

Enough of the Bad News! Craig Groeschel

Well, I really don't wanna sound negative, but I'm getting sick and tired of all the negative talk going on in the world today. Does anybody else feel that way? Like, it's just getting almost overwhelming everywhere that you look, almost all the time. Anytime you turn on the news or read in the news app. And there is a lot of really difficult news. People are getting sick, people tragically dying, jobs are vanishing, the economy is struggling, the nation is divided. And it seems like the pervasive message in the world today, that is the end of the world as we know it. And it's so easy to get sucked into the negativity, and the fear, and the anxiety that seems to overwhelm so many people.

And if I could just be transparent with you, there are so many different times when I find myself more emotionally on edge. I find myself getting easily angered. It's almost good that there's social distancing, because it doesn't take much to get me lit up right now. I find myself more easily discouraged, and often just kind of wake up feeling like, "Can we ever rebuild this? Can we ever go back to something that is meaningful"? So what I'm doing right now is I'm really, really asking God to help me to see the good in the middle of all the bad. I'm fighting to keep a perspective of faith and a very positive attitude.

So I asked all of my children, my youngest, the baby, Joy, is in the house. And she's 15 and I asked little Joy, I said, "Hey, JoJo, what do you think when you grow older and your an adult, what do you think is something that's positive that's gonna come out of this whole pandemic? Is there anything in your life you think, because of this, something's gonna different and it's gonna be good"? And she thought for a minute, she said, "What's gonna be positive when I'm a grownup that came out of this season"? And she smiled really big. She said, "I know what it is". she said, "Whenever my kids ask me to do something and I tell them, no, you're not going anywhere". And the moment they start to whine at me, I'm gonna look at them say, "When I was your age, They locked us up in the house for three months and told us, if you go outside, you're gonna die. That's something positive that's gonna come out of it, I'm gonna tell my kids that".

liked that, looking for something positive in the middle of all the bad news. So I've got some advice for you. Let's be wise, let's social distance, let's wash our hands, let's wear a mask if you're in public and someone might be vulnerable. And let's do everything within us to stay positive. To have an attitude of faith, to look for the good in the middle of the bad and believe that God is still on the throne, that He is still working, that He can be in this, and with us, and He's still for us. Stay positive, fight for faith. Because a negative outlook never, ever leads to a positive life. What I wanna do today, is I wanna show you why I am unshakably optimistic about the future. The title of today's message is, "Enough of the Bad News". With that, let's pray.

Father, we thank you that your gospel is nothing bad good news for lost and broken people. We pray, God, that your living word would build our faith, to be optimistic about the future, because you are good, loving, and faithful God. Speak to our hearts, God, today, that we would be different in your presence. In Jesus' name we pray and everyone said... Amen.

Go ahead and type that in the chat, wherever you're watching, online, just say it with us. You're with us today, type in amen and amen. Let's talk about optimism. And what I wanna do is, I wanna first tell you what optimism is not; so we can be very, very clear. And then, I wanna help try to define what optimism is. Let's start with what optimism is not. First of all,

optimism is not a denial of reality. It's not putting our heads in the sand and acting like everything's okay, nothing's wrong, just have a positive attitude no matter what. Just deny reality, the reality is that we have very significant challenges all over the world. Optimism is not denial of reality. It's also not blind faith. It's not just naive, wishful thinking that everything's gonna work out if we don't do anything about it.

It's not denial of reality. It's not blind faith. A definition online that I read, a very clear definition, is this. Optimism is simply confidence about the future or a successful outcome. It's a confidence, believing that something good is coming. Or an assurance, a belief that there's gonna be a positive or successful outcome. What I wanna do is, I wanna add some spiritual weight to a definition of optimism. This is my definition of what a faith-filled believer can be optimistic, here's why. What is optimism? Optimism is the unwavering expectation that our loving God is working every situation, for our future good. It's the unwavering expectation, is an assurance deep within our souls. That our loving God, He's involved, He's working in every situation for our future good.

all things"? Type that in the chat, just type in, "All things". It might be your impossible boss, or your financial set back, or your annoying in-laws. Don't nudge them if they're with you at your house watching this, but you know what I'm talking about. It could be the challenges of home-educating your kids, or a painful break up. In all things, our God "works for the good of those who love Him, who've been called according to His purpose". In other words, even in a negative situation, it still holds the potential to produce a positive purpose, because we, as faith-filled believers, can live with the unwavering expectation that our loving God is working in every situation for our future good.

