

# When Times Are Tough, Thank God

BY RICK WARREN

*“Always be full of joy in the Lord. I say it again—rejoice!”* (Philippians 4:4 NLT)

When the Apostle Paul says, “Always be full of joy in the Lord,” he doesn’t say to only be joyful in good times. Even when times are tough, the Bible teaches we can be joyful if we follow this simple strategy:

**Don’t worry about anything.** Worrying doesn’t change anything. It’s stewing without doing. There are no such things as born-worriers. Worry is a learned response. You learned it from your parents. You learned it from your peers. You learned it from experience. That’s good news: The fact that worry is learned means it can also be unlearned.

How do you unlearn it? Jesus says in Matthew 6:34, *“Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own”* (NIV). He’s saying don’t open your umbrella until it starts raining. Live one day at a time.

**Pray about everything.** Instead of worrying, use your time for praying. If you prayed as much as you worried, you’d have a lot less to worry about. Is God interested in car payments? Yes. He’s interested in every detail of your life. That means you can take any problem you face to God.

**Thank God in all things.** When you pray, pray with thanksgiving. The healthiest human emotion is not love but gratitude. It actually increases your immunities. It makes you more resistant to stress and less susceptible to illness. People who are grateful are happy. But people who are ungrateful are miserable because nothing makes them happy. They’re never satisfied. It’s never good enough. So if you cultivate the attitude of gratitude, of being thankful in everything, it reduces stress in your life.

**Think about the right things.** If you want to reduce the level of stress in your life, you must change the way you think, because the way you think determines how you feel. And the way you feel determines how you act. The Bible teaches that, if you want to change your life, you need to change what you’re thinking about.

This involves a deliberate, conscious choice where you choose to think about the right things. We need to *choose* to think on the positive and on God’s Word.

What is the result of not worrying, praying about everything, giving thanks, and focusing on the right things? Paul says we will then *“experience God’s peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus”* (Philippians 4:7 NLT).

Talk it Over

- What do you worry about? Talk to God about your worries and honestly tell him why you worry.
- If you prayed as much as you worried, how do you think your life would change?
- God says he has your best interest at heart. Thank him in all things, even if you cannot understand what God is up to in your life.
- What do you think about most? What do you think God wants you to think about? Are these two things in alignment? If not, then why?