



PROMISE KEEPER

LIVING WITH CONFIDENCE IN AN UNCERTAIN WORLD

Small Group Discussion Guide



PREPARATION

STUDY

Spend the week studying Philippians 4:6–7. Consult the commentary provided and any additional study tools to enhance your preparation.

DETERMINE

Determine which discussion points and study questions will work best for your group.

PRAY

Pray for our pastors and this week's message, the upcoming group time, your group members, and their openness to God's Word.

LANDING POINT

The way to God's peace is through prayer and thankfulness.



GROUP DISCUSSION

❑ **CONFIDENTIALITY** | What's said in the group stays in the group.

❑ **NO CROSS-TALK** | Be considerate of others as they share. Refrain from side conversations and texting during group time.

❑ **NO FIXING** | We are not in the group to fix each other. Jesus does that part.

❑ **SHARING** | Be sensitive to the amount of time you share. Don't talk too much or too little. Every person brings something valuable to the group.



As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

OBSERVING BIRDS AND FLOWERS

In every age people have struggled with worry and anxiety. It seems like something ingrained in the human personality. For as long as we can remember, people have been concerned about providing for a family, paying the bills, getting sick or what might happen in the future. We think we have plenty of legitimate reasons for being worried and anxious about life.

Jesus understood the tendency of people to be worried and anxious. In His Sermon on the Mount, Jesus uses birds and flowers to teach us an important lesson (Matthew 6:25–34). He tells His audience, “If God cares for birds and flowers, will He not care much more for you, since you’re more valuable than birds and flowers to Him?”

Jesus is direct. He gives no room for worry and anxiety about life. He calls us to take our focus off the object of our worry and anxiety and direct it instead to God, who is sovereign and in control over our lives.

Paul does the same in Philippians 4:6–7 with the promise of peace. Paul echoes Jesus’ teaching by lifting the eyes of his readers off their worry and anxiety and on to God. The way to God’s peace is through prayer and thankfulness.

Q: *What in life makes you most worried and anxious?*

Q: *What would a life without worry and anxiety look like?*



LEARN

Select 2–3 questions to discuss as a group.

TRUST IN GOD

Like Jesus, Paul makes no room for worry and anxiety in the life of the believer. Regardless of circumstances, God’s people should put their trust in their Heavenly Father, who loves and cares for His children. Paul tells his readers, “Instead of being anxious about life, pray. Turn your attention to God through prayer. Talk to Him and make your requests known to Him and find reasons to be thankful.”

Paul understands that worry and anxiety expose areas of unbelief. When you’re worried and anxious, you’re not functionally believing God to be God. However, when you trust God, you put your life in the hands of your loving Father. Whatever life may throw your way, you know that God will produce something good out of it.

READ: *Philippians 4:6–7. How is the metaphor of a loving father caring for his children helpful when it comes to trusting God?*

Q: *Explain in your own words how worry and anxiety are connected to unbelief.*

THE PROMISE OF PEACE

Next Paul makes an incredible promise. He says, “If you trust God, then His peace will guard your mind and hearts in Christ Jesus.” God’s peace is a peace that *protects*. It keeps you from the enemies of worry and anxiety. Whether you face uncertainty about the future or life feels chaotic and out of your control, you can experience real peace from God. You can have confidence that God is in control over your life.

Q: *How do worry and anxiety cause us to miss out on God’s blessings?*

Q: *Share a time when you experienced God’s peace in a situation.*



LIVE

Select 2–3 questions from this section to answer.

UNDERSTANDING WORRY AND ANXIETY

Ultimately, worry and anxiety come from fear. This isn't the kind of fear that's healthy, like the fear that makes you jump back when you're about to step on a snake. No, the unhealthy kind of fear that worry and anxiety produce leads you to doubt God. This is a fear that paralyzes and saps you of spiritual strength to face your fears.

Anxiety is fear about the future. It's the feeling of some future doom or danger coming your way. Anxiety tends to be vague and nonspecific. Worry, on the other hand, is specific. It's dwelling on what *might* happen and fearing the worst outcome in a situation.

Q: Define worry and anxiety in your own words.

Q: How have you experienced worry or anxiety in your life?

