

Anticipation. Depending on your age you remember it as a hit song by Carly Simon (**picture**) or the Heinz (**picture**) commercial, “*Anticipation*” playing while the ketchup slowly hangs in midair. A little guy watches longingly, waiting for it to fall on his burger. It’s enough to make you hungry!

Anticipation usually describes a joyful feeling. Recently, we visited our friends, Tom and Leesa Drury, in Minnesota. We *anticipated* that trip! Tom and I planned to go fishing. I *anticipated* a day on the lake (**picture**).

In a column for *World Magazine*, “Looking Forward,” Andree Sue Peterson (**picture**) writes: *My father and I have a steady date at the diner on Saturday mornings. One thing I have observed from our booth week after week is that people always look happy when they walk into a restaurant, whereas they look just regular when walking out. I am sure it is the same with me. The reason is not hard to guess. It is the power of **anticipation**, in this case, of the enjoyment of the visualized meal and the ceremony of being served by an affable waitress and of conversation with a person whose company one likes. Built into human nature is a need to have something to look forward to.*

Anticipation usually describes a future joyful feeling. Do you have someone you anticipate seeing? Are you someone others anticipate seeing?

Bob Loggans (**picture**) is one of my best friends. Years ago, his Dad, John Loggans, pastored this church and as a boy, Bob trusted Christ as his personal Savior here in Burlington. Today Bob pastors in Watertown. Bob is someone you anticipate seeing. He’s one of the most upbeat, joyful individuals that I know. The theme verse of his life is Psalm 118:24, “*This is the day that the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it.*” I’ve rarely seen Bob have a bad day. He’s someone you always anticipate seeing.

Are you someone others anticipate seeing? Or are you one of those others dread seeing, a bit like a visit to the dentist (**picture**)? Are you a little black raincloud or a ray of sunshine (**pictures**)?

We’re near the end of our study of the book of *Philippians: Joy No Matter What* and working our way through chapter 4:5-9. These verses unpack traits of a committed Christian. They’re traits of **Being someone anticipated**.

As we work through them, prayerfully ask the Holy Spirit to search your heart to determine if they’re true of you. Or, if there are some that are missing or need more spiritual growth. You can’t be a committed Christ-follower without these. They’re empowered and cultivated by the Spirit. A Christian is someone who *is* the right person before they *do* the right things. God is much more concerned about who we *are* than what we *do*. If you’re taking notes...

1. Joyful Christians are always anticipated, “*Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice.*” Too many are like W. C. Fields (**picture**) who said, “*I start off each day with a smile, and get it over with.*” The word, *rejoice*, is in the imperative. It’s a command. To *rejoice in the Lord* isn’t about how we feel, it’s obedience and repeated twice for emphasis. It’s a command we must deliberately choose to obey, especially when we’re in difficult circumstances. It starts with our heart and our attitude.

Don’t you wish Paul had been more realistic and said, “Rejoice *most* of the time”? But then, most of us would have justified ourselves by thinking, “I usually do rejoice.” We wouldn’t have had to confront our grumbling when things don’t go our way; our lack of trust in God in the midst of trials; our anger if we’re treated unfairly; our disappointment when others let us down, or even when we feel that God has let us down.

This isn’t hypothetical stuff. Paul writes this as he’s incarcerated for over two years and facing possible execution for a false accusation. If that’s not bad enough, on the way to Rome he’d been shipwrecked and snake bit. He had good reason to be angry or depressed at the treatment he’d received. You’d have thought that he’d have been in need of the Philippians writing to cheer him up. Instead, this short letter to them is filled with *joy*...some 15 times. To ignore this directive is disobedience. If a joyful attitude was impossible, God wouldn’t have asked this of us.

Notice the object of your rejoicing (and this is the key). The foundation is “*in the Lord.*” It’s what makes this command possible. It’s not “Hakuna matata” or “Don’t worry, be happy.” The source of our ability to obey this command is the Lord Jesus. We rejoice in Him, not our circumstances.

Circumstances may be terrible, or great. Rejoicing has nothing to do with them. Circumstances change, Jesus Christ remains the same forever. The source for our rejoicing is in our all-loving, all-powerful, all-wise God.

Notice that rejoicing is an action not an emotion. We can’t always control our emotions, but we can choose our actions. No matter what emotions we’re feeling, we can choose to rejoice in the Lord.

Notice that joy is different from happiness. Happiness is dependent on circumstances. Joy is a settled confidence that God is good and that He’s in control. By trusting Him, we can have joy in even the worst situation.

