

Abide in Me

John 15:4
*Bible studies for disciples
who make disciples*



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The Week of January 14, 2024

A Strategy for Sanity
Rejoice Always, Worry Never
Philippians 4:4-7

In 1947 W.H. Auden published the last of his long poems called *The Age of Anxiety*, for which he won the Pulitzer Prize the following year. In the poem, he explored the spiritual emptiness, loneliness, and anxiety-ridden lives of four people in New York City. In the poem he famously stated, "Now is the age of anxiety." Many years later, it does not seem like our world has become any less anxious.

In Philippians 4 the Apostle Paul penned four verses that challenge and encourage Christians, then as now, who struggle with internal and external anxieties. Summarizing his point in a few words, he tells us to rejoice always and to never worry. This idea may seem to have come from someone detached from reality until we realize that Paul wrote these words while he was in prison awaiting trial. In this passage, God's Word reveals the secret to replacing anxiety with joy.

OBSERVATION (*What does the passage say?*)

Before meeting with your Growth Group, read through the passage at least twice and perform the following prompts:

- Place a Δ over each reference to God the Father.
- Place a \dagger over each reference to God the Son.
- Underline each command.
- Double underline the word *again*.
- Circle all the *universal* words that you find in this passage.
- Place a box around the three occurrences of the preposition *in*.
- Above verse 4 write, *Paul is in prison*.
- Above the word reasonableness write *gentleness*.
- Place a parenthesis around the peace of God. Draw a line from this phrase to beneath the passage and write: *Only occurrence in the NT*.
- Draw a line that connects the word *guard* (v. 7) to the phrase you wrote above verse 4.

⁴ Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice. ⁵ Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; ⁶ do not be anxious about anything, 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 your minds in Christ Jesus.

Icebreaker: Do you think the world is becoming more or less anxious? Why do you think this is happening?

INTERPRETATION (*What does the passage mean?*)

1. Review the passage and identify its key words.
2. Paul instructs the Philippians to rejoice in the Lord always. The key to defiant joy is wrapped up in the phrase, *in the Lord*. What is this verse calling us to focus on?
3. What is the connection between the pressures we face and the command to be reasonable to everyone in verse 5?
4. What does Paul instruct the Philippians do on a regular basis? How does this help?
5. Define and discuss the *peace of God*.
6. What is the essence of what Paul means by *your hearts and your minds* in verse 7?

APPLICATION (*How does the passage apply to our lives?*)

1. How can your Growth Group become a safe space to be able to talk about the things that make you anxious and worried?

2. When you worry, what do you tend to worry about?

3. What types of things, whether listening to the news or scrolling on your phone, increase your anxiety? What helps to reduce anxiety?

4. How can meditating daily on who God is help us replace anxiety with joy?

5. Read 1 Peter 5:7. Do you really believe that God is interested in everything that you care about? If so, what does He want you to do with your concerns?

6. What is it about prayer that makes it an effective antidote to anxiety?

