

The Peace of God

Anxiety is on the rise, and its causes are numerous. When we look at Scripture, it's clear that other people and cultures struggled with anxiety too. So is this just the way it is? Or can God help us unwind our anxiety and experience Him in the middle of it?



INTRODUCTION

We have learned that anxiety is overwhelming fear or worry from misplaced attention. God has created us as triune beings: spirit, soul, and body. He understands our innermost needs, fears, triggers, challenges, and hurts. He has promised us peace. Let's discover what He has promised and what He has already done to help us overcome and be victorious.

STARTER QUESTION

Knowing that we are always moving toward our most dominant thoughts, what steps should we take in our lives? How are we being affected mentally and emotionally by our setting and our world at large? What can we do to turn our minds toward God despite our circumstances?

INTO THE WORD

1. As we consider the fact that we move toward our most dominant thoughts, we need to allow God, through prayer, to reprogram our thoughts. Even on our best days, what are some things that can keep Christians from praying? Refer to Philippians 4:4-7, James 5:13-15, 1Thessalonians 5:16-18, Ephesians 6:16-18, Romans 12:12, and Proverbs 15:29 for examples on the power of prayer.
2. The opposite of anxiety is trust. Developing our prayers lives is an important step in trusting God. As we learn to grow in this area of our lives, what might keep our prayers from being as effective as they could be? Refer to Proverbs 3 for examples of how God can help you if you trust Him.
3. Reread *Philippians 4:8* with emphasis on the descriptive words: *true, noble/honest, just/right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent, and praiseworthy*... Who else fits the description of ALL these things? How does focusing your mind on such thing help you to find the peace of God?

APPLICATION

4. Our time with God should consist of both *prayer and supplication: telling and asking*. What are some ways we can incorporate both asking and telling God into our everyday lives? What examples do we see in scripture of this method?
5. After hearing the sermon on Philippians 4:4-9, what can we conclude the necessary "pattern" or "recipe" is that we need to apply when unwinding our human anxiety into a supernatural peace from God?

PRAYER

Dear God, You are the ONLY one who can do something about everything in our lives. Please guard our hearts from the things that distract us from You. Let us think and pray correctly so that our focus remains on prioritizing Jesus, and we may obtain that peace which we don't quite understand, but surely need nonetheless. We can and will rejoice because You are here with us, always and forever! In Jesus name we pray, amen.

SUGGESTED ANSWER GUIDE / MORE FOOD FOR THOUGHT FOR SELECTED QUESTIONS:

Question 1:

Below are just two examples...

- We may feel unworthy to approach God (Luke 5:8). It is easy to feel so ashamed of past (or even current) sins that we feel that we can't approach God. Perhaps we think that we need to "fix" ourselves first. However, Romans 8:1-2 says "Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death."
- We may feel that our prayers are too small. However, Philippians 4:6 says "Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God." Furthermore, 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 says "Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus." These verses make it clear that God *wants* us to come to Him for everything.

Question 2:

Matthew 6:5-8 warns that if we pray in order to be seen or to prove how "spiritual" we are, our prayers will not be effective. At first glance, these verses seem to say that we should only pray in private. However, we can see from elsewhere in scripture that praying together or in public is expected (see 1 Timothy 2:1, John 6:11, John 11:41-42, and Acts 27:35). Warren W. Wiersbe explains these verses by saying "It is not wrong to pray in public... But it is wrong to pray in public if we are not in the habit of praying in private. Observers may think we are practicing [the spiritual discipline of prayer] when we are not, and this is hypocrisy."

These verses in Matthew also warn against insincere prayer. Praying for the same thing over and over is not "vain repetition". What these verses seem to warn against is prayers that are just said by rote, without sincerity. Memorized prayers can take on this quality, if we are not careful. Dr. Robert A. Cook said, "All of us have one routine prayer in our system. Once we get rid of it, then we can really start to pray!"

Question 3:

In *Thru the Bible with J. Vernon McGee* (1 Corinthians through Revelation; page 325) Dr. McGee writes:

"This has been called the briefest biography of Christ. He is the One who is 'true.' He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. 'Whatsoever things are honest'—He is honest. 'Whatsoever things are just'—He is called the Just One. 'Pure'—the only pure individual who ever walked this earth was the Lord Jesus... He was *lovely* which means 'gracious.' *Virtue* has to do with strength and courage. He was the One of courage... He took upon Himself our humanity. 'If... any praise'—He is the One you can praise and worship today."

Refocusing your mind on the things that describe God helps us to understand Him better and to know that He is the only one who can do something about anything and everything you may be facing.

Question 4:

Philippians 2:3-7 – It is easy to get so wrapped up in our own life and our own problems that we ignore the needs of those around us. These verses not only remind us to look out for those around us, but to do “**nothing** from selfish ambition” (emphasis mine). How often do we do nothing out of selfishness?

James 1:19-27 – Our attitudes and responses are often one area that we keep from the Spirit. We make excuses, saying that our anger is justified. But according to these verses, if we can’t keep our responses/words in check (bridled), then our religion is “worthless” (v. 26).

Psalms 37:1-9 – It is easy to look at those in the World who have something we want, and rather than waiting on the Lord’s timing, we imitate the World’s ways in order to obtain it.

Question 5:

In *Pastor Dave’s Sermon 11/21/21 @ Fairhaven: Unwinding Anxiety “The Peace of God”* ~*Philippians 4:4-9*, Pastor Dave teaches us the recipe or pattern we need to apply for unwinding anxiety:

“So...

Think it.

Say it.

Confess it.

Until you trust it.

And the peace of God will be with you!”

Further references for the above, from *Bible footnote on page 2554-2555, Zondervan NIV Life Application Study Bible, Philippians 4:4-9*:

“Think it.”

“4:4-5 Ultimate joy comes from Christ dwelling within us. Christ is near [literally and figuratively]... We are to be gentle (reasonable, fair-minded, and charitable) to those outside the church, and not just fellow believers. This means we are not to seek revenge against those who treat us unfairly, nor are we to be overly vocal about our personal rights.”

“Say it.”

“4:6 Imagine never being ‘anxious about anything’! It seems like an impossibility—we all have worries on the job, in our homes, at school. But Paul’s advice is to turn our worries into prayers.

“Confess it.”

“4:6 Do you want to worry less? Then pray more! Whenever you start to worry, stop and pray.”

“Until you trust it.”

“4:7 God’s peace is different than the world’s peace (see John 14:27). True peace is not found in positive thinking, in absence of conflict, or in good feelings. It comes from knowing that God is in control. Our citizenship in Christ’s kingdom is sure, our destiny is set, and we can have victory over sin. Let God’s peace guard your heart against anxiety.

And the peace of God will be with you!” “4:8 What we put into our minds determines what comes out in our words and actions. Paul tells us to program our minds with thoughts that are true, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent, and praiseworthy. Do you have problems with impure thoughts

and daydreams? Examine what you are putting into your mind through television, books, conversations, movies, and magazines. Replace harmful input with wholesome material.”

“4:9 It’s not enough to hear or read the Word of God, or even to know it well. We must also put it into practice. How easy it is to listen to a sermon and forget what the preacher said. How easy it is to read the Bible and not think how to live differently. How easy it is to debate what a passage means and not live out that meaning. Exposure to God’s word is not enough. It must lead to obedience.”