

**“Dealing With the Holiday Blues”** 12/29-30/07 6 p.m., 9 & 10:45 a.m.  
Philippians 4:6-9

**OPEN** to Philippians 4 (**PAGE** 1830)

## **INTRODUCTION**

The “Holiday Blues” are very real.

The “**blues**” can involve depression, loneliness, hopelessness, an overall feeling of sadness or unhappiness. It can be as extreme as despair and feelings of suicide; or a negative outlook about one’s self or circumstances. It can involve unfulfilled desires or expectations, and deep discouragement.

*The “blues” aren’t limited to this time of year:*

“In 2004, The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention released the results of an extensive survey on depression and sadness. They contacted 166,000 people in 38 states and discovered the average American spends three days a month feeling ‘sad, blue, or depressed.’”

Another survey found that one in fourteen American men suffers from depression and men in their twenties are the ones *most* likely to suffer from it. (Parade, 6/20/04)

One man said, “When I’m feeling down, I like to whistle. It makes the neighbor’s dog run to the end of his chain and gag himself.” *Misery loves company!*

In dealing with things that have us down or tied up emotionally, there’s a pattern of three key elements that God often directs:

1. PRAY
2. FOCUSing your mind on positive truth,
3. Taking ACTION.

The passage we’re going to look at today speaks specifically to dealing with **anxiety**, but it is also helpful to all emotional trials. In fact, in the book of James, chapter 1, the same three elements are listed in dealing with “**trials of all kinds.**”

**READ** Philippians 4:6-9:

## **1. PRAY**

Philippians 4:6-7 “*Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by PRAYER and petition, with thanksgiving, PRESENT YOUR REQUESTS TO GOD.*

*7 And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*

## **2. FOCUS your mind on positive truth**

**v. 8: Finally, brothers, 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.**

## **3. Take ACTION**

**v. 9: 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.”**

*Let's take a few minutes and look at each of these three elements more closely:*

*When you're struggling with the blues ...*

### **I. PRAY!** (v. 6-7)

King David wrote down many of his personal struggles and prayers in the book of Psalms. And in them, he speaks of the different ways he sees God.

**GOD his REFUGE:** A shelter, a place of protection.

**GOD his ROCK:** The high rocks were a place to run to for safety from enemies. Horses could not follow and it was dangerous to follow on foot because of the hiding places and the potential of being ambushed.

**GOD his FORTRESS; STRONGHOLD; TOWER OF STRENGTH; HIGH TOWER:** A literal fortress; a castle; made of rock; where one could find protection from his enemies.

**GOD his SHIELD:** God stood between David and his enemies.

*And, a warmer idea than these battle terms:*

**WINGS of God**: God is pictured as a mother bird, possibly an eagle, who spreads her wings to cover her young and protect them from the elements in the high, wide-open spaces where an eagle's nest would be.

So, *WHEN WE PRAY*, we are taking refuge in God Himself. We are going to Him and saying, "Father, I need Your help! Protect me! Shield me!"

Now, listen to some of David's prayers, *listen to how transparent he was with his feelings as he prayed*:

**Psalm 44:23-24: "Wake up, O Lord! Why do You sleep? Get up! Do not reject us forever.**

**24 Why do You look the other way? Why do You ignore our suffering and oppression?"**

**Psalm 43:1-2: "O God, take up my cause! Defend me against these ungodly people. Rescue me from these unjust liars.**

**2 For You are God, my only safe haven. Why have You tossed me aside? Why must I wander around in darkness, oppressed by my enemies?"**

This is how he *felt* so it's how he talked to God. God can handle how you feel! *David also asked for what he felt he needed*: deliverance from people who were hurting him. Relief from emotions that were immobilizing him. A sense of God's presence. God's help.

*So, when we pray*, we tell God what is going on, how we are feeling and what we think we need. We don't have to candy-coat it or "spiritualize" it, or "sanitize" it.

*Will it do any good? Yes!*

**Philippians 4:7 "And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."**

*When you're struggling with the blues ...*

## **I. PRAY!**

*When you're struggling with the blues ...*

## **II. FOCUS Your Mind on Positive Truth** (v. 8)

**READ v. 8: “Finally, brothers, 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.”**

Here’s why we focus on positive truth:

1. What we choose to focus our minds upon will affect our *perspective*.

For instance, if you focus on the 10% that is bad instead of 90% that is good, your perspective will become, “*everything is going wrong!*”

2. Our *perspective* will affect *how we feel*; our mood.

You cannot feel good, healthy and joyful when you live with a negative perspective on your situation.

This is a process that can happen slowly, over time, or quickly, in a given situation. But, it is what happens.

But how do you focus on positive truth when you’re suffering?

