

Games People Play

PIT

What do we do when life is chaotic?

Life is a lot like PIT sometimes. When I think of the games PIT - one word comes to mind - chaos. All those people yelling at once -that's chaotic.

Life can be chaotic at times.

Have you experienced chaos or are you in the midst of chaos.

Just think of some of the activities that fill our lives:

- work- about 9 hours/day
- travel
- school
- kids to football / baseball/ soccer/ music lessons/ swimming / karate / tutoring
- home work
- sleep- hopefully 8 hours/day, but not so for most in North America
- eating- hopefully a couple of hours/day
- - church-
- study
- Quiet time
- Shopping
- Cooking
- planning what to cook
- Lawn & garden care
- house and vehicle care
- relationships - communication - finances
- elections - \$700 Billions dollar bailouts
- broken washers - broken dryers - broken transmission -

Life can just be chaotic.

Do you ever feel like there are a millions and one voices calling for your attention?

Do you ever feel like yelling "stop the world I want to get off"?

I do at times and I would assume most of us do.

Phil 4

The man who wrote the book of Philippians was the apostle Paul.

Paul's life was not a bed of roses. His life was not smooth sailing. If there was anyone

who knew about the chaos of life it was Paul

2 Cor 11:23 Are they servants of Christ? (I am out of my mind to talk like this.) I am more. I have worked much harder, been in prison more frequently, been flogged more severely, and been exposed to death again and again.

24 Five times I received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one.

25 Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, I spent a night and a day in the open sea,

26 I have been constantly on the move. I have been in danger from rivers, in danger from bandits, in danger from my own countrymen, in danger from Gentiles; in danger in the city, in danger in the country, in danger at sea; and in danger from false brothers.

27 I have laboured and toiled and have often gone without sleep; I have known hunger and thirst and have often gone without food; I have been cold and naked.

28 Besides everything else, I face daily the pressure of my concern for all the churches.

Paul was definitely acquainted with chaos - but Paul also knew how to deal with chaos.

IN the book of Philippians we find a recipe given to us to help us through the chaotic times fo life.

Rejoice.

If you have ever been overwhelmed by the demands of life, rejoicing is likely the furthest thing from your mind. It is so foreign to the atmosphere of Chaos. - but this is exactly what God orders through Paul.

In fact he is so adamant about it that he tells us twice - just in case we missed it the first time.

Rejoice - the term means to be happy, be exuberant, be joyful - full of gladness.

This is perhaps one of the most difficult scriptures to obey. It's tough to be joyful when life is throwing a lot your way. It's tough when you are being inundated.

Now why rejoice?

First of all - what will it take for us to rejoice? When all you can think about is how you are going to meet the next deadline or get the car repaired or keep your 401K from going in the tank - what will it take for you to rejoice?

It will take a major attitude change.

See Rejoicing means that we need to change our attitude and our focus.

Rejoicing is first a change in attitude.

Typically in chaos - what is our attitude.

Self-pity, misery, depression, despair., anger, frustration,

We can not be winners with that kind of an attitude. Those kinds of attitudes typically just make us sink deeper and deeper. Those attitudes don't help us succeed in life - they weight us down.

So when we are struggling with chaos in life and our attitudes are not So we need to turn 180 degrees and that means rejoice.

Rejoicing changes our focus.

IN THE LORD ALWAYS

That's a huge part of this. I'm so glad that God didn't just say rejoice - like suck it up and get over it - but He says rejoice in Him., Rejoice in the Lord.

Start thinking about God. Start remembering His goodness, His faithfulness, His ability. Rejoicing in the Lord changes our focus from our circumstances to the One who can either deliver or redeem us through the chaos.

Habakkuk 3:17 Though the fig-tree does not bud and there are no grapes on the vines, though the olive crop fails and the fields produce no food, though there are no sheep in the pen and no cattle in the stalls,

18 yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will be joyful in God my Saviour.

19 The Sovereign LORD is my strength; he makes my feet like the feet of a deer, he enables me to go on the heights.

Habakkuk knew something that will transform us. That it's not life that matters - it is our understanding of God and who He is and what He can do that really matters. And that's what rejoicing in the Lord really means.

I like how the Message Bible translates Phil 4:4

Php 4:4 Celebrate God all day, every day. I mean, [revel] in him!

When chaos starts to take over life, maybe one of the best things we can do is take out a notebook and start writing down all the things that God has done for us and for others. And then start listing all the attributes of God - or start reading the Psalms and list the characteristics of God or the ways that God has helped one of the Psalmists.

That's first and foremost in dealing with chaos.

