

The Serenity Prayer

Philippians 4 – August 10, 2014

Upcoming Sermon Series

The Prodigal		
A Study of Jesus' Most Famous Story		
Date	Message Title	Bible Text
Aug. 24	The Lost Younger Son	Luke 15
Aug. 31	The Lost Older Brother	Luke 15
Sept. 7	The Prodigal God	Luke 15
Sept. 14	Becoming More Like the Father	Luke 15
Sept. 21	The Prodigal Story as the Story of the Bible	Luke 15
Sept. 28	Heaven: The Father Throws a Party	Luke 15

The Serenity Prayer

God, grant me...
the serenity to accept the things I cannot change,
the courage to change the things I can, and
the wisdom to know the difference.

The Wisdom to Know the Difference

Things I Cannot Change	Things I Can Change
Praying for the serenity to accept these things and to be at peace with them.	Praying for the courage to act on the things I am capable of acting on – namely, myself.

- Acceptance is the last stage of a grieving process. The stages of grieving are denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and then acceptance. Acceptance is coming to peace with what is. We stop striving to control, and we accept what is.
- The opposite of acceptance is trying to _____.
- Melody Beattie: "The only person you can now or ever change is yourself. The only person that it is your business to control is yourself. The surest way to make ourselves crazy is to try to control other people. Stop trying to control other people and learn to take care of yourself."

How Paul Prayed and Lived the Serenity Prayer in Philippians 4

Things the Apostle Paul Could Not Change	Things the Apostle Paul Could Change
The fact that he was imprisoned in Rome and chained to a Roman soldier (1:12-14)	What he chose to do with his time – namely write letters to the churches (1:1)
His circumstances and what other people did	Whether he was anxious or whether he prayed (4:6-7)
His circumstances and what other people did	What he thought about (4:8)
His circumstances and what other people did	His contentment (4:11-12)
His circumstances and what other people did	Himself. Whether he leaned on Christ (4:13)
His circumstances and what other people did	His thankfulness (4:14-18; 4:6; 1:3-4)
The fact that he was imprisoned and chained to a Roman soldier	Whether he shared his faith with that Roman soldier (4:22)
Other people's decisions and actions (i.e. Euodia and Syntyche's fighting with one another)(4:2-3)	What he asked for (4:2-3)
His circumstances and what other people did	His joy (4:4)

Seven Things That Have Helped Me Live with Serenity

1. Actually _____ of things I can and cannot control.

Things I Do Not Have Control Over	Things I Do Have Control Over

2. _____ over my losses.

- Make a list of major losses and changes that I have gone through in my life. Allow myself to grieve these. Allow myself to go through the stages of grief (denial, anger, bargaining, depression, acceptance). Ask myself: Have I fully gone through the grief process with each loss? Am I stuck somewhere? Do I have any unfinished grieving to do?
- **Romans 12:15** – Mourn with those who mourn.
- **Matthew 5:4** – Blessed are those who mourn for they will be comforted.

3. Making an inventory of _____ shortcomings and working on those with God's help.

- Melody Beattie: "A codependent is a person who has gotten so absorbed in other people's problems that he doesn't have the energy to work on his own problems. Codependents know what alcoholics should and shouldn't do, and they wonder why the alcoholic didn't do it. Yet these codependents, who had such great insights into others, couldn't see themselves, their own feelings or problems, or what they should do to solve their own problems."
- **Matthew 7:1-5** – *Do not judge, or you too will be judged. 2 For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you. 3 Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? 4 How can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' when all the time there is a plank in your own eye? 5 You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye.*

4. Setting _____ and working on them with God.

- These goals should be about my life (not changing other people).
- There is power in prayerfully setting goals, committing them to the Lord, and then working on them.
- **Proverbs 16:3** – *Commit to the Lord whatever you do, and your plans will succeed.*

5. _____ for what I need.

- I cannot control others, but I can ask them for what I need. After I ask, I then surrender it up and get on with my life. I cannot control if they do what I ask, but I can control whether or not I ask.

6. _____.

- I do not control God, but I can ask God for what I need. After I ask, I then surrender it up to God and trust Him (Philippians 4:6-7).
- Lately, I have been using The Lord's Prayer as my prayer guide.
- Coming January 2015: Sermon series on The Lord's Prayer called "Pray Like This"

7. Practicing Sabbath and having _____.

- I'm a lot less neurotic about controlling circumstances and others when I take the time to enjoy God and this life He has given me by practicing Sabbath and having fun.

Today's Big Application – Fill out the chart below for your life. Prayerfully accept the things that you cannot change (and quit trying to control them). Ask God for the courage to change the things that are in your control to change – namely, yourself.

Things I Cannot Change (things I cannot control)	Things I Can Change (things I do have control over)