

— THE —

**END  
TIMES  
SURVIVAL  
GUIDE**

TEN BIBLICAL STRATEGIES  
FOR FAITH AND HOPE  
IN THESE UNCERTAIN DAYS

**MARK HITCHCOCK**

## **THE END TIMES SURVIVAL GUIDE**



THE  
**END  
TIMES  
SURVIVAL  
GUIDE**

TEN BIBLICAL STRATEGIES  
FOR FAITH AND HOPE  
IN THESE UNCERTAIN DAYS

**MARK HITCHCOCK**

TYNDALE  
MOMENTUM®



*The nonfiction imprint of  
Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.*

Visit Tyndale online at [www.tyndale.com](http://www.tyndale.com).

Visit Tyndale Momentum online at [www.tyndalemomentum.com](http://www.tyndalemomentum.com).

*TYNDALE*, *Tyndale Momentum*, and Tyndale's quill logo are registered trademarks of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc. The Tyndale Momentum logo is a trademark of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc. Tyndale Momentum is the nonfiction imprint of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Carol Stream, Illinois.

*The End Times Survival Guide: Ten Biblical Strategies for Faith and Hope in These Uncertain Days*

Copyright © 2018 by Mark Hitchcock. All rights reserved.

Cover photograph of crumpled paper copyright © artush/Depositphotos.com. All rights reserved.

Cover photograph of burned paper copyright © siloto/Depositphotos.com. All rights reserved.

Cover photograph of coffee stains copyright © Juhku/Depositphotos.com. All rights reserved.

Author photo by Chris McLaughlin, copyright © 2016. All rights reserved.

Designed by Ron C. Kaufmann

Published in association with the literary agency of William K. Jensen Literary Agency, 119 Bampton Court, Eugene, Oregon 97404.

Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are taken from the *Holy Bible*, New Living Translation, copyright © 1996, 2004, 2015 by Tyndale House Foundation. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Carol Stream, Illinois 60188. All rights reserved.

Scripture quotations marked NASB are taken from the New American Standard Bible,<sup>®</sup> copyright © 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1995 by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission.

Scripture quotations marked NIV are taken from the Holy Bible, *New International Version*,<sup>®</sup> *NIV*.<sup>®</sup> Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.<sup>®</sup> Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.

Scripture quotations marked KJV are taken from the *Holy Bible*, King James Version.

For information about special discounts for bulk purchases, please contact Tyndale House Publishers at [csresponse@tyndale.com](mailto:csresponse@tyndale.com), or call 1-800-323-9400.

#### **Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data**

Names: Hitchcock, Mark, date- author.

Title: The end times survival guide : ten biblical strategies for faith and hope in these uncertain days / Mark Hitchcock.

Description: Carol Stream, Illinois : Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., [2018] | Includes bibliographical references.

Identifiers: LCCN 2018017913 | ISBN 9781496414090 (sc)

Subjects: LCSH: Hope--Religious aspects--Christianity. | Christian life. | End of the world.

Classification: LCC BV4638 .H58 2018 | DDC 234/.2--dc23 LC record available at <https://lccn.loc.gov/2018017913>

Printed in the United States of America

24 23 22 21 20 19 18  
7 6 5 4 3 2 1

# CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	ULTIMATE SURVIVOR <i>vii</i>
CHAPTER 1	USE THE 46 DEFENSE <i>1</i>
CHAPTER 2	RUN FOR YOUR LIFE <i>21</i>
CHAPTER 3	MAKE A GOOD CONNECTION <i>39</i>
CHAPTER 4	PUT ON YOUR ARMOR <i>61</i>
CHAPTER 5	KEEP PUSHING <i>81</i>
CHAPTER 6	DO THE BEST THINGS IN THE WORST TIMES <i>103</i>
CHAPTER 7	FIND YOUR FRAIDY HOLE <i>121</i>
CHAPTER 8	REMAIN UNDER THE INFLUENCE <i>143</i>
CHAPTER 9	TUNE IN TO HEAVEN'S FREQUENCY <i>163</i>
CHAPTER 10	WAKE UP <i>183</i>
NOTES	<i>203</i>
ABOUT THE AUTHOR	<i>213</i>



*Introduction*

# ULTIMATE SURVIVOR

*The future, like everything else, is not what it used to be.*

PAUL VALÉRY

SURVIVAL IS BIG BUSINESS. Everywhere you look these days, someone is talking about survival. Entertainment outlets and the media have seized the survival craze.

