

Stress-Powered Prayer

The Peace of God Part 5
Philippians 4:5b-6a 4/8/2017

Summary: This isn't an absolute prohibition of all incidents of anxiety, as the same word is used earlier in a positive sense of Timothy's anxiety for the Philippians. Paul is prohibiting ongoing anxiety (Greek present tense), that continues beyond its intended purpose, which is to supply appropriate emotional energy to take action. Once action is taken, continued anxiety is like the motions of a bowler after letting go of the ball. Fight it three ways. The first is to use the emotional energy of the anxiety to power especially earnest prayer.

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Philippians 4:4 Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! 5 Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. 6 Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. 7 And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Introduction: The Problem of Anxiety

30 million Americans are on anxiety medication. That means if you take every man, woman, and child in the entire nation, 1 out of every 10 will be on anxiety meds. And for middle-aged women in America it's 1 out of 4. Use of anti-anxiety drugs from 1996-2013 went up 67%. And it's killing people. The number of deaths from overdoses of anti-anxiety meds has gone up in that period more than 400%. I don't know if any nation of people has ever been more hooked on drugs than Americans are on anti-anxiety medications.

Now, I'm no expert, but it seems to me that if those drugs worked, you would expect ours to be the most calm, peaceful, relaxed culture there's ever been. With that many people taking anxiety drugs, anxiety should pretty much be eradicated from our culture, right? Based on your experience, would you say that's the case? I work on I-25 during rush hour and I can testify that our culture has not successfully eradicated stress. People are freaking out left and right.

We don't have time to go through all the numbers, but you'd be amazed at the percentage of people who are in hospitals or in the grave because of stress. Weight gain, weight loss, heart disease, cardiovascular diseases, nerve problems, muscle problems, mental problems, immune system problems – high

levels of anxiety wreak havoc on the human body. And not just your body, but your soul. Jesus taught that anxiety can send you to hell.

Matthew 13:22 the seed that fell among the thorns is the man who hears the word, but the anxieties of this life choke [the Word], making it unfruitful.

Worrying about the troubles of life can make a person one of the unfruitful soils that describes a person who isn't saved in the end.

Context: Anxiety Threatens Church Harmony

So anxiety is hard on your body and hard on your soul, but the reason it comes up here in Philippians 4 is the fact that it's also very hard on the body of Christ. When Christians have anxiety, it wreaks havoc in the church, because it destroys harmony. Just like people become irritable when they lack joy – they become even more irritable when they are stressed out. Any argument there? Anxiety ruins relationships because nothing will make you more self-centered than anxiety, and nothing destroys relationships faster than selfishness. Anxiety takes all your negative emotions and makes them worse. Little offences become big offences. Little things people do to hurt you become huge assaults. Minor disagreements become major conflicts.

Stressed out, anxious, worriers are next to impossible to get along with, and they constantly disrupt the unity of the church and the family. So you can see why Paul would talk about it here in this section where he's teaching us the three virtues we need in order to enable ourselves to have unity in the church. The first had to do with your attitude toward God – rejoice in the Lord (v.4). The second was about your attitude toward people – be reasonable (v.5). Now in v.6 he moves on to a third one, and this one is about your attitude toward circumstances.

Philippians 4:6 Do not be anxious about anything

Regarding God – joy. Regarding people – reasonableness. Regarding circumstances – inner peace. Don't be stressed out about anything.

The Command: Don't Be Anxious

Absolute Prohibition?

Now, how many of you hear that and all it does is increase your anxiety? Not only are you stressed out about all the problems in your life, but now you've got the added stress of knowing that being stressed out is sin. Is this saying that every instance of anxiety is sin? If a semi loses control and is coming straight at you on the ice and 80 mph, is it wrong if you feel a little stressed about that? You're on a hike and a bear is attacking your kids, is it sin to be a little agitated in that moment? What about when your spouse hands you divorce papers? Are you supposed to feel nothing? How about when you see your neighbor mowing his lawn and realize he's on his way to eternity in hell? Those are big things – what about little things? If you're in the backyard and suddenly realize you forgot about the food in the oven, and you say, "Oh no!" and you go sprinting into the house to see if you can prevent dinner from being ruined. Those are all examples of anxiety – are they all sin? Are there ever any instances in which anxiety is ok?

