

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

These questions are designed to help you talk about God's word and Pastor Brian's message with friends and family. You of course can use your own questions, but we'd like to give you this tool to encourage Biblical fellowship and discipleship in your circle of relationships. *Enjoy discovering more about Him!*

"PEACE OVER ANXIETY" | PHILIPPIANS 4:1-7 | PASTOR BRIAN BELL

WARM-UP QUESTION:

- What are signs someone is experiencing anxiety?

"Stand Firm in the Lord and Pursue Peace with People" Philippians 4: 1-3

Christ followers should find their stability in their relationship with Jesus, and that should lead them to seek peace with others.

- What does it look like to "stand firm" in the Lord in someone's life?
- How can people help others reconcile as Paul asks in this section instead of making it worse?

"Rejoice in the Lord Always and Let Gentleness Be Seen" Philippians 4: 4-5

Because God is near, believers can rejoice in any situation and can show all kinds of people gentleness.

- Who is someone who is an example of showing gentleness or tolerance to all kinds of people?
- If God is always near, why do many believers struggle to rejoice always?

"Replace Anxiety with Prayer and the Peace of God Will Guard You" Philippians 4:6-7

Believers are to bring their concerns to God and to practice gratitude, knowing God guards their hearts and minds and gives peace.

- How can believers practice prayer in a way that reduces their anxiety and increases their trust in God?
- How do you respond to the image of God guarding your heart and mind?

"Christ Connection: Jesus Gives Us His Peace"

Jesus had perfect peace and still experienced anxiety before the cross, but He showed dependence on God the Father. Our faith in Jesus gives us the relationship to God that allows us to have that same peace.

- What would it look like for you if you brought all your worries honestly to God as Christ did?

REFLECTION AND APPLICATION QUESTIONS:

Paul reminds people that in Christ, they can rejoice always and have His peace because they can pray and thank God all the time.

- What anxiety do you need to bring honestly before God?
- What relationship do you need to reconcile?
- Make it a goal this week to pray through your worries with God.

Peace Over Anxiety

I. Announce:

- A. Welcome to those watching online 10am.
- B. Slide1-4 Kel: REAL. Moving up. Prayer. Blood Drive.
- C. Slide5 Cam Ordination: read.
- D. Slide6 Prayer:

II. Slide7 Intro: Peace Over Anxiety

- A. We welcome our Middle school & HS in with us this morning. (lost electricity to our modulars).
 - 1. But, I'm glad you're in here today for this message (Phil.4). It's on *anxiety, peace, pressure, relationships*, and *prayer* which are things *middle schoolers, high schoolers, & adults* all experience - *just in different forms*.
- B. What do you worry about?
 - 1. Middle school: maybe it's fitting in, friends, sports, grades.
 - 2. High school: maybe your future, college, relationships, identity.
 - 3. Adults: finances, marriage, health, kids, grandkids.
 - 4. Seniors: health, family, your future. [details change - anxiety doesn't]
- C. Summary of Each Chapter: (1) Joy in suffering. (2) Joy in humility.(3) Joy in knowing Christ. *And today* (4) Joy in trusting God daily. [joy 16 x's]
- D. Big Idea: *God's peace guards the heart that runs to Him*.
- E. Theme: Replacing anxiety with prayer and right thinking.
- F. Paul now moves *from pressing on toward Christ; to living with peace in everyday pressures*.
 - 1. And remember, Paul writes this from prison. This is not theory from a beach chair, this is *peace in hardship*.

G. Key thought: Paul **does not** say, *believers never feel anxious*. He teaches, **believers know where** to take their anxiety.

H. **Slide8 Illust**: You know how the ocean can look? The surface: wind. waves. turbulence. chaos. **But** deep below the surface: calm. steady. quiet.

1. Many people live only at the surface level of life, every circumstance tosses them around.
2. Paul says, There is a deeper place where the peace of God steadies the soul.

III. Slide9a **1 STAND FIRM IN THE LORD (1)**

A. Therefore, my brothers, whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, **stand firm** thus in the Lord, my beloved.