II - Rest in the Lord

You will notice in this passage of scripture that the writer is challenging the reader to do some things.

Action verb - rejoice / don't be anxious / Let you gentleness / Think on these things

All action verbs - things we are to be doing.

But in the middle of this there is a little phrase. A phrase with no action. It's just a statement.

Here it is.

THE LORD IS NEAR. Guess what the phrase is when it is exactly translated from the original GREEK. THE LORD IS NEAR.

How about that.

When life is throwing so much at you that you can't see straight. When things are coming at you faster than a millennium falcon. When you know you need to do something quick because doing something is better than doing nothing - then you just need to understand - the Lord is Near.

You are not in this chaos all by yourself. The Lord is near. You are not in child rearing by yourself - you are not in your job by your self - you are not in your marriage by your self - you are not in the planning of you future by yourself - The Lord is Near.

Study the word Near and you will find that the original meaning is the bending of the arm - like an embrace or hug.

Sometimes we view God as distant. Yes, he's near, but so is the courthouse. And in relation to New York, Fort Wayne is really near. So how near is God? He's as close as a hug.

That should bring us comfort in times of Chaos.

We have an opportunity when God is near.

We have an opportunity for rest.

When it comes to the problems of life, this is what Jesus had to say.

Mt 11:28 "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.

Mt 11:29 Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.

Mt 11:30 For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

What is a Yoke. It is not a humorous story by a scandinavian.
This is a yoke (Picture)

Yoke Pictures Three Things:

1. Connection “Be with Me.” Yokes are made for two, not one. We were not meant to go through life living apart from God. His yoke fits well and is lighter than the one we’ve been pulling by ourselves. Be connected to Jesus!

2. Direction “Follow Me.” The idea of a yoke pictures the forward motion of two connected together. You cannot be yoked to Jesus and go your own way anymore. We follow Him and His direction for our life. Follow Jesus!

3. Cooperation “Work with Me.” To be yoked together means that we cooperate with His work. Before we come to Him, we were living for this side of eternity. Now we are joined to His work and discover that our lives make an eternal impact.
We experience only when we obey: COME and TAKE His yoke.
Rest is the result of obedience! We rest in Him!

J.H. Jowett summarized the thought this way...

The fatal mistake for the believer is to seek to bear life’s load in a single collar. God never intended man to carry his burden alone. Christ therefore deals only in yokes! A yoke is a neck harness for two, and the Lord Himself pleads to be One of the two. He wants to share the labor of any galling task. The secret of peace and victory in the Christian life is found in putting off the taxing collar of “self” and accepting the Master’s relaxing “yoke.”

There’s a story told of the one-time heavyweight boxing champion of the world, Muhammad Ali, flying to one of his engagements. During the flight the aircraft ran into foul weather, and mild to moderate turbulence began to toss it about. The passengers were accordingly instructed to fasten their seatbelts immediately. Everyone complied but Ali. Noticing this, the flight attendant approached him and requested that he observe the captain’s order, only to hear Ali audaciously respond, “Superman don’t need no seatbelt.” The flight attendant didn’t miss a beat and replied, “Superman don’t need no airplane either.”

That’s how we attempt to navigate through the chaos of life. We try to do things by ourselves. We try to go it alone. And all the time there is God as close as a hug with one part of the yoke on himself waiting for us to partner with Him.

III - Pray - don’t ponder

This is one of the greatest portions of scripture and one of the most frustrating to actually assimilate into life.

Charlie Brown and Linus were sitting around talking one day. Charlie said to Linus, "I worry about school a lot." He thought a little longer and then said, "I worry about worrying so much about school." And upon further reflection he concluded, "My anxieties have anxieties!"

The chaos of life brings worries. And our default setting for most is to ponder.

We love to stew about problems in life -well, we do. We must -because we do it so often. We must like it.

During stressful situations in life here's what we do -
we think and we reason and we try to figure it out. WE mull over the problems -
we rehearse them in our heads. WE rehearse the possible fixes - we rehearse the outcomes
- most of which are not good.

We play out all the scenarios - mostly negative and we think about the consequences when those scenarios happen

There are two words in this passage we need to focus on right up front.

anything and everything

I want you to think about how inclusive and exclusive these words are.

one is a negative - don't worry about anything.

If we don't worry about anything what does that leave us?

This is not genuine concern -this is downright worry.

Don't worry about anything - period

What does that mean? I can't worry about anything.

Whether there is enough gas in the car?

Whether my marriage will survive.

Whether I will get the job or the promotion.

