

How to Handle Anxiety

The Prescription for Peace (Philippians 4:4-7)

📖 Philippians 4:4-7 Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice! (5) Let your gentleness be known to all men. The Lord is at hand. (6) Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; (7) and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

I. Our CONTENTMENT – “Rejoice in the Lord” (4:4)

1. The **COMMAND** (an appeal to our will) to Rejoice (4:6a) – “Rejoice”

📖 Isaiah 61:10 I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, My soul shall be joyful in my God; For He has clothed me with the garments of salvation, He has covered me with the robe of righteousness, As a bridegroom decks himself with ornaments, And as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.

📖 Psalms 27:1 The LORD is my light and my salvation; Whom shall I fear? The LORD is the strength of my life; Of whom shall I be afraid?

📖 Psalms 27:4 One thing I have desired of the LORD, That will I seek: That I may dwell in the house of the LORD All the days of my life, To behold the beauty of the LORD, And to inquire in His temple.

📖 Psalms 32:7 You are my hiding place; You shall preserve me from trouble; You shall surround me with songs of deliverance. Selah

📖 Psalms 33:1 Rejoice in the LORD, O you righteous! For praise from the upright is beautiful.

2. The **SOURCE** of Joy (4:6b) – “...in the Lord”

3. The **TIME** of Joy (4:6c) – “...always”

4. The **REMINDER** (4:6d) – “Again, I say rejoice”

II. Our CONDUCT – “Let your gentleness be known to all men. The Lord is at hand” (4:5)

III. Our COMMUNICATION – “Let your requests be made known to Him” (4:5)

1. The **Prohibition** (4:6a) – “Be anxious for nothing”

🕯️ **Anxious** (merimnao/3309): to give one’s thoughts to a matter, to be concerned. This word is comes from the root word *merizo* – to divide or pull in different directions, to distract. Our hopes often pull in one direction, while our fears pull us in the opposite direction *.

See 1 Pet 5: 6-7; Matt. 6:25-34; Luke 10:38-42

Burdens are not accidents but appointments. The burdens you have in your life today are what God has ordained for you--unless they are the result of your own rebellious sin against Him. Burdens help us grow; they help us exercise the muscles of our faith. They teach us how to trust God and live a day at a time.
Warren Wiersbe

2. The **Precept** (4:b) – “let your requests be made known to God”

a.) The **Contrast and Scope of Prayer** – “but in everything”

The negative command prohibiting worry is to be replaced with the positive precept – “in everything...let your requests be made known unto God. When we worry, we talk to ourselves. When we pray, we talk to God.

🕯️ **But:** a conjunction which is setting forth a strong contrast.

🕯️ **Everything:** everything without exception. This word is emphatic as it comes before the four words for prayer. We are to communicate everything to Him, holding back nothing from our heavenly Father.

In strong contrast to worry, the believer is commanded to bring every concern without exception to God.

b.) The **Concept of Prayer**

Paul lays down the concepts of prayer which are the antidote for anxiety.

The Prayer

- 🕯 **Prayer** (proseuche/4335): is the more general word for our communication with God. The prefix *pros* conveys the sense of being immediately before (facing) Him and expresses the idea of adoration, devotion and worship. Wuest aptly translates this portion – “*by prayer whose essence is that of worship and devotion.*”

The Petitions

- 🕯 **Supplication**: a desperate call or entreaty for help arising from a need. Webster comments that to supplicate means to make a humble and earnest request.
- 🕯 **Request**: – to ask, it refers to specific petitions addressed to God. Vincent states that requests are the specific details regarding the supplication.

The Praise

- 🕯 **Thanksgiving**: the expression of thanks or gratitude for favor and mercy shown. On the one hand, thanksgiving may teach us that when we approach God, however stressful our circumstance, we should not be pessimistic or doubtful (cf. James 1:5-6), but rather full of hope and gratitude as we reflect on His character. On the other hand, when we approach God in regard to a genuine need, we should remember to express our deep gratitude for His past dealings with us. Regardless, thanksgiving implies that one is in perfect submission to the will of God. This attitude of thanksgiving only becomes a reality in our life when we realize that God is the one Who is ultimately in control (Rom 8:26-30).

We are to lay our concerns into the presence of God. Vine aptly states that “*Though God knows all our needs before we ask Him, He delights to have that expression of our confidence in Him which intelligently utters our needs in detail in communion with Him.*”

3. The Promise (4:7) – “and the peace of God”

- 🕯 **Peace**: – to bind or join together what has been broken or divided – thus to be made whole; to be in a harmonious state.

a.) The Source of Peace – “of God”

The peace **of** God is not the same as the peace **with** God. Every believer comes into an eternal peace **with** God at the moment he believes the gospel, but not every believer possesses the peace of God, which is a fruit of confidently trusting Him through prayer. (See Scofield Bible Notes at Matt. 10:34 for a further discourse on peace)

The peace **of** God is that sense of rest and contentment that comes about because a harmonized relationship has been developed with Him through trust in His divine provisions. This peace is not the absence of problems but is a result of reflecting on His presence and sufficiency in the midst of problems. The peace of God is only realized by the believer who has confidently committed all his needs to His trustworthy and adequate resources.

b.) The Nature of Peace – “which surpasses all understanding”

- 🕯 **Surpasses** (huperecho/5242): a compound word derived from *huper* – above or over; and *echo* – to have, thus this word literally means to hold above and, in the context, means to transcend the reach of man’s ability to comprehend. This word describes that which is superior or of surpassing and exceptional value.

c.) The Protection of Peace – “will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus”

- 🕯 **Will Guard**: a military term which means “to garrison, to guard, to keep, to provide security.” It is used in the future tense which makes this verb a declaration of what will result when the preceding precepts (4:6) are put into practice.

“Notice that we entered this passage in anxiety, with worry, and we came out of the passage with peace. Between the two was prayer. Have things changed? Not really. The storm may still be raging, the waves still rolling high, the thunder still resounding. Although the storm has not abated, something has happened in the individual. Something has happened to the human soul and the human mind. In our anxiety we want God to change everything around us. “Give us this.” “Don’t let this happen.” “Open up this door.” We should be praying, “Oh, God, change me.” Prayer is the secret of power. We enter with worry; we can come out in peace. Joy is the source of power; prayer is the secret of power.”
(J Vernon McGee – Thru the Bible Commentary)

- * This does not deny the possibility of a physiological cause of anxiety. Trusting the Lord does not take away the need for physical treatments, such as medication, if it is deemed necessary by a medical doctor.