiery retaliation against those in your path who are unfortunate to be at the wrong place at the wrong time. How many people have been wounded as a result of such unbridled stress? On the other hand, how many disasters have been averted because one person decided to be calm?

It is this composure Paul is referring to when he states, "Let your gentleness be evident to all." (Philippians 4:5 NIV). The Greek word translated as *gentleness* describes a temperament that is seasoned and mature. It envisions an attitude that is fitting to the occasion, levelheaded and tempered. The gentle reaction is one of steadiness, evenhandedness, and fairness.

Jesus promised that "in this world you will have trouble." (John 13:33 NIV). It is as inevitable as the sun rising on a new day, as waves crashing on the shores of a beach. But what you also need to remember is that Jesus has promised to be with you in the midst of those troubles. Before Jesus departed this earth, he said to his disciples, "Go and make disciples of all nations . . . teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely, I am with you always, to the very end of the age." (Matthew 28:19–20 NIV).

Throughout the Bible, God repeatedly pledged to be present with his people. He was with Abram as he traveled to a new land. He was with Hagar when she fled into the wilderness, and with Isaac when he was forced to move from place to place. He was with Joshua when he faced the Canaanites, and with David when he faced the Philistines. He was with Peter in prison, and with Paul whenever and wherever he found himself in dire circumstances.

God was never watching from a distance. In fact, his very name is *Immanuel*, which means "God with us." He became flesh. He became sin. He defeated the grave. And he is still with you.

Maybe you're fighting today to keep a family together, a business afloat, or a school from going under. How you handle that fight will reveal where your trust ultimately lies. If you trust in Jesus and believe he is always with you, the byproduct of releasing the control to him will be a contagious calm that surrounds your life. This calm will allow you to see how God is working in your situation—and others will notice there is something different about you. It will bring healing to your anxiety, mature your faith, and show others that God is always faithful.

Anxiety management is like pulling stumps out of the ground. Some of your worries have deep root systems, and extracting them is hard work. But you don't have to do it alone. Present the challenge to your Father and ask for help.

Respond:

Who in your life is most impacted by the way you respond to stressful situations?

How would you define the word *gentleness*? Would you say your responses to others in stressful situations tend to be *gentle*? Why or why not?

How can knowing that God is always present in your circumstances help you to maintain a sense of contagious calm?

DAY 3

Philippians 4:6, 1 Peter 5:7

Present Your Requests to God

In Luke 18:1–8, Jesus told a parable about a persistent widow who went before an unjust judge. The woman so pestered the judge that he finally agreed to her request just to get her to go away. Jesus ended the parable by saying, “Will not God bring about justice for his chosen ones, who cry out to him day and night?” (verse 8 NIV).

What are you to make of this parable? Is God a reluctant judge? Are you the marginalized widow? Is prayer a matter of pestering God until he breaks down and gives you what you want? No, this is a parable of contrast, not comparison. God is not like the judge in the story. He is not reluctant in answering the prayers of his people. As a child of the King, you can turn to him at any moment. He never places you on hold or tells you to call again later. God loves the sound of your voice. Always. He doesn't hide when you call. He hears your prayers.

But why present your requests to him at all? What's the purpose when he already knows what you are going to ask? Prayer is actually for your benefit. It allows you to act in faith on what you know about his character. When you pray in specific ways—for the particulars of your problems—and you see God respond in specific ways, your faith grows. You come to trust that God will always be there for you, even in the midst of the most anxiety-producing moments.

Prayer is simply a conversation with your heavenly Father. You place your anxieties in his hands and remind him—and yourself—of the promises he has made in his Word. You find a promise that fits

your problem and build your prayer around it. These prayers of faith touch the heart of God and activate the angels of heaven. Miracles are set into motion. You experience less consternation; more supplication. Fewer anxious thoughts, more prayer-filled thoughts.

Thanksgiving is the means God uses to help you take the focus off yourself and onto him. Gratitude is a powerful weapon in the arsenal against anxiety because it leads you out of the land “if only” and into the realm of “already.” The anxious heart says, “Lord, *if only* I had this, that, or the other, I’d be okay.” The grateful heart says, “Lord, you’ve *already* given me this, that, and the other thing. Thank you for your blessings, God.”

Christ-based contentment will turn you into a strong person. It helps you realize that since no one can take your Christ, no one can take your joy. Failure can’t steal your joy, because Jesus is greater than your sin. Disappointments can’t steal your joy, because even though your plans may not work out, God’s plans always will. Not even death can steal your joy, because Jesus has conquered death itself.

What you have in Christ is greater than anything you don’t have. You have God, who is crazy about you, and the forces of heaven to monitor and protect you. You have the living presence of Jesus within you. In Christ you have everything. So anchor your heart to the character of God. Treat each anxious thought with a grateful one, and prepare yourself for a new day of joy.

Respond:

Do you ever feel like you are pestering God when you pray? How does knowing God is eager to hear from you affect your desire to talk to him?

What attitude do you tend to have when you pray? How would your prayers change if you focused on what God has already done in your life?

What anxious thoughts will you pray for specifically today? How will you remind yourself of God’s faithfulness in the past as you pray specifically for these needs?

