

LESSON 56 - LIVE SERENELY

3 Biblical Principles For A Life Of Serenity

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Are you stressed and anxious about something? Are you able to affect the outcome, or is it pointless to stress because it's not within your control? Do you want to feel calm, peaceful, and untroubled? The word for this is serenity. In the 1940's American Evangelical theologian Reinhold Niebuhr wrote a prayer for a sermon later referred to as the "Serenity Prayer." One phrase in it points to three biblical principles you can embrace to have a life of greater serenity. The phrase: *"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."* Let's break this down further and learn to: 1) Always trust God and release all control to Him, 2) Allow the Spirit of God to empower and lead you to change whatever you can, and 3) Pursue godly, biblical, and spiritual wisdom.

1. Trust God and Release All Control To Him. *"God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change."* There are many difficult circumstances in life we have no control over. Often we understand intellectually there's nothing we can do to change the circumstance, nonetheless we still allow ourselves to feel stress and anxiety about it. These feelings aren't helpful at all. They're actually a coping mechanism. When something bad happens it can be psychologically satisfying to allow ourselves to *feel bad* about it. This subconsciously helps us feel like we're doing something about the situation, but this is an illusion. The truth is we're actually doing nothing to change the situation. In fact, the stress and anxiety will only cause additional physical and spiritual problems. In Matthew 6:27 Jesus said, *"Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life?"* Remember, God is sovereign; He's in control over everything that happens in the entire universe. Romans 8:28 assures us saying, *"In all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose."* It doesn't say in *all good* things; it says in *ALL* things: the good *and* the bad. If you love God and have given Jesus your life then you're on your way to eternal life. So remind yourself that God is using and working *EVERY* circumstance for your good! In the moment, we might not understand how a bad or hopeless situation can have any good to it, but we need to trust that it does. God allowed it to happen. That means regardless of how dark, evil, or painful, there's still a way for God to be glorified through it and He will work it out for our good—if we allow Him to. Shift your focus away from stressing about what you cannot change and towards surrendering those things to God, trusting Him with it. Release all control to Him. Trust that He is doing what is good and best. Rest in the freedom of that decision. Jesus's burden is light (Matthew 11:30). The Holy Spirit lives inside of you; allow Him to fill every part of you. He has made available to you: joy, peace, patience, faithfulness, and self control. Receive and enjoy it!

2. Allow the Spirit of God to Empower and Lead You. *"God, grant me the courage to change the things I can."* We're not alone. God is with everyone who has received Jesus as Lord and Savior. He supernaturally and spiritually empowers, helps, teaches, and guides us by His Spirit. In John 14:16-18 Jesus said, *"I will ask the*

Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever... I will not leave you as orphans.” John 14:26 He said, *“The Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.”* He even helps us pray. Romans 8:26 says, *“The Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans.”* His presence is essential to the Christian life. In Luke 24:49 Jesus told His disciples not to leave Jerusalem, preach the Gospel, nor start growing His Church until they received the power of the Holy Spirit. He said, *“Stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high.”* Acts 1:5-8 Jesus said, *“John baptized with a water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit... You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”* Yes, pray for God to give you the courage to change what you can, but pray for more than that. Pray, and believe, for miracles, strength, discipline, faith, hope, wisdom, and discernment of spiritual attacks. Pray for blessings, divine opportunities, and that closed doors would be opened. Take authority against Satan in the mighty name of Jesus. Rebuke and cancel, by the blood of Christ, all of Satan’s plans to steal, kill, and destroy you. Romans 8:31 reminds, *“If God is for us, who can be against us?”* Focus on changing what you can through God’s power and leave the rest of the outcome in God’s hands.

3. Pursue Godly, Biblical, and Spiritual Wisdom. *“God, grant me the wisdom to know the difference.”* You need wisdom to know if you should surrender something to God, trust Him, and release control of it to Him, or if you should go on the offensive, fight, and work hard to change it. Wisdom will guide you to handle challenges better: to reflect deeper through prayer and fasting, to seek the Lord’s empowerment to overcome, or to bring to the church for help. Pursue three kinds of wisdom. *Godly* wisdom allows you to see the situation as it really is, from God’s perspective rather than yours, and make decisions accordingly. Proverbs 3:5-7 says, *“Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight. Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the Lord and shun evil.”* Proverbs 9:10 says, *“The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.”* *Biblical* wisdom comes from knowing, trusting, and living according to God’s Word, the Bible. This is the only source of wisdom guaranteed to be Holy Spirit-inspired, inerrant, authoritative, and universally applicable and binding for all people. Study God’s Word daily; it’s the only way to know truth from falsehood. 2 Timothy 3:16-17 says, *“All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.”* *Spiritual* wisdom is a gift from the Holy Spirit (see 1 Corinthians 12:8). This wisdom is a deeper understanding of God’s truth and ways. As 1 Corinthians 2:13 says, *“Not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, explaining spiritual realities with Spirit-taught words.”* The world considers this kind of wisdom foolishness but those led by the Holy Spirit make judgments with the mind of Christ. James 1:5 says, *“If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you.”*

Let’s pray. God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change; the courage, power, and guidance to change the things I can in the best way possible; and the godly, biblical, and spiritual wisdom to know the difference. Help me to always trust You and release control to You. In Jesus’ name. Amen.