

Mind Games | Philippians 4:4-9

So, we have come to the end of our study in Philippians, and man, it's been strong. My prayer for you all through this entire study has been that God would begin stirring your hearts for a spiritual revival. Our world is at a place right now where we need God, maybe more than ever. And during times such as this, when it seems like everything around us is in total chaos, where our enemy tries to steal the only sense of peace we can truly have and that is through our hope in Jesus.

Our enemy knows that he cannot physically hurt God anymore; he lost the war when Jesus defeated death and was raised back to life through the resurrection. Therefore, the only way that Satan can remotely affect God is by hurting His children, His beloved creation – us. However, it would be too easy for Satan to outright hurt us physically; he wants to try and make sure that God feels the pain of what He is doing. So, Satan prolongs our suffering by making it complex, by not only trying to harm us physically, but make us mentally think that God is against us, that God wants us to struggle, that, ultimately, God actually doesn't love us. He makes us question who God really is.

Three years ago, I had a terrible freak accident occur to me that ended my basketball career. I remember sitting in my Dad's recliner two days after my surgery feeling hopeless, confused, angry, but even worse, submerged completely in doubt of who God was. I actually wanted nothing to do with God. I did not want to read His word, I did not want to talk to Him, or worship him. I wanted NOTHING to do with God. I hate to admit it, but Satan had me fooled. I had been following Christ for years, had already received my calling to ministry, and still, I fell victim to Satan's mind games. It wasn't until several of my closest friends and family members reminded me that God is never the one that changes, He is never late, and He is always for us. It is how, not only what our hearts are set on, but also where we are setting are minds as well.

Take a second and read **Philippians 4:4-9**.

The reason I was not experiencing the peace I needed during my time of need, was because I was not **setting my mind on the things above**. I was not **rejoicing in my weakest moments** like I was when I was in my strongest. I was not **seeking God and allowing Him to take control of my circumstances**, but rather was attempting to blame them on Him and deal with things myself. And if I had to guess, there have been moments in your life, where you have done the exact same thing.

So, how can you and I, even now during this time of uncertainty and unknown, not only rekindle the fire in which where our hope comes from in our own hearts, but also share that hope with others?

I think there are four things we can take away from this passage and put into practice:

I. Worship God in Your Weakness

- It is always so easy for us to worship God at our strongest moments because there is no threat of our weakness being revealed, however when our weaknesses become a threat and we are no longer in a place of comfort, where our faith is tested, many times we, instead of relying on God even more, we not only run away from Him, but we blame Him for our problems. But lean into this truth from scripture today:
 - God is always working things out for the good of those that love Him. (Romans 8:28)
 - That your time of weakness and suffering is not to harm you but to make you stronger, to make you complete. (James 1:2-4)
 - If you run to God in our time of need, He will embrace you. (2 Chronicles 7:14)

II. Turn Your Weakness into Prayer

- Sometimes, we expect God to fix our problems without any input from us. Even though God knows at all times what our needs are and what we are going through, that doesn't mean He is always going to jump into action without us seeking Him out for His help, that's not how a relationship with the God of the Universe works. **We can't expect God to fulfill our requests if we don't lay them at His feet!** Therefore, we must take our weakness to the feet of King Jesus and surrender complete control to Him, not so that He can see our need for Him, but rather that we can realize for ourselves that He is the only thing we really need. (Philippians 4:6)

III. Look Up, Not Around

- The enemy consistently uses the things of this world to distract us from running to God in our times of need. While many of these things are really "attractive", the real reason why we can so easily be distracted is because we are not practicing setting our minds daily on the things of God, the things that not only protect us from the schemes of the enemy, but prepare us to fight back. We spend our time with our hands closed to ourselves, instead of reaching out to what God has for us. We spend our time filling our minds with temporary things, instead of filling them with eternal things. We spend our time trying to control our lives instead of allowing our Creator guide us. And we spend our time looking around at things that keep us from constantly looking up in pursuit of our Father. When we begin putting into practice the things of God, we find that the place we want to be the most is on our knees, looking up. (Philippians 4:8-9)

IV. Know and Experience God's Presence of Peace

- When we Worship God in our weakness, turn our weakness into prayer, and begin looking up and not around, we experience real peace that can only be found in Jesus. Verses 7 and 9 promise us that God's peace, that transcends all understanding, meaning

peace that no other being or thing could extend to us, will surround us, guard our hearts, and remind us that we are loved and in the care of a God who never forsakes us, but is always going before us, protecting us from behind, and walking in relationship beside us.