



## Reflection for October 10

By Dan Dick



*Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 4:4-7)*

Today's devotion is for me; I really need to hear these words and reflect on what they say to me. In my daily ministry, I deal with a lot of unhappy people. They might be unhappy with something the bishop has said, or something a district superintendent has done, or something their pastor preached, or something a lay person did. I sometimes quip that happy people don't ever call my office. The problem is that when God passed out the fruit of the Spirit, God had run low on patience, so he skipped that one. Generosity? Yes, I have that. Kindness? I like to think so. Love, joy,

peace, faithfulness? I feel those to the core of my being. Patience? What's that? I don't seem to have that. This makes my job challenging!

I need God to whisper in my ear each day, "let your gentleness be known to everyone." I need to know that God is right there with me, hearing what I am hearing, but simply letting the person calling be who they are, feeling what they are feeling, saying what they are saying. I need to hear the gentle guidance of the Spirit reminding me to chill out, not to get defensive, but to be patient and kind. And when the tension rises and the anxiety escalates, to give it to God in prayer, with thanksgiving. God can provide the patience I lack and grant me a Spirit of "peace which surpasses all understanding." I need to remember Philippians 4:13: "I can do all things through him who strengthens me."

I need to remember that when people are unhappy, they are suffering. No one likes being unhappy. No one wants to be upset. No one thrives in anger and incivility. Each unhappy person is one more opportunity for me to extend God's love and grace into a broken world. Every angry voice expresses a need for healing and compassion. Every upset individual is one more gift from God to witness to the world that love conquers all.

Under the cloud of a pandemic, through the darkness of racial injustice and unrest, in the midst of a world torn by violence and oppression, the light of Christ breaks through and the voice of God calls us to "rejoice in the Lord always." This is a test, and unfortunately it is a test I fail too often. But God keeps giving me second chances and new opportunities. By God's grace, I might get better at this, and one day I might even learn patience, living in the assurance that God is constantly at work in me, helping me to improve.

*Gracious God, I am deeply grateful you don't give up on us. You continue to work on us, and in us, and through us, to become the servants you need us to be. You break through our limitations to strengthen and improve us. Thank you. By your loving care, we are transformed, and through our transformation we rejoice in you. Continue this sacred work in each and every one of us, we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.*

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*May this devotion provide you with a moment of faithful reflection and care. You are involved in ministries of justice and witness, in ministries of standing up and standing with people working to create better systems and communities, in ministries of learning and searching and researching to become more aware and awakened, more technologically savvy and proficient, more virtually and personally present in your churches and communities and world. Each of us who serve as members of your Wisconsin Cabinet write these devotions in grateful prayer for you – for sustenance and buoyancy, for strength and courage, for safety and just actions, and for faith and love to be full and fulfilled in your daily lives. God's grace and blessings, God's challenge and healthy discomfort, God's Spirit and energy be with you, in the hope Christ offers us all.*

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