Good Anxiety

The answer to that is definitely yes – without equivocation. Not only ok, but virtuous and godly. The only other time this word is used in Philippians is in 2:20.

Philippians 2:20 I have no one else like [Timothy], who will show genuine concern for your welfare.

The word translated **concern** is this same Greek word - **anxiety**. Timothy was the only person qualified for the task of the mission trip to Philippi because he's the only one who had enough anxiety for their welfare. No one else got as worked up emotionally as Timothy did when it came to their spiritual wellbeing, and so that disqualified them for that ministry. Paul was the same way:

2 Corinthians 11:28 I face daily the pressure of my anxiety for all the churches.

1 Corinthians 7:32 An unmarried man has anxiety about the Lord's affairs-- how he can please the Lord.

Those are examples of this exact same word being used to describe a kind of anxiety that is godly. In fact, we actually need the good kind of anxiety for church unity. The bad kind destroys church unity, but the good kind is necessary for church unity.

1 Corinthians 12:25 there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal anxiety for each other. 26 If one part suffers, every part suffers with it.

We have to have godly anxiety for each other in order to have church unity. So why does Paul say **don't be anxious about anything?**

Bowling Alley Anxiety

I think the best way to understand what he's saying here is to realize that that phrase **be anxious** refers not to a moment in time, but to an ongoing reality. So what is being forbidden here is not any instance of anxiety, but an ongoing condition of being anxious. There are various tenses in the Greek, and this one is a tense that generally points more to ongoing, linear action. So the idea is that anxiety is wrong when it persists beyond it's intended purpose and lingers in your soul.

The Purpose of Good Anxiety: Action

Think for a second about the purpose of anxiety. Why God gave human beings the ability to have that emotion? Isn't it to move us to action? Anxiety is emotional energy. That's why we describe it with phrases like being "worked up." Anxiety causes your thoughts and your emotions and everything inside you to run hotter and faster, so that you have the energy to take action. Before you remember about the dinner in the oven, you might be relaxing in the backyard with barely enough energy to reach over and take a sip of your drink. Then you remember the food in the oven, and suddenly you have the energy to jump out of your chair and run across the yard like a maniac. That's what anxiety is for – to give you the energy you need to take action.

God gave us the ability to feel anxiety to protect us from ruining our lives through apathy. You have a big exam tomorrow at school, you don't feel like studying, but anxiety about the danger of failing is the energy that gets you to crack open the books and study. If you were apathetic and indifferent, you wouldn't have the motivation to do the hard work of studying. But that knot in your stomach that you feel when you think of failing the test moves you to take action and prepare. Anxiety about going to jail moves you to finally get your taxes done. Anxiety about a friend going in a bad direction will give you the motivation you need to have a hard conversation with him. Anxiety is energy.

It's like the adrenaline of the soul. Physically, when you have a surge of adrenaline, you're almost superhuman. You have incredible strength, clear thinking, time slows down and you can handle an emergency – it's amazing. So why not just inject ourselves with adrenaline all day so we could always have peak performance? Because adrenaline is really hard on your body. If it flowed all the time, you would destroy yourself. You talk to someone right after a car crash and you can see what it does. Twenty minutes later, the emergency is over, but the adrenaline is still in their bloodstream. They shake uncontrollably, grown men randomly start crying – and they don't know why – they are perfectly safe now. That's the effect of adrenaline when you're not in an emergency - it's just hard on the body. I read an article about the health problems that come from too much adrenaline. "Adrenaline stored up in the

bloodstream becomes more harmful than helpful. Insomnia, nervousness and lowered immunity toward illness are all connected to high levels of stress in the body.”¹ Adrenaline is good when it’s needed for taking action, but God didn’t design your body to be able to handle having it all the time. If you’re trying to lift a car off someone who is trapped, adrenaline is great. But if you’re sitting on the couch or lying in bed trying to go to sleep, adrenaline is the last thing you want in your system. And spiritual adrenaline (anxiety) is the same way. Good anxiety is needed for moving you to take action, but if it gets into your bloodstream and stays in your system, it will destroy you. That’s what Paul is telling us never to do.

