

Last week we talked about the challenge of adhering to Paul’s command to **“Be anxious for nothing.”** If Paul had said, *“Be a little less anxious than you are already,”* that would have been challenging enough. But *“Do not be anxious about anything”*? How are we going to do that?

Fortunately for us, Paul wrote this phrase in the present active tense, meaning that we aren’t to live life in a constant state of anxiety, worry, or fret.

We try not to be anxious, but we must admit that the presence of anxiety is unavoidable. It’s what Jesus referred to as “The Anxiety of Life.” So, let’s learn how to deal with it. We won’t stay trapped in anxiety, worry, and fear- but we will come through it declaring, “I’m Anxious No More!”

Do Not Be Anxious About Anything, But Pray About Everything

Philippians 4:6 Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.

As quickly as Paul tells us not to be anxious about ANYTHING, he just as quickly tells us it’s ok to pray about EVERYTHING. Every situation, every thought, every feeling, no matter how big or small, should be discussed with your best friend, Jesus! Talk to Jesus about everything.

With A Heart of Thanksgiving, Pray About Everything!

Philippians 4:6 Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.

Don’t pray in a spirit of worry and anxiety but pray with a spirit of thanksgiving.

- Thankful that we can make our requests known to God with assurance that He will answer.
- Thankful for what God has done for us in the past, thankful for what He is doing now, and thankful for what He will do in the future.

Prayer Triggers

I think we should change our perspective on things like anxiety, worry, fret, fear, stress, and even depression and use all these as emotional signals to remind us to pray.

Think of them as **prayer triggers**. Allow them to trigger you to pray.

If we prayed every time we felt anxiety coming on, what a difference it would make in our lives.

And think how much it would frustrate the enemy who doesn’t want us praying more.

When he would normally try to defeat us with anxiety, he would be thinking, “Now wait a minute, if I attack with anxiety and fear, they are just going to pray more!”

Next Step: This week I will use my feelings of anxiety as a triggers to pray.

Cast All Your Anxiety on Jesus

Paul said rather than suffering with anxiety, pray. Peter put it this way: **1 Peter 5:6-7**

Humble yourselves, therefore, under God’s mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time.

7 Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.

First, humble yourself before the Lord. Admit that you can’t control every situation and make things turn out the way you want them too. A lot of our anxiety is that we pridefully try to control our world. It doesn’t work. Humble yourself and ask God for help.

Now what do you do with the anxiety you are experiencing?

1 Peter 5:7 Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.

Jesus cares for you! He doesn’t want you anxious! Get rid of it! In prayer, cast it away!

EX: Casting as opposed to hanging on.

Prayer Results

What is the result of heeding Paul's advice to not be anxious about anything, but pray about everything and Peter's advice to cast all your anxiety on Jesus-, the one who cares for you?

Philippians 4:6 Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. 7 And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

The result is God's kind of peace. Peace is certainly the opposite of anxiety.

We will talk more about this peace in two weeks. But this thankful type of prayer and casting your anxieties upon Jesus will result in the Peace of God in your life!

You will discover God's kind of peace even when it doesn't make sense to be at peace!

This kind of peace, "**transcends all understanding.**"

Notice that if you do this, the peace of God will **guard not only your hearts, but your minds** as well. God's peace will combat all those distorted thought patterns, all fears, phobias, worry, stress, and anxiety- all the thoughts that are contrary to God's Word!

"Why Worry, When You Can Pray?"

When I was in high school, my mother gave me a small card that simply read:

"Why Worry, When You Can Pray."

This sounded like a good idea, something that would be easy to do, but it wasn't as easy as I thought it was going to be. I often found myself worrying first and only praying as a last resort. The worrying came more naturally because it was based on my own **'self-reliance mentality.'**

Praying, on the other hand, caused me to shift to a reliance on the Lord. We must shift our reliance from ourselves and our own efforts to Jesus and always start looking to the Lord first!

I think what Paul was trying to teach people, and what my mother was trying to teach me with the 'Why Worry Card', is that through prayer we can entrust all the cares and worries of this life into the hands of a loving Savior who cares for us.

- We don't have to make things work. We just give them over to someone who can work all things together for our good.
- Instead of fretting over these nagging anxieties, we now can experience peace that others only dream about: The peace of God that goes beyond our understanding and cannot be described with words.

