



Jesus & Anxiety

Almost every week this summer I've said this but again, I'm just in awe of how God is speaking directly to what we are walking through together in our Bible reading plan. Not just every week, but every day, as we're reading through the Gospels. This last week with the end of Mark, we read the good news that Jesus is not dead. He's alive and that changes everything. Then in Luke over the last few days, the chapters are so rich.

Then we're studying Philippians together each week and many people are working to memorize it. Today we'll close out this section with Philippians 4:4-9 on anxiety. We're reading this when people across our church received news that schools would not be starting in our counties this fall, leading to all kinds of questions, concerns and anxiety about how this is going to work, how you are going to return to work, how this will affect the economy and our lives and our country as this pandemic continues to have so many different effects in so many different ways.

Into the middle of this precise moment, unlike anything any one of us has ever experienced in this world, God's Word is speaking to us. I want us to read Philippians 4:1-9 together and as we do, hear it as the word of God to us right now. This is the Word of God.

¹ Therefore, my brothers, whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm thus in the Lord, my beloved.

² I entreat Euodia and I entreat Syntyche to agree in the Lord. ³ Yes, I ask you also, true companion, help these women, who have labored side by side with me in the gospel together with Clement and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life.

⁴ Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice. ⁵ Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; ⁶ do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. ⁷ And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

⁸ Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. ⁹ What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me—practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.

O God, help us understand Your Word to us right now, amidst everything going on around us.
Amen.

Let's just put this out on the table at the beginning: As people in the middle of a pandemic, we are anxious about many things. We're anxious about many things as people in life in general. We worry about our lives, our families and our future. We worry about finances, jobs, school and health. We worry in our own thoughts; we worry about what others think. We worry about ourselves; we worry about others. And that's just life in general.

Then you throw a pandemic on top of all that and everything is out of sorts with our lives, families, finances, jobs, schools, health. With so much unknown about the future, anxiety goes to a whole other level. It can be so overwhelming—intellectually, emotionally, even spiritually. We are anxious about many things. We live in anxious times. Into the middle of this, God is saying to our hearts right now, *“Do not be anxious about anything.”*

How is that possible in the middle of a pandemic, when you don't know what to do with your kids at home all day, when you don't know what to do when you need to work, when you don't know how finances are going to come through or what the future holds? When you're walking through all sorts of other challenges in life and health and family, how do you have peace that surpasses all understanding in everything?

Many of you are thinking, “I'm not feeling peace that passes all understanding right now.” This is where I want you to see what has been saying over the last few weeks and now what He is saying to us today in this section of Philippians 4, not by coincidence. God loves us so much and is speaking so clearly to us right now.

I want to summarize what we are hearing from God in this part of Philippians 4, capping off today with verse nine. We will summarize what God is saying with four words of encouragement and two promises for every single person who is listening wherever you are. I want to offer these words of encouragement for your life and make them as memorable as possible for tomorrow or later this week or next week or next month—whenever you are tempted to worry or be anxious about anything.

I sometimes think acrostics can be kind of cheesy, but if they're memorable, I think they can be helpful. So today I want to give you an acrostic that spells out STOP. Keep this in your mind so that as soon as an anxious thought comes in you will be able to STOP, pause and do these four things. When you do these four things, I promise you that two things will happen, based on the authority of God's Word, not my authority. Let me give you the promises here at the beginning as a motivation to listen closely to these four words of encouragement. Here are the two promises we're going to end with today. When you do these four things in this STOP acrostic:

1) You will experience the peace of God, an otherworldly peace that surpasses all understanding. You will experience the peace of God in your mind, heart and life.

2) You will know the God of peace. You will not only experience this gift of peace from God, but you will also know God, the giver of Peace. You will not just know Him, but enjoy Him, being secure and satisfied in Him and by Him.

So if you want those two realities in your life—if you want to experience the peace of God and if you want to know the God of peace in a pandemic and whatever else you’re walking through—then remember these four words of encouragement: STOP.

S – Seek God in prayer about everything.

Whenever you begin to have an anxious or worried thought, pause and seek God in prayer about everything. This is straight from God in Philippians 4:6: “Do not be anxious about anything, but pray about everything.” In order to be anxious about nothing, pray about everything. Seek God in prayer about everything. Martin Luther said, “Pray, and let God worry.” Which He won’t because He doesn’t have to. And for those who are His children, you don’t have to either.