The initial offering in the new survival genre, and reality TV, was the series *Survivor*, which premiered in the United States in 2000. The series features a group of strangers marooned at an isolated location where they have to scrounge for food, water, shelter, and fire. The show completed its thirty-fifth season in 2017. *Survivor* is the quintessential survivor in the media industry. Since *Survivor*, a steady stream of movies and series has focused on surviving in almost every possible predicament, including in a postapocalyptic world.

A spate of survival reality TV shows has also erupted. Consider these:

- > *Out of the Wild: The Alaska Experiment*
- > *Extreme Survival*

- > *Man vs. Wild*
- > *Survive This*
- > *Fat Guys in the Woods*
- > *Survivorman*
- > *Surviving Disaster*
- > *Dual Survival*
- > *The Wheel*

*Doomsday Preppers* is another offering that demonstrates how to survive various doomsday scenarios. The survival business is booming online with all kinds of products designed to enhance a person's ability to endure any conceivable disruption, from living off the grid to all-out apocalypse. You can learn survival tips and buy survival gear for any eventuality. Online you can find all kinds of survival gurus touting their tips for surviving everything from school shootings to nuclear holocaust.

What's behind the survival obsession? Why are these programs, products, and pointers so successful? Because the future has never been more uncertain. Never more unknown. Never more unpredictable. We live in a world that seems to be on the verge of coming apart.

In 2017, a Las Vegas shooting spree at an outdoor concert left dozens massacred, a terrorist plowed through innocent pedestrians in New York City, and a gunman opened fire on a church service in a small Texas town, all in a little over a month. Evil is intensifying.

Political rancor and polarization in American politics has

shifted to another gear. Both sides are so entrenched that for someone to give any ground or to compromise in the least is viewed as total capitulation, making that person an outcast from all groups. Even commonsense solutions seem unachievable. The anger and outright malice on cable news and social media is over the top. Increasingly, protests fill the streets. Violence and racial tension are boiling over. Anarchy threatens. The family is in dire trouble. Deadly diseases and viruses like Ebola and Zika erupt with frightening regularity and can spread globally very quickly. Cataclysmic weather events seem to be escalating in frequency and intensity.

Beyond these things, the once faraway threat of a terrorist attack has jumped into everyone's life—the World Trade Center, the Pentagon, a subway in London, a train in Spain, a convention in California, a tourist hot spot in France, a nightclub in Orlando, a Christmas market in Berlin. No one seems safe anywhere. Millions of displaced, devastated people are fleeing their homelands, potentially giving terrorists cover to blend into and infiltrate Western nations.

Rogue regimes such as North Korea already have the bomb, and other nations like Iran are on the threshold. Barbaric terrorists threaten our safety and very way of life. Even as the caliphate is crumbling and ISIS is on the run, fleeing ISIS fighters are exporting their savagery to more locations. ISIS-inspired killers are hiding among us. There seems to be a collective, growing sense that things can't go on this way much longer.

And then there's the world economy, which, while doing

well on many fronts, seems increasingly fragile, susceptible at any time to a geopolitical crisis. The United States is twenty trillion dollars in debt, and that number is climbing. The debt bomb must explode at some point, triggering financial Armageddon.

In addition to all these things, there's an increasing indifference and malaise—and sometimes outright militancy—toward the central truths of the Christian faith and practice. Anti-Christian momentum is palpable. Hate and hostility toward Bible-believing Christians is on the rise. Christians are taking fire. Believers who dare even to question the legitimacy of same-sex marriage and gender fluidity are labeled “haters” and “homophobes.” Believers in Jesus Christ now find themselves playing in enemy territory in American culture, and the crowd is getting more and more hostile.

Pornography is metastasizing like a deadly cancer and infecting an entire generation of young men and women. The young are swallowing a deadly cocktail of toxic ideas in the name of love and tolerance. We have front-row seats to a moral freefall. We're waiting for the other shoe to drop. Time seems to be running out.

What can we do?

### **ARE WE LIVING IN THE LAST DAYS?**

Many of us have probably asked ourselves at some point whether we're living in the last days. Maybe we've asked it more often in recent times. When we ask about living in the last days, what we're really asking is “Are we living in the

final days before the apocalypse? Is this the end of the age predicted in the Bible?”

In the New Testament, the term “last days” (or “last times”) refers most often to the last days of the church on earth or this current age (see 1 Timothy 4:1; 2 Timothy 3:1; James 5:3; 1 Peter 1:20; 2 Peter 3:3).

