

Be Still

One of the things that makes it harder to see God and His peace is my anxiety. I am constantly trying to finish a to do list to make the gap between expectation and reality much smaller. Except that list never gets smaller and I never reach my expectations. Worry or lack of peace in everyday life stems from the feeling that something is out of your control (which most things are). And unrest comes from our vain efforts to put things under our control.

Sometimes my standards for God are too low, and my standards for myself are too high. I put more things on myself and fewer things on Him; I say “take it off my hands” as I’m shortening my morning prayer to go take care of things myself. I stand before Him at the end of each day thinking about what I still have left to do, while I am worshipping Him with my lips. And all I am left with is unrest. In his book, *The Screwtape Letters*, CS Lewis says that humans think the devil works to put thoughts in our head, when his best work consists of keeping thoughts out—that includes keeping God’s promises out.

Remember that the words, “Be anxious for nothing” (Phil 4:6) are not just poetic words; **they are a command to us**. Just like any other. Yes, plan ahead, set aside time for your work, as much as you need, but set aside time for God **in your school day too**. I know this sounds scary to just choose not to be anxious, but faith itself is not a feeling; it is a choice. You need to actively choose, every time you pray and every time you’re anxious, to be vulnerable enough to trust in Him. Choose to be still in a world that is not. Pope Kyrillos once said, “Rest assured and do not think too much about any matter. Leave it to God who is in control. Have you known anyone who has trusted in God and was let down? Heaven forbid.” Realize that for God to help you in your tests, relationships with others, this is something very small for Him. He has raised a dead man, moved mountains, and you think He can’t help you with your problems? “Now if God so clothes the grass of this field, which today is, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will He not much more clothe you, O you of little faith?” (Matt 6:30)

Remember Peter, when He was walking on water, only fell once he took his eyes off of the Savior. Only then did he heed the winds and the storm around him. I always picture Christ yelling at Peter, likewise, shouting at us through the storm, “Keep your eyes on Me! [Your Name] Keep your eyes on Me, take my hand!”. God shouts to us through our distress, to make sure we hear Him. Whether or not we trust Him is our choice. And when you are undertaken by the waves of this world, tossed and worn, in moments of unrest, cry out, “Lord, I believe, help my unbelief!” (Mark 9:24) For this is the sole reason why He allows such troubles to avail: that we may learn to find our rest in Him. God only wants us to realize that we need Him.

You must realize that no matter how many things you do, the list will always grow, and you will never find the rest you are looking for in a world that doesn’t promise it. Nothing remains consistent on this earth, so anxiety fills us as we feel ourselves losing control. We build houses on sand made of success, attention, relationships, and wonder why they don’t stand; anything in this world can be taken away from us in a moment—so why do we make the world our master? But God is the only portion of our lives we can invest in, that no one can take away

from us. Too often we forget the words, “lay up for yourselves treasures in Heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal.” (Matt 6:20) Wrestle with God, to never leave prayer until you take something from Him. He is beneficent; He is always the giver, never the taker, always waiting to give you something every time you **ask**. The more time you spend with Him, you begin to take on His presence. You begin to be filled with love, joy, peace, and many fruits. The stronger YOU get, the weaker the world’s influence on you does. But you will never take from prayer so as long as you are too busy to listen. Hear Him tell you, “[Your Name], you are worried and troubled about many things,” (Luke 10:41) as He is in your house speaking to you. Sit at His feet with Mary and listen to Him. The scary part about prayer is that God actually hears you and can change you. You won’t have less work to do; the test won’t ace itself, but you will see things differently. You will find hope in situations you felt were hopeless, comfort in accepting what you can’t change, and peace in the midst of the chaos.

Keep your eyes on Him and do not worry: “Be still and know that I am God.” (Psalm 46:10)