



# ANTIDOTE TO FEAR AND ANXIETY\*

## INTRO

*Does life seem overwhelming at times? Do you struggle with sleepless nights? Are the "what if" thoughts invading your mind and robbing you of peace? Are you looking for relief from the fear and anxiety that is filling your life and silencing your dreams of a better tomorrow?*

**While it's impossible to be fearless, it's possible to fear less.**

*Today, let's find out together how we can do that!*

## WARM-UP

Choose one or two questions:

- In which area(s) of your life would you like to fear less?
- Has fear ever led you to do something you later regretted? Briefly explain.
- People who love God and follow Him also face hardships in life. Does this come as a surprise to you? Have you ever expected special treatment from God? If so, how did it affect your relationship with him when you experienced hard times?

## WORD

Read the following text, Philippians 4:6–9 (NIV), aloud as a group:

(If you want, let each group member read it again silently, circling or underlining words that stand out.)

Background information:

Philippians is a New Testament letter written by Paul the Apostle (approx. mid 50s to early 60s AD) to the early Christians in Philippi ( an important Greek city at that time).

*<sup>6</sup>Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. <sup>7</sup>And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. <sup>8</sup>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. <sup>9</sup>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.*

## Questions:

What was one thing that stood out to you from this text?

Why do these words stand out to you, and - if you are a Christian - what fresh insight do they bring?

Now, let's discover together what Paul's antidote to anxiety is, according to Philippians. But first let's define anxiety more:

The word anxious or anxiety in this text actually comes from a Latin root that means "to choke" or "to squeeze." Its strong grip interrupts your sleep, chokes your energy, and harms your overall well-being.

But anxiety is not so much the onslaught of a storm as the continual threat that one is coming. It's a big heap of "what ifs." (*E.g., What if I don't get this job? What if he doesn't like me? What if I never get married? What if I will never have a child? What if I am pregnant? What if I get hurt again?*)

Anxiety is a close cousin to fear, but the two are not twins. Fear sees a threat, while anxiety imagines one.

Maybe you have been taught that the Christian life is one of peace. When we don't have peace, we assume the problem is within us, which leads us to feel guilty. But while the presence of anxiety is unavoidable, the prison of anxiety is optional.

When the Apostle Paul writes "*Do not be anxious about anything,*" he is referring to an ongoing state. In other words, Paul is saying that he doesn't want us to be stuck in the prison of perpetual anxiety.

Instead, he wants us to experience God's peace. But how can we have that peace? When we follow Paul's antidote for anxiety.

The word "antidote" by definition is: *A remedy (a treatment or plan) to counteract the effects of poison* (and many of us have been poisoned by fear and anxiety).

In **Philippians 4:6** we find Paul's antidote for anxiety. He gives us three very practical things to do:

### **1. Pray**

The first thing we need to do when anxiety attacks is pray. Prayer is simply talking to God and telling Him how we're feeling. Just be honest with Him. Prayer needs to become our first response, not our last resort.

### **2. Ask for Help**

Once we talk to God and tell Him how we're feeling, we then need to ask Him for help. Petition (or supplication) is crying out to God, "Oh, God! I'm desperate for You! I need you. Please help me with this!"

### **3. Give Thanks**

The third thing we need to do is to thank God for all of the good things He's done in our lives. When we reflect on all the ways He's helped us in the past, our perspective changes. We stop focusing on our problem and we remind ourselves that God loves us and can be trusted.

When we do these three practical things, it's amazing how quickly anxiety fades away. As Paul writes in verse 7: "And then the **peace** of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds through Christ Jesus."

## **APPLICATION**

1. Take a minute to write down three "what ifs" that are causing you anxiety—three worries that are weighing you down. Once you are finished, fold up the piece of paper and write "Philippians 4:6" on it to remind you of what you have learned today. Pray for one another in your group after this application part, but also continue to pray to God, ask Him for help, and thank Him throughout the next few days by yourself. At the end of next week, in your Life Group or alone at home, reevaluate the list of "what ifs" and see how God has brought supernatural peace to these anxious places in your heart.
2. In Philippians 4:8-9, Paul gives further instructions on how we can assure that the God of peace will be with us. In your group, talk about practical applications of these two verses. Then put them into practice this week and see what positively changes in your life.

## **PRAYER**

- Ask God to take away the anxious thoughts you each wrote down earlier and to come fill your heart with the supernatural peace he promises in Philippians 4:7.
- Ask God to help you make prayer a habit in your life - instead of a last resort.

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*\*This content is not intended to be a substitute for professional advice, diagnosis, or treatment. Always seek the advice of your mental health professional or other qualified health providers with any questions regarding your care. Remember, seeking help doesn't make you weak—it makes you wise.*