This is exactly what Jesus tells us when He’s talking about worry in Matthew 6:31-34: *“Therefore do not be anxious, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’”* You ask, “How am I going to do this? How is this going to work. What does the future hold?” Don’t ask these things. *“For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all.”* What do you do? *“But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.”*

This is worth a short side note because that last part of Matthew 6 is a game changer in the battle against anxiety. Don’t miss what Jesus is saying here. God guarantees mercy today for challenges today, and God guarantees mercy tomorrow for challenges tomorrow. God does not give mercy today for challenges tomorrow. No, today’s mercies are designed for today’s burdens. Tomorrow’s mercies will be sufficient for tomorrow’s burdens.

Anxiety and worry so often come when we’re focused on tomorrow. We worry, thinking, “How am I going to make it through the fall with my kids doing virtual school? How am I going to make things work financially in August and into next year? What’s going to happen with schools? What’s going to happen with the economy? When is the vaccine coming? How is all this going to affect my life and family in the future?”

It’s not unwise to think about the future. There is certainly wisdom in planning for the future as best we can. But when you think about the future—particularly when there are so many unknowns in it—stop and realize that God holds the future in His hands and that He promises to give you new mercy in August, new mercy in September, new mercy in October, November, December and next year. God promises that His mercy will always prove sufficient for you in every new day.

This means you don't have the mercy today you need for August, September, October, November or next year. Do you know why? Because it's July 26th and God is giving mercy today for July 26th. God promises you will have new mercy for July 27th, then new mercy for July 28th, then for August, September and so on, as each day comes and whatever each new day brings.

Believing this is critical and in some sense it's the key to fighting anxiety as you realize that what you need today is not strength for tomorrow. Don't worry about tomorrow, Jesus says. Instead, live in the mercy God gives you today, believing new mercy is coming tomorrow. That mercy will be sufficient for whatever tomorrow holds. How can you not be anxious about tomorrow? By believing that new and sufficient mercy from God is coming your way every single day for all that day holds.

So seek God in prayer about everything. "God, I don't know how to make it through this fall, or this week, because of this concern I have. But right now I'm going to stop and lift all of this to You in prayer. I'm going to stop and pray for You to specifically help me or this other person. I'm asking for Your help specifically in my life, for my kids, family, friends, for this need or that need, in this situation or that situation. I'm going to trust that Your mercy is going to be made known in all these different ways." When you begin to experience anxious thoughts or worry, immediately STOP and Seek God in prayer about everything that's on your mind. Just start there. That's S

T – Trust God through prayers of Thanksgiving.

. Then "T" —trust God through prayers of thanksgiving. This is so important. In both Matthew 6 and Philippians 4, we're told to trust God through prayers of thanksgiving. We this in Philippians 4:6: "*Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.*"

Why "with thanksgiving"? Those of you who worshiped with us online the first Sunday after this shutdown began might remember that we defined worry and anxiety biblically. We talked about a variety of definitions of anxiety in the world, including clinical or medical anxiety that has all kind of physical symptoms. Biblically we saw that worry or anxiety means carrying concerns in this world in such a way that we either lose perspective on life or we lack trust in God. So how do we keep perspective on life and live with trust in God? Philippians 4:6 is saying, "Express thanksgiving to God." This is the same thing Jesus said back in Matthew 6:26: "*Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?*" And the answer is yes! You are more valuable than the birds of the air.

So as you begin to worry or be anxious, STOP, seek God in prayer about everything that's on your mind and trust that God loves you and will help you. Trust that God will give you everything you need. We're going to see this even more starting next week; Philippians 4 is only going to get better. Stop and thank God for all the ways He loves you, cares for you and promises to help you as you lift up your needs

to God. Going into this week, going into this fall, thank God in advance for the mercy He's promised to give you. Instead of worrying about this fall, thank God that He is going to lead you through it. Instead of worrying about the future, thank God that He holds the future in His hands. Instead of worrying about what we don't know, thank God for the promises we do know. Instead of worrying about what you don't have, thank God for all the grace you do have. Trust God through prayers of thanksgiving.

