

From Panic to Peace



Some people might recall the story of when my life was in a panic mode. My YMCA was about to enact the biggest rate increase ever, at the same time as opening a major expansion to the facility. I was worried that our members would leave the Y for less expensive facilities, rather than pay the new, much higher rate. As the January 1 beginning of the fiscal year approached I tore myself up in fear of failure. My fears peaked during a 16-hour drive to spend Christmas with my family. On that trip I had time to think as Kathy and I alternated driving. I was in full panic mode during the 2 AM shift. In the solitude of that drive, with the rest of my family sleeping in the car, I decided the fear was too much for me to bear. I turned my YMCA over to God. I gave in and put everything in His hands, and I promised to honor Him as I made it a Christian YMCA. As soon as I did that I was at peace. A huge burden had been lifted from my shoulders and fear no longer ruled. It was God's YMCA now, and I knew that God would make it a success. Since that time He has blessed our YMCA abundantly.

How about you? Are there are times when everything seems to be in chaos? A serious issue comes up and disaster seems inevitable. Perhaps the situation seems to have no good resolution. You feel boxed in with nowhere to go. Maybe you even freeze, not knowing where to turn, because there seems to be no way out. Panic sets in.

So, what do you do when panic takes over your life? In reality, panic doesn't solve anything. Instead, it leads to rushed decisions, poor choices and escalating unrest. The best solution is to turn your problems over to the One who can solve them. As I did on that Christmas drive, turning it over to God will give you a sense of peace. When we trust the Lord "Faith replaces fear."

In the height of our frenzy giving it over to God may seem to be easier said than done. The key is trust. Without trust in God we hold onto our fears, hoping for a miracle, but still trying to solve it ourselves. If we can trust God we can let it go completely. Trust in God is only possible because of our faith. When this happens faith can replace our fears. And then, we will have peace. *May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit (Romans 15:13).*

So, what happens to the problem? When you turn your situation over to God He will guide you in the right choices to make. *Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight (Proverbs 3:5-6).*

But, there is more. You can then proceed with confidence and assurance that God will be with you as you work through the challenges you face. The storms of life test our faith, but remember that when you turn it over to God, you have Jesus' power with you. When storms are raging Jesus is in the boat with you and He will calm the storms. *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 go" (Joshua 1:9). ... And surely I am with you always ... (Matthew 28:20).*

What a gift God offers you: to turn your panic into peace.

Questions: Have you ever placed something in God's hands, trusting Him as you listen for His guidance? Did you feel a sense of peace?

Prayer: Loving, Heavenly Father. We pray we can give up those situations which cause us to go into panic mode. Let us put our trust in you, so that our faith replaces fear. Amen.

This devotion is based on a devotion led by Rosemary Suess at the YMCA's Blue Ridge Christian Leadership Conference, on May 20, 2017. With her permission I am paraphrasing her devotion and her key phrases "from panic to peace" and "faith replaces fear."