I'm incredibly optimistic. So what I want you to do for a moment, is I want you to just kind of pause. And I want you to think about what you think about. I want you think about how your process your thoughts about the future. How do you see the future in your thought life? Because the reality is, if your thoughts are consumed with negativity, and fear, and worry, and anxiety, that's really, really bad news. Because what consumes your mind, tends to control your life. Whatever you think about tends to direct your life. In other words, the life that you have, is generally a reflection of the thoughts that you think.

Proverbs tells us this, that as a man, or as a person thinks in his heart, so he becomes. Your life is generally moving in the direction of your strongest thoughts. And so if you tend to think the worlds is always in trouble and you can't trust anyone, and I hate my circumstances, you're probably not gonna get to the end of that day and go, "Wow, this was the best day ever". If you wake up with a bad attitude and a bad perspective and a bad filter, and you see everything through a pessimistic lens, what you think about tends to direct your life. What consumes your thoughts, controls your life. And that's why the quality of your life, will exceed the quality of your thoughts.

What do you think about? This is one of the big problems with pessimism. Those who have a consistently, chronically negative attitude. Experts will tell us this about pessimists. Pessimists tend to view negative events as both personal and permanent. That they're personal. In other words, "It's my fault. This is happening to me because I'm bad, I'm no good, nothing ever goes my way. I'm incapable, I'm unworthy of anything good". And then, they tend to think that it's permanent. "This is always gonna be this way. I'm never gonna have a good life. We're always gonna struggle. Things are bad and they're only gonna get worse".

and before long, we start to live with a very real victim mentality. "The economy's bad, I'll never get the job that I wanted. The virus is unstoppable. We're gonna have to wear a mask for the rest of our life, everywhere we go, all the time. The world is never gonna be safe again". Here's what he has to recognize. That being content, being satisfied, being blessed, being optimistic, it isn't a state of affairs. It's a state of mind. What controls your mind, controls your life. What consumes your thoughts? I want you to think about what you think about. What consumes your thoughts? Are your thoughts typically drifting towards faith and God? And optimism and belief about His power and His goodness involved in your life? Or do they tend to drift toward the negative?

"I'm just concerned, I'm worried. The whole world's falling apart". If you move toward the negative, and if I can be kind of honest with you, I have to fight for an attitude of faith, because by nature, I tend to be a realist, I tend to be concerned, I tend to drift toward the negative. If you find yourself there, what you wanna do is you wanna feed your faith and you wanna starve the negativity. Feed your faith and starve your fears. Why? Because whatever you feed tends to grow. And whatever you starve tends to die. What I wanna do, is I wanna starve the wrong voices that rob me of any potential joy, and I wanna feed the things that help me grow in faith.

This doesn't mean I put my head in the sand. But for me, what I do to starve the fear, is I don't watch the news 24 hours a day. Because if I did, I wanna hop in a bathtub, fill it up, and make toast in the bathtub. It's just too much. And so what I do is, I do study the news every single day. 30 minutes max, one time a day. One time a day I wanna know, I wanna be very aware of what's going on in the world, but one time a day. I'm in focus for 30 minutes a day and then I'm out. If I've got negative voices all around me, what I'm gonna do is, I'm gonna distance myself from those who are only, "The world's falling apart". I'm gonna distance myself and I'm starving my fears.

Then what I'm gonna do is I'm gonna try and feed the things that build my faith. And what I wanna do is I wanna show you exactly how I feed and build my faith. One of the most valuable things that I do, is I take a rich portion of scripture and I try to get into scripture so that scripture gets into me. I don't just read through it, but I'm going to live in it. I'm gonna focus on it, I'm gonna meditate, I'm gonna think about it, I'm gonna let it work and start to renew my mind. So I'm gonna give you an example. And since we're talking about Romans 8:28, the power of God that works in good things, I wanna show you how I would go through Romans 8.

In order for me to feed my faith, I'll take a rich portion of scripture. And first of all, I wanna understand the context. Not just reading it, but I wanna know who wrote it, to whom was it written, why was it written, what's going on before the verses I'm reading? And so I know that the apostle Paul, was writing a very, very rich, meaty, weighty letter to the Romans. I know that Romans 8 comes after Romans 7. So I think about Romans 7. And in Romans 7, I love Romans 7, because Paul was just totally a mess. It makes me feel better about me whenever someone who's spiritual is like, just losing it. It makes me feel better whenever I'm losing it.

