

"THE POTENTIAL OF PRAYER"

Philippians 4:6-7

Happy Mother's Day! I'm so glad you've chosen to worship the Lord today. We're going to focus our attention on two verses of Scripture, Philippians 4:6-7 (Quote these verses). This portion of God's Word is always relevant but especially as we spotlight moms/families and as we prepare to nominate a Pastor Search Team.

Right off the bat we are introduced to a common problem—*ANXIETY*. Every family at one time or the other and in one way or the other must deal with this thief that is out to steal our joy and strangle our spiritual life.

- **In the U.S., about 19.1% of adults experience an anxiety disorder annually.**
- **Roughly 31.1% of U.S. adults experience an anxiety disorder at some point in their lives.**
- **In the U.S., 11% of children ages 3–17 have a current diagnosed anxiety disorder.**

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There are many causes that contribute to anxiety. Some of these include childhood trauma, stress associated with work or school, conflict in the family or the workplace, financial pressure, concern about your kid's future, caring for aging parents, etc. **Anxiety involves imagining the future in a worst-case scenario and then stressing out over it.** Is there an answer to this dilemma? Here's the truth I want to drop into your heart this morning.

STOP WORRYING AND START PRAYING!

What is prayer? Prayer is talking with God. Paul wrote this letter "to all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi." He didn't address these Spirit-inspired words to those who were not believers. Prayer is exclusively for Christians. **Are you a Christian?** If you are, you have access to God's throne through the Lord Jesus Christ.

**"If you don't live with an anchor of faith,
you will drift in a sea of anxiety."**

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"Anxious"—Paul wrote this letter in the Greek language. The Greek word for *anxious* means to pull in different directions. Anxiety rips apart your thoughts and feelings. This word appears several times in the Bible . . .

Matthew 6:25... "For this reason I say to you, do not be worried (31,34) about your life, *as to* what you will eat or what you will drink; nor for your body, *as to* what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing?"

Luke 10:41... But the Lord answered and said to her, "Martha, Martha, you are worried and bothered about so many things."

1 Peter 5:6–7... Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time, **7** casting all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you.

When we choose to allow anxiety to get a foothold in our lives, in effect we say to God—"*I don't trust you!*" For the sake of our families and the church,

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we've got to get a grip on this problem of anxiety.
Pay attention to . . .

1. THE ADMONITION

Philippians 4:6... *Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.*

There's no wiggle room. It's a command. Paul was in prison when he wrote this epistle. Stuff was going on in his life that was beyond his control . . .

Philippians 1:12... Now I want you to know, brethren, that my circumstances have turned out for the greater progress of the gospel,

Philippians 1:19... for I know that this will turn out for my deliverance through your prayers and the provision of the Spirit of Jesus Christ,

Philippians 2:23... Therefore I hope to send him immediately, as soon as I see how things go with me

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Philippians 4:11... Not that I speak from want, for *I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am.*

The Christians in the church at Philippi were devoted believers. However, their hearts and minds were being ripped apart by the threats of the Roman government, the possibility of severe persecution, and conflict within the church.

This was not an idle command. Paul and Silas brought the gospel to Philippi in the first place. If you remember, Paul and Silas were arrested, beaten, and thrown into prison—*not the ideal situation for sure*. I want you to see how they responded . . .

Acts 16:25... But about midnight *Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns of praise to God,* and the prisoners were listening to them.

Anxiety would not get the best of these two godly missionaries. They understood that the best thing they could do was . . .

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Okay, we’ve seen the admonition. Now I want you to pay attention to . . .

2. THE APPLICATION

Philippians 4:6... but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.

“**Prayer**”— This is the general word that carries the idea of adoration, devotion, and worship. Whenever we find ourselves worrying, our first action ought to be to get alone with God and pray. As we see the greatness and majesty of God, the things that cause us to worry come into much sharper perspective. ¹

“**Supplication**”— This is an earnest or urgent request to God. Jesus modeled this for us . . .

Hebrews 5:7... In the days of His flesh, He offered up both prayers and supplications with loud crying and tears to the One able to save Him

¹ Warren W. Wiersbe, The Bible Exposition Commentary (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996), Php 4:6–7.

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from death, and He was heard because of His piety.

