

Instead, Stop, Inhale, Thank, and Respond

Introduction:

Anxiety and fear are at the root of many of the struggles we face. These hinder good relationships and making good decisions.

The key is to live in God's PEACE.

6 Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done. 7 Then you will experience God's peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus.

8 And now, dear brothers and sisters, one final thing. Fix your thoughts on what is true, and honorable, and right, and pure, and lovely, and admirable. Think about things that are excellent and worthy of praise. 9 Keep putting into practice all you learned and received from me—everything you heard from me and saw me doing. Then the God of peace will be with you.

Philippians 4:6-9

Paul teaches us not to be anxious about anything (with fear) but to practice:

a. To give thanks to God.

b. Pray to God letting Him know our requests.

Allow God to guard our hearts and thoughts.

Has it ever happened to you that you arrive with God overwhelmed, anxious and you don't get any word from God? Does it happen to you that you come out as dry as what you entered?

What do we have to do? Shift our focus to truly encounter God and experience His PEACE.

It is a PEACE that revolves around being connected to the vine.

"Yes, I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who remain in me, and I in them, will produce much fruit. For apart from me you can do nothing.

John 15:5

When we shift our focus to Jesus, we cannot help but be filled with his PEACE, hope, and confidence, even in the darkest of circumstances.

We'll look at a practical tool that will help us do this: to not focus on fear/anxiety/stress and to be able to reconnect with the Lord to make sure we're living by FAITH and not FEAR:

STOP – Don't try to fix the problem, person, or situation.

Analyze it – Times when you've made bad choices, find yourself struggling with temptation, explode emotionally, or spend time in isolation from God and others... have you been tired, overwhelmed, or a combination of both?

The first step to overcoming fear, exhaustion, anxiety, and reconnecting with God is to STOP.

Important: Learn that not everything has to be solved at the same time. Most things can wait. We can stop and make sure we're in tune with the Lord.

Attention: When we try to fix the problems or the people in front of us – right then and there – we almost certainly end up trying to control the person or the situation and make a mess!

Be still in the presence of the Lord, and wait patiently for him to act. Don't worry about evil people who prosper or fret about their wicked schemes.

Psalms 37:7

The first step, then, to walking by faith is to make sure we are in tune with Jesus and not make our decisions based on fear or past experiences.

For this – STOP.

INHALE – take a deep breath and calm your emotions.

In our culture we don't practice being still and serene much.

Many do this: they stay so busy that they miss quiet and quiet times before the Lord and then wonder why they are so stressed, powerless, and discouraged.

"Be still and know that I am God! I will be honored by every nation. I will be honored throughout the world."

Psalms 46:10

Stay still, STOP, calm down... Calm down...

This is what the Sovereign Lord, the Holy One of Israel, says: "Only in returning to me and resting in me will you be saved. In quietness and confidence is your strength. But you would have none of it.

Isaiah 30:15

In tranquility and stillness, confidence will be your strength.

Instead, I have calmed and quieted myself, like a weaned child who no longer cries for its mother's milk. Yes, like a weaned child is my soul within me.

Psalms 131:2

Part of learning to practice stillness is having scheduled times with the Lord where you practice being still, meditating, and soaking up His Word.

Here we slow down, and we can go to the next step.

BE GRATEFUL and connect with Jesus.

Once we have stopped and calmed down, we are ready for the best way to enter into God's presence, which is "Worship."

Enter his gates with thanksgiving; go into his courts with praise. Give thanks to him and praise his name.

Psalms 100:4

When we focus on Jesus and the things He has done for us and given us, we can experience the change of attitude in our hearts, and this begins to change our mood.

If we STOP and CALM down—and shift our focus to Jesus and what He did for us and what He has provided for us—we will notice the change in attitude and emotional state.

By being focused on the things you are grateful for you will notice that the alteration begins to disappear, and your heart begins to calm down, thoughts become clearer and at this point your prayer and hearing His Voice will flow much easier.

AMAZING: We have been made to live according to God's Word, and when we do, we function better in ALL areas of life.

When we are in God's direction through praise, we are better able to hear Him and receive direction for the situations we find ourselves facing and then... Next step:

RESPOND – in faith and love, do what is right, obey the direction you receive from the Lord.

Focused on God, His PEACE will flood us and we will be able to hear His heart and direction for the specific situation we are facing.

If we want to live a life of faith and not be controlled by our fears, let us live the life of an obedient servant:

"Listening, Trusting, and Obeying."

In situations it can mean, forgive, let go, forget, in others confront and in others wait.

Whatever direction we receive, we must respond in faith by obeying and making sure that we are always responding with a loving heart that honors Christ in all our actions and decisions.

DON'T MAKE LITTLE SCENES

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Getting to know us

Share with confidence a moment where you didn't stop and consult with God, you made a little scene.

Inside the Bible

Read Philippians 4:6-9 carefully

What stands out to you most about this passage?

Read Psalm 46:10, Psalm 37:7, Psalm 131:2, and Psalm 62:1

What is the advice you find in common in these passages?

Why do you think it is difficult for us to be still before God?

What do you think happens when we are still before God?

Application.

Let's review the DIAR tool and take a moment to put it into practice (work this individually, pen and paper in hand).

STOP – Don't fix the problem, person, or situation

Write down a problem you're currently facing.

INHALE- Take a deep breath and calm down

Lee Salmos 46:10

Take a few moments to be still, relax your shoulders, neck, hands, face, etc. and take a few deep breaths. Focus your heart and mind on Jesus.

Any anxious or distracted thoughts you have, or tasks you have in mind to do... in prayer take them captive to Jesus.

BE GRATEFUL and connect with Jesus

Read - James 1:17 and Psalm 100:4

Think of something you are grateful to Jesus for.

Briefly write down the moment when you experienced it and it led you to be grateful.

RESPOND – in faith and love, do what is right, obey the direction you receive from the Lord.

Ask Jesus how he sees the situation you are facing

Ask Jesus how He wants you to respond in that situation.

Write down what it shows you.

If two or three of the group want to share their ID, let them share it.

End by praying for each other.

Family Altar: Take some family time to practice the D.I.A.R. shown in the Application section of this outline.

PAZ