It Should Go Away After You’ve Taken Action

So at what point should anxiety over something go away? At what point does it go from being appropriate anxiety, to sinful anxiety? To get the answer to that, go to a bowling alley. Go to a bowling alley and watch what people do after they let go of the ball. Aim, 4 steps, backswing, release and then – here comes the body English. As the ball is rolling, all kinds of gyrations trying to keep it out of the gutter, and guide it in. Bending, twisting, jumping on tiptoes – meanwhile, the ball just goes where it was going to go. Let me give you a profound lesson about bowling that will save you a lot of energy – you can’t do anything about the path of the ball after it leaves your hands. Some people put more effort into the body English after they release the ball than they do before they release when it actually matters. Why do we do that? I don’t know why, but it’s a perfect picture of the point where anxiety goes from being helpful to being sinful. While you still have the ball in your hands, by all means – use your spiritual adrenaline to help you put the appropriate amount of energy into doing what you need to do. That’s what anxiety is for. But if it’s not time to act or plan – there’s no place whatsoever for spiritual body English.

And not only is there no place for it, but it’s actually sinful. It’s sinful because any time you reach over and try to take the wheel, it’s because you trust yourself more than you trust the one who is driving. Ongoing anxiety is a walking billboard that says, “My God can’t be trusted without my supervision.” So it’s evil, but that’s tough to swallow in our world, because our psychologized culture has portrayed anxiety as a disorder or condition that just needs proper medication. We need to understand, ongoing anxiety is not a condition to be managed; it’s a sin to be repented of. But how do you overcome it? People with anxiety don’t want to have it, so just telling them to stop having it isn’t going to accomplish anything. We need instruction on exactly how to get rid of it, and Paul is going to give us a solution that will work on every level of anxiety – from getting terminal cancer, all the way down to being irritated because you’re running late for work.

The Goal: Peace

Now, when I use the phrase “overcome anxiety,” let’s make sure we understand what that looks like. When you have turmoil and anxiety in your heart, what’s the goal? The goal is the opposite of anxiety, but what is that?

Not Apathy

Is it apathy? Imagine a woman who really struggles with sinful anxiety. She’s always worked up and worried and upset about things outside of her control. And her husband is always telling her to just chill out and relax and be more like him. He has no anxiety at all. And the woman knows that her anxiety is wrong, but she just can’t bring herself to try to be like her husband, because she can see that the reason he doesn’t have anxiety is because he just doesn’t care very much about things that are really important. He pats himself on the back for not being anxious, but he’s apathetic and indifferent about spiritual matters that the Bible says we should be passionate about.

¹ <https://www.promises.com/articles/research/over-production-of-adrenaline-linked-to-stress-related-illnesses-in-adults-and-children/>

The woman is right – apathy is not the goal. Apathy is not the opposite of sinful anxiety. Apathy is the opposite of the good kind of anxiety. Is God apathetic or indifferent? No. God cares a lot about important things – even to the point of being really emotional. If the wife is all worked up about things that aren't really important, then yes, she needs to adjust her priorities. But when it comes to important things, we should care a lot, like God.

Romans 12:11 Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord.

Indifference is a sin that we need to repent of, not a virtue to strive for.

Not Numbness

So caring less isn't the solution – nor is it *feeling* less. That's another wrong solution to anxiety. People get stressed out, so they have a glass of wine with dinner to help them relax, or an anxiety drug, or painkillers, or pot, or whatever. Calming through chemicals.

It may be that drugs may help in certain situations, but even then, they won't solve the spiritual problems behind sinful anxiety. Nor will they give you joy. Mostly what they do is take the edge off the pain of anxiety. The pain is still there – it's just not as sharp. And they tend to numb all your emotions, including happiness. People who numb their emotions are not happy people – they are just coping with their unhappiness. That's not a high enough goal.

