

## February 27 Adult Spiritual Growth Class Synopsis

### Anxious for Nothing: Chapter 5: Contagious Calm

**Do you consider yourself as one who is contagiously calm? Do you know people who are characterized by calm? What other qualities and character traits do they have from their contagious calm?**

**Lucado speaks of C.A.L.M – Celebrate God’s goodness; Ask God for help; Leave your concerns with God; Meditate on good things. Which of these do you do and which do you need help with?**

The Apostle Paul tells his Philippian brethren to *“Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near”*. (Philippians 4:5). The Greek word translated here as gentleness (epiekes) describes a temperament that is seasoned and mature. It speaks of an attitude that is one of steadiness, evenhandedness and fair. People take notice of the gentle spirit filled with sober mind, clear thinking and contagious calm. God is in control and He is near.

Scripture is filled with stories of angst, anxiety and doubt, which God overcomes through His very Presence and Word. In Genesis 15:1-6, *God tells Abram, “Do not be afraid, I am your shield, your very great reward.” Yet Abram begins to doubt God’s promise. Abram says, “You have given me no children, so a servant in my household will be my heir”. God tells him, “This man will not be your heir, but a son who is your own flesh and blood will be your heir.” God takes Abram outside and says, “Look up at the sky and count the stars—if indeed you can count them.” Then God tells him, “So shall your offspring be.” Abram believes the LORD, and He credits it to him as righteousness.* We are reminded that trusting in God, even when things seem impossible, is faith, and our faith gives us righteousness.

In Joshua 1:9, God exhorts Joshua, *“Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you may go.”* Joshua was about to lead the people of Israel into the promised land. Joshua was to be careful to heed all the instructions given to Israel through Moses. He was told, *“This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success.”* Joshua was to saturate himself in the word of God; to meditate on the promises of God; to trust in the truth of God’s Word and follow the demands of God that had been given to Israel - in the knowledge that God was with him and the Lord was his strength and courage.

Jesus’ disciples seemed to never be lacking in doubt, fear, and anxiety, even when Jesus was with them. Mark 4:35-41 gives the story of Jesus’ calming the storm. *That day when evening came, he said to his disciples, “Let us go over to the other side.” Leaving the crowd behind, they took him along, just as he was, in the boat. There were also other boats with him. A furious squall came up, and the waves broke over the boat, so that it was nearly swamped. Jesus was in the stern, sleeping on a cushion. The disciples woke him and said to him, “Teacher, don’t you care if we drown?” He got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, “Quiet! Be still!” Then the wind died down and it was completely calm. He said to his disciples, “Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?” They were terrified and asked each other, “Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him!”* Various lessons of the story spoken in the commentary include Jesus has power over the storms of life; He experiences them alongside us; He loves us; He saves us from them; and He wants us to trust him more than we do. Yet while the storm is real and terrifying for the disciples, who believe that they will not survive, the point of the story is not necessarily about surviving the storm but is about who is in the boat with them - *the Lord is near*. The

epitome of calm, storms don't worry Jesus. He's right there with us during them, but he's perfectly calm. He isn't terrified, impatient or worried. In fact, He's so calm, He's asleep. We may wonder why on earth He doesn't get up and do something. We start to wonder if He even knows our trouble, if He cares, if He even can do anything about it, if He's really all he's cracked up to be. Like the disciples, we believe He's there. In the disciples' case, they could actually see him lying there asleep. We believe He's there, but we may think that He just seems asleep as he was during the storm that day on the Sea of Galilee. The psalmist had the same lament in Psalm 44:23-24: *"Awake, Lord! Why do you sleep? Rouse yourself! Do not reject us forever. Why do you hide your face and forget our misery and oppression?"* The not-so-obvious lesson may be that Jesus was just as much in control, and the disciples were just as safe in His hands, while He was asleep as while He was awake.

The story of the feeding of the 5000 is one of Jesus' great compassion on the multitude while teaching His disciples. Given in Matthew 14, as with the other three Gospel accounts, the story followed more than 12 different occasions where the disciples witnessed Jesus performing miracles of healing, raising the dead, and even calming a violent sea with them in the boat. Here a great multitude followed Jesus even though He went out to a deserted place to be alone. In spite of this imposition, Jesus still served the multitude with great compassion. In Matthew 14:15-16, the disciples expressed their frustration and angst: *When it was evening, the disciples came to Him and said, "This place is desolate and the hour is already late; so send the crowds away, that they may go into the villages and buy food for themselves. But Jesus said to them, "They do not need to go away; you give them something to eat!"* In John 6:5-13, *Lifting up his eyes, then, and seeing that a large crowd was coming toward him, Jesus said to Philip, "Where are we to buy bread, so that these people may eat?" He said this to test him, for he himself knew what he would do. Philip answered him, "Two hundred denarii worth of bread would not be enough for each of them to get a little."*

Here, the disciples did not want to be bothered with the crowd and did not have the resources to buy bread to feed the multitude. Even if they had the money, it would be impossible to obtain the bread to feed them all given the desolate area they were in. They over-looked the very One who was near and who was fully capable and willing to fulfill the hunger.

*One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said to him, "There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish, but what are they for so many?" Jesus said, "Have the people sit down." Now there was much grass in the place. So the men sat down, about five thousand in number. Jesus then took the loaves, and when he had given thanks, he distributed them to those who were seated. So also the fish, as much as they wanted. And when they had eaten their fill, he told his disciples, "Gather up the leftover fragments, that nothing may be lost." So they gathered them up and filled twelve baskets with fragments from the five barley loaves left by those who had eaten.*

The abundance of the Lord's grace was so great that all were fed and so precious that all fragments were gathered, such that none were lost with twelve baskets filled. One day later, Jesus declared, "I am the bread of life, whoever comes to me will never be hungry and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty. The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent."

A song to reflect and pray on:

[Praise You In This Storm - Casting Crowns \(Lyrics\) - Bing video](#)

## Looking ahead – Sunday March 6

Anxious for Nothing: Finding Calm in a Chaotic World

Section 2: Ask God For Help – *Let your requests be known to God*

Chapter 6 – Prayer, Not Despair – Peace happens when people pray