And in Romans 7, he's going on this rant, like, "I don't understand myself". To put it in modern day language, he's kind of saying, "I'm just a screw up, the things that I wanna do, I don't do them, and things like I know I don't wanna do, I end up doing those, I'm such a mess". And then he shifts in Romans 8 and it's almost like he's talking himself out of his negativity and his disfunction and his sinfulness. In the very beginning he says, "Therefore now, there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus". If you're in Christ, there's no judgment for your sins. Your sins have been forgiven. And he makes this hard turn as he

starts to renew his mind.

He talks about the mind that's on the flesh, that things about the things of the flesh. But the mind that's on the spirit lives for the things of the spirit. He says if you're led by the spirit, you're children of God. If you're focusing on the spirit, your mind will be at peace. And then I might just land in a portion of the text. Like Romans 8:18, where this is what Paul says. He says that, "I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing to the glory that will be revealed in us".

And I'm just gonna stop there and just read it, and read that, and let it read me, to feel it, when he says, "I consider that our present sufferings", all these things that we hate, that we're enduring, that are so incredibly painful, "our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us". So I remind myself, "Okay, the apostle Paul wrote this. How did he suffer"? Well, he was imprisoned multiple times, that's kind of worse than what I'm going through right now. Five times he was beaten with 40 lashes, that's pretty bitty bad. Three times he was beaten with rods, he was stoned, and not for entertainment purposes. I just felt like I should say that, I don't know.

I mean, he was not, rocks were thrown at him. He was shipwrecked, he spent the night out at sea. I would hate that, hanging onto a log for his life or whatever. He was betrayed, he was beaten, the guy was left for dead on the side of the road, he didn't even look like he was alive. And this is the guy who said, our present sufferings are not worth comparing to the glory that is to come. I let that feed my faith. Our present sufferings aren't worth comparing to the glory that is to come. So I'd ask you, where are you hurting right now? What have you lost? Where are you experiencing a hardship that deeply grieves your soul.

I know that so many of you , you're facing a job loss right now. And that's real suffering. Some of you are worried that you're sick. Some of you would be sick, or have relatives that are. Some are battling diseases like cancer and such. Some have relational challenges right now in their marriage or with your kids, or you had a friend betray you, or you're just dealing with the inconveniences of, "How do I work at home when there are kids crawling all over me"? Whatever it is, what I do is, I tell myself, as I'm reading this, what scripture teaches me, essentially, is that the struggle I'm in today, is producing the strength I need for tomorrow. It's not even worth comparing. This momentary trial, this momentary struggle, is not even worth comparing, to God's future blessings and the glory that will be revealed in us.

I've got an unwavering expectation, that our loving God is working in every situation for our future good. So I starve my fears, I feed my faith. I let God's Word start to renew my mind, because my life is always moving in the directions of my strongest thoughts. So I read on, I get to Romans 8:26 and I stop there. Paul said, "In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weaknesses". I need that, it's really good news. It's good news for me, it would be good news for some of you right now. Because I'm feeling incredibly incapable. I feel unsure all of the time. How do I lead through this? How do I preach the right message, at the right time, for the right spiritual response. I'm second guessing myself right and left, don't feel prepared for this at all.

And then I tell myself, "He will never leave me. He will never forsake me, His spirit helps me when I'm weak, when I'm broken, His spirit, the same spirit that raised Christ from the dead, dwells within me". And I feed my faith. For those of you who are feeling weak, you feel overwhelmed, you feel discouraged you feel like you can't take anymore at all. People will tell you, "Well, God helps those who help themselves". Bible doesn't say that. Bible says, "God helps those who need help". He helps those who are weak, He helps those who are broken, He helps those who crying out to him. He

helps you when you are weak.

So if you're hurting right now, who is God? He is your comfort. If you're confused, He is your guide. If you find yourself discouraged, He's your hope. If you're anxious, He's your peace. If you are weak, our God is your strength. So I feed my faith, I starve my fears. I feed my faith. Then I go to Romans 8:28 and I let it sink in. "We know that in all things", and all things, and all things, and all things, in the good things, and in the bad things, in the days that I love, and the days that I endure, and the heartbreaks, and the inconveniences. "In all things, God works for the good of those you love Him, who've been called according to His purpose".