All the way back in the first century, the apostle Peter said, “The end of the world is coming soon” (1 Peter 4:7). Even in New Testament times the apostles “sensed that they had moved dramatically closer to the consummation of God’s plan for this world.”<sup>1</sup> The Old Testament age had ended; they were now living in a brand-new era. For the apostles, the end of the age was already a present reality. The Scriptures indicate that the first coming of Jesus Christ inaugurated the “last days” for the church. According to the New Testament, we are living right now in these last days: “Now in these final [last] days, he has spoken to us through his Son. God promised everything to the Son as an inheritance, and through the Son he created the universe” (Hebrews 1:2).

The apostle John even calls this present age “the last hour”: “Dear children, the last hour is here. You have heard that the Antichrist is coming, and already many such antichrists have appeared. From this we know that the last hour has come” (1 John 2:18). According to the New Testament, the last days commenced with Christ’s first advent and will close with the return of the Lord to catch his bride—the church—away to heaven. Therefore, the entire current age, commonly known as the church age, is known as the last days.

Labeling this age as the “last days” is a vivid reminder that Christ could come at any time. Every generation since the death and resurrection of Christ has lived with the hope that it might be the final generation and that Christ could return at any moment. There are no prophecies that must be fulfilled before Christ can come. We are living in the last days and may be living in the last days of the last days before Christ’s coming. As the end approaches, the enemy is ramping up the attacks in a final onslaught.

### **THE ULTIMATE SURVIVOR**

Jesus, Paul, Peter, John, and others warn of an unprecedented increase in demonic deception, moral corruption, doctrinal error, and spiritual lethargy in the last days. Believers today face unparalleled spiritual danger. These are treacherous times. As Erwin Lutzer notes, “The day of the casual Christian is over. No longer is it possible to drift along, hoping that no tough choices will have to be made. At this point in American history, any moral and spiritual progress will have to be won at great cost. The darker the night, the more important every candle becomes.”<sup>2</sup> We need to stand firm and shine brightly in the darkness.

In August 1990, Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait, triggering the Gulf War. When she heard of the invasion, British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher was in the United States. She described her initial thoughts in an interview with PBS’s *Frontline*: “I went out for a walk, always lovely in the mountains, and got things worked out in my mind, but it was

perfectly clear, aggression must be stopped. That is the lesson of this century. And if an aggressor gets away with it, others will want to get away with it too, so he must be stopped, and turned back. You cannot gain from your aggression.”<sup>3</sup>

Toward the end of her tenure as prime minister, Thatcher helped spur President George H. W. Bush to intervene militarily in the Persian Gulf after the Iraqi invasion. Urging President Bush to join the fight against Saddam, Thatcher famously declared that “this is no time to go wobbly.”<sup>4</sup> The same is true for us—this is no time to go wobbly.

But how can we stand strong in perilous times? How can we shine brightly in the darkness? How can we keep from “going wobbly” as the end of the age draws near?

### **GIVE ME THE TOOLS**

Winston Churchill was prime minister of Great Britain during the trying days of World War II. Despite his massive influence, he often downplayed his own part in winning the war. He gave credit to the people, saying after the war had ended that they “had the lion’s heart,” and he merely “had the luck to be called upon to give the roar.” In February 1941, Churchill delivered one of his most lauded wartime speeches. He claimed that in wartime, what mattered was “deeds, not words.” After walking listeners through what had already transpired in the war, he urged US President Franklin Roosevelt to get involved in the fight rather than sitting on the sidelines. He said, “We shall not fail or falter; we shall not weaken or tire. Neither the sudden shock of battle, nor

the long-drawn trials of vigilance and exertion will wear us down. Give us the tools, and we will finish the job.”<sup>5</sup>

There’s no doubt the church of Jesus Christ is locked in a deadly spiritual war. Sitting on the sidelines is not an option. The war is multiplying on numerous fronts. The good news is that God has given us the tools, or maybe it would be better to call them the truths, that we need to finish the job as we await Christ’s coming. God has given us sufficient resources to effectively encounter and engage the world we’re facing.

Many have wondered in recent years why the apocalypse craze in movies and video games appeals to people so strongly. One answer is “because they show people returning to the fundamentals of existence.”<sup>6</sup> In the same way, I believe what’s happening in our world today is moving believers to return to the foundations of our spiritual existence. Believers everywhere must get back to what matters most. We must always remember that our battle “at the most basic level is spiritual, not political or even moral.”<sup>7</sup>

Some Christians today are carefully preparing *physically* for the apocalypse—hoarding cash, gold, weapons, and food. To one degree or another they’re the ultimate “doomsday preppers.”<sup>8</sup> There’s nothing wrong with reasonable preparation for disruptions in basic services that could occur in our complex world; however, the most important “prepping” for every believer should be *spiritual*. Whatever view we may hold concerning the apocalypse or the end times, our focus should be on spiritual survival. That’s the consistent focus of Scripture.