"God, I thank You—we thank You—right now that COVID is not in control. God, we thank You that our security is not dependent on our economy, on our King. God, we thank You that You hold our lives, children and loved ones in the palm of Your hands. We thank You that You hold our breath in the palm of Your hands. God, we thank You for Your promises to be with us, to lead us, sustain us, satisfy us, guide us and provide for us every day." Are you thankful for all that?

As we express prayers of thanksgiving like this, do you know what begins to replace worry in our hearts? Faith. Trust. The realization that we don't have to worry, because we have a great God Who promises to give us every single thing we need for every single moment we face.

STOP. Seek God in prayer about everything. Trust God through prayers of thanksgiving.

O – Open your mind to that which comes from God.

Then O—open your mind to that which comes from God. We talked about this last week and read this just a moment ago:

Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.

We can summarize true, honorable, just, pure, lovely, commendable, excellent and praiseworthy by saying, "That which comes from God." Stop and ask, "Does this thought I'm having come from God? Does this thought I'm having originate in Him? Is this thought honoring to Him? Is this thought worthy of praise before Him?" If not, then remove it from your mind. Close your mind to that kind of thinking and open your mind to that which comes from God.

Last week, we looked at verse eight and how the battle for peace, joy and gentleness begins in our minds—between our ears—because what you think determines how you live. Look at the connection here as we add verse nine. The Bible is telling us how to have perpetual joy, gentleness in any circumstance and surpassing peace. It says in verse eight that it all happens when you think about "these things" that are true, honorable, just, pure, lovely, commendable, excellent and praiseworthy.

Then we have this phrase in verse eight: "*think about these things*," then verse nine says, "*What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me—practice these things...*" So there's thinking in verse eight and there's practicing in verse nine. Transformed thoughts lead to a transformed life. It starts

with opening our minds to that which comes from God and closing our minds to that which does not come from God.

—Let me give you a picture that I hope will be an extremely helpful, practical and potentially even a life-changing way to think about this; we see this two different places in the Bible. Picture four concentric circles in our lives. At the core of our lives is a decision about who or what we are going to worship. Either we worship God, ourselves or other things we put in the place of God. Who or what we worship then affects how we think.

So our thoughts go in the next circle. If God is on the throne of our hearts, then our thoughts will be driven by God, which is praiseworthy before Him. If we are on the throne of our heart, our thoughts will be driven by our self and what seems good to us. If some other god, like money, is on the throne of our hearts, then our thoughts will revolve around money. If reputation is what's most important to us, then our thoughts will revolve around what helps boost our

reputation. We could go on and on with examples. But who or what we worship determines how we think.

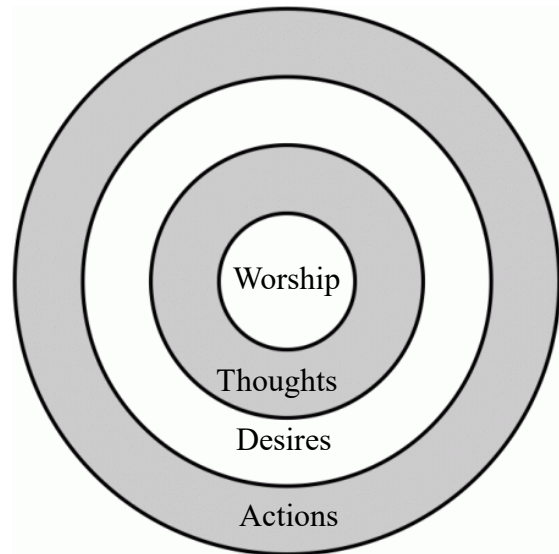
Then how we think affects what we desire. So put desires in the next circle. If we think God is good, then we will desire more of God and what He says is good. If we think our ways or the ways of this world are good, then we will desire our ways or the ways of this world. Again, if we're consumed with thinking about money, then we'll desire more money. If we're consumed with thinking about what others think about us, then we'll be focused on what is going to help others think a certain way about us.

Then these desires affect our actions. We saw in Philippians 4:8 that the way we think determines the way we live. Now we're seeing this connection even more clearly in verse nine that what you think determines how you act and live.