He is that good, He is that good, He's that involved. And I visualize the olive guy, there's an olive guy. I visualize, I literally, I call him the olive guy. Amy would remember this, 1995, I graduated from seminary. Before then, we were like poor seminarians. Before then, I think the nicest restaurant that we'd ever been to always started with an apple. Applebee's or Applewoods. I don't know why, but those were the places. Applewoods, apple fritters, glory to God, those were the days. But when we graduated from seminary, we went to see a friend in California. And this guy, he took us to someplace we'd never been like it before. He took us to a Ritz-Carlton buffet to celebrate.

Oh my goodness, gracious. It's like heaven descends upon food in a buffet. There's more food than I've ever seen. The most amazing buffet. And I was going through, we were nervous, because it was way above our pay grade. We didn't know which forks to use and how do you get this off the plate? So I was trying to act like I knew what I was doing, because I was a seminary grad. And I grabbed an olive-looking thing. It may not have been an olive. It might have been like some foreign fruit. But I put it on my plate and when I put too many on there, one of them rolled off and it hit my foot. And the moment it hit my foot, it rolled across the Ritz-Carlton. I was devastated. Horrible mistake.

It was a nice restaurant. And all the sudden, this server who worked there, jumped out of the curtains, Pastor, and it was the most amazing thing. He was dressed in black, blending into the curtains. And he came out and scooped up that olive so fast, perfect in form and fashion and disappeared back into the curtains. It was the most amazing thing I'd ever seen. I was so excited by it I took another olive and I just rolled it off my plate. And sure enough, out of nowhere, he came and scooped it up and disappeared again.

And this was the perfect visual of an invisible loving God, I mean, work with me, but this is what I honestly think, who I don't always see, but He's always there. And whenever I need him, He's working, in the middle of the situation, going in behind the scenes whenever our enemy means something for evil. Our God, He can still use it for good. This is how faithful our God is. You may not see Him, but He's always there, He never leaves. He's always good, He's always for you, and he's always with you.

And I think about the olive guy. And I'm reminded of the goodness of God. So often, people will say things like this. "Here's the key to happiness, you want to be happy? You want to be fulfilled? Lower your expectations. Don't expect anything good. Then you're never gonna be disappointed. If you just lower your expectations and believe only bad things are gonna happen, then you're not gonna be crushed when they do happen". I would tell you this. As followers of Christ, don't lower your expectations. Raise your expectations in the goodness, the faithfulness, the power of our God.

So many people say, "I just want life to get back to normal". I've got more faith than that. I'm looking at a lot of you who wanna go back to normal and I'm remembering you were complaining about your life about three months ago. You were whining about all you had to

do, and now you wanna go back to that? I've got faith in God that we can go back to something better than normal. That He can do something in us. I may not like what I'm going through, but I appreciate what God will produce out of this present pain. God is working in all things, to bring about good.

I believe by faith, that God can do exceedingly and abundantly more than all we ask or imagine, according to His power. I'm believing that going through this, there are some of you, you're gonna come out on the other side, and your marriage is going to be stronger. I am optimistic that some of you, your families will be closer, that your love is going to be deeper for one another, that your generosity is going to become greater, that there are Christians who are going to become bolder their faith, that the light of the church will shine brighter, and that the harvest is going to be bigger because we lift up the name of Jesus. I am optimistic in the goodness, and the faithfulness of God.

During worship today, I had to leave the auditorium. This is our first time to gather in, what? 10, I don't even know how many weeks. It seemed like four years. And I was so emotional to have a small portion of my church family, distancing themselves to be back together. So emotional, because I realized there's nothing that's gonna stop the love of God through his church. His church always prevails, His word is always true. His presence never leaves us, He never, ever forsakes us.

And so I feed my faith and I starve my fears, and I read in Romans 8:38-39 when Paul said, "For I am convinced there is an unshakable assurance, with everything in my soul I believe this to be true. For I am completely convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus of Lord".