"Thanksgiving"— Gratitude to God is a crucial part of your prayer life. At one point in His ministry Jesus healed 10 lepers. Only one of them came back and thanked Him!

Colossians 4:2... Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with *an attitude of thanksgiving*;

"Requests"— This simply means that we are to pray specifically, not generally.

1 John 5:14–15 ... This is the confidence which we have before Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. **15** And if we know that He hears us *in* whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests which we have asked from Him.

Earnest, biblical prayer is the way *we transfer our anxiety into the capable hands of our Lord*, and the way *He transfers His peace into our brittle hearts*. Robert Morgan wrote . . .

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- **Prayer is the closet where we change clothes and replace a spirit of despair with a garment of praise.**
- **It's the bank where we present the promissory notes of God's promises and withdraw endless deposits of grace.**
- **It's the darkroom of the soul where negatives become positives.**
- **It's the transfer station where the pulse of fear is exchanged for the impulse of faith.**
- **It's a currency exchange where we trade in our liabilities for God's abundant life.**

When we face challenges in our families and in the church—whatever they may be—we must cast our anxiety upon God who loves us and has promised to meet all of our needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus!

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We've analyzed the admonition and the application.
Finally, I want you to rejoice in . . .

3. THE AFFIRMATION

Philippians 4:7 ... And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

When we make a conscious decision to pray, God promises that He will provide something we can't find anywhere else—*PEACE*. The word "peace" means a state of wholeness, untroubled and undisturbed well-being. This kind of peace is a supernatural by-product of genuine salvation.

It is the peace with God . . .

Romans 5:1 ... Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

When Jesus died on the cross and was resurrected from the dead, He opened the door of salvation to sinners like us. When we repent of our sin and place our faith in the Lord Jesus, our sins are forgiven and

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we are justified before God as the righteousness of Christ is imputed to us. At that moment we enter into a state of eternal peace with God. Glory! Beyond this, Jesus promised those who believe in Him a special kind of peace that others can never experience.

It is the peace of God!

Isaiah 26:3... "The steadfast of mind You will keep in perfect peace, Because he trusts in You.

John 14:27... "Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Do not let your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful."

Do you trust God? You can have peace about your finances, your health, the future of your kids, caring for your aging parents, about retirement, the search for our next pastor, and the amazing plan the Lord has for this church.

This peace **surpasses all comprehension**. The peace of God, like the love of God, is beyond our ability to

comprehend. Even though we can't understand it, it is real and it is available to you 24/7!

This peace **will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus**. This word "guard" is a military term. It implies that God's peace stands on duty to keep out anything that brings anxiety into our lives.

In fact, it stands guard over the two areas that create worry—the heart (wrong feeling) and the mind (wrong thinking). Peace means that we have a quiet confidence within, regardless of circumstances, or people.²

Several years ago a submarine had to remain submerged for many days. When it returned to port, someone asked the captain, "How did the terrible storm last night affect you?" The officer looked at him in surprise and exclaimed, "Storm? We didn't even know there was a storm!" The sub had been so far beneath the surface that it had reached the area known to sailors as "the cushion of the sea." Although violent storms might whip

² Warren W. Wiersbe, The Bible Exposition Commentary (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996), Php 4:6–7.

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the ocean above into huge waves, the waters deep below are never stirred.

That's a great picture of the supernatural peace God makes available to those who are ***"in Christ Jesus!"***

CONCLUSION

STOP WORRYING AND START PRAYING!

Do you have PEACE WITH GOD? I remind you that this peace with God cannot be achieved by *being more religious, by turning over a new leaf, by devoting yourself to a great cause, or by living a moral life.* None of this will secure peace with God.

Peace with God can only come through a personal, life-changing relationship with Jesus Christ.

The Roman jailer in Philippi asked Paul and Silas, ***"Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"*** These two mighty men of God responded, ***"Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household."*** Will you place your faith in Jesus as your personal Savior and Lord?

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Do you have the peace of God? Be honest now. Is worry strangling the spiritual life out of you? You must decide to overcome this spiritual blight on your life. This is one of the many spiritual blessings that has been made available to you in Christ Jesus! I want to invite you to come to the altar and pray about those things that are causing you to be anxious.

Hebrews 4:14–16... Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. **15** For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as *we are*, yet without sin. **16** Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

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