

WORSHIP

SUGGESTED WORSHIP SONGS:

Solid Ground, Again I Say Rejoice

WELCOME

Share some things that have given you reason to rejoice during the past week. Have you faithfully thanked God for these blessings?

WORD

PHILIPPIANS 4:1-7

Therefore, my beloved brethren whom I long to see, my joy and crown, in this way stand firm in the Lord, my beloved.² I urge Euodia and I urge Syntyche to live in harmony in the Lord.³ Indeed, true companion, I ask you also to help these women who have shared my struggle in the cause of the gospel, together with Clement also and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life.⁴ Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice!⁵ Let your gentle spirit be known to all men. The Lord is near.⁶ Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.⁷ And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Sometimes it is difficult to grasp the truth that God is in control and as He continues to allow the COVID 19 pandemic to affect all of us. In fact, the world has battled numerous plagues in the past:

249-262 AD: The *Cyprian Plague* where 5000 people died every day in Rome.

541-542 AD: The *Justinian Plague* where half of the world's population then (30-50 million) people died.

13th century: The *Bubonic Plague* resulted in 25 million deaths, almost a third of the population in Europe at that time.

1918-1920: The *Spanish Flu* infected 500 million people.

It just goes to show that today's pandemic of COVID19 is not "new". **Amazingly though, it was during the plagues when Christians became more distinct from others as they cared for, ministered to, and drew more people to the Lord.** God is always involved in these catastrophic events. He is trying to wake up the world and remind believers that He is God. No amount of money or power can solve this crisis apart from divine intervention. Many of us are learning to grow closer to the Lord as we use this time to examine our life and our purpose for living.

In **Philippians 4:1-7**, Paul encouraged the Philippians to stand firm so that when they appear before God someday, they will be found blameless. "Stand firm" comes from the Greek word **STEKO** – *to persevere, don't give up, to be steadfast*. **Ephesians 6:10-11** tells us that if we put on the full armor of God, we will be able to stand firm and not fall into the trap of the enemy!

Once, Jesus shared the story of the wise and foolish builders (**Matthew 7:23-27**). If we learn God's words but we do not apply them, we fall like the foolish man. The wise person will build his life on a solid foundation – God's Word, hearing and acting on it. A foolish man hears but does not obey. We have not been promised a storm-free life, but if we build our lives on God's truth, then we can live storm-proofed lives.

As we face this pandemic "storm", let us **STAND FIRM** for the danger of falling away from the faith is always there. A true follower of Christ will be able to "endure until the end" (**Matthew 24:13**). This is so important, because many so-called Christians fail at this. So how do we stand firm?

1. REGARD FOR OTHERS

This is very counterintuitive in times of crisis, yet Paul thought of others while he in prison. He encouraged **Euodia and Syntyche** to be reconciled and asked the church to help them to do so. While conflicts are inevitable, **Philippians 2:4** tells us to consider the interests of others and not be self-seeking. Take the initiative to seek reconciliation. The virus of self-centeredness is rampant – self-pity, self-righteousness, self-admiration, self-promotion, self-will. Until you deal with self-centeredness, you can never stand firm. Think of others more and see how you can be of help! **Romans 12:18** reminds us to fix relationships, this avoids anger and bitterness to develop. Do not just distance yourself from people you disagree with. Keep in mind Jesus' command to love one another (**John 13:35**)!

2. REJOICE

Grammatically, **Philippians 4:4** means that we must **keep on** rejoicing in the LORD always, not just in favorable circumstances. **Acts 13:52** shows that joy is supernatural – it comes from the Holy Spirit. If we modernize what the prophet was saying in **Habakkuk 3:17-18**, we can say that in times of COVID 19, we can still choose to rejoice in the fact that God is real! Remember God's grace and His greatness for you to be able to rejoice in the presence of challenges. This is not denial of our troubles – it is knowing that our joy is complete in Him. That's why **Nehemiah 8:10** tells us that the joy of the Lord is our strength. His assurance that He is with us through the hardest of times is truly an "unspeakable joy".

WORD (cont'd)

3. REST IN THE LORD

How do we rest in the Lord?

a. With GENTLENESS

Let your gentleness be made known to all men (Philippians 4:4-5). GENTLE is sometimes translated as forbearance, meekness, or moderation. It is the Greek word *Epiekes* – and it can mean being considerate, handling conflict in a respectful manner, being magnanimous and gracious, etc. Gentleness and meekness show that Christ rules our hearts. When people look at us, do they see us as gentle and Christlike, or do they see our irritation and complaining attitude (**Matthew 11:28-29**)? As we keep in mind that the Lord is near (**Philippians 4:5**), we will experience *restedness*. The opposite of this quality is someone who argues a lot! So how are you with your family? Do your family members like to be with you? Are you patient, gentle, and a source of encouragement?

b. Without WORRY or ANXIETY

Remember that God is in control. We are told to always be anxious FOR NOTHING because we can pray (**Philippians 4:6-7**) to God instead and to...

c. Be THANKFUL!

Because God is near, you should be able to say **THANK YOU LORD** instead of fretting. The Scripture promises that the PEACE OF GOD will guard our hearts in Christ Jesus when we pray for our concerns and thank God for His blessings. The peace that comes from God surpasses all comprehension! As our Heavenly Father, God will take care of us and He can resolve our worries and fears! Be comforted by the fact of His nearness, just as a fearful child is comforted by the presence of their parents. As you go through life, God is with you, He is beside you. That's why we can stop being anxious! Our job is to pray and **Habakkuk 3:17-18** is an encouragement – that we can still choose to rejoice in the Lord even if we are facing problems. King Jehoshaphat's response when trouble came upon his kingdom (**2 Chronicles 20:1-4**) was to draw near to God. God assures the king through a prophet that **"the battle is not yours, but God's"** and **"the Lord is with you" (vv.15-17)**. Another king, David, resolved in **Psalms 16:8-9,11** that he will set the Lord before Him so that he will not be shaken. Let us do the same. There is reason to rejoice in God's presence, and our joy and security is grounded in the faithfulness of a tried and tested GOD. Jesus has always been and will always be, the greatest comfort for those who are truly His. May our commitment to Him to grow deeper, as we choose to STAND FIRM!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

(Leaders: Please choose questions that are appropriate to the level of spiritual maturity of your members)

- 1. Self-Check..** Are you a worrier? What do you usually worry about these days?
- 2. Setting It Right.** Do you turn your worry into prayer items and praise items (when you thank Him by faith for His future answers)? How will doing this change/improve your attitude about what's going on in our world today?
- 3. Living It Out.** Is the "nearness of the Lord" real to you? What will help you know and experience more that the Lord is near?

WORKS

PRAY CARE SHARE IN ACTION

Pray for the worries of the people around you. Encourage them this week by letting them know you pray for them. Share God's promises to them (ex., from Philippians 4:1-7) and let them know how they can stand firm and experience the peace of God that surpasses all understanding!

WEEKLY PRAYER POINTS

I. Thanksgiving

- Worship God for who He is, what He has done, and what He will do in our lives

II. Country and the World

- Wisdom, protection and saving faith for the frontliners and government leaders
- Nations around the world to recognize God as the only one who can end this pandemic

III. Church

- That CCF Members would honor and love God and make disciples
- Elders, Pastors, Leaders, and Families
- Ministries and Churches worldwide

IV. CCF Facilities

- Worship and Training Center
- Prayer Mountain

V. Personal Concerns

- Deeper intimate relationship with God
- Righteous living
- Salvation of family and friends