



Small Group Leader Guide

Philippians 4:6-7 | What Jesus Said About...Worry

Prepare: Things to do before your small group gets together

- **Consider** the issues that give you the most anxiety, or cause you most to worry. Upon what do they tend to focus? Family? Work? Friends? Your future? Decisions to make? **Think** about what it is that causes you to worry about these matters. **Pray** that God will help you in your worries to trust God and have peace in the circumstances that trouble you. **Praise** him for His sovereignty over every detail of your life and that nothing is too difficult for Him. **Ask** God to guide you in how to respond to circumstances that tend to make you anxious, and to lead you to relate with other people in ways that glorifies Him.
- **Read** the following Scriptures: Matthew 6:25-34; Luke 12:25-26; John 14:27; 1 Cor. 7:32-34; Psalm 34:6,17; 1 Peter 3:14. **Notice** the theme on worry and God's exhortations and instructions related to it. **Invite** God to lead you in your preparation, guiding you to develop a small group experience that will speak to the needs of every person who participates. **Submit** your heart to God's conviction, that you may be exhorted to experience anew the timely activity of God's Holy Spirit in your life.
- **Preview** this material and engage with God's Spirit as He guides your study.
- **Pray** for your small group members by name, asking God to use you to be a teacher of influence for each person in your group, for the glory and cause of Jesus. **Seek** God's wisdom in leading your small group to apply God's word to their lives. **Commit** yourself to the Lord, that you would live what you teach.

To The Point – What to impart to your small group

Key Verse: "Don't worry about anything, but in everything, through prayer and petition with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God. (Philippians 4:6, ESV)"

Objectives: Through your time exploring this passage, your small group members will:

Discuss the issues that cause worry in your lives.

Explore the root of worry

Analyze God's remedy for worry and evaluate the promises of God.

Apply God's Word to your life regarding your worry, in practical terms for your daily life.

Encounter: A suggested plan for your small group experience

Ice Breaker: Worries in a Hat (or a bowl)

Prepare

Provide a square of paper for each person in the group (and writing supplies if needed).

Say

Each person writes a single word on their paper to describe a worry in their life. One word.

Direct

- After each person has written their word, collect all the papers in a hat (or bowl), and mix up the contents.
- Pass the container around the group, instructing each person to take a piece of paper and read it. If a person gets his or her own scrap, exchange it for another.

Say

Now, try to describe what you think this worry on your paper means, in your own words and understanding.

Allow participants to respond.

Ask

Why do you think we have worries that are common?

Allow participants to respond.

Say

As we continue to explore deeper in Pastor Jamie's series, "What Jesus said," we hone in on this issue of worry. As we do this, we are looking at a particular Scripture in Philippians that gives us a command for our worries, an alternative to our worries, and a promise we can expect when we follow God's way.

Open in prayer for your time together.

The Command (Philippians 4:6a)

The command is simple, "Do not be anxious about anything." What is anxiety?

Anxiety is a feeling of stress that causes you to be uneasy, frustrated, angry, or worried. It is described as an inner turmoil that results in nervous behavior. It's considered a disorder because it is an unhealthy departure from a normal state of being.

Even though our "ice breaker" addressed some of these issues, what are some specific things in your life that you worry about?

Allow the group to respond.

Why do you think we worry about these and other things?

Allow the group to respond. Help participants understand that worry is at its root a doubt in God. It can be a doubt in God's goodness, His justice, His provision, or even His love.

How can worry be a form of idolatry?

Worry can be a form of idolatry because whatever is the object of worry is the thing taking attention or worship off of God. This "thing" has become bigger than God in our minds.

Do you agree or disagree with the first statement, "The command is simple, 'Do not be anxious about anything.'" Why or why not?

Allow the group to respond. People may be inclined to agree that the command is simple in its premise, but difficult in its execution. Perhaps because there are so many things in life that we can be worried about, it is difficult to not worry about any of them.

Read the last part of verse 5. What does it tell you about why you must not worry about anything, and what difference does this detail make in your efforts to not worry?

