

“Let your gentleness be evident”

We are offering a series of reflections for individuals and churches who may be finding it difficult to provide midweek prayer and shared learning from Scripture. You can use these by watching the YouTube video, reading the relevant Bible passage and then reflecting on the questions below. To help make this a shared activity, you are encouraged to reflect on this together with friends using an online conference package, or simply arrange with a friend for them to watch it too. Then ring each other up, share your thoughts and responses and then pray for one another, and pray together for our world.

Read Philippians 4:4-7

If you can, watch the YouTube video: <https://youtu.be/E-7XmFlg7us>

We often display our faith to a watching world by our engagement in the life of our local church, or through seeking to work for good in the wider community. Many of us are struggling to do that at the moment, but we can still reflect our identity as followers of Jesus by our attitude and character. This is echoed in Paul's words “Let your gentleness be evident to all”. You are invited to read through these verses and reflect on how each element helps that to become a reality.

Rejoice in the Lord: Notice that we are not invited to rejoice in our circumstances but rejoice in the Lord. This is not a matter of making light of our situation but embracing the practical consequences of a profound reality – things may be tough and stressful, the future may feel precarious and uncertain, life itself may be hanging in the balance, but God hasn't changed - the goodness and faithfulness, the love and the promise of God are no less - we can rejoice in the Lord. As we rejoice in God, we become focussed on God, and so our attitude and our demeanour can begin to change.

Let your gentleness be evident: This is particularly difficult when things are stressful and challenging. Take time to intentionally focus on this calling, and seek God's help to be someone who reflects the attitude of Jesus.

The Lord is near: God's resources are at hand; God is there to help us in the struggle. But this is also a reminder that God is watching and seeing what we do. There is perhaps a gentle challenge in that – if God is watching, we might seek to ensure that we act in ways that we are not ashamed for God to see. Take some time to acknowledge and experience God's presence with you wherever you are.

Give your anxiety to God: These words invite us through prayer, petition and thanksgiving to bring our anxieties to God. There is also a glimpse here into the nature of prayer. Paul makes a distinction between “petition” and “prayer”. We are encouraged to bring our requests to God, but we reminded that prayer is more than that. The word translated as “prayer” carries a sense of worship with it, we are encouraged to make ourselves present to God, to listen for God's purpose before we bring our requests. Prayer is not so much telling God what we want as discovering more of who God is; listening for God's voice before we raise ours - and we are invited to offer our prayers and petitions with thanksgiving.

Receive the gift of God's peace: Our peace does not simply come from everything working out as we want – it transcends the events of this world. God's peace is discovered through offering the struggle to God, and being content and confident of God's faithfulness, from knowing we've handed it over to God, whatever the outcome. And in a world that rightly recognises the importance of mental wellbeing, we might note that God's peace is described as one that “guards our hearts and our minds”

PRAYER

Gracious God, in these challenging and uncertain times, grant us all we need to be people of evident gentleness, that our lives might bear testimony to the faith and the hope that is ours in you. Help me to receive your gift of peace, to rejoice in your presence, and to be content to place my concerns and anxieties into your faithful hands. Through Christ our ever-present help. AMEN