DAY 4

Philippians 4:7, John 14:27

The Peace of God Will Guard Your Heart

When mariners describe a tempest that no sailor can escape, they call it a “perfect storm.” Not perfect in the sense of ideal, but perfect in the sense of combining factors. All the elements, such as hurricane-force winds plus a cold front plus a downpour of rain, work together to create an insurmountable disaster. The winds alone would be a challenge—but the winds *plus* the cold *plus* the rain? The perfect recipe for disaster.

You don’t need to be a mariner to experience a perfect storm. In fact, you’ve undoubtedly already faced a few in your lifetime. A layoff *plus* recession. An illness *plus* a job change. A relationship breakup *plus* a college rejection. A sudden loss *plus* an unforeseen event that threatens your future.

Individually, these elements might be manageable. But collectively, they are absolutely formidable. It's enough to make you wonder, *Will I even survive?*

Paul's answer to that question is as profound as it is concise. When you present your requests to God with thanksgiving, "the peace of God . . . will guard your heart." (Philippians 4:7 NIV). In other words, as you do your part and release the worry to God, he does his part by bestowing on you his perfect peace. You should be worried . . . but you're not. You should be upset . . . but you're calm. The peace of God transcends all logical explanation.

When Paul was faced with a "perfect storm" at sea, he told the sailors, "Last night an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I serve stood beside me and said, 'Do not be afraid, Paul. . . . God has graciously given you the lives of all who sail with you.'" (Acts 27:23–24 NIV). On the deck of a sinking ship, God sent angels to minister to Paul. He will do the same for you. Unlike the world, his resources are limitless and his peace is permanent.

Perhaps you've prayed and prayed and heard nothing. Don't give up! Rest in the truth that just as God sent angels to protect those you read about in the Bible, he will send his angels to protect you—even as your storm continues to rage. When you gave your life to him, he took you into his family as a cherished child. He has purpose for your days, and he invites you to join in accomplishing his will in the world. He will use the storms to grow your faith and trust in him.

When you seek the Lord, you will find him. So seek him first. Lead with worship and thanksgiving. Go to your Father in prayer and praise. Confess to him your fears. Gather with his people. Set your face toward God. Cry out for help. Admit your weakness. Then, once God moves, take a step and move with him.

Expect to see the God of ages fight for you. He is near, as near as your next breath. You may be facing the perfect storm, but Jesus offers the perfect peace.

Respond:

What are some "perfect storms" that you have faced in your life? What made them so difficult?

In what way is God's peace different from the kind of peace the world has to offer?

What protection do you need God to provide right now? How can you express your trust in God's ability to care for you in the midst of these difficult circumstances?

DAY 5

Philippians 4:8, 2 Corinthians 10:5

Meditate on These Things

Paul's final instruction in his prescription to anxiety is to meditate on the things of God. In other words, pick what you ponder. Picture your thoughts as airplanes in the sky above a busy airport. You are the air traffic controller of that airport. You get to decide which thoughts land and which ones fly away.

Want to be happy tomorrow? Let the thoughts of happiness land today. Want to be miserable tomorrow? Let thoughts of guilt, worry, and fear land today.

Healing from anxiety requires healthy thinking. In truth, your challenge is not your challenge; your challenge is the way you *think* about your challenge. Likewise, your problem is not your problem; the way you *look* at the problem is your problem. Satan knows this, which is why he is always seeking to plant lies in your thinking. He wants to influence the way you perceive your struggles or uncertainties. But remember that he is not the master of your mind.

Furthermore, you have a power he can never defeat, for you have God on your side. When anxiety threatens to weigh down your heart, you can simply call on God. This slaps the handcuffs on the culprit and marches it before the One who has all authority. This denies worries and fears to have a platform to influence your mind. This guards your thoughts as you trust in God your Father.

Make it your aim to cling to Christ. Abide in him. Go to him as your source of strength and the One your thoughts need to obey. Read God's Word. Listen to sermons. Worship him. Set aside distractions and claim time for him. Understand that if anything good comes into your life, he will be the conduit.

The dominant duty of the disciple is to cling to Jesus. And when you cling to Jesus, you fill your mind with God's truth. You disarm the enemy and keep anxiety at bay. God's truth sets you free—free from fear, free from dread, and free from anxiety.

Having anxiety means you are human. It doesn't mean you are emotionally underdeveloped, stupid, demon possessed, or a failure. It doesn't mean your parents failed you, or vice versa. And—this is important—it doesn't mean you aren't a Christian. Yes, even Christians battle anxiety. Jesus himself fought anxiety in the Garden of Gethsemane. But he didn't stay anxious. And neither should you.

A new day awaits you. A new season in which you will worry less and trust more. A season with reduced fear and enhanced faith.

God is near. Can you imagine a life in which you are anxious for nothing?

Respond

How has your understanding of God's sovereignty over your problems helped you to keep your thoughts on good things? When has this been a struggle for you?

What does setting your eyes on Jesus mean to you? How does doing this help you keep your thoughts captive and obedient to Christ?

What strategy can you set up for the next time anxiety tries to take over your heart and mind?