

So today we will be diving into Philippians Chapter 4: Starting in Verse 4.

4 Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! 5 Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. 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.

8 Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things. 9 Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.

So there's kind of a lot to unpack in these verses so let's just start at the beginning. Vs 4. **“Rejoice in the lord always, again I will say, rejoice.”** This book and these verses are written by the apostle Paul. He wrote this book to the church of Philippi while he was under house arrest. So this man, who had every right to have anxious thoughts, is reminding us to rejoice, always. He's not saying it's a situational thing, or under the right circumstances when our days are going well we will rejoice, but he says Always.

Vs. 5 Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. So I'm going to be frank with you guys, I struggle with this one" How I read this verse is that we are to exude or portray this peace, this overwhelming peace, even in stressful situations. Anyone know someone like that? Like there's so much going on, whether it's problems in the family, a stressful moment at work, financial burdens, etc. And there's always that one person that you feel like no matter the situation, they never seem to be stressed? Even if it's one thing right after the other. Or at least they don't show stress on the outside. I struggle with this one because while most of the time I don't show that I am stressed on the outside, I am super stressed out internally. Like my mind wanders to places that people would laugh at. For example,

This sermon: Dave had asked me to give this message, Immediately I had no desire to because I knew that would mean getting up in front of all you fine people, and public speaking still stresses me out, gives me anxiety, and causes so much worry. Maybe I am just not in the right profession. And when I begin to worry, my mind flies. Like I jumped to "What If I pass out" "what if I vomit?" So I am so sorry for those of you in the front rows. I hope you aren't wearing your favorite shirt.

But it goes from "What if I say something super embarrassing, then I won't be able to speak again, what if it's really bad and I lose my job? If I lose my job, I'll have to move back with my parents, If I move back with my parents, what will other people think of me? What would my next job be? What If I have to become a street performer? I don't know how to play the saxophone, How much even are they?"

So just that simple question Dave asked me of “Hey, can you speak the Sunday after Thanksgiving? Has turned into, now I have to learn how to play the saxophone. But on the outside, I said to Dave confidently, “Yeah! I got you!!”

But when I started thinking about preaching, I called a few people to get advice. My parents, my old youth minister, a few friends. Most of them were super excited for me and they ALL said “I can’t wait to watch the live stream and see it” And I was like “No, don’t worry about that” “You don’t wanna see me” “It’s all good” But as I started to write this lesson I realized how much my worry was taking over my ability to not only hear God, or see God, but trust in Him.

Continuing in Vs 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.

This is a reminder that we find our peace in the love of God. **A lot of times we vent to** someone about all of our stresses and sometimes we will get the people who will say,

“Well have you prayed about it?” Most of the time, we wanna hit them. We think to ourselves, that’s not what we want to hear. I wanna know how to fix my problems. Like if you are stressed about finances, we tend to not wanna hear “just pray about it”, we wanna here “So here’s how to solve all your financial burdens”. Right?

We have this unspoken expectation that Prayer won’t always solve our problems, and that’s true if we think of it with the mindset that we are in control. Prayer will not always get rid of the problems in life that we face. But the problems we face each day are not our problems. It’s when we allow anxiety in and how we deal with worry that is the problem. Because if you aren’t seeking refuge in the Lord, you gotta find “peace” in another way. Like: Oh today was just such a long day, I really need a drink.

Or, Social Media, like Oh man, Christmas is coming up and I'm anxious about seeing family and friends because I want them to feel like I am successful and liked. So let me make up a few stories about how my life has been to impress people, let me post a bunch of stuff on Facebook or instagram or snapchat to show that I am important and I am doing well in life. Not saying that we can’t post stuff on social media and be proud of it, but it’s when pressing that “post” button gives us this relief of “finally, now people will see how I am going in life” that’s where the issue lies.

Or when our schedules become too hectic and busy, we start to either shut down, or let people down because the anxiety of being busy sometimes is too overwhelming to do on your own. And then we get more stressed because we are letting people down.

To those who say that “Prayer” doesn’t help, and that refuge in Christ isn’t enough. I just wanna ask you, How’s your method going? That isn’t meant to be a slant or a bash towards anyone because I’ve been there! Seeking love and peace from things I shouldn’t have. But the God of peace is waiting, the God of peace is listening.

I read this book by Henri Houwen. In this book, he referenced how God is a nurturer as well as a provider. And in the book he talks about how God is strong enough to hold us up and hold our problems up. And He is gentle enough and loving enough to listen. Are we allowing God to hold us up? Are we allowing him to listen?

Lastly, In Vrse 8 **8 Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.**

Paul writes in Verse 8, starting with “finally”, almost as an **invitation or as an application** of overcoming overwhelming stress, that we need to focus our minds and thoughts on Him.

He says **whatever is true:** Anxiety comes from false ideas, just as I was thinking about how I thought I would start playing the saxophone after doing this lesson, our thoughts built from anxiety are nothing but chaotic ideas and lies. Paul reminds us that we need to focus on what is true, that Jesus is alive and that he has a plan as well as love for us. **So often do we listen to our worries and anxiety before we give the God of the Universe a chance to speak.**

He says **whatever is Noble**: Noble is defined as high moral principles, excellent or superior quality. Basically he is referring to how our minds need to be transcended on things above. Not focused on our worldly problems, but in God's wisdom, God's excellence.

Whatever is right: Paul's talking about how sometimes our thoughts or worries are focused on us and what we want out of it. He reminds us that we need to focus on things that are fair to us, what we need.

Whatever is pure: This has to do with proper motives, being free from sin, and centered on God. Our focus should be on things that are "of" God.

Whatever is lovely: These are the thoughts I try to stay on, things that give us those warm feelings, whether it's a good memory, family, friends, thoughts that remind us of happiness and loveliness, feeling loved.

Whatever is Admirable: Things that are worthy of God's praise, things that we need to show thankfulness for.

And in verse 9, Paul wraps this thought up with, "What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me—practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you."

So I don't think Paul was bragging about how Godly he is or how awesome he is when he said "What you have learned, and received, and heard and seen in me" I think he is saying it's possible. That we need to learn from his experience in dealing with anxiousness.

Sometimes our battles may seem unable to be overcome, but that's where our thoughts are being controlled by our anxiety. Rather than fixating on our problems, let's fix our eyes on the one who calls us "His Beloved", the one who gives us true peace.

We all have problems, we all struggle, and we are all longing for rest in the arms of the creator.

God is bigger than our problems, why not focus on him?

In the Gospels, one significant story is the story of Jesus walking on water. This was just after the feeding of the 5000 and he had told some of the disciples to go head and head over the sea of Galilee. It says, just before dawn he saw them caught in a storm and went to go to them. They saw him and thought he was a Ghost. Peter challenged him and said "If it is really you, tell me to come to you Jesus says Come" It wasn't until he took his focus off of Jesus where he focused on the wind and the waves and started to sink.

1. What are some of your post Thanksgiving traditions?
2. What are your favorite leftovers? Do you eat them cold?
3. Phil.4:4-9 - when do you have the hardest time rejoicing?
4. When are the times in your life when you are most anxious? How do you battle those times?
5. Thinking about truth and things that are right help with fighting back against those thoughts that rise against you. What are some truths that help you fight against negative ideas?
6. Paul says follow me as I follow Christ. How are you able to be an example for people to follow?