Peace

So if the solution is not caring less (apathy or indifference) and the solution is not feeling less (drugs or numbness or distraction or whatever), then what is the solution? What is the opposite of sinful anxiety? The answer is in v.7.

6 Do not be anxious about anything, but

Then he tells us what to do, and if we do it, the result will be

7 And the peace of God will guard your hearts

That's the goal. The opposite of sinful anxiety is not apathy or numbness, it's peace – **the peace of God**. You won't be apathetic. You'll still care a lot about important things. But you'll be at peace on the inside – even when those important things are threatened or go awry.

I'll plan on talking more next time about what that peace is all about and how it guards your heart and mind, but for now, without any explanation at all, just on the face of it, doesn't that sound like a wonderful thing? Doesn't the peace of God that surpasses understanding sound a lot better than just taking the edge off your anxious emotions with a drug, or finding a way to cope?

Of God (the Lord is Near)

And it's significant that it's not just peace in general, but **the peace of God**. It comes from the presence of God. Look at the last phrase in v.5 – **the Lord is near**. Most people take that as going with what came before it, but I think it's more likely the introduction to what comes after it. So instead of "Let your reasonableness be evident to all because the Lord is near," it's "The Lord is near, so don't be anxious about anything." I'll plan on talking some more about that next time, and I'll give you my reasons for taking it this way, but for now I just want to point out that the peace will come to you from the nearness of the Lord. The solution to runaway anxiety doesn't come from a psychological technique or coping mechanism. It's none other than the very peace of God that comes from the nearness of God. And that is so much better than just numbing your emotions. It's so much better than the dial tone of indifference. God's peace that is beyond understanding that comes from the nearness of God. That's the goal. And how do we reach that goal? How do you go from being anxious and worried and fretting and

having anxiety attacks and lying awake at night, tense muscles, runaway thoughts that are out of control – how do you go from all those kinds of things to having the peace of God? Paul is going to teach us three things that, if you do them, you'll have that peace.

Principle #1: Earnest Prayer

The most obvious one is prayer. You don't have to be a rocket scientist to see that in v.6, right?

6 Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.

The whole verse is about prayer. Think about each stressor in your life as a little rubber ball in a tank of water. Your tax bill is way more than you expected – that's one ball. You say, "I can handle this," and you take hold of it and hold it down in the water. Then someone asks you to take on a new ministry at church, you don't know if you'll be able to handle it, but you don't want to say no, so you agree to do it. That's another ball, and you get a grip on it and hold that one down. Then another problem, then another, and another, and you're frantically trying as hard as you can to keep them all down. When you are out there, taking care of your responsibilities, that's what you've got to do. Use the energy of anxiety to propel you to do what you need to do. But when you are not in a position to take action, then Scripture teaches us to just let go. All those balls want to bob up to the surface – let them. Just let go, and let them all bubble up to God in prayer. God wants us to off-load our burdens on him.

1 Peter 5:7 Cast all your cares on him because he cares for you.

Now, when I said Paul is going to show us how to overcome anxiety and get real peace, you might have thought, "Oh good – I'm finally going to learn how to overcome this problem." And you get your hopes all up, and then we get to the first point, and it's just prayer. "Oh *that*. Of course. I knew about that – pray. That goes without saying." But does it? We throw up all kinds of little sentence prayers, "God, please let this work out." "Don't let me get laid off." "Don't let it be cancer." "Please, help my marriage." There's nothing wrong with sentence prayers, but I don't think that's what Paul is talking about here.

We need to not only pray, but to pray with the principles Paul is teaching in this passage. If you pray the wrong way – without those principles, praying can actually make your anxiety worse. You can start talking to God about all your troubles and fears, and when you're done, you're more upset than you were to begin with. So let's see what we can learn from this passage.

Emphatic

When I first started studying v.6, the big question in my mind was, "Why so many words to describe one basic idea?" Why not just say, "Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, pray"? Why use 4 different terms to describe the prayer?

