

We begin a new year – consumed

What consumes you? Stay with me and think about what I'm asking. Where is your focus? What are your goals? What drives you? Each person would probably have a different answer depending on their personal circumstances or concerns. Thoughts and feelings can consume us, either positively or negatively, depending on how we feel at any given moment. There are many of us who are consumed with worry and stress. The economy, the ever-growing threat of terrorism, the decline of family and relationships, the upcoming elections...I could go on and on but you get my point; we are a people filled with anxiety.

There are many of us who are consumed with anger and unforgiveness. We read headlines designed to inflame us; we watch cable news shows designed to inflame us; and we listen to speeches by political pundits which are designed to inflame us. We are obsessed with a burning indignation for anyone who disagrees or who believes differently than we do.

There are many of us who are consumed with fear. We fear being labeled-whether it be politically incorrect, intolerant, bigoted, or an extremist if we take any type of stand for ourselves or our beliefs. We watch as the Middle East implodes (or explodes, depending upon your point of view) and we are fearful that the fate that so many have suffered at the hand of evil awaits us. We fear that our country will never recover from the slippery slope of sin and debauchery lovingly embraced by so many. We cry out as we watch our cultural and traditional mores pushed headfirst into an abyss of total darkness with seemingly no point of return.

There are many of us consumed with depression. We feel hopeless and helpless in the face of our worries, anger, and

fear. We have gradually descended into a black pit of desperation searching frantically for some type of relief while praying for a glimmer of light. Or, we knowingly accept the deception that there is nothing we can do to change the course of events or circumstances that we find ourselves in—either individually or collectively as a nation.

I am telling you now that there is hope. Fear and anxiety stems from uncertainty.

I want to share with you my most recent “AHA!” moment that shook me to my core. I was praying. For me. My concerns, my anxieties, my fears, it was all about me. My prayers could not have been more self-centered. In the midst of my selfishness, I had this thought, “How dare I?”.

How dare I worry about what the future holds— much less tomorrow? Want to talk about an uncertain future? There are people throughout this world who are daily persecuted and martyred for their faith. These are people with the same feelings and emotions we are all given who have never backed down from their faith in the promise of eternal life with Jesus Christ. Do you not think that they must live every single day with the uncertainty of their tomorrows? Will the new morning bring torture, captivity, or an agonizing death? Yet, they persevere in their faith because of their hope in Jesus Christ. Christians in Syria are called “people of the grass” because that’s all they can find to eat. When is the last time you ate grass? Do you have a bed to rest upon, a home to call your own? Think of the nightmarish reality that so many families must face as they flee the only home they have ever known or risk slavery and certain death for refusing to renounce their faith.

You may say it’s coming but, as of today, no one has held a knife to my throat and told me to convert or die. Thank you, Jesus.

Don't get me wrong. We are told in 1 Peter 5:7 to "cast all your anxiety upon Him, because He cares for you". Please go to your Heavenly Father who loves you and who has promised that He will never leave you or forsake you. Give Him your fears and worries. Be aware... there will be times when we will find ourselves snatching our cares out of His hands just as quickly as they were released to Him (usually takes me about five minutes!). Give them back!

Today, I want to challenge you as I challenge myself to trust God fully in all things. Let's learn to examine our anxieties, our feelings of futility, and our fears in the light of God's Word. If we are going to be consumed, let's be consumed by "...a hope that does not disappoint". Let's be consumed by "the peace of God, which passeth all understanding". Let's be consumed by Him, the one and only great "I Am".

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