The Lord is at hand. The command to not worry is given in the context of the promise of the nearness of God through the indwelling presence of God's Holy Spirit in the life of believers.

The Alternative (Philippians 4:6b)

What does this verse prescribe as the alternative to your worry?

The simple prescription to avoid worry is to take everything as a request to God.

By what means does this verse state your requests about everything should be made known to God? What does this mean to you?

The means for making your requests about everything is by prayer and supplications with thanksgiving. Prayer is the communication expressed by being in relationship with God, and supplication is the part of prayer where requests are made to God. The key description included in this instruction is "with thanksgiving."

How is it possible to make these prayers and requests with thanksgiving? What is the mindset that makes thanksgiving like this possible?

Allow participants to respond. Answers may include:

- *Thanksgiving requires believing the right things about God - that He is good. That He loves you. That He is at hand. That He is generous. That He is sovereign.*
- *Thanksgiving requires believing the right things about yourself - that you are God's child. That you are accepted and approved. That you don't face your situations on your own.*
- *Thanksgiving requires believing the right things about your situation - that it didn't happen on accident or by coincidence. That God intends to glorify Himself through it. That God is working all things together for His good.*

How does your circumstance look different when you face it with worry compared to facing it as God prescribes here?

Allow the group to respond. Highlight that the worry response is a faithless response, where God's prescription is only possible with faith.

The Promise (Philippians 4:7)

What is the promise of verse 7 linked with verse 6's prescription? What does it mean to you?

The promise is literally, "And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." God promises that when you pray with thanksgiving, God will provide you supernatural peace that guards your heart and

mind. When you talk with God with faith expressed as gratitude (in the truth of who He is, the truth of who you are, and the truth of your circumstances), God affirms the reality that you are at peace with Him, through Jesus - He has reconciled you to the Father, and your heart and mind are secure in Him.

What may or may not be obvious in this promise is the lack of a promise that God will give you a quick or easy resolution to the trouble that would otherwise be worrisome. How do you feel about that and why?

Allow the participants to respond.

How is peace with God a better promise than the promise to a resolution to your worrisome situations?

Peace with God gives you perspective to face your life's troubles. Peace with God also causes changes your perspective on things that may have before been worrisome no longer are. Peace with God that guards your heart and mind facilitates a state of being where you no longer conform to the world, but become transformed by a renewing of your mind.

So what does it look like in real, practical ways this next week to put this prescription in to practice and experience the promise of peace with God?

Allow participants to respond.

Jesus in Focus

Where in this study do you see Jesus: Christ-like practices, examples, principles?

Among the many acceptable answers:

- *Jesus exhorts us not to worry about anything.*
- *Jesus is the peace-bringer.*
- *Jesus pointed to the constant promise of the Holy Spirit, who by your abiding in Christ bears the fruit in you of love. Love hopes in all things, believes in all things, and expects all things. This is the opposite of worry because it is the faith-born expression of full confidence in God.*

What are some other Scriptures that come to mind or are relevant to this chapter's themes, teachings, or emphases?

Among the many acceptable possibilities:

- *Matthew 6:25-34*
- *Luke 12:25-26*
- *John 14:27*
- *1 Corinthians 7:32-34*
- *Psalm 34:6, 17*
- *Psalm 36:1*
- *1 Peter 3:4*

What is one "take-away" for you from this chapter?

Allow the group participants to respond.

Say Alfred E. Neumann said, "What, me worry?" and Bobby McFerrin encouraged, "Don't Worry, Be Happy!" And while the world suggests that apathy and feel-good optimism are aims that help avoid worry, only God's Word offers a true prescription and an iron-clad promise to overcome your troubles when they arise. It never suggests you won't face tough times, or won't have to "ride them out," in an extended perseverance. God promises nothing less than Himself for you, giving you His best to guide you through your worries to provide you with the means to be thankful even in and throughout your difficulties.

Let's close in prayer:

Invite the group to pray for one another. Pray over any needs or issues that were shared in your time together. Pray over the content discussed in your small group, highlighting the aspects that God's Spirit revealed to your group as important. Confirm your plans for your next gathering!