

Memory Verse 5 | Phillipians 4:6-7 (Author, John Majors)

Devotion

An unexpected knock fell upon his hotel room door.

“Our utmost apologies for disrupting you, sir, but may we please request that you move to higher ground?”

“Higher ground? I.... don’t understand.”

“Well, sir, and again, we apologize for the interruption, but it’s just that the Tsunami sirens have been sounding for the last ten minutes and...”

TSUNAMI! He hadn’t even considered the possibility when he traveled to the South Pacific to teach a class to local missionaries. But of course, that would be a reality of island life. He needed no further encouragement. He moved toward the door, grabbed his computer, wallet, lecture notes, and a book.

Mindful of the incredible damage a recent tsunami created in Japan, he texted his wife about the situation. She asked, “Where will you go?” His response was one word: “up.” She asked, “Aren’t you anxious?” Not really—just taking action. Should I be? He began to wonder... Would he be swept away before he could get out of the hotel? Images from the recent Indonesian tsunami also flashed through his mind: families frolicking on the beach, unaware of the violence barreling down upon them.

When watching the footage from the safety of his mid-American living room, thousands of miles from a beach, he had all kinds of advice for the people trying to flee the scene. “I’d just crawl up that tree right there.” But now he realizes it’s not that easy.

Philippians 4:6-7 (NIV) says, “Do not be anxious, about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”

Many anxious thoughts were racing through his mind, yet outwardly he was surprisingly calm. Mostly because everyone around him was calm. He joined the throng moving methodically up the hill behind the hotel. And as he climbed, he prayed. His wife also let him know she was praying.

Those prayers calmed his fears and anxieties and brought peace. He also focused on giving thanks. Thank you, God, for warning sirens. Thank you for the very polite hotel staff who helped warn him. *Though could they have a little more sense of urgency next time? Please, Lord?* Thank you, this hotel was built at the base of a hillside. Thank you for this beautiful sunny day. In minutes they were well above any possible high-water line. He would be ok. He stood with hundreds of other watchers—looking out toward the ocean to search for any signs of a tidal wave. But one never came.

He later learned that though there had been a recent tsunami in this country that caused a fair amount of destruction, tsunamis usually didn't make it to the shore with much force because of the reefs. These huge coral barriers act as a natural layer of protection. The locals knew this, which partly explained their nonchalance. There's less reason to be full of anxiety when surrounded by a protective barrier.

Questions

1. Why were the locals not as anxious about the Tsunami as the visitor?
2. How does Philippians 4:6-7 say we should respond to anxiety? What should we do?

Prayer

God, when we feel anxious, help us to remember Philippians 4:6-7. Remind us to bring our anxieties to you in prayer. Help us to focus on gratitude with our prayers. Overwhelm us with a sense of peace as we focus on your goodness and your protecting hand. Thank you for being our protective barrier in the midst of anxiety.