So let's test this picture biblically, asking if this is what the Bible actually teaches. We'll go to two places. The first is Romans 1:21-23, teaching us about sin in our lives. Talking about sinful men and women, notice where sin starts:

²¹ For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. ²² Claiming to be wise, they became fools, ²³ and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things.

Did you hear that? Where does sin start? It starts in a heart that does not honor God or give thanks to Him. It's a heart that exchanges the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and other things. That's worldly worship. It's worship where we've replaced God on the throne of our hearts



with someone or something else that leads to worldly thoughts. *“They became futile in their thinking....Claiming to be wise, they became fools...”* So worldly worship leads to worldly thoughts.

Let’s see where it goes from there, beginning in Romans 1:24. In light of worship that is centered on the world which leads to worldly thoughts....

²⁴ Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, ²⁵ because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen.

Do you see that? Worldly worship led to worldly thoughts, which led to worldly desires. *“God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity...”* This then led to worldly actions: *“the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves...”*. Then it comes back to the core. Why do they have these worldly desires and act in this worldly way? Because *“they exchanged the truth about God for a lie”*—that’s worldly thoughts—*“and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever.”* That’s worldly worship.

Don’t miss it. Sinning with our bodies is worldly action which has its root in worldly desires, worldly thoughts and worldly worship. Sin starts when we open our minds to things which do not come from God at the center of our lives.

Let’s look at one other example. We looked at this last week in Genesis 3 regarding the first sin in the world. If this is the way sin actually works, then we would certainly expect to see it there. If what you’re going to look at here is true, it has massive implications for your life, your parenting, your relationships with other people and your understanding of the world. Going to Genesis 3, let’s see if these concentric circles play out here.

¹ Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, “Did God actually say, ‘You shall not eat of any tree in the garden’?” ² And the woman said to the serpent, “We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, ³ but God said, ‘You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.’” ⁴ But the serpent said to the woman, “You will not surely die. ⁵ For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” ⁶ So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate.

What’s the action here? Eve and her husband took the fruit and ate. But don’t miss the root. That worldly action was based in worldly desire? She *“saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise.”* These worldly desires were grounded in worldly thinking, based on a lie from the devil that said God and His word are not good. They believed the lie. In their worship, they took God off the throne of their hearts, putting themselves in the

position of thinking their thoughts were better than God's thoughts, which led to desires to do that which was against God's word, which ultimately led to the action of eating a piece of fruit.

The whole point in showing this is to see the root of sin. It wasn't when they ate a piece of fruit; it was when God was not on the throne of their hearts. This affected the way they started thinking about Him and His word in their lives, that led to desires, that led to action. What we allow into our minds affects and determines how we act and live.

Consider the massive implications of this. When you struggle with sin, don't just look at the action you are taking, the thing you are doing or the words you are speaking. Look at the root. Romans 1 indicates that sexual immorality with our bodies starts with not living for the worship of God. We think that in doing this or looking at that we'll be satisfied. So that's what we start to desire, therefore we act on it. How do you stop that action? By being transformed by the renewing of your heart and mind at the core of who you are.

Think about all your efforts to combat sinful actions in your life this way. Until you address what's going on in your heart and mind, you will only be putting a band-aid on a broken limb. You'll be ignoring the root of any sin, not just sexual immorality. Think about the implications, not just in our lives, but for helping others avoid sin.

Think about parenting. When my child does something wrong, if all I say is, "Don't do that," then I'm not helping them nearly as much as if I sit down and say, "Why did you do that?" Then I can show them root of their action is in desires and thoughts and ultimately a heart that's turned aside from God in that moment. This is not just for parents. As a church, we help each other grow in Christ as we help each other turn from sin. Let's identify the heart, thoughts and desires at the root of the actions we struggle with.

Now, let's bring all this back to stopping anxiety and worry. Anxiety and worry happen when we forget that God is on the throne of our hearts and lives and the world around us, so we begin to think thoughts that are not true, honorable, just, pure, lovely, commendable or praiseworthy. This then spirals downward into unhelpful emotions of despair, distress and discouragement. These emotions lead to unhelpful actions in all kinds of ways, from being short or harsh with the people around us to missing out in so many ways on the abundant life and the great things God has for us.