Know that it’s okay to be sad. Does that seem like a contradiction? You can be sad and still rejoice in the Lord. Jesus wept at the death of His friend Lazarus. In Acts we read that “*godly men buried Stephen and mourned deeply for him.*”

It's not wrong to be sad. It's right to feel sorrow over sin, death and tragedy, yet we can still rejoice in our Lord through our sadness.

People will ask us how we're doing. Sometimes someone answers, "Okay under the circumstances." Believers don't live under the circumstances, but above the circumstances! Joy is a mark of a Christian because Jesus is alive!

When he was 80, Billy Graham (**picture**) was interviewed by Larry King (**picture**). Graham had recently been diagnosed with Parkinson's. When King asked him how he felt about having Parkinson's, Billy replied, "*I feel great about it. It's been a wonderful experience. I believe the Lord has many lessons to teach me through this disease.*" That's what it means to "*Rejoice in the Lord always.*" **Joyful Christians are always anticipated.**

2. Gentle Christians are always anticipated, "*Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand.*" Would you say Novak Djokovic (**picture**) is *gentle*? Djokovic was disqualified from the US Open last week after he hit a ball in anger and accidentally struck a line judge in the throat.

Would those who know you consider you a gentle person? To make the question harder: Would the people you like least consider you a gentle person? That's the real test. Anyone can be gentle around nice people. Only the spirit of Jesus enables us to respond gently to those who mistreat us.

The word translated "*reasonableness*" is a hard one to precisely translate into English. Other possibilities include "moderation," "gentleness," and "fair-mindedness." One writer calls it the quality of "inner calmness."

But standing up for one's rights is very American. One flag from the American Revolution is a snake with the motto, "*Don't tread on me!*" (**picture**). We're not going to let anyone push us around. We're prone to this demanding of our rights.

At work, at home, even at church, we're quick to react when we feel we're treated unfairly. We take courses in assertiveness training so we can learn how to stand up for ourselves (as if we need training in how to do that!). As a pastor, I've watched people jump from job to job, marriage to marriage, or church to church, each time claiming that they were in the right and others wronged them. Even if you believe that they were right, they're wrong. They weren't practicing the command in our text, the godly trait of gentleness.

There's a direct connection between having God's joy and being gentle. Our joy is often disrupted by those who wrong us or irritate us. If we respond, "She has no right to treat me that way! I have my rights! I'm not going to let him get away with that!" If we go that route, we lose our joy.

Those with frequent relational problems probably aren't practicing the Golden Rule, treating others as they'd like to be treated (Mt. 7:12). Gentle believers aren't easily offended, nor do they take everything personally. They're gracious. They give others the benefit of the doubt. Love "*always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres*" (1 Cor. 13:7).

One of Paul's main concerns is our witness for Jesus Christ. If we lack joy, especially in times of trials, we won't be effective witnesses for the power of the gospel. The same is true when we lack graciousness and gentleness.

Maybe you're thinking, "If I practice gentleness, I'll get walked on! It's a dog-eat-dog world. How can I practice gentleness without getting trampled?"

Remember, we're accountable to the Lord first. One day we'll give an account to Him on our response to being mistreated. If we allow evil people to stop us from being Christlike, we lose and so does the cause of Christ.

Please understand. There are times when it's not loving to let an aggressive person get away with their sin. The most loving and Christ-honoring thing is to confront them. It must be done though with Christlike graciousness.

"*The Lord is near.*" God is omnipresent. He's everywhere. When students are mean, co-workers rude, the boss unjust, a neighbor cruel – God is present. He's close and He sees. He's in control, orchestrating even injustice and unfairness to accomplish His purposes for His glory and our good. **Gentle Christians are always anticipated.**

3. Praying Christians are always anticipated, "*Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*" "*Unconscious blasphemy*" – that's what Oswald Chambers (**picture**) called anxiety. Ouch!

The Greek word translated "*anxious*" means to be pulled in different directions." Fear pulls us apart. The Old English root from which we get our word "*worry*" means "to strangle." Anxiety and worry strangle us. They affect our thinking, our sleep, our digestion and our relationships.

Jesus used this word picture to describe worry in His parable of the sower. In Mark 4 He tells a story of a farmer sowing seed, comparing it to the way different people respond when they hear the gospel. He said that the seed sown among the thorns represents the ones who have heard the word, [BUT] the *worries* of the world choke the word and it becomes unfruitful. Worry is dangerous. It throttles our thinking and chokes God's truth out of us.

For years one woman had trouble getting to sleep at night because she so feared burglars. One night her husband heard a noise and went downstairs to investigate. When he got there, he actually found a burglar. "Good evening," said the man of the house. "I'm pleased to see you. Would you please come upstairs and meet my wife? She's been waiting for years to meet you."

All of us struggle with worry. We worry about our kids, our finances, our health. We worry about our sermons (at least I do). Anxiety is one of the most common mental disorders encountered by mental health professionals.

