

DON'T LET ANXIETY ROB YOU OF YOUR PEACE

Dr. Ché Ahn

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

INTRO: As we enter into Thanksgiving season and then Christmas, this can be a wonderful and joyful season, but it can also be the most anxious and stressful time of the year. We are worried about finances, family relationships, and all the shopping and traffic we have to navigate through to get to the end of the year. There seems to be a million and one things that we have to get done. 64% of Americans say that their anxiety goes up during this season. There is a medical terminology for this, Seasonal Affective Disorder. SAD. Part of the reason why this is so is due to the Daylight Savings time change. The days get shorter and people feel gloomier. 70% of all Americans will travel from the Thanksgiving to New Year time frame at least one time. Navigating through the airports or traffic is extremely stressful, especially if you have lost baggage or canceled flights. Then, you have the worst weather with cold and snowstorms throughout the country. No pun intended, but you have the “perfect storm” during the holiday season with all these factors converging together.

Peace is our inheritance with God. We have “Peace with God” (Romans 5:1). And peace through the Holy Spirit dwelling within us. Galatians 5:22 says, “The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy and peace.” The Kingdom of God is righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit (Romans 14:17). But, Satan who is a thief will try to rob you of your peace. He will use anxiety to do so.

I was talking to Bill Johnson at the Revival Alliance retreat this past August. I asked Bill, how he was able to manage everything that he does. He answered by saying, “I don’t let anyone, or anything rob me of my peace.” That is the title of my message. DON'T LET ANXIETY ROB YOU OF YOUR PEACE.

Anxiety is nothing new. In the Old Testament, you see how the Jewish people were constantly dealing with the problem of anxiety. They lived in an agrarian society so that issue with weather, with their livestock, and health.

Here is what Solomon had to say about anxiety.

Proverbs 12:25 “Anxiety in a man’s heart weighs it down, but a good word makes it glad.” I want to share a good word that will help you overcome anxiety.



It is a word found in one of my favorite books in the New Testament and one of my favorite verses, Philippians 4:6-7. I know you know these verses. Many of you have these verses memorized. But, I want to share a good word with you from our text.

I want to divide this message into three parts. I want to look at the problem of Anxiety. Then look at the Biblical Prescription that is how to deal with anxiety, and then finally the Biblical promise of peace.

I. THE PROBLEM: ANXIETY

A. Philippians 4:6 “Do not be anxious about anything...”

B. The problem with anxiety

1. We live in a very anxious age. What are you worried about?
2. Many people worry about finances, relationships, future, job, school, kids, their weight.
3. According to data from the National Institute of Mental Health, anxiety is the most common health issue. Some 38 percent of girls ages 13 through 17, and 26 percent of boys, have an anxiety disorder. On college campuses, anxiety is running well ahead of depression as the most common mental health concern, according to a 2016 national study of more than 150,000 students by the Center for Collegiate Mental Health at Pennsylvania State University. Meanwhile, the number of web searches involving the term has nearly doubled over the last five years, according to Google Trends. *Source: Alex Williams, “Prozac Nation Is Now the United States of Xanax,” New York Times (6-10-17)*
4. 2018 Boston University published and confirmed that Anxiety is the number one disorder in America and has surpassed depression as the number one mental health issue.
5. Among nations, United States is number one in anxiety disorder. According to one study, anxiety has jumped 1200% in the last decade.
6. In its annual survey of students, the American College Health Association found a significant increase—to 62 percent in 2016 from 50 percent in 2011—of undergraduates reporting "overwhelming anxiety" in the previous year. Surveys that look at symptoms related to anxiety are also telling. In 1985, the Higher Education Research Institute at U.C.L.A. began asking incoming college freshmen if they "felt overwhelmed by all I had to do" during the previous year. In 1985, 18 percent said they did. By 2010, that number had increased to 29 percent.



Last year, it surged to 41 percent. For many of these young people, the biggest single stressor is that they "never get to the point where they can say, 'I've done enough, and now I can stop,'" [one expert] says. "There's always one more activity, one more A.P. class, one more thing to do in order to get into a top college. Kids have a sense that they're not measuring up. The pressure is relentless and getting worse."

B. What are people worried about? Gallup says the top five:

1. Personal Income. I don't have enough to support my family. I don't have enough to retire. The real estate market is going down because people are fearful of recession.
2. Social Security System. Will there be enough money when I retire?
3. Terrorist attacks and mass shootings. We have a war against terrorism since 9-11 or mass shootings like the sniper shooting in Las Vegas a few years ago.
4. Health Issues. People are worried about getting cancer or other health related issues.
5. Race issues.
6. One said, "I'm very concerned about the stock market." The other said, "I'm not." "Why?" "Because I have hired a professional worrier." "What's that?" "He does all my worrying for me." "How much do you pay him?" "\$100,000 per year." "How can you afford to pay him?" "I can't, but that's his worry."
7. But here is my concern about worry. The greatest problem with worry is that you become preoccupied with your problems and become self-absorbed and have a hard time loving others. The Catholic author, John Powell, had this fascinating statement that's stayed with me. He said, "It's very hard to love others when you have a toothache." When you have a toothache, you aren't thinking about anybody else. You're totally absorbed with that side of your face that's causing you agony.
8. Something happens when you're preoccupied with what you need and want. You stop thinking about other people. You're just focusing on your wants and your needs. You don't think about God. You don't think about others. You just think about what it is that you want, and you need.