B. Paul begins with **stability**.

1. The Christian life is **not**: *emotional drifting. spiritual instability. Nor panic-driven living*. Our stability is: "*in the Lord*."

C. **Slide9b** You **cannot** always control what happens around you, **but** you can **anchor yourself** *in Christ*.

IV. Slide10 **2 PURSUE PEACE WITH PEOPLE (2,3)**

A. **2** I entreat **Euodia** and I entreat **Syntyche** to agree in the Lord. **3** Yes, I ask you also, true companion, help these women, who have labored side by side with me in the gospel together with Clement and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life. [**so imp** some believe this is why he's actually writing to the church!]

B. Paul addresses conflict between these 2 ladies in their church, **Euodia** and **Syntyche**.

1. Interesting: Paul moves from **relationship disagreements** to **anxiety**. **Why?** Because *relational tension* often fuels **inner anxiety**.

a) Unresolved conflict steals peace.

C. Paul calls them: *toward unity. toward reconciliation. toward shared mission*.

1. **Peace with God** *should shape* how we pursue peace with people.

D. Is there a **relationship** stealing your peace right now? Where might God be calling you toward *reconciliation*?

V. Slide11a **3 REJOICE IN THE LORD ALWAYS (4)**

A. **4** Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice.

1. **Not** rejoice *in circumstances*. **Not** rejoice *in ease*. **Not** rejoice *in comfort*.
But Rejoice in the Lord. [Paul keeps bringing **joy** back to **Christ**]

B. Slide11b Important Clarification: *Joy is not pretending life is easy. Joy is confidence that Christ remains faithful.*

1. *Christian joy is not denial of pain - it is confidence in God's presence.*

VI. Slide12a **4 LET GENTLENESS BE SEEN (5)**

A. **5** Let your **reasonableness** be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand.

[**reasonableness** = *mercifulness or tolerance of slight deviations from moral or legal rectitude*. LKGNT - reasonableness and judging. *The word signifies a humble, patient steadfastness, which is able to submit to injustice, disgrace, and maltreatment without hatred and malice, trusting in God inspired all of it.*]

1. One of the marks of **Christian maturity** is not that we agree on everything, but that we learn how to love one another when we don't. In a church family, there will be differences of opinion on all sorts of matters. The question is **not**, '*Can I find someone who agrees with me on everything?*' The question is, '*Can I listen well, learn humbly, and love faithfully when someone sees things differently?*' Sometimes we are right, sometimes we are wrong, and often we simply have more to learn. **A learner is not threatened by disagreement. A learner asks, 'What can I understand? What might God teach me through this conversation?' We don't have to surrender our convictions, but we **should** hold them with enough humility to listen and enough grace to remain united in Christ.**

2. Slide12b "If no one can *disagree with us*, we stop being learners." (Pride)

B. **An anxious world becomes:** *reactive. harsh. defensive. controlling.*

1. Paul says **believers** should be marked by **reasonableness**/gentleness/graciousness/having consideration for one another.

C. And **Why?** Because *The Lord is at hand*. (i.e. His return is *imminent*)

1. **Meaning:** God is **near**. God **sees**. God is **present**. God is **coming again**.

D. **Peaceful people do not need to force control over everything.**

(Let's see if this works: *Peaceful ... parents, grandparents, teachers, politicians ... do not need to force control over everything*).

VII.Slide13a **5 REPLACE ANXIETY WITH PRAYER (6)**

A. **6 do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by **prayer** and **supplication** with **thanksgiving** let your requests be made known to God.**

B. **Slide13b** Pause commercial: **Logos**, my bible software, added an **AI function**. Its AI tools do not go out and search the web. **Instead, they work within my trusted resources already contained in my Logos library.**

1. It is my **personal research assistant** sitting there in a huge library which, when I ask it a question, It looks through every one of my books and resources, helping me find, organize, and summarize information from all my trusted sources. It doesn't replace studying God's Word; it helps me get to the relevant resources faster (picture my office w/4000 books).