So, what are the spiritual tools, the spiritual truths, Scripture tells us we must understand and use as the end draws near? How can we be spiritually prepared for today and for what lies ahead?

In the pages that follow, you will discover ten spiritual tools the Bible relates directly to our spiritual preparation for the Lord's coming—ten biblical survival strategies to live out these last days so you and your family can prosper in an increasingly decaying, darkening world.

These strategies won't guarantee your physical or financial well-being, but they are guaranteed to bring life and vitality to your spiritual health and welfare as you cling to the immovable rock of God's Word. The truth is that even if you survive physically and prosper financially, your deepest need—and mine—is spiritual survival and stability. When life is whittled down to its essence, the real issue is our spiritual condition before God.

My prayer is that God can use these basic, biblical tools and strategies to help you survive and thrive as you await Christ's coming.

*Mark Hitchcock*

JANUARY 2018



CHAPTER I

## USE THE 46 DEFENSE

*Most news . . . could carry a universal headline to get our attention:  
YOU SHOULD BE WORRIED.*

GARY STOKES

ONE OF THE GREATEST DEFENSES in NFL history was that of the 1985 Chicago Bears. They employed a defensive scheme known as the “46 defense,” developed in 1981 by defensive coordinator Buddy Ryan. Armed with this scheme and some great talent, they throttled and terrorized offenses across the league, reaching their zenith in 1985. The pressure they applied, led by middle linebacker Mike Singletary, was reckless and relentless. The ’85 Bears struck fear into the hearts of opposing quarterbacks, blazing a trail of devastation through the NFL. Their domination was so overwhelming that “during one three-game stretch, the Bears scored more points on defense than they allowed, and they’re the only team in history to post back-to-back shutouts in the playoffs.”<sup>1</sup>

The 46 defense is legendary. None has ever been better.

As our world becomes more volatile and uncertain, wouldn't it be nice to have that kind of spiritual defense against the mounting cares, stresses, and worries of life? Wouldn't it be comforting to have an impenetrable wall that holds back the fear and fretting that floods our minds with anxious thoughts?

The truth is that God *has* given his people a “46 defense” against the cares, worries, and anxieties we face. It's a 46 defense that's better known even than that of the '85 Bears. It's Philippians 4:6. (We'll look at another famous 46 defense—Psalm 46—in chapter 7.)

The “Philippians 4:6” defense is renowned. It shuts down opposing offenses. They have no chance against it. It's a fail-safe formula against worry and stress:

Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done. Then you will experience God's peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus.

PHILIPPIANS 4:6-7

In anxious times, with worry on the offensive, more and more people are using it. Amazon tracks information about the most highlighted passages in their e-books. This list of what people highlight or annotate sheds light on what people find

interesting, important, or valuable. According to Amazon, the verse in the Bible that is most frequently highlighted is not a traditionally familiar one like Psalm 23, John 3:16, or the Lord's Prayer—it is Philippians 4:6-7.<sup>2</sup> Apparently, it has become “America’s go-to passage of Scripture.”<sup>3</sup>

This shouldn't surprise us, because by all accounts, the United States is the most anxious nation in the world. Ironically, one of the world's wealthiest nations is also the most worried.

We live in a world of cascading crises. The world and its troubles and trials seem to be getting worse.

Jesus told us this would happen. In his famous sermon about the end times, just a few days before his death, Jesus outlined the signs of his coming and concluded by warning about the worries of life that can overwhelm us. Jesus said, “Watch out! Don't let your hearts be dulled by carousing and drunkenness, and by *the worries of this life*. Don't let that day catch you unaware, like a trap. For that day will come upon everyone living on the earth” (Luke 21:34-35, emphasis added).

Jesus said that the “worries of this life” in the final days will get so strong and will dull our hearts to such an extent that we might lose our hope and expectation of his coming if we allow them to go unchecked.

The worries of this life produce anxious days and sleepless nights. They distract us. They threaten our spiritual survival in these last days. Jesus said they're traps that dull our hearts and leave us unprepared for his coming. We can't thrive spiritually at the same time our hearts are weighed down with

worry. But let's face it: maybe only a few of us worry none of the time, most of us worry some of the time, and some of us worry all the time.