Whether the church will grow or the Summit will get paid off.

then there is the word **everything**

But instead - present everything to God.

How much is everything - it's the totality - the whole ball of wax

All your stress, all the unknowns, all the things coming your way.

All your problems - all the chaos

God does not want us to handle the stress - He wants it all.

Paul says present all your requests.

In other words - Pray about them
communicate with God and give them to Him

Now what does God want us to know about presenting requests to Him?

#1 - He has the ability to answer

Eph 3:20 Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us,

Jer 32:17 "Ah, Sovereign LORD, you have made the heavens and the earth by your great power and outstretched arm. Nothing is too hard for you.

Is there anything too difficult for God? (Repeat)

#2 - He can take care of our situation

Matthew 6:25 ¶ "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes?

26 Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they?

27 Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life?

28 "And why do you worry about clothes? See how the lilies of the field grow. They do not labour or spin.

29 Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendour was dressed like one of these.

30 If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith?

31 So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?'

32 For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them.

33 But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

34 Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

#3 - He wants us to ask Him for Help

Jer 29:12 Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you.

Mr 11:24 Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours.

Lu 11:9 "So I say to you: Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you.

Lu 11:10 For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened.

It would be different if God said stay away - It would be different if He didn't want to help us. But the truth is that God is waiting for us to ask. He wants to intervene. He wants to more than we are willing to let Him.

Joh 15:7 If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you.

What does that say to you?

Notice what happens when we operate in this manner.

THE PEACE OF GOD

What do we really need in times of chaos - when life is giving us more than we can handle - when things are not adding up - when our plate has not room left for more? We need peace.

We need real peace

REAL PEACE My therapist told me the way to achieve true inner peace is to finish what I start. So far today, I have finished 2 bags of chips and a chocolate cake. I feel better already. SOURCE: <http://www.cybersalt.org/cleanlaugh>

Now peace is not the absence of turmoil. It doesn't mean everything automatically goes away. But peace is a confidence in the Lord and His provision in the midst. It is a confidence to know that God is on the case and He is taking steps to give direction and help.

This peace is a calm assurance.

It's something that goes beyond understanding. It's something that is unexplainable. But it will guard our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

[A young business owner was opening a new branch office, and a friend decided to send a floral arrangement for the grand opening. When the friend arrived at the opening, he was appalled to find that his wreath bore the inscription: “Rest in peace.” Angry, he complained to the florist. After apologizing, the florist said, “Look at it this way—somewhere a man was buried under a wreath today that said, ‘Good luck in your new location.’” Bits & Pieces, June 23, 1994, p. 4]

There is no luck about this. If you pray about your problems, struggles, and indecisions, you will have peace. Too many times this is our last resort. OK - too many times it's my last resort.

Why don't we do it sooner? I can tell you, when I pray about stress, I get peace. The Bible is true - it works.

IV - Change your stinking thinking

What are our thoughts in times of chaos?

What about the last couple of weeks?

What am I going to do about finances - retirement - the upcoming election - groceries - gasoline - propane.

Our minds become one collection point for all the negative that is coming our way.

Psychologists tell us that each person has about ten thousand thoughts per day.

I find that an encouragement. You see that means you have at least a one in ten thousand chance of having a good thought every day.

In times of chaos we need to change our thinking patterns.

Look at the list Paul gives

Remember that things are not going well for Paul, He is in prison. He does not have freedom. He can't go speak to the Philippians. The church is being attacked. People are being corrupted by false teaching and wrong doctrines. Paul has deep concern.

But even in that concern he makes a decision and he tells the church to follow suit.

Don't dwell on the problems. Don't dwell on the negative. Think about the positive.

Vs 8 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.

See what we focus our mind on shapes us. It molds us. The focus of our mind will determine our responses and reaction.

The Bible clearly tells us that the major battle with the enemy begins in the mind.

2 Cor 10: 4 The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds.

5 We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.

Notice where the battle is - it's in the mind.

Now we want to win over Chaos. How do we do that? Start changing our thinking.

Whatever is true

Whatever is noble

Whatever is right, pure, lovely, admirable

Wow, what a difference life could be if we just took time to apply this verse.

Life is certainly chaotic at times. Life is chocked full of decisions, calamities, disappointments, the unexpected, tiring schedules.

How Can we win over the Chaos

Rejoice in the Lord

Rest in the Lord

Pray - don't worry

Change your thinking

Here's the last part of all of this. It's a choice. None of this can happen unless we make the choice. WE can either choose to continue in despair and choose to be overwhelmed or we can choose to follow Paul's advice. What will you do this week?