

March 8, 2020

## ***Finding Peace in a Troubled World***



***"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. 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."***      **Philippians 4:8-9**

Think about your morning routine. All of us have some kind of morning routine. We are all creatures of habit, and while some of those habits are really good and life-affirming, others are open invitations to bring Satan's lying whispers directly into our minds and hearts. Our loving Father wants us to enjoy peace that transcends understanding, and so we have to recognize that Satan wants to steal that peace.

How does Satan work to steal our peace? I am convinced that for a lot of us he works through our habituated routines. So, what about your morning routine? Gloria starts her day with a cup of coffee, a couple of Hershey's kisses, and Bible reading and prayer. Nearly every morning she wakes up, heads for the sofa, and starts her routine.

My morning routine also begins with coffee. Yes, I am addicted and no, I am not giving it up. I get my coffee, my phone and my Kindle and begin my routine. I check email, check Facebook, look at the weather forecast, and, at some point I check the news headlines. Frankly, Gloria has a way better morning routine than I do.

What about you? How many of us start the day turning on the TV to catch our favorite morning news show? Maybe another part of our routine is to drive to work listening to a some radio talk show or maybe we listen to that same show all day long.

Most of us struggle to find and hold on to that transcendent peace that God promises, and I am convinced that the reason we struggle is that we are not intentional in what we let our minds absorb. We watch the news so that we can learn about all of the death and destruction that occurred over night. We listen to our favorite talk show tell us what to think and how to feel. We look at the ugly, we listen to the hate, we pay attention to divisive and violent and then we wonder why we have no peace.

I have observed in recent years a mental health issue that plagues a growing number of my clients. They struggle with insomnia, they struggle with anxiety and panic attacks, they struggle with severe depression, they struggle with relationship issues and feelings of isolation and sometimes they even struggle with thoughts of suicide and most of them have no idea why. I have learned to ask them to describe their daily routines and almost without exception I learn that they are watching 24 hour new shows, they are listening to the ranting voices on radio and TV talk shows, and they are participating in a steady stream of ugliness and violence which they have invited into their minds and hearts by simply turning on their TV, radio, or device.

Interestingly enough they react to my advice to shut off all outside information sources for one week sort of how I react to someone suggesting that I give up coffee. Like my coffee addiction, many of my most hurting clients are addicted to those sources of chaos which lead them and far too many of us to unintentionally choose to give up our transcendent peace.

Paul will tell us that peace is the product of the things upon which we intentionally focus. Look at this list, "...*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.*" The Apostle commands us to use this standard for anything that we let in. Does what I am watching, does what I am reading, does what I am listening to meet these standards? If my honest answer is 'no', then Paul commands me to change my focus.

If I would find peace I must honestly and intentionally pursue sources that are true, and noble, and right, and pure, and lovely and admirable and excellent and praiseworthy. And, I must turn off those sources of influence that don't meet those standards. If I intentionally seek positive influencers then I will find peace; if I don't I won't.