Worry is a national addiction. You could even call it a plague. "Anxiety has become the number one mental health issue in North America. It's estimated that one third of the North American adult population experiences anxiety unwellness issues."<sup>4</sup>

Part of the explanation for the surge of worry is our constant connection to everything that's going on all over the world. Through 24-7 cable news, the Internet, and smartphones, we instantly know about nuclear threats, child kidnappings, famines, disasters, riots, economic problems, and on and on and on. The daily load of bad news can overwhelm us. Before means of mass communication, people lived mostly secluded lives. News traveled slowly, and sometimes not at all. How things have changed. Immediate access to world news threatens to crush us with stress and worry.

When Jesus spoke of the end times and the worries of this life, he knew that these worries would grow to the point that people are paralyzed and trapped. We all sense that anxiety is increasing and intensifying as the end draws near. We're anxious about all kinds of things:

- > World problems and politics
- > Our health
- > Our finances and the economy
- > Our children or grandchildren

- > Our marriages
- > Our choices
- > Retirement
- > Death
- > What has happened
- > What could happen

Sometimes we even get worried that we don't have anything to worry about.

We hear more and more about anxiety attacks, panic attacks, and people just generally being stressed out. Anti-anxiety drugs regularly appear on the top ten list of prescription medications in the United States. Many people have turned worry into a lifestyle, a full-time job. Life is consumed with worry and fear.

This reminds me of a story I heard about a woman who for many years had trouble sleeping because she worried about burglars. One night her husband heard a noise in the house, so he went downstairs to investigate. When he got there, he found a burglar and said, "I'm pleased to see you. Will you please come upstairs? My wife has been waiting ten years to meet you."

It's far too easy for worry to become a way of life and for us even to find ourselves worrying about the same things for years. But for God's people, life shouldn't be that way. A real burglar can steal from you once, but worry can steal from you night after night for years.

As the stresses of life multiply in these last days, how can

we win over worry? How can we bury worry before worry buries us? What's the spiritual survival strategy?

We have to employ the Philippians 4:6 defense.

And this defense is strikingly simple. The antidote to anxiety is thankful prayer. To state it more fully: *we experience God's peace instead of worry when we pray with thankfulness.*

We can't worry and pray at the same time.

The three simple parts of this strategy come from the three key words in this passage.

- > The Problem: Worry
- > The Prescription: Prayer
- > The Promise: Peace

### **THE PROBLEM: WORRY**

Philippians 4:6 begins with four sweeping words: "Don't worry about anything," or as some translations say, "Be anxious for nothing."

It doesn't say,

- > "Be anxious for less"
- > "Be anxious for a few things"
- > "Be anxious for only one hour a day"
- > "Be anxious for only the big things"

It says, "Be anxious for *nothing*." "Don't worry about *anything*." It's categorical. God's people are never to worry—period. About anything.

The word *worry* in the original Greek (*merimnao*) literally means “to be divided into parts.” To worry or be anxious is to have a distracted, divided mind—a mind torn down the middle and pulled in different directions. The worried mind is restless, filled with tension, and unsettled, like a flag twisting in the wind. It’s a mind fighting on two fronts. The English word *worry* comes from an old English word that means “to strangle.” This is a fitting image, because we all know how worry strangles and squeezes the peace and enjoyment out of life. Sometimes anxiety can get to the point that the worrier actually feels short of breath.

Worrying is having your mind torn between the real and the possible. Worry feeds on the what-ifs of life. It’s a stream of thoughts focused on fear of what might happen. I once heard someone say that worry pulls tomorrow’s cloud over today’s sunshine. The worrier lives in the past and the future, spending life crucified between two thieves that rob the present of its joy and vitality. Helmut Thielicke aptly describes worry as “*wandering in times not our own.*”

### ***Anxiety Attacked***

Jesus confronted worry in his Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5–7. Interestingly, one-seventh of Jesus’ famous sermon is about worry. That’s fascinating and instructive. Here is the Master’s wisdom on worry:

That is why I tell you not to worry about everyday life—whether you have enough food and drink, or

enough clothes to wear. Isn't life more than food, and your body more than clothing? Look at the birds. They don't plant or harvest or store food in barns, for your heavenly Father feeds them. And aren't you far more valuable to him than they are? Can all your worries add a single moment to your life?

And why worry about your clothing? Look at the lilies of the field and how they grow. They don't work or make their clothing, yet Solomon in all his glory was not dressed as beautifully as they are. And if God cares so wonderfully for wildflowers that are here today and thrown into the fire tomorrow, he will certainly care for you. Why do you have so little faith?

So don't worry about these things, saying, "What will we eat? What will we drink? What will we wear?" These things dominate the thoughts of unbelievers, but your heavenly Father already knows all your needs. Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and live righteously, and he will give you everything you need.

