

Free to Face the Headlines

Proven strategies for consuming today's news without being consumed by today's news

- 1. Wear your armor.** Face the headlines equipped. Knowing God's word, spending time in prayer and meditation on Scripture, and putting on the full armor of God as Paul instructs us in Ephesians 6, are daily habits that will keep us as up-to-date on eternal headlines as we are on the daily news. Schedule more time with Him than with the headlines.
- 2. Secure your soul to the Anchor.** Remember who God is. Have Bible passages at hand such as Colossians 1:15-20, Job 38-42, or Psalm 104. These verses remind us of the nature of the God we serve and of the power of Jesus. We can be undaunted by the daily news because in Jesus all things hold together. This is our anchor on the high seas of dangerous times.
- 3. Inhale the headlines and exhale prayer.** Consider it your role to translate the news into intercessory prayer. The believer is never helpless but neither did God design us to be superheroes righting every wrong. We're conduits for intercession. Know that God is with you when you receive news and speak with Him about what concerns you as you watch. No need for fancy language. Tell Jesus what's happening and ask Him to intervene. Use scripture to pray when you're at a loss for words.
- 4. Team up.** Watch the news with others. Make the news hour and hour of fellowship and prayer. It can be empowering to meet daily and watch or read the news with others. Pray through the headlines together. Intentionally devote more time to prayer than discussing or sharing tragic details. Begin and end your time by worshiping through Scripture hymns, or praise songs. Arrange a virtual gathering by meeting online through Skype or Google hangouts.
- 5. Moderate your intake.** A constant influx of world news or focusing on one world event for hours or days can paralyze your soul. You serve God but you aren't God. Hear the news, let it pass through you to God in prayer, and then move on with daily life. Electronic devices have off buttons. Jesus knew better than we do the trouble in the world but when He was here, He ate, drank, loved, and slept. Take an occasional media fast in order to pray, rest, and refresh.

6. Seize opportunities to act. There are times when God wants us to take action beyond prayer. In these times, the question “Who is My Neighbor” can have international implications. Be ready to say “Yes” when God prompts you to speak out, reach out, or move out in response to a world or local need. He equips the called, granting faith and courage as needed.

7. Engage in sharing cautiously. These days a rumor or lie can spread across the world with a couple of finger clicks. Before you pass on a headline, news photo, or story, pause to reflect. Have I prayed? Is this source reliable? Can people get this story from another source? Will this edify or build up the people with whom I share it, or am I spreading fear without acknowledging the truth of our hope in Christ? Be confident in Christ before you click.

8. Love the world through the headlines. Educating yourself, doing personal research, or taking even a small step of action can reduce the vague anxiety or emotional paralysis that sometimes comes from just consuming the headlines. God so loved the world He gave His only Son and He calls us to love as He does. Beside your Bible and prayer journal, keep an atlas or reference book that give facts and information about every nation. Learn about the countries mentioned in the headlines or about the people involved in local news. Learn about the culture of the people. Seek out locals from other countries and ask them about their homeland. Write to a missionary from that area to ask how best to pray or support them. Visit the local police station, homeless shelter, or community center and ask what prayer or hands-on support is most meaningful to them.

9. Be a role model. Some of us are comfortable dealing with the news, skilled at communication, gifted with discernment, or experienced in intercession. Seek opportunities to help others around you to process, especially during times of worldwide tragedy or local disaster. Encourage through social media, from the pulpit, in small groups, or even impromptu gatherings. Avoid criticizing people who are overwhelmed or uninformed. Offer to host a prayer time or information session, or even to visit someone one-on-one to minister to a heavy-hearted soul.

10. Train the next generation of believers. According to Biblical prophecy, times will worsen the closer we get to the end of the age. Always be mindful that we are modeling behavior for the next generation. Be watchful for opportunities to teach and to train in regards to processing and responding to the headlines in a manner worthy of Christ. Actively listen to younger believers to understand their

perspective on world events. Exchange ideas. Know that you can be a benefit to one another.

11. Remember the watching crowd. Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders. Whether we're public figures or shut-ins, people who don't know Jesus watch how we Christians handle life. The way we respond to the daily headlines makes an impression of the Jesus-surrendered soul. Remember this truth always. Carefully, prayerfully consider your words. Be authentic, by all means, but there is never any call for Christians to run around like Chicken Little claiming that the sky is falling. Our security is always in Christ and our words and attitudes should reflect that even when we're facing tragic or daunting circumstances. Colossians 4:5-6 (ESV) is a wonderful guideline: "Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity. Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone."

12. Circle the wagons. Sometimes a piece of news strikes us hard and puts our faith face down on the mat of this world. When that happens, we can struggle with discouragement, doubt, depression, or fear. At times, it's not one piece of news that does this but a steady diet of tragedy or a relentless incoming tsunami of horrible headlines. God designed us to be in fellowship with other believers and it's at times like this that we should seek them out. Maybe, we just need to chat on the phone or go out for coffee but some of us may need wise, trained counsel to overcome a tough headline. We're engaged in spiritual battle. Wounds happen and the wise tend to them.

13. Keep the truth ever before you. Jesus lives. Jesus reigns. Jesus is coming again. The battle is His and is already won. We're beginning to experience the prophesied labor pains of the end as history surges toward the promise of eternal life for all who claim the name of Jesus. We need to keep our eyes on Jesus as never before in order to endure. The writer of Hebrews says it this way and we'd all be wise to memorize these words: "For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God you may receive what is promised. For, "Yet a little while, and the coming one will come and will not delay; but my righteous one shall live by faith, and if he shrinks back, my soul has no pleasure in him." But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who have faith and preserve their souls." Hebrews 10:36-39 (ESV)

These are just a few ways I have found the courage and stamina **to face the headlines without fear**. As you apply these suggestions and find more, please message me at www.loriroeleveld.com and I'll add your ideas to the list. The words with which I close are true and worthy of our practice: *"And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near."* Hebrews 10:24-25 (ESV)

Mercy and Grace,

Lori Stanley Roeleveld

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(*Overcoming Your Giants and Living a Fruitful Life*)