Next Step: This week, I will keep my "Why Worry, When You Can Pray?" card in a visible location and read it every day, praying as I do.

I'm reminded of the old hymn, "**What a Friend We Have in Jesus.**" It says,

"What a friend we have in Jesus, All our sins and griefs to bear!

What a privilege to carry everything to God in prayer!

Oh, what peace we often forfeit, oh what needless pain we bear,

All because we do not carry everything to God in prayer!"¹

Prayerful and Alert

Before we move on, I think that we should back up to 1 Peter 5:6-7 again and consider verses 8-11.

1 Peter 5:6-7 Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time. 7 Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.

1 Peter 5:8 Be alert (Watch out for anxiety and quickly recognize it.) **and of sober mind.**

(Next week, we are going to talk about having a sober mind and changing the way we think about things that lead to anxiety.) Why do we need to be alert and sober minded?

Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.

¹ "What a Friend We Have in Jesus," Words, Joseph Scriven, 1855. Tune CONVERSE, Charles C. Converse, 1868

Your enemy, the devil, like a lion, wants to attack you and he prefers to attack you when you are alone. Like a lion attacking a Zebra, he waits for him to leave the herd.

When we get anxious, we tend to withdraw and isolate ourselves.

One of the things that will help you with anxiety is solitude with God, but not isolation.

“Solitude is a gift from God. Isolation is not – it’s a tool of the Enemy.” - Carey Nieuwhof

We need each other. Stick together. Don’t isolate yourself.

When the devil tries to attack with fear and anxiety...

1 Peter 5:9-11 Resist him, standing firm in the faith, (You walk by faith, not by sight or the circumstance around you. And remember that you are not in this alone.)

because you know that the family of believers throughout the world is undergoing the same kind of sufferings. (All of us have to deal with the anxieties of life itself.)

10 And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast.

You might have to suffer for a little while, but let’s keep it at a little while and let’s come through our seasons of anxiety as Jesus restores us and makes us strong.

And we will give him the praise. **11 To him be the power for ever and ever. Amen.**

Praying for Each Other

In Paul’s second letter to the Corinthian Church he told them that because of his trials, persecutions, and the burden of ministry, ...**We were under great pressure, far beyond our ability to endure, so that we despaired of life itself.** **9 Indeed, we felt we had received the sentence of death.**

But Paul saw a reason for his sufferings...**9b But this happened that we might not rely on ourselves but on God, who raises the dead. (2 Corinthians 1:8-9)**

Notice he said in verse 8 that this was far beyond his ability, but it was **not beyond God’s ability!**

When we feel this way, we need to shift our reliance from ourselves to God!

We make that shift in prayer.

What did Paul report to the Corinth church concerning that stressful time?

2 Corinthians 1:10 He (Jesus) has delivered us from such a deadly peril, and he will deliver us again. On him we have set our hope that he will continue to deliver us...

But don’t miss the importance of the next verse, verse 11. Not only was Paul releasing his anxiety and burdens to the Lord in prayer, but he also had other people praying for him too!

2 Corinthians 1:10-11 He has delivered us from such a deadly peril, and he will deliver us again. On him we have set our hope that he will continue to deliver us, 11 as you help us by your prayers.

Paul is saying the Lord is delivering me, but one of the reasons is that you are helping me and those on our team by your prayers!

Our prayers for each other work! We should always pray for each other and especially when our family in Christ is experiencing seasons of stress, fear, and anxiety! We need each other’s prayers.

2 Corinthians 1:11b Then many will give thanks on our behalf for the gracious favor granted us in answer to the prayers of many.

When we pray together, we win together. Then we all will rejoice together and give thanks when we experience God’s gracious favor and answered prayer.

- Why did God graciously give them favor? **“in answer to the prayers of many.”**

That’s why we are calling this series **“Anxious No More!”** because even though we may have been there in the past or are there now, we know Jesus has delivered us, is delivering us, and will deliver us again! We know there will be a day when we say, “I used to live in a state of anxiety, but now I’m anxious no more!”

God's Will for You

Living in Anxiousness is not God's will for you.

**1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 Rejoice always, 17 pray continually,
18 give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.**

Use anxiety as your prayer triggers!