I tell myself no matter where I go, my God is there. No matter what I do, my God loves me. No matter what happens to me, my God is for me. And that's why I have an unwavering expectation, that our loving God is working in every situation for our future of good. Enough of the bad news. Enough of the bad news. Let's acknowledge it, we've got some problems. And we have a bigger God, we have a bigger God. I said we have a bigger God. A God to whom all things are possible. So rather than be consumed by fear and anxiety, I'm gonna believe that our present struggles are not even worth comparing, to the future glory of what God is gonna do in us and through us.

Whenever I'm discourage and weak, I remind myself, His spirit, His spirit is perfect. In my weakness, His strength is perfect. He's working in all things to bring, I may not see Him, but He's still present, and He's still good, and even when our enemy means something for evil, our God can turn it into good. Because there's nothing, not a disease, not a sickness, not any fear that can separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord. And so I know that what consumes my mind controls my life. My life is almost always moving in the direction of my strongest thoughts.

That the life that I have, is a reflection of the thoughts that I think. My God has not given me a spirit of fear, but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind. So I starve my fears and I feed my faith. And I lift up my hands and tell you, I have an unwavering confidence that a very good, very involved, very loving God is working in every situation in your life right now, to bring about future good. All for His glory. Because that's how good our God is.

So Father, today I pray, that because of the truth in your word, that you would build our faith, God, to stay positive, to be optimistic, God, not because of what

we see, but because of what you say. God, renew our minds with truth that would change our perspectives. That we could reflect your goodness in all that we do.

As we're praying today, those of you watching online, countries across the world, those of you social distancing in Life.Church locations who'd say, "I wanna be more full of faith and spiritual optimism", would you lift up your hands right now? Just lift them up. In that chat you can say, "Me, I wanna be more full of faith". Just type it in the chat right now, just type it in...

Father, I thank you, that it's your word that builds our faith, that faith comes by hearing your word. And so God, as we experience your word, would it help it to renew our minds, God, that we could focus on your goodness, your power, your presence, knowing that our present sufferings, God, are not worth comparing to what you're gonna do in us, and through us, in this life and in eternity that You would be gloried. God, build our faith, help us to stay positive. Help us to be optimistic. Not putting our faith in our desired outcome, God, by putting our faith completely in you and your Goodness. God, build our faith.

As you keep praying today in all of our churches the title of this message is, "Enough of the Bad News". Let me tell you some really good news. We call this the gospel, and the gospel is the best news ever. The bad news is, and there's a lot of bad news. The bad news is that we've all messed up. If you look at your life and if you're really honest, you'd probably say that there's a lot of things that you've done wrong that you're embarrassed about, you feel bad about, you feel guilty for. And the reason is, is because we've fallen short of God's standards. Scripture calls that sin, and the Bible's really clear. All of us have done it, we're all guilty, we've all sinned and we've fallen short of God's perfect standard. But there is really, really good news.

And the good news is this, that our God loves us, even though we sinned. And while we were still sinners, scripture says, Jesus, the sinless son of God, died on a cross, and God raised Him from the dead, so that we could be forgiven. In other words, the way that you're made right with God, is not based on your religious efforts and not by you stopping doing bad and started doing good. The way that you're made right with God is by placing your faith in the perfect work of Jesus, the risen son of God. And when you call on Jesus, God hears your prayers and He forgive your sins and you're not just saved from eternal death, but you're saved for a life of joy and victory, reflecting His love on this earth.

And all of our churches that are open and all over the world online, those of you who recognize you feel guilt and you feel the weight and you don't know where you stand with God, if you'll call on that name that is above every name, the name of Jesus, God hears your prayers. He forgives your sins. It's as if you've never, ever sinned and you become brand new, made right with God, because of the perfect work of Jesus. Those who say, "I need His grace, I want His forgiveness, I wanna put my trust in Him", at all of our churches and all over online, those who say, "Yes, I need His forgiveness today, I call on His name. I need, I want His forgiveness, I surrender my life. Jesus, I give my life to you".

If that's your prayer today, just lift up your hands right now, at all of our churches, just lift them up, I see many hands going up right here. Type in the chat right now, "I need Jesus". Just type in the chat, "I need Jesus, I'm giving my life to Jesus". And as we have people all over the world crying out to Him, I would love it if you would just pray, right where you are,

just pray:

Heavenly Father, forgive my sins. Jesus, save me. Make me new. Fill me with your spirit, so I can follow you and show your love in all that I do. My life is not my own. I give it to you. In Jesus' name I pray.