There are three key words in these two verses: *anxious*, *prayer* and *peace*. Being anxious is the problem we're told to put off. Prayer is what we're commanded to practice. Peace is the product that we're promised by God.

Anxiety is a sin. Jesus said, "*Be anxious for nothing.*" Read the Sermon on the Mount and you'll quickly discover Jesus had a lot to say about anxiety. He makes it clear that anxiety comes from a lack of faith and from a wrong focus on the things of this world instead of on the kingdom of God.

Anxiety hurts our Christian witness to a lost world. How can we encourage someone to trust Jesus for their eternal salvation if we won't trust Him for our temporary needs? When non-Christians sees us weighed down with anxiety, they won't ask how they can have what we have. For the sake of our testimony for Christ, it's imperative that we learn to experience the peace of God, rather than give in to worry.

Four words for prayer are found in this sentence: *prayer*, *petition*, *thanksgiving*, *requests*. The first, *prayer*, is the general word for prayer. The words *petition* and *request* both have to do with asking for God's help. The fourth, tucked in the middle, brings out a vital aspect of prayer, *thanksgiving*.

We usually thank God after He's answered our request. Philippians 4:6 teaches us to mix thanksgiving right in with the request. "*With thanksgiving, present your requests to God.*" In other words, even as I am asking God, I'm already thanking Him: thanking Him for being my God, thanking Him for being my Savior, thanking Him for loving me and hearing my prayer, and in faith thanking Him for answering my prayer according to His wisdom.

Don't worry...pray – these two commands go together. It's impossible to obey the first command without first obeying the second. The only way we can worry about nothing is to pray about everything. Every time you're faced with something to worry about, turn it into a prayer.

The result? "*And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*" God will fill you with a supernatural peace beyond your ability to understand it. It's not from God granting all of your requests, but comes from making your requests known to Him. Once you've prayed about it, you know God's will will be done and you can leave it in His hands. It doesn't make sense in the world's eyes, but it makes sense when you know the Father and trust His working in your life.

His peace will guard your heart and mind. *Guard* is a military term, used of soldiers standing guard over a city to protect it from harm. God's peace will stand guard over your heart and your mind, and protect you from worry.

Worrying or praying are both actions. You can choose one or the other. If you choose worry, you'll be filled with anxiety. If you choose prayer, you can be filled with peace. **Praying Christians are always anticipated.**

4. Upward Thinking Christians are always anticipated. "*Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.*"

Did you know the average person has 10,000 separate thoughts each day? That's 3.5 million thoughts a year. By age 75, you'll have over 26 million. Most of you have had over 2,000 separate thoughts since you got out of bed this morning and you'll have another 8,000 before bed tonight. That's why biblical upward thinking is integral to a life of joy and peace.

Many lose their joy and witness because they don't understand *G.I.G.O.* G.I.G.O. stands for *Garbage in, Garbage out*. It's a computer term that means if you put in poor data, you get bad results. It's true of the computer God gave us. Put garbage in your mind, you'll get garbage out in your life. What you feed your mind impacts your life. It's why we're commanded to think upward thoughts.

Whatever is *true* means those things that are real, genuine, and honest. Don't live in a fantasy world or listen to lies. Stay connected to those things that are trustworthy, honest. Whatever is *honorable* means those things that are dignified, majestic, worthy of respect. Think about noble things, like sacrifice and honor. Go outside and contemplate God's majestic creation. Whatever is *just* is the upright and proper. *Pure* means things that are holy, chaste, and undefiled. *Lovely* are those things pleasing, agreeable, that which calls forth love. Whatever is *commendable* are things that are admirable or attractive. All six are summed up with what's *excellent* or *praiseworthy* – think on those things.

We don't naturally think good thoughts. We're sinful people. The only way to get rid of the bad stuff in our minds is to replace it with the good. Romans 12:2 refers to it as being "*transformed by the renewing of your mind.*" Spending time in God's Word, listening to Christian music, all of these are important ways to fill your mind with good. Memorizing

Scripture helps. It enables us to learn to think God's thoughts. We must filter and delete the bad; focus and cultivate the good and praiseworthy.

In this day of chronic bad news, let me encourage you to start a "Blessing Diary." Write down one good thing, one thing you're thankful for each day.

The word *think* gives us our word *logic*. The word was used to describe deliberation or to calculate. Too many don't think with an eternal worldview. Yet, we're commanded to work at our thinking.

You won't have God's joy and peace, you won't be able to truly pray if you don't have the right kind of thinking. The best place to begin right thinking is with your Bible. Yet it's tragic how few Christians spend time regularly in the Bible and then they wonder why they're so anxious and have so little joy.