Usually when a writer uses a whole bunch of words to say something that would normally be said in just one or two words, it's for the sake of emphasis. That's true in their culture and ours. If I just want to say that there was some rain, I might say, "It – was - raining" (3 words). But if I use a whole bunch of words, "it was just raining and pouring and dumping down out of the sky all over everywhere" – what's the difference? I'm saying the same thing – it was raining, but using all those extra words makes it emphatic – it was really raining hard. I think that's what Paul is doing here.

6 Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.

Prayer – that's talking to God.

Petition – that's asking God for stuff.

Requests – that's the stuff you're asking God for.

Thanksgiving – that’s another aspect of prayer.

A lot of words to say one thing.

And the phrase **in everything** also adds emphasis.

And that phrase **present your requests to God** (lit. **let your requests be made known to God**) – that’s another emphatic way of speaking. I looked up the other times in the Bible when instead of just saying, “I told you” they said “I let it be made known to you,” and I found that whenever that happens, it’s in a context where the writer is really trying to be emphatic.² I’m not just telling you; I’m taking you by the lapel and really *letting you know*.

So the point of all that is this – when you have anxiety, principle #1 for getting from an anxious heart to the peace of God in your heart is to not just pray, but to really pray *hard*. Don’t just mention your requests to God – grab hold of God and really *make them known*. Be passionate about it. Be persistent about it. Be energetic and earnest and fervent in your prayers. Pray hard. When you have anxiety, drop to your knees and just pray your face off.

Praying Hard

You have all this anxiety, and the sentence prayers are going up all the time, but when was the last time you prayed explicitly and at length over each of the things that are currently stressing you out? Our lives are so rushed that we begrudge a 3 minute prayer time and then wonder where God is. The question isn’t, “Where is God?” God is right there in your prayer closet. The question is, “Where are you?”

Anxiety Gives Energy to Prayer

Now, I realize that hits a lot of you as a burdensome thing. You might be thinking, “All my Christian life I’ve been trying to get myself to get serious about prayer, but I just can’t seem to do it with any consistency.” That’s one area of the Christian life where the enemy just shoots us down time after time – our prayer life. We read about Jesus getting up before sunrise to go pray somewhere in isolation, or praying all night, and it just seems like something that we would never be able to get ourselves to do.

You’re not alone in that. Prayer is hard – really hard. And praying hard is even harder. It takes a huge amount of mental energy, doesn’t it? And so it’s like working out, or cleaning out the garage – in our laziness, we just can’t seem to get ourselves to do it. We don’t have the emotional energy.

So where are we going to get more energy? Look at this passage – can you find energy anywhere? It’s in the anxiety! Remember, that’s the whole purpose of anxiety. Anxiety is energy. Use the emotional energy produced by your anxiety to enable you to really pray earnestly.

We always read this verse and think, “Oh, Paul is saying I should pray in order to get rid of my anxiety.” And that’s fine – nothing wrong with that, but I think that’s only half of what he’s saying. It’s not just pray hard to get rid of anxiety; it’s use your anxiety to pray hard.

When you don’t have any anxiety in your heart, you can try to pray hard, but the earnestness just isn’t the same. That’s just the way God designed the human soul. You see that again and again in Scripture. David, or a Prophet or the people of Israel or whoever – some great suffering comes along, that makes them cry out in earnest prayer, and God delivers them. It was even true of Jesus.

² I found 5 instances of the word “to know” (*ginosko*) in the passive voice (to be made known).

1 Corinthians 12:3 Therefore I make known to you that no one who is speaking by the Spirit of God says, “Jesus be cursed,” and no one can say, “Jesus is Lord,” except by the Holy Spirit.

1 Corinthians 15:1 Now, brothers, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand.

2 Corinthians 8:1 And now, brothers, we want you to know about the grace that God has given the Macedonian churches.

Galatians 1:11 I want you to know, brothers, that the gospel I preached is not something that man made up.

Philippians 1:22 If I am to go on living in the body, this will mean fruitful labor for me. Yet what shall I choose? I do not know!

Philippians 4:6 Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.

