

Living in the Present

Fear, anxiety, depression, and unhappiness are common among our society today. Many people who suffer with these negative moods may come to believe their personal happiness is dependent on situations and events outside of one's control and are usually focused on past events or future worries. *If "they" had not hurt me, then I could be happy. "If I had not made the mistakes in the past, I could be content today." "I'm so worried about my future, I have no peace in my life." "If only..."*

Eckhart Tolle in his book entitled *A New Earth Awakening to Your Life's Purpose*, says that the joy of Being, which is the only true happiness, cannot come to you through any form, possession, achievement, person, or event—through anything that happens. He encourages his readers to accept the present moment and find the perfection that is deeper than any form or event untouched by time. This reminds me of the words to an old southern gospel song about personal happiness and contentment that comes from knowing Christ; "The world didn't give it to me and the world can't take it away."

Each individual must take personal responsibility for his or her inner thoughts, often referred to as one's "self talk." We often spend our waking hours thinking about either the past or the future and very little time enjoying the present moment. Living in the past robs us of joy as we constantly regret past events which we can never go back and do over or "fix." These thoughts can be all-consuming and usually begin with *"I should have done..."* or *"If only they had not done this to me, then ..."* *"I could have or I should have..."* The opposite extreme exists when our minds are worried about those things that could happen in the future. We worry about not having enough money, we fear being without or being alone. We fear future loss, failure, and the unknown, none of which exists in the present, but haunts us with what may lie in the future even though there may be little or no existing evidence of specific events or circumstances which lie ahead. Every thought, every moment spent regretting the past or fearing the future will only generate feelings of sadness, depression, anxiety, unhappiness and cause us to miss the pleasures that God has provided for us in the present moment. All feelings of regret, fretting about the future will never change what has happened or what will occur in the future.

This then is how we know that we belong to the truth, and how we set our hearts at rest in his presence 1 John 3.

The good news is that we can intentionally choose where to spend our thought energy. Only I can control what I think about, no one can do that for me or to me. By becoming aware of my thought life and self-talk, I can choose to think and "be" in the present. Being in the present means becoming aware of seemingly insignificant and meaningless aspects of God's creation unfolding before me, within me, with each breath I take. It's paying attention to the falling leaf, the azure sky streaked with the orange color of sunset, the smell of turkey roasting in the oven, air filling our lungs as we inhale. Joy can be found in the "present" or the "now" moment of time with whatever is taking place and joy will never be found lingering in past regrets or fretting about what might or might

not occur in the future. God is our refuge and strength, an ever-**present help** in trouble.
[Psalm 46:1-3](#)

Having doubts? Try this little experiment. The next time you are feeling anxious, sad or depressed, let the mood become your cue to stop and discover where your thoughts were taking you. Were you in the past or in the future? Then, intentionally bring your thoughts into the present by paying attention to where you are in the moment. Become aware of Christ in you, the hope of Glory. To them God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the **hope of glory**. [Colossians 1:26-28](#) Refresh in His presence and love for you, right where you are, and appreciate who you are in each present moment before it swiftly enters your past.

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