So don't worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring its own worries. Today's trouble is enough for today.

MATTHEW 6:25-34

There's a lot here to unpack, but we'll just look at this passage briefly. Jesus uses the word *worry* five times (verses 25, 27, 28, 31, 34). He tells us three simple things about

worry. First, worry is *fruitless*. It doesn't do any good. As Jesus said, "Can all your worries add a single moment to your life?" We see the worthlessness of worry in that most of the things we worry about never happen. We expend countless hours exhausting our emotions on events that never materialize.

Sometimes people will say or think something like "I know worry works because when I worry about something, it doesn't happen." But that doesn't mean the worry worked. It simply proves that most things we worry about never happen. Like Vance Havner once said, "Worry is like sitting in a rocking chair. It will give you something to do, but it won't get you anywhere." It doesn't produce a thing. Fretting is a lot of work for nothing.

A recent study discovered that "85 percent of what subjects worried about never happened, and with the 15 percent that did happen, 79 percent of subjects discovered either they could handle the difficulty better than expected, or the difficulty taught them a lesson worth learning. This means that 97 percent of what you worry over is not much more than a fearful mind punishing you with exaggerations and misperceptions."<sup>5</sup>

Worry doesn't do any good—and results in a great deal of bad.

Second, worry is *faithless*. Jesus put his finger on the core issue when he said, "Why do you have so little faith?" Worry brings our weak faith to the surface. Many of us believe God can take care of the "Sweet By and By," but we have trouble

trusting him with the “Nasty Now and Now.” We trust him for heaven but not for earth.

Worry is the opposite of trust. It’s a failure to trust God to take care of us. Worry has been described as the stepchild of unbelief. We can dress it up and disguise it however we want to, but worry is nothing but lack of trust in God to meet our needs in his perfect time.

Third, Jesus says worry is *fatherless*. When we worry, we act as if we have no Father who cares for our needs and yearns to meet them. Jesus says, “Your heavenly Father already knows all your needs.” Worry diminishes our heavenly Father’s loving care for us. Think of how our worry must make God feel. When he sees us worried and afraid, we aren’t trusting him. He is our Father, but we choose to live like we’re orphans when we worry and fret.

We live under the canopy of God’s fatherly care. In Matthew 6:26-30, there’s an argument from the lesser to the greater. God loves his children more than his pets. If God cares for birds, he will care for us.

We are his children through faith in Jesus Christ. God is our Father—and he’s a *perfect* father. We can trust him to care for us at all times, even during these dark days.

### ***Worry Weary***

With worry comes a host of unwanted results. Robert J. Morgan vividly outlines some of the consequences of an anxious outlook: “When worry barges into our brains, it brings along a gang of accomplices—discouragement, fear,

exhaustion, despair, anguish, hopelessness, pain, obsession, distraction, foreboding, irritation, impatience—none of which are friends of the Holy Spirit.”<sup>6</sup>

Anxiety saps your strength, leaving you spent and stressed out. Worry slowly drains our strength and focus. As the old saying goes, “Worry doesn’t empty tomorrow of its sorrows, but it empties today of its strength.”

It’s not wrong to think about the future and to make plans. The book of Proverbs tells us in various ways that planning is wise. I love to plan and think about the future. It’s fine and even faithful to *think* about tomorrow, as long as we submit our plans to the Lord, but it’s never right to *worry* about the future.

At one point during his presidency, the people around Abraham Lincoln were anxious about coming events. In response to their worries, Lincoln told this story:

Many years ago, when I was a young lawyer, and Illinois was little settled, except on her southern border, I, with other lawyers, used to ride the circuit; journeying with the judge from county-seat to county-seat in quest of business. Once, after a long spell of pouring rain, which had flooded the whole country, transforming small creeks into rivers, we were often stopped by these swollen streams, which we with difficulty crossed. Still ahead of us was Fox River, larger than all the rest; and we could not help saying to each other, “If these streams give us

so much trouble, how shall we get over Fox River?” Darkness fell before we had reached that stream; and we all stopped at a log tavern, had our horses put out, and resolved to pass the night. Here we were right glad to fall in with the Methodist Presiding Elder of the circuit, who rode it in all weather, knew all its ways, and could tell us all about Fox River. So we all gathered around him, and asked him if he knew about the crossing of Fox River. “O yes,” he replied, “I know all about Fox River. I have crossed it often, and understand it well; but I have one fixed rule with regard to Fox River: I never cross it till I reach it.”<sup>7</sup>

Far too many believers are wearing themselves out crossing the Fox River long before they reach it. Wait until you get there.