C. THE DEFINITION OF ANXIETY

1. *Merimnao comes from two words merim-divided naos- mind*
2. This word appears 19 times in the NT
3. This word comes from two words. *Merizo* - to tear, separate or divide. Naos means the mind. You put these two words together and it means to



divide or the tearing of the mind. Anxiety is when your mind is divided with legitimate thoughts and destructive thoughts. Yes, you do have to think about the Christmas shopping list, those are legitimate thoughts. But, you don't have to worry and be anxious about these thoughts. Are they going to like the gift I give them this year? Will they think I am being too cheap with this gift? Etc. Anxiety tears your mind and takes you into two different directions.

4. The old English word for “worry” literally means to strangle or choke.

II. THE PRESCRIPTION- Philippians 4:6 “Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.”

A. GOD COMMANDS US NOT TO WORRY!

1. Jesus said, “Do not worry!” Matthew 6:25

2. Paul is quoting Jesus. This verse is in the imperative command.

3. Anxiety is about control. Worry is the attempt to control the uncontrollable. Who is in control, God or you?

4. Give God total control over your life and your thought life. It is the battle for the mind. Take your thoughts captive the Bible says.

5. God says in the imperative command, do not worry!

6. Jesus says the same thing, “Do not be worried by your life, as to what you are going to eat and what you are going to wear.” Matthew 6:25

7. Make a choice not to be anxious. Philippians 4:6 “Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.”

8. 1 Peter 5:7 “Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.”

9. Have faith in Jesus. John 14:1 “Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me.”

10. Most of our anxieties are unfounded. Research has shown that 40% of our anxiety is over the future (and most of the things we worry about never happen); 30% of our worry is concerning the past, which we can never change; 12% is needless worry about our health; 10% are petty worries (not worth fretting about); and 8% are legitimate concerns.

Worry can't change the past and can't change the future. It just messes up today.

11. Two rules for anxiety a.) Don't sweat the small stuff. b.) It's all small stuff.



B. WORSHIP

1. The Greek word is *proseuche* or worship. Worship gets us into the presence of God
2. Jesus taught us how to pray. “Our Father who is in heaven, Holy is your name.” Matthew 6:9
3. One of the ways to begin to worship is by beginning with giving thanks.
4. **Psalm 100:4 “Enter His gates with thanksgiving *And* His courts with praise. Give thanks to Him, bless His name.”**
5. Thank God for the many blessings in your life.
6. Thank God for specific answers to past prayer requests.
7. When you worship, you come into the supernatural presence of God. That is where His peace is manifested. Romans 14:17

C. PETITION

1. Petition is the Greek word *deesis* request. Usually implying emotional cry. James 5:16 “The fervent prayer (*deesis*) of a righteous man avails much.”
2. Whatever you’re anxious about, make it into a petition. Take your anxiety and turn it into a petition; make a request for your wants and your needs. Bring them to God. When you do that your anxiety will dissipate. God's peace will be like a good governor who comes into your heart and takes control and banishes all the anxiety, and stops the crime wave of anxiety. Then you can be focused on the things that really matter. Let your mind focus on what's really important.
3. You have a responsibility to learn petition. Ask for blessings—not so that you can turn God into your genie, your personal butler, or your personal assistant, and not so God can serve you. But, so that you can have your wants and needs taken care of and can get on with serving others, seeking first God's kingdom, God's justice, and God's dream for the world as it should be.
4. Bruce Wilkinson acknowledges this in his book, *Prayer of Jabez*, when he talks about the phrase “enlarge my territory.” He uses that to say, “God, enlarge my influence for you in this world.” That's a beautiful prayer to say, “Father, one of the blessings I want most from you is that I can have an influence for you. In my family, in my job, in my neighborhood, in my social settings I can be an influence for you. Let that increase, Lord. I can help other people get closer to you. I can help other people learn more about you. I can help other people come into a relationship with you and live more the way you want them to live.”



D. GIVE THANKS THROUGHOUT YOUR TIME OF PRAYER

- 1. Colossians 4:2-3 “Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful.**
- 2. 1 Timothy 2:1 “I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone.”**
- 3. Derek Prince (picture please) said, “Thanking God is the most basic expression of our faith in him.”**
- 4. “Prayer becomes powerful when you pray with thanksgiving.” Ché Ahn**
- 5. Some of the greatest miracles took place in the context of thanksgiving.**
- 6. The feeding of the multitudes. Jesus looked up into heaven and gave thanks for what God was about to do.**
- 7. Before raising Lazarus from the dead, Jesus prayed and gave thanks. He said, “Father, I thank you that you have heard me.” Then He raised his voice and said, “Lazarus, come out!”**
- 8. Thanksgiving is the language of faith. Thanksgiving helps me to get my eyes off the problem and my eyes on Jesus.**
- 9. Ask with thanksgiving--“I ask you and thank you for healing me.” “I ask for a financial breakthrough and I thank you in advance.”**
- 10. Contend with thanksgiving--We prayed through the healing of my TMJ and the purchase of Ambassador Auditorium with much thanksgiving.**
- 11. Give thanks when the prayer is answered--Jesus healed 10 lepers, but only one came back to give thanks.**

III. THE PROMISE

- A. PHILIPPIANS 4:7 “AND THE PEACE OF GOD, WHICH TRANSCENDS ALL UNDERSTANDING, WILL GUARD YOUR HEARTS AND YOUR MINDS IN CHRIST JESUS.”**

CONCLUSION: So much power is released when we give thanks. By giving thanks, we overcome anxiety, discouragement, and have our prayers answered and enjoy the peace that passes all comprehension and understanding!