Luke 22:44 And being in anguish, he prayed more earnestly

Why didn't Jesus pray that earnestly to begin with? The human soul – even a perfect, sinless human soul, in this fallen condition, needs anxiety to stimulate the most passionate kind of prayer. And so that's God's design.

James 5:13 Is anyone among you in trouble? Let him pray.

Zechariah 13:8 In the whole land," declares the LORD, "two-thirds will be struck down and perish; yet one-third will be left in it. 9 This third I will bring into the fire; I will refine them like silver and test them like gold. They will call on my name and I will answer them

God chooses some to be saved – his elect, represented symbolically here by the number one-third. And look what he does – he saves them from perishing and puts them into the fire. He saves them from the fires of hell and puts them in the fires of refining. And what's the result of that? **They will call on my name.** God puts his people into the fires of suffering so that they will call on his name in prayer. John Calvin commented on that Zechariah passage in his commentary: It is therefore necessary that we should be subject, from first to last, to the scourges of God, in order that we may from the heart call on him; for our hearts are enfeebled by prosperity, so that we cannot make the effort to pray. Hence the discipline is necessary, so that earnest prayer may become vigorous in us.³

Harness the emotional energy of your anxieties. You watch that movie War Room and get all motivated and say, "Ok, this time I'm going to just really cry out to God. You get your prayer area all set up and you think, "I'm going to be just like that lady in the movie – I'll probably lose track of time and pray all night." Then about 3 minutes in – "Wow, there's kind of a lot of dust on those blinds " That's all it takes. Our greatest resolve to pray like there's no tomorrow, and the slightest little distraction is all it takes. "That dust is driving me crazy. I'll just quick get up and dust that and " That's how we naturally are. But in those times when your heart is exploding with some great, overpowering anxiety , you can pour out your soul in prayer and you don't care about dust on blinds, you're not curious about that email that just came in , you aren't interested in Facebook or the news headlines or checking the stock market. You are banging on the door of heaven with urgency because this thing matters so much to you. That's what anxiety is supposed to do. That's what it's for. It's to enable you to pray your face off.

Point the Hose at the Fire

When you really care a lot about something, and that thing goes bad or is threatened, that generates energy in your emotions. It's generates internal pressure. Think of that pressure as being like the water pressure in a fire hose. When people have sinful anxiety – the bowling alley kind where it just stays in your system on an ongoing basis , what's happening is it's like a firehose that has been dropped, so it's just going off, whipping around in all directions, shooting water everywhere. If you could somehow look inside their heart, you'd see emotions just shooting off in all directions like a wild firehose, and all that pressure is accomplishing nothing. Either that, or they try to pinch it off, so the pressure just keeps building. All that does is put strain on the hose.

But what is the purpose of a fire hose? To put out fires. God gave us the energy of anxiety for a reason. So when you have anxiety, take all that pressure (and the greater the pressure the better) , and when you are in the right position, at the right time, point it at the fire, open up the valve, and use that pressure to put the fire out.

Anxiety is designed by God to give us the energy we need to take action to solve the problem. And you haven't taken action until you've really prayed hard. Even if you've used the emotional energy of anxiety to make a hard phone call, or do this hard thing or that hard thing – you've done all that, you still haven't really taken the necessary actions until you've prayed hard. That's one of the most important

³ Calvin's commentary on Zechariah 13:8.

aspects of sending that bowling ball down the lane toward the pocket, or putting the fire out. That's what solves big problems – earnest prayer.

If you have your normal, daily prayer routine, but the anxiety is still there, then you know – “Oh, this is calling for some special prayer. This is a situation where I need to step out of my normal, daily routine of prayer, and go off by myself somewhere for an extended season of strong, passionate, earnest prayer.” You can't do that every day, but you do it on those days when your normal prayers aren't cutting it, and the anxiety is staying in your bloodstream.

How to Pray Hard

So what does that look like? How do you pray hard about something? You say, “Please God, please, please, *please*”? – but then what?