THE CURE

Paul tells us that the cure for worry and anxiety is prayer. Prayer confronts our fears head on. Charles Swindoll says, “We can allow fear to make us its victims or we can challenge fear to work for us by driving us to a deeper dependence on God.”¹ Prayer is coming to God and giving Him everything—our fears, our worries and our anxieties. When we do this, we say, “Lord, you see my life much clearer than I do. I can't see the outcome or good you want to produce in this situation. Therefore, I'm going to trust you and depend on you for the faith and I need to look to You in this situation.”

Paul also highlights the importance of thankfulness in our prayers. When you're thankful you dwell on all God has done in the past, which gives you confidence that He will act similarly in the future. Thankfulness “crowds out selfish pride, checks fear, defuses anger, and directs one's thoughts outwardly toward others.”²

Q: Write a prayer to God about something that gives you worry or anxiety.

Q: Describe someone you know who trusts God in life. How do they react to things that usually cause people worry and anxiety?



LEAD

Select 1 question from this section to ask your group.

PEACE IN PRACTICE

If you want to experience God's peace, then prayer and thanksgiving must be a priority in your life. It's the way you connect with the Father. It's through prayer that you have the space to be honest with God about what might cause worry and anxiety in your life. Prayer also gives you the opportunity to thank God. Thankfulness will drive out worry and anxiety like nothing else.

If you have time to worry, you have time to pray. If you catch yourself going down the path to worry and anxiety, stop and tell God, "Right now, I feel worried and anxious. I need you to replace my worry and anxiety with trust and confidence in You." If you do this over time, you will discover that the "way to become anxious about nothing is to be prayerful about everything."³

Q: What's one way you can put peace into practice right now?

Q: Write down three things you're thankful for. Do this every day for the next week.



PRAY

Pray that God would focus your mind and heart on Him. Share with your Father anything that is making you worried or anxious. Spend time praising God for everything you have to be thankful for. End by declaring your trust in God and your belief in His promise of peace over your life.



FOLLOW UP

Midway through this week, send a follow-up email to your group with some or all of the following:

- Read 1 Peter 5:6–11 and reflect on how this passage relates to Philippians 5:6–7.
- Ask the group to share any stories or lessons learned where they see God at work in their lives.



THE PAPA PRAYER Larry Crabb offers a simple prayer method, which is called the PAPA Prayer. PAPA stands for:

- *Present yourself to God without pretense.* (Be real with God.)
- *Attend to how you're thinking of God.* (How do you experience God currently?)
- *Purge yourself of anything blocking your relationship with God.* (What makes you want to run and hide from God? Where are you seeking what's best for you?)
- *Approach God as the "first thing" in your life.* (Seek to make God your ultimate treasure.)⁴

SIDE EFFECTS OF ANXIETY "When anxiety persists in the absence of a need to fight or flee, it can not only interfere with our daily lives but also undermine our physical health. Evidence suggests that people with anxiety disorders are at greater risk for developing a number of chronic medical conditions. They may also have more severe symptoms and a greater risk of death when they become ill."⁵

REAL PEACE "When we give our hearts to Christ in salvation, we experience 'peace with God' (Rom. 5:1); but the 'peace of God' takes us a step farther into His blessings. This does not mean the absence of trials on the outside, but it does mean a quiet confidence within, regardless of circumstances, people, or things."⁶

ENDNOTES:

1. Charles Swindoll, "Fear and Anxiety: God's Provision in Your Time of Need," *Insights Newsletter*, May 1999. accessed November 8, 2017, <http://www.christianity.com/bible/fear-and-anxiety-gods-provision-in-your-time-of-need-11547430.html>.
2. David E. Garland, "Philippians," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Ephesians–Philemon (Revised Edition)*, ed. Tremper Longman III, vol. 12 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2006), 253.
3. Hywel R. Jones, *Philippians, Focus on the Bible Commentary* (Ross-shire, Scotland: Christian Focus Publications, 1993), 136.
4. Larry Crabb, *The Papa Prayer: The Prayer You've Never Prayed* (Nashville: Integrity Publishers, 2006), 10.
5. "Anxiety and Physical Illness," *Harvard Health Publishing*, June 6, 2017, https://www.health.harvard.edu/staying-healthy/anxiety_and_physical_illness (accessed November 8, 2017).
6. Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996), 95.