

Read: Philippians 4:4-7

Our King can turn worry to joy

Philippians 4:4-7

Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, 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.

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

A preacher came to a new church. Everyone liked his first sermon. He preached it again the second Sunday. And the next Sunday! An elder asked him why he kept preaching the same sermon. He replied, "None of you were doing what I said the first time, so I needed to tell you again!!"

Paul repeats himself in our reading: Rejoice! Rejoice! But it's not to get us to do more. He wants us to worry less. Maybe you think, "Yeah, that's easy for you to say, Paul! If you lived my life, you'd worry a lot, too!" But did you know Paul was in prison when he wrote this? Paul had reasons to worry.

Here's a lie that most of us believe: We can't do anything to stop worrying. It's just the way we feel. But Paul tells us there's a lot we can do to change how we feel.

First, you can be gentle to others. You have control over your words and actions. If you treat people with kindness, it will help calm your own heart.

Second, remember that the Lord is near. Paul didn't mean that Jesus was close to us (even though that's true!). He meant that Jesus was coming back soon. Whatever problem you have, you won't face it forever and you'll never face it alone.

Third, pray. Cast your cares on the Lord. He's listening, and he can help.

Fourth, give thanks. When you take time to thank God as you bring him your prayers, you'll find reminders that he really is in control and is giving you so many blessings.

Those are things you can do that will help with your worrying, but maybe you noticed something. As you do these things, God is really the one doing the important work. He'll give you peace that you can't even understand. Your King Jesus will be turning your worry into joy.

The questions below are to help families discuss this devotion. The questions are divided by age group as suggestions, but anyone could reflect on any of the questions as they desire.

Questions for the Younger Children

- Right after Paul tells us to rejoice, what does he tell us to do?
- Why does Paul say we can always rejoice?

Questions for Elementary Age Children

- Describe something in your life that makes you feel anxious.
- If there's something you're worried about, what can you do?

Questions for Middle School and Above

- Instead of worrying, Paul tells us to give thanks to God. How does giving thanks to God actually help stop us from worrying?
- What do you think it means that God's peace "guards our minds"?

Closing Prayer:

Dear Jesus, sometimes I think I worry because I can't control the things in my life. But the real reason I worry is because I forget that you're the one controlling them all in love for me. As I show your love to others and remember your love for me, as I bring you my fears and give you thanks for your kindness, bless me with peace, even when I don't understand how it will all work out. Amen.