Romans 8:18 “**I consider** [*mentally thought it through*] **that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us.**”

*Romans 8:18 was written by a man who was very familiar with suffering: multiple physical beatings, relational betrayals, hunger, homelessness, pain, sleeplessness, etc. (2 Corinthians 11:24-29)*

All this because he was following Jesus Christ.

*Now*, if Paul’s *controlling* thought in his continued suffering was, “*Everything is going wrong! Stop the pain!*” then he would have stopped serving Christ or become depressed or angry *because* it was his service for Christ that was bringing the suffering.

But he didn’t. Why?

Because he “**considered**” (FOCUS) that his present sufferings were not worth comparing to the glories of Heaven and the glorious rewards of serving Christ.

He thought it through, he “**considered**” his suffering:

“Why am I suffering?”

*Because I am following Christ and His call on my life.*

“Is following Christ worth the suffering?”

*Yes.*

“Why?” - *Through it people are believing in Jesus and gaining eternal life.*

- *My suffering is temporary, the glory and rewards of Heaven are forever.*

The positive truth that Paul focused upon in his sufferings was that eternal glory will last much, much, longer than temporary suffering in this life.

Paul focused on the positive truth, not the negative truth.

*When you're struggling with the blues ...*

### **I. PRAY!**

### **II. FOCUS Your Mind on Positive Truth**

*When you're struggling with the blues ...*

### **III. Take ACTION** (v. 9)

Philippians 4:9 **“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.”**

- Extreme tiredness/exhaustion can lead to depression (Elijah). In this case, take action by slowing down; make a plan to get some rest.
- Get involved in serving/helping others (AVC: basic help of others, from driving to a medical appt. to making phone calls, to doing simple tasks for the elderly or handicapped that they can't do for themselves anymore)
- Get involved in a small group or a support group (reinforces prayer, positive truth, taking action. Call the church office or ask someone you know if they're in a group)
- Get involved in some enjoyable activity (gardening, going to the library, bowling, walks in the park, or drive to the park or a nearby elementary school and watch children playing)

- Stop the behavior that is causing the problem possibly something that is making you guilty.

“Karl Menninger, the famed psychiatrist, once said that if he could convince the patients in psychiatric hospitals that their sins were forgiven, 75 percent of them could walk out the next day!” (Today in the Word, March 1989, p. 8)

Sometimes the “blues” is caused by something that happened in the past that we deeply regret, wish we’d never done.

Guilt can cause depression, anxiety, withdrawal from people and life. So how do we apply these three steps to guilt?

**PRAY**: Confess sin

**FOCUS on positive truth**: Forgiveness!

Take **ACTion**: make amends with person as long as it won’t cause harm to the person or others.

- See a doctor to see *if* your problem is caused by something physical.

## **CONCLUSION**

### **I. PRAY!**

### **II. FOCUS Your Mind on Positive Truth**

### **III. Take ACTION**

This deals with the whole person ... spirit, mind, emotion, body.

And now a word to those who are not struggling right now:

## **ILLUSTRATION**

“Back in the early 1930’s during the Great Depression, Pastor William Stidger was with a group of friends talking about the Depression and how it was so discouraging to so many. As they talked, he sensed God speaking to him: ‘Why don’t you give thanks to those people who have been a blessing in your life and encourage them during this terrible time?’

He remembered a school teacher who had gone out of her way to put in him a great love of literature. It affected all his writings and his preaching. So he sat down and wrote a

letter to this woman, now up in years. It was only a matter of days until he received a reply.

‘My Dear Willy: I can’t tell you how much your note meant to me. I am in my eighties, living alone in a small room, cooking my own meals, lonely ... and like the last leaf of autumn, lingering behind. You’ll be interested to know that I taught in school for more than fifty years, and yours is the first note of appreciation I ever received. It came on a blue, cold morning, and it cheered me as nothing has done in many years.’

Then he thought of a kindly pastor, now retired, an old man who had recently faced the death of his wife and was all alone. This pastor had taken a lot of time, given him advice and counsel and love when he first started in the ministry. So he sat down and wrote him. In a few days he received a reply:

‘My Dear Will: Your letter was so beautiful, so real, that as I sat reading it in my study, tears fell from my eyes, tears of gratitude. Before I realized what I was doing, I rose from my chair and I called my wife’s name to share it with her, forgetting she was gone. You’ll never know how much your letter has warmed my spirit. I have been walking around in the glow of your letter all day long.’”

It’s always encouraging to know that people sincerely care about us ... and even more encouraging to know that God sincerely cares about us.

Take the time to express gratitude ... it will help others more than you could ever know!

*“Father in Heaven, thank You for caring about my emotional and mental health. You are good! Help me, please, to take the initiative to pray, focus and act. In Jesus’ Name, Amen.”*