

Choosing Peace over Worry
"Becoming a Peacemaker"
Philippians 4:1-9

Introduction:

1. The dictionary defines "worry" as "mental distress or agitation resulting from concern usually for something impending or anticipated."
2. Worry is a universal problem. It is not confined to a segmented group of people.
 - **Illustration:** poor people think that rich people don't have a care in the world, but the opposite is true. Poor people are worrying about how to get money and rich people are worrying about how to hold on to it. The more you have, the more you have to worry about.
3. Does the Bible talk about worry? Is worry something normal that we simply have to live with and bear our entire life? The answer is "no." The person who knows Jesus Christ as Savior and believes God's Word does not have to live in bondage to worry, but rather can experience peace.
4. This is the theme of the text before us. Verse 6 says, *"Be careful for nothing."*
 - The word "careful" means "anxious, full of anxiety." So Paul is saying "Don't be worried, afraid, or anxious."
 - The word "anxious" means "to be distracted, to have a divided mind."
5. Worry will so consume your thought life that you cannot stay focused on anything because you are being distracted by what you are worried about.
6. Worry adversely affects our lives. Worry can damage our health, consume our thoughts, disrupt our productivity, negatively affect the way we treat people, and weaken our faith.
 - The word "worry" comes from an old Anglo-Saxon word meaning "to choke, to strangle." This is exactly what worry will do to you in your life.
7. But what is the alternative to worry? Look again at verse six, but let's read on this time to verse seven. The alternative is **peace**.
 - Peace is defined as "freedom from agitation or disturbance by passions such as fear, terror, anger, anxiety; quietness of mind, tranquility, calmness."
8. Here in Philippians 4, God is going to show us very clearly how we can choose peace over worry. Notice I use the word "**choose**." Peace in our lives doesn't just happen. Peace doesn't seek **us** out. We must **seek** peace and **choose** peace as we implement into our lives the Bible principles that we will be discovering in this passage.
9. How can we choose peace over worry?

First, by becoming a peacemaker. vs. 1-3

1. Read vs. 1-2. You can tell how much Paul loved these people as you read vs. 1, yet his heart was much burdened. Why is this?
2. There were two ladies in the church who were obviously at odds with one another. We have no idea what these ladies were disputing about, but whatever it was, it was bringing division into the church and causing unrest.
 - Paul encourages them to get things right with each other.

3. Paul then appeals to the rest of the church to be peacemakers and help these women settle their dispute (vs. 3). Paul reminds them that we are fellow-laborers and our names are all written in the Book of Life in heaven. We are part of the same spiritual family!
4. Mark it down, the peace of verse 7 will escape us as long as we hold on to bitterness and unforgiveness and manifest a divisive spirit.
5. Do you know what bitterness is? It is a **past grudge** (some people can hold grudges for years), which leads to a **present resentment** (backpack - they picked up the grudge, threw it on their shoulders and carried it ever since), and a **refusal to forgive** (they won't drop the backpack).
6. We protest and say, "Why should I forgive them and let them off the hook?" You let them off **your** hook, but they are never off of God's hook until they deal with Him.
 - If you don't let them off of **your** hook, do you know what happens? You are hooked to the past and this just means continued pain, turmoil, and unrest for you.
 - **Illustration:** tie myself to somebody else with a rope. If I refuse to forgive, I'm hooked to the past and can never get away from it. Everywhere I go, there he is!
 - Forgiveness unhooks me. This is why **Ephesians 4:31-32** is in God's Word. It is for **our** good.
7. Jesus said in **Matthew 5:9**, "*Blessed are the peacemakers...*" Until you decide to get rid of the bitterness and exercise forgiveness, you are not a candidate for peace, but rather anxiety, anger, resentment, worry, distress, and frustration.
 - It will plague you and rob you of your peace. There is true freedom in forgiveness.
8. You may be asking, "But where is the justice? They don't deserve my forgiveness." Let me ask you something. Have you ever needed God's forgiveness? Why would God forgive you? Was it because you deserved it or earned the right to His forgiveness?
9. It was because of the cross of Jesus Christ that God could forgive you, and it is because of the cross that you can forgive others. The cross makes forgiveness legally and morally right.
10. Do you want to choose peace over worry, anxiety, and stress? Make a list of those who have offended you, face the cross (in a manner of speaking), and simply say, "God, since you have forgiven me, I too can forgive them based on the cross work of Jesus Christ."

If you do this, you will be on the path to choosing peace over worry.