The key to fighting this battle is stopping, pausing and opening our minds to that which comes from God. That's why the O is critical in this whole picture. So STOP—seek God in prayer about everything, trust God through prayers of thanksgiving, and open your mind to that which is from God. That's where the battle is raging.

P – Practice the Word of God.

This is the exact language we have in Philippians 4:9. Remember? "*Think about these things...*" in verse eight. Then in verse nine, "*Practice these things.*"

This makes sense in light of what Paul just said before this: *“Whatever you have learned and received and heard and seen...”* What’s supposed to happen when we learn? We do what we learn. We apply what we receive. We obey what we hear. We follow what we see. If you hear this word from God in Philippians 4, but then don’t do it, this word from God will not do you any good. This is exactly what God says in James 1:22-25:

22 Be doers of the word, not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. 23 For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks intently at his natural face in a mirror. 24 For he looks at himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like. 25 But the one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing.

If you hear these words of encouragement for fighting anxiety, thinking, “Well, that was helpful,” but you don’t actually STOP and do these things when you begin to think anxious or worrisome thoughts, then you are deceiving yourself and will miss the blessing of God.

And not just you, but others. There’s a powerful word back in Philippians 4:9. Paul just said, *“What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me—practice these things.*” That’s a bold statement, isn’t it? “Whatever you see me doing, do those things—and the God of peace will be with you.”

He actually said something very similar a few verses before this, at the end of Philippians 3:17. He said, *“Brothers, join in imitating me...”* That’s a bold statement, saying to someone else, “Just imitate me.” Paul is saying to these Christians, “Just do what I do.” It might sound arrogant until we put this together with what Paul said in 1 Corinthians 11:1: *“Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ.”* Paul is saying, “I want so badly for you to follow Christ, that I will do everything I can to show you what that looks like in action. If you live like me, then you’ll be living like Jesus.”

Back in Philippians 3:17, Paul says, *“Brothers, join in imitating me, and keep your eyes on those who walk according to the example you have in us.”* In other words, focus your eyes on people who are living like Jesus. Become more and more like them, and in the process, become more like Jesus.

Based on Philippians 4:9, is your life worthy of imitation by those around you? If other people follow your life, will they be following Jesus? Students, teenagers, children—is this a way you would describe your life? This is what Paul said to Timothy: *“Let no one despise you for your youth, but set the believers an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity”* (1 Timothy 4:12).

Single brothers and sisters, is your life worthy of imitation, abandoned to God and His purposes? Husbands and wives, is your life worthy of imitation, such that if a husband or a wife lives like you, they would be following Jesus in a way that totally honors their spouse? Parents, is your life worthy of imitation by your kids, such that if your kids walk with Jesus like you walk with Him, they will be experiencing deep, true intimacy with Jesus?

This week I was reading about John Paton. He’s one of my favorite people in history and his biography is one of my favorites. John took the gospel to a never-before-reached cannibalistic people on a

remote island. Today, that island is 94% Christian. His story is amazing and I highly recommend his biography. There are all kinds of things I could say about him what caught my attention this week was about the influence his father, James Paton, had on his life. There was a room certain in the house and his family knew that whenever their dad went into that room, he was meeting with God. They could hear him praying from outside the room. They'd occasionally walk in to see him on his knees before God. His dad would gather his kids around the family room and they would kneel to pray together. His dad would just pour out his soul in pleas to God for provision of their needs or in tears for people to come to know Christ.

John wrote about how the family would walk together four miles to church every Sunday. In 40 years, John could remember only three times that his dad missed church. Once because of snow, once because of ice, and once because of a cholera outbreak. You might think that walk would lead to a lot of complaining among the kids, but Paton and his ten siblings said their dad made going to church a joy, because they saw such joy in him. His dad read the Bible to them, taught them what it means around their dinner table and showed them what it looks like in practice.

So dads, let me ask what are your kids seeing in you about what it means to follow Jesus? If your kids live just like you, will they be following Jesus with all their hearts? God has entrusted you and me as dads with the responsibility to show our wives and children how to follow Jesus. They will not be what they cannot see. And this is not just for dads. Moms, we've mentioned the reality of kids being home from school. Again, I don't presume to know all the challenges that will bring, but I do want to encourage you, Mom and Dad, don't underestimate for a second the value of more time with your children, more time for them to see in you the Spirit of Jesus, the life of Jesus. There is nothing more valuable for our children than for them to see Jesus in us.