An average social media user spends 2 hours and 24 minutes a day on social media. How can we rationalize that we don't have time to read, study or memorize God's Word? Satan has deceived us and we're lying to ourselves.

Have you heard of Garbage Mary? She was dubbed that by the media when she was picked up by police at a shopping mall in Delray Beach, Florida. She was a filthy mess. So were her car and her two bedroom apartment.

Neighbors told of her scrounging through garbage cans in search of food, which she took back to her apartment. Police found garbage everywhere; in the refrigerator, in the stove, in the cabinets, even in the bathtub. But they found other things as well. They found Mobil Oil Stock worth more than \$400,000. They found documents indicating she owned oil fields in Kansas, stock certificates from prominent firms, and passbooks from eight large bank accounts. They discovered that Garbage Mary was the daughter of a well-to-do lawyer and bank director from Illinois, who'd died several years earlier. Garbage Mary was a millionaire, but lived as a pauper. Great wealth was at her fingertips, but she spent her life sifting through garbage.

It's a sad story, but is like far too many Christians. They should be immersing their minds in wholesome thoughts, but instead fill them with decay, wallowing in the trash of a dying world. How's your thought life? Is it time to install some new programming? **Upward Thinking Christians are always anticipated.**

5. Real Christians are always anticipated. *"What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me—practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you."* Stuart Briscoe (**picture**) was teaching the principles of Bible study. He showed how to pick out the promises and the commands in Scripture, and what to do with them. Finally, he reviewed and asked, "Now, what do you do with the commands?" A little old lady raised her hand and said, "I underline them in blue." Underlining the Bible's commands in blue might make for a colorful Bible, but the point of God's commands is not to underline them but to obey them.

We tend to think attending church is a nice, safe thing to do. It feels good to sing and fellowship with nice people and to hear a message from God's Word. James 1:22 warns us that if we hear God's Word, yet fail to do it, we deceive ourselves. Hearing the Bible and knowing God's Word without translating that knowledge into obedience is dangerous. The Bible was written to transform us and radically change our lives!

Paul exhorts us to follow his example and become doers of the Word. Christian conduct is built on biblical content and is vital because it results in the very presence of the God of peace. Verse 9 must not be separated from verse 8. Our thought life forms the basis for our behavior.

If our conduct is merely outward conformity to the expectations of the Christian crowd, it's not genuine and won't hold up under pressure or temptation. Our Christianity must flow out of a godly thought life. A Christlike thought life is the outcome of real conversion. God imparts into us a new nature, a new life and a new mind.

Christians have been transformed at their very core. We're totally different. Once we're converted through faith in Christ, we begin the process of spiritual growth through the renewal of our minds through Scripture and corresponding changes in our behavior. We live like Jesus and please God.

What's the bottom line? Put it into practice. Don't just think, do! Paul asks: *Did you learn something from me? Did you receive instruction? Have you heard me? Have you seen my example? Just do it!*

The same applies to us. We don't come to church to listen and leave. We come so our lives are radically changed. We're to take what we've learned or received or heard or seen and put it into practice. The result? *"The God of peace will be with you."* Only God's presence brings His peace. Do you want to know God's presence? Put His commands into practice and the God of peace will be with you. **Real Christians are always anticipated.**

Conclusion: In an article in Breakpoint entitled *"Drawn to the Light - Why Muslims Convert to Christianity,"* Dr. Dudley Woodberry (**picture**), professor of Islamic Studies, aware that throughout the world Muslims have been turning to Christ, was curious about *Why?* – especially in countries where the cost of conversion is very high. To find the answer, he created a detailed questionnaire. Over a 16-year period, some 750 Muslims from 30 countries filled it out.

The results were eye-opening. The number one reason Muslim converts listed for their decision to follow Christ was the lifestyle of Christians among them. That's what it means to **Be someone anticipated!**

Why aren't more Christians "anticipated" and wanted? There's little or no change. We're too much like a lost world and have little to offer it.

Yet, if you've committed your life to Christ, there's within you God's enabling power to obey every command in this passage. By His grace you can change. If you surrender and link yourself with Him, you're joined with the highest moral power in the universe. The Lord Jesus is the embodiment of everything commanded here. It's all in Jesus. All virtue, beauty, holiness, truth, all that's good and right is found in Him. This is a call to a personal relationship. It will radically change your life and your relationships.

Do you want to be radically changed? Do you want to see true change in this world? Live for Jesus! **Joyful, Gentle, Praying, Upward Thinking, Real Christians** are always anticipated and always wanted! It begins from the inside out with a personal relationship with Christ as your Savior.

Do you know Him? Will you be one? Are you **someone anticipated?**