

Pray or Worry

“Worry is a thin stream of fear trickling through the mind. If encouraged, it cuts a channel into which all other thoughts are drained.” –author unknown

Warm-Up: Talk about how anxiety could be one of the number one by-products of our culture and why. What are some of the leading anxiety/stress factors for you and those around you? Once people realize there is a cure for the *lack* of peace that they deal with... do they *take* the cure? Why or why not?

What is anxiety? Why is it so commonplace? What does it do to us?

Read Philippians 4:1-9

- Describe your initial thoughts and reactions to this passage. What jumps out at you the most?
- Do you think some reading this letter might have thought that Paul’s words were a little out of touch with reality when he said, “Do not be anxious about anything”?
- Explain the plan and process Paul gives for letting go of life’s anxiety.
- Why do you think thanksgiving is included in the process?
- What replaces anxiety in our lives when we pray this way and how could we describe it to someone who has never experienced it?

More for thought: Paul tells us that the cure to anxiety is “worry about nothing, pray about everything.” Verse 6 uses no less than four different terms for prayer:

(1) “Prayer” (proseuche): This is the broadest word for communication with God. It is a general word for addressing Him with reverence and devotion.

(2) “Supplication” (deesis): The word used here conveys the sincere sharing of personal needs and problems.

(3) “Thanksgiving” (eucharistia): Our prayers should be accompanied by a heart of gratitude for all that God has done for us in the past.

(4) “Requests” (aitema): This word speaks of specific petitions rather than vague and hazy generalities. Paul makes it clear that worry and prayer cannot coexist at the same time. You can either pray or worry, but you cannot pray and worry. What God wants is for you to counter worry with prayer. Therefore, when you are tempted to worry, why not attempt to pray? It may be just a five-second “arrow prayer” shot up to heaven.

Wrap-up: No matter what life throws at you, you can be joyful. Paul wrote these things from prison...Wow! What a huge encouragement to honor God whether good times or bad. That’s because real joy isn’t about our circumstances, but about God’s goodness and grace.

Pray for one another and the pressures each person might be going through.

For personal accountability:

1. Do I have a deep love for the members of my church (4:1)? In what specific ways do I verbally express my love and appreciation for my brothers and sisters in Christ? Do I find value and fulfillment in watching them grow as believers? How am I making that obvious and is this evident in the things I do?

2. When was the last time I was involved in an interpersonal church conflict (4:2-3)? How did I behave badly? How did I grow through this trial? What would I do differently *when* (not *if*) a conflict like that happens again? What advice or encouragement could I give others?

3. How have I learned to rejoice in the Lord **ALWAYS** (4:4)?

4. In the midst of conflict and trials, do I really turn my cares over to the Lord (4:6-7)? How can I know when legitimate concern turns into anxiety? How has my prayer life been strengthened through difficult times in my life? How has the Lord brought peace into my life in the midst of despair?