### ***Good Worry?***

The Bible makes an important distinction between what we might call “good worry” and “bad worry.”

Philippians 4:6 says, “Don’t worry about anything.” Clearly this is sinful worry. But in Philippians 2:20, the apostle Paul lauds his friend Timothy when he says, “I have no one else like Timothy, who genuinely cares about your welfare.” The phrase “genuinely cares” translates the same Greek word used for “worry” in Philippians 4:6. So there is a kind of care that’s

applauded and appropriate that we could call “concern” and another inappropriate form we could call “anxiety.”

There are many good things to be concerned about. Our marriages. Our children. Our aged parents. Our own spiritual lives. The spiritual condition of our family and friends. The future and welfare of our nation. We all have genuine, legitimate concerns. There are many good things that should burden us—things we should care about. But genuine concern can quickly degenerate into godless worry or what Jesus called the “worries of this life.”

We all know what it feels like to be concerned about something and suddenly feel our mind being pulled in different directions. Our thoughts become restless and distracted, and sleep evades us. We’re tense and unsettled and feel like we’re being pulled apart. We can feel the surge of uneasiness. We’re moving from concern to worry—from “good” worry to “godless” worry.

The Bible is clear that we aren’t to worry about anything. But how do we shake the worries of life?

### **THE PRESCRIPTION: PRAYER**

In Philippians 4:6, the word “instead” (or “but” in some translations) appears right after the words “Don’t worry about anything,” drawing a sharp contrast. After the word “instead” we have God’s prescription for worry: “Pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done.” The antidote to anxiety is to pray about everything.

Three different Greek words for “prayer” are found in this verse. The first one is a general word for prayer in which we give adoration, worship, and devotion to God. The second term focuses on our needs and connotes the idea of dependence or a desperate cry arising from need. The third word refers to precise petitions or specific requests.

Jesus highlighted prayer as the antidote to anxiety in his sermon about the end times:

Watch out! Don't let your hearts be dulled by carousing and drunkenness, and by the *worries of this life*. Don't let that day catch you unaware, like a trap. For that day will come upon everyone living on the earth. Keep alert at all times. And *pray* that you might be strong enough to escape these coming horrors and stand before the Son of Man.

LUKE 21:34-36, EMPHASIS ADDED

Jesus says prayer is our defense against the worries of life. Robert J. Morgan vividly highlights the connection between prayer and overcoming the trap of worry:

Prayer is the closet where we change clothes and replace a spirit of despair with a garment of praise. It's the bank where we present the promissory notes of God's promises and withdraw endless deposits of grace. It's the darkroom of the soul where negatives become positives. It's the transfer station where the

pulse of fear is exchanged for the impulse of faith. It's a currency exchange where we trade in our liabilities for God's abundant life.<sup>8</sup>

Prayer is our defense against the worries of life, but not just any prayer—*thankful* prayer. Philippians 4:6 includes the all-important words “and thank him for all he has done.” Recalling God's blessings must accompany our prayers. When we give thanks, we're recognizing and remembering God's good gifts to us. This intentional recounting of God's blessings creates faith and trust. Grateful prayer builds our faith, pushing worry out of our hearts. Praying with an attitude of gratitude wipes out worry. Thankful prayer is the fail-safe formula that transfers our cares to God and taps into his peace.

As Charles Spurgeon once said, “No care but all prayer. No anxiety but much joyful communion with God. Carry your desires to the Lord of your life, the guardian of your soul. Go to Him with two portions of prayer and one of fragrant praise. Do not pray doubtfully but thankfully.”<sup>9</sup>

As we plunge deeper into the end times, the worries of life will increase and intensify. We see it already. To survive and stand, we must run the 46 defense every day, every moment in our lives. You may have to use the 46 defense over and over again every day as worry tries to worm its way into your heart and mind. Every time worry knocks, immediately use the 46 defense. It will work every time.

**THE PROMISE: PEACE**

Few promises in the Bible are more comforting than Philippians 4:7: “Then you will experience God’s peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus.”

Did you catch those words? “God’s peace.” This is stunning. When a believer humbly approaches the throne of God in thankful prayer, the serenity of the Trinity is unleashed in that believer’s heart. God has never experienced one worried moment. Nothing disturbs him. He’s never shaken. He’s perpetually at peace. There’s never panic in heaven. The Trinity never meets in emergency session. God has an infinite, measureless supply of peace, and he makes that peace available to us by means of prayer.

