

## PREPARATION

---

Spend the week studying Philippians 4:4-9. Consult the commentary provided and any additional study tools to enhance your preparation.

**DETERMINE** | which discussion points and study questions will work best for your group

**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** | Praying is the antidote to worry when life feels overwhelming.

### ◦ Remember the 4 Rules for Small Group Discussion

1. **Confidentiality.** What's said in the group stays in the group.
2. **No cross-talk.** Be considerate of others as they share. Refrain from side conversations and texting during group time.
3. **No fixing.** We are not in the group to fix each other. Jesus does that part.
4. **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.

## INTRODUCTION

---

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

Dave and Catherine are missionaries in Czech Republic. They've been serving there for fifteen years. Living overseas has had its challenges, but they have enjoyed doing God's work abroad. Recently Dave became the president of their missions organization and life has shifted into another gear. Added responsibilities and less margin in his schedule have left Dave feeling overwhelmed. His near constant traveling and tending to the needs of missionaries and pastors on the field has stretched him thin. Catherine supports her husband, but knows this lifestyle is not sustainable. Most of the time Dave and Catherine feel like they're just trying to survive from one week to the next.

**Do you relate to anything in Dave and Catherine's story? If yes, what?**

**In which area of life do you want to experience God's peace? Why?**

## LEARN

---

*Select 2-3 questions to discuss as a group.*

### o **The antidote for worry and anxiety**

Paul writes to believers in Philippians 4:4-9 and addresses the worry and anxiety people often feel when overwhelmed by life. His words are encouraging and comforting, because they show us how to fight the enemies of worry and anxiety.

In verses 4-6 Paul gives three commands to his readers. First, he calls them to rejoice. Christians are to rejoice in God always, regardless of circumstances. The source of true joy is not our circumstances, but our contentment in God. Second, Paul tells his readers to let their reasonableness (or gentleness, graciousness) be known to all. Someone who's reasonable serves others; they're able to withstand offenses and not seek revenge; they're open and trusting of others. Third, Paul gives a negative command – not to be anxious. The anxiety Paul focuses on here is that which paralyzes and makes someone unable to act. Instead of being anxious, Paul calls his readers to pray. He also exhorts them to give thanks to God. In modern language, he wants them to have an attitude of gratitude and remember all they have in Christ. For Paul, prayer is the antidote to worry and anxiety.

In verse 7 Paul gives a promise. The result of prayer is that you experience God's peace. The peace of God does two important things. First, it guards your mind and heart. Life's difficulties won't overwhelm you when God's peace protects you. Second, God's peace reminds you that God is loving and in control over your life. No present hardship will keep you from experiencing God's best, regardless of circumstances.

In verses 8-9 Paul concludes that a life of obedience is the right response to experiencing God's peace. He highlights two areas of obedience: 1) in the mind (v.8) and 2) in practice (v.9). Paul has in mind here the entire community of believers here. A community dedicated to peace will be more joyful, giving and loving.

**Consider Paul's three commands in vv.4-7. Which of these would you like to see more of in your life? Why?**

**Can you recall a time when you experienced God's peace through prayer? If so, share with the group.**

**Write a short statement of truth you can tell yourself the next time you feel worried or overwhelmed.**

## LIVE

---

*Select 2-3 questions from this section to answer.*

### ◦ Peace stealers

There are three things that can steal our peace with God. Let's call them peace stealers. First, a lack of perspective skews your view of things. When this happens, it's easy to become overwhelmed and think only of yourself and circumstances. Second, the pace of life can steal your peace. Many have a schedule so full that their life most often feels frenetic and overloaded. There's no room for peace in this lifestyle. Third, the storms of life threaten your peace. Whatever the length of these storms, they can cause worry to creep in and rob your peace.

**Which peace stealer do you encounter most? Where does it show up most in your life?**

**What are one or two practical things you could you do to combat these peace stealers?**

### ◦ Path to peace

The Bible gives us a clear path to peace in this passage. If you're experiencing worry and anxiety, God has given you a way out. The path to peace requires that we: 1) rejoice in God regardless of circumstances, 2) be gracious and patient with all, 3) pray and present your needs to God and 4) receive God's peace and respond to it with obedience.

**What are unhealthy ways to deal with worry and anxiety?**

**Split the group into pairs. Have group members share anything that causes them worry and pray over them.**

## LEAD

---

*Select 1 question from this section to ask your group.*

### ◦ Seeking peace

We should remember that Paul wrote his epistles to communities of believers. His instructions were meant to be applied corporately, not just individually. As God's people, we should seek peace in our communities. God has also called us to bring peace into our neighborhoods, workplaces and cities. Rather than seek violence or revenge, we seek peace and grace in relationships. Thankfully, we're not without guidance in this. God has given us a path to peace. Those who follow it experience a peace that "surpasses all understanding," because it's a supernatural peace not of this world. It's God's peace.

## LEAD [CONT'D]

---

What challenges might you encounter in trying to bring peace into your neighborhood, workplace and city? What's the best response to these challenges?

What would be different about your community if everyone pursued peace in their relationships?

## PRAY

---

Follow Paul's instruction and pray to God, making your needs known to Him. Thank Him for all He has done for you and for all His provision. Ask for wisdom and direction to be a community that seeks peace where there is none. Finally, spend time (quietly or aloud) reflecting on Jesus as your ultimate example of peace.

## FOLLOW UP

---

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

- Read John 14:25-27 and reflect on Jesus' promise to give you His peace and how it is different than the peace the world offers.
- Ask the group to share any stories or lessons learned where they see God at work in their life.

## COMMENTARY

---

### ◦ Understanding the context for Philippians.

Paul wrote Philippians from jail.<sup>1</sup> The church in Philippi was close to Paul's heart, which is evident in his tone throughout the letter. While his imprisonment prevented him from being with them, he wrote his letter to encourage believers and thank them for their support. Paul also expresses a desire for his readers to grow in their faith by explaining what a healthy, fruitful spiritual life looks like. The ultimate example of this is Jesus (see 2:5-11).

1. "Paul and Silas were imprisoned there for exorcising a demon from a fortune-telling slave girl, but God miraculously delivered them, and they proclaimed the gospel to the Philippian jailer." Crossway Bibles, The ESV Study Bible (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2008), 2275-2276.

 **COMMENTARY**

---

- **The peace of God.**

The peace God gives is different from other kinds of peace. Jesus made that clear in John 14:27. Three characteristics mark God's peace. First, its origin is from God. That means it reflects something of God's character. Second, it's a peace that surpasses our limited knowledge. "Paul contrasted knowledge and peace at one point: Peace excels over knowledge. No doubt he had in mind situations where knowledge is insufficient. Sometimes it cannot explain, and sometimes explanations do not help. Peace, however, is always appropriate and meets the need of the heart."<sup>2</sup> Third, it guards our hearts and minds. Paul borrows military terminology to show that God's peace protects us from worry and anxiety.

- **Jesus' response to anxiety.**

What's remarkable about Jesus' teaching on worry and anxiety (Matt. 6:25-34) is that He gives no room for them. We have no legitimate reason to worry, because we have a Father that cares for our needs. The truth is, at the heart of worry and anxiety is unbelief; we doubt whether God is truly good or will care for our needs. Our Father is the King. As a child of the King, we have no reason to worry about anything, even death. Rather than worry, Jesus calls us to seek the kingdom of God first (v.32). If we trust in Jesus for something so important as our salvation, we should also trust Him with smaller matters in life.

---

2. Richard R. Melick, *Philippians, Colossians, Philemon*, vol. 32, *The New American Commentary* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1991), 150.