Obviously, this is not just for kids and parents. Let's each ask the question, if our family, friends, neighbors, coworkers or group members lived just like us, will they be following Jesus with all of their hearts? Let's take responsibility for showing others what the life of Christ looks like in action. To be a Christian means to follow Jesus in such a way that we're leading others to Him. All this is the P in our acrostic: Practice the Word of God.

So we need to STOP:

- Seek God in prayer about everything.
- Trust God through prayers of thanksgiving.
- Open your mind to that which comes from God
- Practice the Word you have learned and received and heard and seen.

When we do these things, we have two promises straight from the mouth of God.

Promise #1 - You will experience the peace of God.

In Philippians 4:7 we're told "*the peace of God, which passes all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*" This is a promise. You will experience the peace of God when you pray about everything with thanksgiving, when you think about and practice these things. This is a promise that you will experience other-worldly, all-surpassing peace from God.

Promise #2 – You will know the God of peace.

Philippians 4:9 tells us, "...*the God of peace will be with you.*" This is so awesome. You will not just receive the gift of peace from God, you will also receive the gift of God Himself. God Himself will be with you as your peace.

This is the gospel. This is what Jesus makes possible. We have all sinned against God and are separated from God—from His peace, His joy and His life. If we die in this state of separation from God, we will experience eternity separated from His peace, joy and life. But God loves us and has sent His Son Jesus to die for us, so when we put our faith and trust in Him, we're reconciled to relationship with God. We can know Him, walk with Him, experiencing His peace and joy and life. You and I, through faith in Jesus, have been reconciled to God Himself.

Let's summarize what we've seen in Philippians 4:4-9. In a world where we are prone to anxiety and worry, when we trust in God in all the ways we've seen—when we STOP and do these things—we will know the God Who says, "I will guard your heart and mind. I will take care of you. I will protect you. Trust Me." Jesus said in Matthew 6, "You're worth more than the birds of the air and the lilies in the field. You can trust Me to care for you; not only to care for you but to carry you. I will be with you."

God is not just saying, "You have My peace." God says, "You have Me with you." As you look forward to fall and a future of unknowns, the God of peace says, "I care for you and will carry you." In Philippians 4:5, we read, "...*the Lord is at hand.*" In other words, the God of Peace says, "I am coming for you." There is coming a day when this world with all of its worries will pass away.

There is coming a day when there will be no more worries, no more anxiety, no more pandemic, no more pain, no more unknowns, no more sorrow, no more sin and no more death. Our God is coming for us. One day the temptation to worry or be anxious will be no more, for we will dwell forever with God in everlasting worship and eternal security—and that is good news.

I want to ask every single person, just between you and God, do you know the God of peace? Have you been reconciled to God through faith in Jesus? If you were to die today, do you know you would experience His eternal peace with Him in heaven because you've trusted in Jesus? I know the answer to these question for many listening right now is "Maybe" or even "No, I don't know God in this way."

If that's you, I invite you to pray in your heart and say, "God, I want to know You. I want to know Your peace, joy and Your life." Confess to God the sin that separates you from Him, saying to Him, "God, I know I've sinned against You in my thoughts, desires and actions. I've put myself on the throne of my

heart. But today I'm believing Jesus died to forgive me of my sins. Today I want to trust You and put You on the throne of my heart."

When you place your faith in Jesus and call out to Him for the forgiveness of your sins, God says, "My salvation is yours. I save you from your sin and draw you to Myself, so you will know Me forever."

God, I pray for people to trust in Jesus today in this way. I pray for all kinds of men and women, students, children who have trusted in You. I pray that You would help us this week, this month and in the months to come. Amidst all the unknowns, help us STOP and seek You in prayer about everything, trust You through prayers of thanksgiving, open our minds to that which comes from You and put into practice Your Word. We trust that we will experience Your peace that passes all understanding and that we will know You and experience Your presence with us.

All glory be to Your name for other-worldly peace and for reconciliation to You that will last forever, giving us a cornerstone to cling to in the middle of a very uncertain world. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

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