

RAGE!

Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. ~Philippians 4:6 (NIV)

I yell at the television.

My gut tenses and my blood boils when I see propaganda, blatant lies, attempts at brainwashing, and wickedness in power. I detest lies, and I struggle with not hating the deliverer of lies. What happened to Thou shalt not bear false witness? What hurts is these are my countrymen and women; we are all Americans, yet our relationship seems adversarial and competitive as opposed to united and cooperative. Sadly, they feel the same way about me. I question the name of our country: What happened to “United” part of USA?

Love your enemy is one of the hardest lessons Jesus taught. It tests my faith. “How can God let them stay in power?” I ask myself. “Can’t God see what harm these people are doing?” I wonder why God is not protecting us from their division and destruction of our country.

Hateful words!
No compassion!
The other side is the enemy!
Blame!
Your side is a disgrace!
Mockery!
Bullying!

My country has divided itself. Friends and family are now foes. We’re encouraged to buy into and accept the falsehoods.

I feel my body tighten and my fists clench as I allow wicked words and ways to turn me into one of them, filled with hatred for all they stand for, filled with rage. I say more horrible things to the television. My husband is shocked. I normally don't rant, but I had kept it bottled up for so long.

Explosive Rage.

That is how I felt.

My mind spiraled to friends' social media posts agreeing with what I saw as egregious atrocities, publicly promoting the spoon-fed justifications. People blindly following the lies they've been fed when the truth is so clear. I scowled. I hated. I resented. I saw myself as one that does not succumb to this, and I hated myself. I tell myself, "I am a happy and loving person, who puts negative feelings aside," but this was testing my resolve - my being.

When all else fails, let go and let God. I handed it to God, and he answered by increasing the power of the wicked. "God, what type of an answer is that?" It was literally driving me crazy until the day I discovered Psalm 37. It included instructions for me to get through this mess. Here it was. The answer I had prayed for.

What Now? Week #5

I stepped back, took a deep breath, prayed to release the hate and resentment. I read a Psalm that renewed my soul. I handed it to God. I will not become one of the haters. I will keep trying to love them all. I will pray for us all. I slip; I fall; I get back up, brush off my knees and follow the advice set by the Psalms and confirmed by Jesus. Here is this special Psalm. I hope it helps you during these times, as it did me.

Psalm 37 (from ECUSA Lectionary Page)

- 1 Do not fret yourself because of evildoers; do not be jealous of those who do wrong.
- 2 For they shall soon wither like the grass, and like the green grass fade away.
- 3 Put your trust in the LORD and do good; dwell in the land and feed on its riches.
- 4 Take delight in the LORD, and he shall give you your heart's desire.
- 5 Commit your way to the LORD and put your trust in him, and he will bring it to pass.
- 6 He will make your righteousness as clear as the light and your just dealing as the noonday.
- 7 Be still before the LORD and wait patiently for him.
- 8 Do not fret yourself over the one who prospers, the one who succeeds in evil schemes.
- 9 Refrain from anger, leave rage alone; do not fret yourself; it leads only to evil.
- 10 For evildoers shall be cut off, but those who wait upon the LORD shall possess the land.
- 11 In a little while the wicked shall be no more;
you shall search out their place, but they will not be there.
- 12 But the lowly shall possess the land; they will delight in abundance of peace.
- 13 The wicked plot against the righteous and gnash at them with their teeth.
- 14 The Lord laughs at the wicked, because he sees that their day will come.
- 15 The wicked draw their sword and bend their bow to strike down the poor and needy,
to slaughter those who are upright in their ways.
- 16 Their sword shall go through their own heart, and their bow shall be broken.
- 17 The little that the righteous has is better than great riches of the wicked.
- 18 For the power of the wicked shall be broken, but the LORD upholds the righteous.

Reflection: Take a step outside for a minute. Find the beauty. Pause and think about this creation around you whenever you are anxious. Bring God's peace into your heart. Regardless of how you feel about the chaos of these times, think about what this culture is doing to your soul, then find ways to reclaim it.

Response: Set aside time each day (or several times each day) to go outside, sit quietly and find a patch of nature. Thank God for this patch of peace. While in this spot, read the Prayer of St. Francis and Psalm 37 every day this week. Trust that God has this under control. Pray to release hatred, anxiety, animosity. Think of those you know, leaders, and others who you view as "the enemy." Feel compassion and love toward them, even if they don't care. Strive to put your trust in the Lord and do good, even for those with whom you fervently disagree.

Prayer: God, bring me to peace in your creation. Remind me to stop, think, and take those moments to go outside and pray when I feel the anxiety or anger building up in me. Help me put my trust in you and do good things for others. Help me love my enemy. Lord, make the path of righteousness clear, and help me be patient as you work through these times. Help me not fret over the wicked who seem to prosper, but instead, help me put on the armor of love and keep my focus on you, your will for me, and your way. In Jesus' name. Amen.