2. **Slide13c** I asked it yesterday, *“What is Paul’s balance with the word anxiety? He is not saying never have anxiety. Is there a good anxiety and a bad anxiety?”* - **This was its answer ...**

C. **“Paul’s teaching on anxiety reveals a crucial distinction. He’s not prohibiting all concern, but rather distinguishing between *legitimate care rooted in faith* and *destructive worry rooted in unbelief*.**

The same Greek word (meri-mnow) describes both, with context revealing the difference - concern plus unbelief equals **anxiety**, while concern plus faith becomes a **biblical virtue.**”¹ Bill Thrasher/Erwin Lutzer

¹ (Logos) Bill Thrasher and Erwin W. Lutzer, *A Journey to Victorious Praying: Finding Discipline and Delight in Your Prayer Life* (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2017), 188.

1. Slide13d concern + unbelief = anxiety. (while) concern + faith = a biblical virtue.

D. So, Paul saying don't be anxious is **not shame for struggling, nor denial of emotion**
- It is an invitation!!!

1. Paul hands us the **replacement**: Instead of anxiety, **bring prayer, supplication, thanksgiving to God.**

a) Paul does not say: ignore anxiety. Nor suppress anxiety.

E. He says: **redirect** anxiety Godward.

1. **Anxiety** shrinks when **prayer** expands. Or, **Prayer is what turns panic into dependence.** (Read Mt.6:25-34 if time)

2. "If it's big enough to **worry** about, it's big enough to **pray** about!"

F. If Paul were writing today, he might mention some things that **feed anxiety**:
Constant notifications on your phones ● (aka notification badge). *Comparing ourselves to everyone online. The pressure to look perfect. The fear of missing out.*

1. **The technology changed, the human heart didn't.**

G. So Paul envisions **God's peace** as a soldier who protects **the hearts and minds** of believers **from anxiety, fear, and doubt.**

H. What do you run to **first** when *anxiety* rises? Is prayer your first response or your last resort?

VIII. Slide14 **6 THE PEACE OF GOD WILL GUARD YOU (7)**

A. **7** And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will **guard** your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

B. The word **guard** is military language. [picture soldiers *standing watch* over a city]

1. Paul says: **God's peace** stands guard over **your heart**, and **your mind**.

2. **Paul does not promise**: immediate answers. perfect circumstances. painless lives. **He promises**: **God's peace in the middle of it.**

C. Peace is **not** the absence of trouble - it is the **presence** of God *within trouble*.

IX. Slide 15a 7 CHRIST CONNECTION

A. Jesus Himself said, *Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you.* Jn.14:27

1. Jesus is not merely *the giver* of peace. **Jesus IS our peace.**

a) *At the cross our greatest problem was solved.* We were reconciled to God.
We no longer have to live separated from Him.

B. **15b** Because we have **peace WITH God**, we can experience the **peace OF God**.

C. Prayer is **not** pretending the weight isn't real - *Prayer is deciding you were never meant to carry it alone.*

1. **Worry** rehearses problems. **Prayer** rehearses God's faithfulness.

2. **15c** *Anxiety grows when we **carry**, what God invited us to **surrender**.

D. God's peace does not always remove the storm, **but** it **steadies** us *within it*.

E. What currently **occupies** your mind most? What anxiety do you need to bring **honestly** before God? Are you **feeding worry** or **feeding trust**? What would it look like to **practically** turn anxiety into **prayer** this week?

X. WRAP UP

A. Many people want peace **by gaining control**. Paul offers another way, **Surrender**.
Not because life is easy, **but** because **Christ** is **near**.

1. The peace of God is not found in a trouble-free life, **but** in a God-filled life.

2. You may not know what *tomorrow holds*, **but** you know **The 1** holding you.

B. The anxious heart finds rest when it finally stops carrying what **only God can carry**.

C. **Prayer:** Jesus, You know how easily our hearts become anxious and overwhelmed.
Teach us to bring every fear, every burden, and every uncertainty to You. Help us replace panic with prayer and worry with trust. **Guard our hearts and minds with Your peace.** Remind us that You are **near**, that You are **faithful**, and that we do not walk through life alone. **Steady us in Your presence and help us reflect Your peace in an anxious world.** [repeat after me: "I will **pray** - before I **panic**"]

D. Keywords: peace, anxiety, prayer.