There are two beautiful things in Philippians 4:7 about God’s peace. First, it’s *unexplainable*. The peace of God infinitely surpasses the ability of the human mind to perceive or understand how it works. It “defies all attempts to describe, analyze, explain, or comprehend it.”<sup>10</sup> Charles Spurgeon says, “This shall bring you God’s own peace. You shall not be able to understand the peace which you shall enjoy. It will enfold you in its infinite embrace. Heart and mind through Christ Jesus shall be steeped in a sea of rest. Come life or death, poverty, pain, slander, you shall dwell in Jesus above every rolling wind or darkening cloud.”<sup>11</sup> I hope you’ve experienced this peace.

Our first son, Justin, was born while Cheryl and I lived in Dallas during my first semester at Dallas Theological

Seminary. Cheryl was in the hospital for a month before he was born. He was born very prematurely and had a cleft lip and palate. He spent his first six weeks in the neonatal intensive care unit at Baylor Hospital. During those dark days, I used the 46 defense over and over again. Every time, my cries to God were met with his supernatural calm. I still can't explain it. God's peace is unexplainable.

Second, the peace of God is *unassailable*. The word "guard" is a military term for a contingent of soldiers assigned to protect someone. The peace of God acts as a guard at the door of your heart and mind to provide security against the assaults of worry, confusion, tension, and uncertainty.

At the time Paul wrote the epistle to the Philippians, he was eight hundred miles away from them in Rome under house arrest, guarded 24-7 by the Roman Praetorian Guard, the most elite force in the Roman Empire. But as Steven J. Lawson points out, "He was also being guarded in a far more secure way—God was protecting his heart so that anxiety and fear would not enter it. Fear was being denied entrance into his heart. . . . anxiety cannot crack the divine defense."<sup>12</sup> The believer who prays with thanksgiving is guarded against the assault of anxiety.

As we're hurtling toward the end of days and the worries-of-life mushroom, God's peace is like a spiritual "SEAL Team Six" stationed at the entrance of your thoughts and emotions to protect and keep you, giving you mental and emotional stability and tranquility.

Philippians 4:7 ends with the comforting words "in

Christ Jesus.” In Jesus we have nothing to fear; without him we have everything to fear. Jesus is our peace.

Joseph Scriven said it well in the hymn “What a Friend We Have in Jesus”:

*What a friend we have in Jesus,  
all our sins and griefs to bear!  
What a privilege to carry  
everything to God in prayer!  
O what peace we often forfeit,  
O what needless pain we bear,  
all because we do not carry  
everything to God in prayer.*

Don't forfeit God's peace. Don't go on bearing needless pain. Carry everything to God in grateful prayer. Use the 46 defense. Claim God's fathomless, unshakable peace.

## **NO WORRIES**

An early Greek manuscript bears the name of a man called Titedios Amerimnos. The first name is a proper name—like the name Titus. The second name is like a nickname, and it is made up of the word that means “to worry” (*merimnos*) prefixed by the Greek letter alpha, which negates the meaning of the word. *Amerimnos* means “not to worry.” Based on this nickname, many believe this man was a Greek who constantly worried but who stopped worrying once he was saved.

Thereafter he was known as Titedios Amerimnos—“Titedio, the man who never worries.”<sup>13</sup>

The question for us is, can we write our name and add to it, “The One Who Never Worries”? This will only be true if we learn the spiritual survival strategy of thankful prayer.

We must use the prescription in Philippians 4:6 and claim the promise in Philippians 4:7. There’s no need to have any more anxious days and sleepless nights.

Some days and nights you may have to use the 46 defense over and over again. You may have to go to the Lord in thankful prayer again and again. But you can rest assured it will work every time. God’s perpetual peace is available if we will humbly lift our hearts to him in grateful prayer. The only question is, will we obey this clear command? If we will, our days and nights of worry are over.

In my early twenties I spent two to three hours every Friday night studying the Bible with an elderly friend. He was a faithful, loving Bible teacher who helped me a great deal. He had several adages he liked to repeat, but there was one saying he repeated most often—“When in a fix, go to Philippians 4:6.” I know it’s a bit corny, but I’ve never forgotten it. I still apply it often today. I hope you will too.

“When in a fix, go to Philippians 4:6.”

This world is not becoming a safer, more stable, or more secure place. As technology explodes and threats expand, the potential for worry widens. Stress surges. Jesus lovingly warned us about the prevalence and peril of the “worries of this life” that threaten our spiritual strength, stamina, and

stability as this age draws to a close, and through the pen of the apostle Paul, he graciously gave us a fail-safe defense that will work every time—the 46 defense:

Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done. Then you will experience God's peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus.