

I wonder if you can relate to this? Have a look: [Video: Worst Case Scenario!](#)

Are you a worrier? Do you find that your mind races and worries about the worst possible outcomes in life?

If you are, then you're not on your own. According to last year's survey for Laya Healthcare, anxiety is on the rise. Nearly 40% of Irish workers reported feeling anxious frequently or all of the time – mostly about things like the rising cost of living, money worries and uncertainty about the future.

And this isn't surprising. We're constantly bombarded with 24 hour news coverage about the dangers of climate change, conflicts around the world or even things like artificial intelligence. We're living in a world with so much uncertainty and insecurity.

And this even impacts young people:

- The Union of Students in Ireland reported that 40% of students are experiencing extremely severe levels of anxiety.
- And another survey reported that 60% of young people worldwide are struggling with climate anxiety.

So how can we deal with those anxious feelings? What can we do about our worries?

Well making practical changes in our lifestyles can help - thing like eating well, exercising regularly and talking about our struggles.

But that's not all. In his letter to the Philippians, Paul provided us with a much more powerful antidote to anxiety. They're well-known words, but it's worth spending time with them because they can really help us to serve in peace. **READ: TONY**

Philippians 4:6-7: ["Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, 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."](#)

### 1. **Don't Worry About Anything!**

It would've been understandable had the Christians in Philippi struggled with anxiety.

- They were suffering persecution. Earlier Paul reminded them that they'd the privilege not only to believe in Jesus, ["But also to suffer for him."](#) Philippians 1:29
- They'd also been warned about false teachers: ["Watch out for those dogs, those men who do evil."](#) Philippians 3:2.
- And in their own church, there were disagreements and division. As we saw last week Paul pleaded with Euodia and Syntyche ["To agree with each other in the Lord."](#) Philippians 4:2
- And to make all of this worse, their friend, church-founder and spiritual leader was miles away. He'd told them, ["I am in chains for Christ."](#) Philippians 1:13 and was facing possible execution.

#### a) **In Any Circumstance**

But incredibly, despite all these challenging circumstances, Paul wrote, ["Do not be anxious about anything."](#) Philippians 4:6.

No matter what is happening in our lives, what challenges we face, what difficulties we're experiencing, we don't need to allow worry take control. We don't need to accept crippling anxiety as the inevitable burden of living in this messed up, dangerous and uncertain world. We don't need to give in to it. We can overcome it.

#### b) **Still Care**

But we need to be careful what this means. This doesn't mean that we should be living a carefree life. It doesn't mean we should be totally unburdened by any concern.

Paul wasn't. He knew the burden of caring for people. He told the Corinthians, ["I face daily the pressure of my concern for all the churches."](#) 2 Corinthians 11:28

And he wrote in his letter to the Philippians about Timothy's deep concern for them. ["I have no-one else like him, who takes a genuine interest in your welfare."](#) Philippians 2:20 And the word translated interest or concerned, is basically the same word Paul used for anxious in v6.

So we're not supposed to float through life without a care in the world!

### c) Don't Condemn

But also, v6 doesn't mean we should condemn ourselves or others if anxiety is something we struggle with.

We need to be careful of the tone of this passage. I don't think for a minute that Paul is condemning his brothers and sisters in Christ here for feeling distressed, worried or anxious.

Paul is the one who taught us ["There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus."](#) Romans 8:1 Paul knew that if we put our faith in Jesus and his finished work on the cross, then God will never condemn us. He'll never hold our sins against us. And so nobody else has the right to condemn us.

### d) Be Comforted

So if this morning we're hearing Paul condemn us for struggling with anxiety, then we're hearing him wrong. This isn't a command to hit people over the head with. Paul is not trying to make us feel guilty here. Instead this is a word of encouragement.

This is what the Lord gave to Paul when he was in Corinth, just a little after his first visit to Philippi. Paul was struggling with the weight and danger of his mission and so: ["One night the Lord spoke to Paul in a vision: "Do not be afraid; keep on speaking, do not be silent. <sup>10</sup> For I am with you, and no-one is going to attack and harm you, because I have many people in this city.""](#) Acts 18:9–10

Paul didn't feel condemned by these words. He didn't conclude that he was a terrible Christian because he needed this. Instead he was encouraged and enthused by them, and overcame his fear and recommitted himself to serving the Lord.

And that's the tone of what Paul wrote to the Philippians. It was good news. It was Paul coming alongside them, putting his arm around them and quietly helping them to see that they didn't need to let anxiety overwhelm them. That there is an answer for the worries and anxieties that we struggle with.

## 2. Pray About Everything

So what is this answer? What can we do when those anxieties rise up in our hearts?

Well instead of being anxious about anything, we can pray about everything. ["But in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God."](#) Philippians 4:6

The antidote to anxiety is prayer. When we're worried, concerned, fearful or agitated we need to learn

- To pray – to turn to God.
- To petition him – to ask him for help.
- To present our requests to him – be specific in bringing to him all that we need.

Instead of us trying to carry the worries and cares about our past or future, we can surrender them all to the Lord. We can place them in his hands and leave them there.

### a) God Knows

That's because we can be sure that God knows all that we need. This was the message that God gave to Moses at a burning bush in Exodus 3. He said, ["I have indeed seen the misery of my people in Egypt. I have heard them crying out because of their slave drivers."](#) Exodus 3:7

This was amazing news for Moses. For years Israel had been suffering in slavery, oppression and cruelty. They'd been crying out to God for help, wondering if God had heard their prayers at all.

But God had seen their pain. He'd heard their cries! He knew all about their struggles and suffering.

And this is true for us too. God knows all that we are going through. He knows all that we are struggling with. He knows all that we need. Jesus said, ["So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?'"](#)<sup>32</sup> ["For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them."](#) Matthew 6:31–32

### b) God Cares

But God didn't just tell Moses that he knew what they were going through. He also said, ["And I am concerned about their suffering."](#) Exodus 3:7

I'm sure that Moses and the people of Israel must have questioned this. Suffering and struggles often makes us doubt God's love. Does he really care about us? Is he really concerned about our lives.

But God wants us to be clear about this. He deeply cares about us. He cares about our needs and desires. He cares about our worries and fears. He cares about our hopes and dreams. He cares about our joys and delights. He cares about every detail of our lives.

And he proved this once and for all by sending his Son to the cross. "God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us." Romans 5:8

Yes circumstances and struggles make us question this. But the cross of Jesus declares that God cares about us.

And so we can confidently bring our worries and concerns to him. As Peter wrote, "Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you." 1 Peter 5:7

### c) God Rescues

But God said something else to Moses that day at the burning bush. Not only that God knows and that God cares, but also that God rescues. "So I have come down to rescue them from the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land into a good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey." Exodus 3:8

Even though their circumstances were overwhelming, their problems were huge, their struggles were intense – he was coming to transform their lives, to bring them into a new life, life to the full.

And this is why we can bring our prayers and petitions to the Lord. No matter what challenges we face. No matter what difficulties we are struggling with. God is able to rescue us. He "...is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us." Ephesians 3:20

And how can we be sure about this. Well we can look back at the Exodus and see how God worked in power through Moses. But even more so, we can look back to the wonderful cross and the empty tomb of Jesus, and see him triumph over sin and death and all the powers of evil.

If Jesus was able to do that for us, and was willing to do that for us, then why would we ever need to doubt that he can provide us with all that we need in our lives. As Paul wrote in Romans 8:32: "He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?"

This doesn't mean that God will give us everything that we want. It doesn't mean that God will stop anything bad happening in our lives. That he will prevent us from going through any time of suffering or struggle.

But it does mean that we can be confident, that God is always in control and that he is always working for our good. That, "In all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose." Romans 8:28

But it also means that ultimately nothing can harm us, because "Our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Saviour from there, the Lord Jesus Christ." Philippians 3:20 One day he will come down and rescue us fully and finally from this messed up world.

So we don't need to be anxious about anything. We can pray about everything because we can be sure that

- God knows what we need.
- God cares about even the tiniest details of our lives.
- God will rescue us, according to his good and perfect plan.

### 3. Give Thanks Continually

And this is why, even in the toughest of situations it's appropriate for us to pray "With thanksgiving." Philippians 4:6

I think many of us find this difficult. Often in our lives there doesn't appear like many reasons for thanksgiving and praise. With human eyes all we might see are impenetrable problems and impossible barriers to living out the life we want.

#### a) In Faith

But with eyes of faith, we can instead look to the God who has promised always to be there with us in the difficulties, always to be watching over us, always to be working for our good.

And so, in faith, we can “Be joyful always; <sup>17</sup> pray continually; <sup>18</sup> give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.” 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

No matter what we’re going through or what we’re facing, we’ve so many reasons to rejoice in the Lord, to give thanks for his mercy and grace, to celebrate his commitment and faithfulness, to rest in his love.

#### 4. The Protection of God’s Peace

And when we do this, look at what Paul promises: “And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.” Philippians 4:7 This is a peace that impacts our whole lives.

##### a) With God

If we’ve put our trust in Jesus, we have received peace with God.

Our sin made us enemies of God, separated from him and living in rebellion against his rule and reign. But through Jesus’ death on the cross to pay for our sins, we’ve been reconciled to him – brought into a close, intimate and secure relationship with him.

“Since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” Romans 5:1 We’re now forgiven, cleansed and adopted into his family!

##### b) With Others

And as a result, we’ve been reconciled with each other. As we thought about last time, there are many things that separate people but through his death and resurrection, Jesus has removed those divisions. “There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.” Galatians 3:28

All of us who’ve trusted in him have been brought into one community of God’s people, equally loved, equally valued, equally accepted.

##### c) With Ourselves

But God’s peace is also a peace with ourselves. God can bring harmony into our troubled hearts, an inner sense of contentment and wholeness, even in the middle of turmoil and trouble.

And this, “Will guard your hearts and your minds.” Philippians 4:7 It is like a walled city with its soldiers standing guard on high alert. Its defences are strong and so people inside the city are safe.

In the same way, when we bring our issues and struggles to God, and leave them in his hands, we will experience the protection of our hearts and minds from the onslaught of anxiety, worry and stress!

Not because our circumstances are perfect. Not because we will get everything we want. Not because God will do everything that we want.

But because we are “in Christ Jesus.” Philippians 4:7 We are depending on him as our Saviour. We know that we are safe in his hands, and that nothing and no-one can ever separate us from his love.

That’s why this peace of God, “Transcends all understanding.” Philippians 4:7 It doesn’t conform to what we can understand because it doesn’t work the same way the world does. It doesn’t require perfect circumstances, tranquil surroundings, wonderful relationships, healthy bodies or economic prosperity.

Instead it is a peace that protects our hearts and minds from the worries and stresses of life even when we might go through some of our most difficult days! Whatever is happening in our lives, if we respond to it by praying in faith, then we can live within the protective walls of the peace of God.

This is what Jesus promised. “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.” John 14:27

#### Conclusion

There are so many reasons why we might be anxious today. But there is an answer to all of it.

- We don’t need to worry about anything!
- Instead, if we pray about everything
- And give thanks continually
- Then we can know the protection of God’s peace, a peace that goes beyond our comprehension, but a peace that

comes from our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ!

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