First, do what Jesus did and get away. Go for a long drive, or a walk – if you go up into the mountains, away from all people, that really helps. And bring your Bible, because that's the main way God will answer you. Then just talk it over with God from all angles. Here are some sample questions you can ask him:

- Always start by seeking God's will in the matter. “What do you most desire in this situation, Father?” And when he reveals it, pray for that.
- “What would glorify you're the most in this God – both in my responses and in others?” When he shows you, then pray for that.
- “Father, what are my heart attitudes about this matter? The feelings I'm having – what do they say about my values and priorities and loves? It's the passions of my heart that are powering this anxiety. Are they the right passions?” When God shows you, then ask him to enable you to conform any wrong values or priorities or loves or passions to match his.
- “What does your Word say about things like this?”
- “What does persevering look like in this ordeal?”
- “What does humility look like?”
- “What does it look like to love my neighbor as myself in a situation like this?”
- “Lord, what have you done in the past when your people have faced things like this?”
- Pray through a psalm or 2, adjusting the psalm to fit your situation.
- “What is the next step for me to take in this matter, Lord? What do you want me to do now?”

Then, when you've wrestled through all those things with God, end by casting your cares on him and seeking his comfort. When asked how he could handle all the stresses of the massive responsibilities that were upon him, George Mueller replied very simply: I do not carry the burden.... It is not only permission, but positive command that He gives, to cast the burdens upon Him. Oh, let us do it! My beloved brothers and sisters in Christ, “Cast thy burden upon the Lord and He shall sustain thee.” Day by day I do it. This morning sixty matters in connection with the church of which I am pastor, I brought before the Lord. I've found that I can't cast my burdens onto God in one, giant batch. Give this a try. Carve out a special time to get alone with God, undistracted, and lay your burdens on the Lord one-by-one by name. Not just, “Lord, please let it work out,” but “Lord, I roll this concern about my child onto your shoulders. This situation at work – it's on you now. I've done what I can do for today, I'll take whatever action I can take tomorrow, but for right now, there's no other actions for me to take other than prayer, so I'm rolling this bolder off of me onto you. It's on you now, God. And the fact that my wife is mad at me – right now 'm rolling that on to you – take it Lord. And that noise my transmission is making – take the weight of that. And the fact that I'm not measuring up to what I thought I'd be by this time in life. And my failing knees, and the wrinkles and all these signs of aging. And this distressing thing I heard on the news Lord – take that off my hands.” Spurgeon: Agitated Christians, do not dishonor your religion by always wearing a brow of care; come, cast your burden upon the Lord. What seems to you a crushing'

burden, would be to him but as the small dust of the balance. See! the Almighty bends his shoulders, and he says, "Here, put thy troubles here." "Come unto Me, and I will give you rest."

Psalms 91:1 He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty.

Small Groups Discussion

Read Luke 10:38-42 (the word translated "worried" in v.40 is the same word for anxiety in Php.4:6).
What went wrong with Martha's anxiety? What should have happened?

Prayer Guide

- Always start by seeking God's will in the matter. "What do you most desire in this situation, Father?"

When he reveals it, pray for that.

- "What would glorify you're the most in this God – both in my responses and in others?"

When he shows you, then pray for that.

- "Father, what are my heart attitudes about this matter? The feelings I'm having – what do they say about my values and priorities and loves? It's the passions of my heart that are powering this anxiety. Are they the right passions?"

When God shows you, then ask him to enable you to conform any wrong values or priorities or loves or passions to match his.

- "What does your Word say about things like this?"
- "What does persevering look like in this ordeal?"
- "What does humility look like?"
- "What does it look like to love my neighbor as myself in a situation like this?"
- "Lord, what have you done in the past when your people have faced things like this?"
- Pray through a psalm or 2, adjusting the psalm to fit your situation.
- "What is the next step for me to take in this matter, Lord? What do you want me to do now?"

End by casting your cares on him and seeking his comfort.

Spurgeon: Agitated Christians, do not dishonor your religion by always wearing a brow of care; come, cast your burden upon the Lord What seems to you a crushing' burden, would be to him but as the small dust of the balance. See! the Almighty bends his shoulders, and he says, "Here, put thy troubles here." "Come unto Me, and I will give you rest."

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