

ANXIOUS *for* NOTHING

FINDING CALM *in a* CHAOTIC WORLD

By Max Lucado with Jenna Lucado Bishop

Read Philippians 4:4-8

OPENING REFLECTION

When I (Jenna) was growing up, my dad had school drop-off duty. And without fail, every morning as he slowed the car to a stop and we hurriedly unbuckled our seat belts, grabbed our backpacks, and threw open the doors, he would give the same exhortation: “Girls, have a good day. Laugh a lot. Learn a lot. And don’t forget who gave it to ya.”

I never thought much about the phrase growing up. My sisters and I would just robotically say it with him and then quickly yell,

“Okay, Dad!” before slamming the car doors shut.

Laugh, learn, remember.

As a young girl I naturally did just that. Laughing came easily.

Learning was fun. Remembering God as the giver of my day? It wasn’t always on my mind, but I never doubted God was with me and cared for me.

But then I started to grow up. And with growing up came more responsibility. And with more responsibility came anxiety. It wasn’t long before homework hours lengthened, friends hurt me, and I hurt them. Pretty soon I was taking my SATs, learning how to interview for jobs, paying bills. Marriage brought deep joy, but also deep struggles. Cancer invaded the family, and my heroes in life passed away. Babies were born—yet another level of worry.

The older I got, the less I naturally lived my dad’s exhortation to laugh, learn, and remember. The serious struggles of life squelched laughter. The joy of learning turned into pressure to achieve. And remembering God? The anxieties of life pushed out thoughts of him.

That’s why it’s hard for me to accept Paul’s words in Philippians

4:4, “Rejoice in the Lord always.” *Always?* How are we supposed to do that with the pain and anxiety of life?

In this session, we will see that rejoicing in the Lord does not mean we are in a constant state of excitement. We don’t have to carry a guitar around and sing worship songs all day.

It's not about plastering on a fake smile as we walk through a dark time. No, rejoicing in the Lord *always* is about a deep remembering.

Remembering that the Lord is here, *always*.

Remembering that the Lord is in control, *always*.

Remembering that the Lord is not only the giver of your day but also the ordainer of every minute inside of it, *always*.

Remembering that amidst the pressures, pain, and anxiety in life, he is sovereign, *always*.

As we remember, I have an inkling we may discover the carefree child we used to be. Laughing a lot more. Learning a lot more. And not forgetting who is with us through it all.

What was one thing that stood out to you from Philippians 4:4-8?

Why do these words stand out to you, and what fresh insight do they bring?

What does "rejoicing in the Lord" mean? In your life, have you found it difficult or natural to rejoice in the Lord? Why?

What did you learn from the video?

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."

The word *anxiety* 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.

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

We have been taught 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 Paul writes to “be anxious for nothing,” he is referring to an ongoing state. His words could be translated, “Don’t let anything in life leave you *perpetually* in angst and breathless.”

Paul’s prescription for anxiety is a call to “rejoice in the Lord.”

This is not a call to a feeling but to a decision.

The sovereignty of God refers to his perfect governing over all things. God works in and through every detail of his creation to accomplish his divine purpose. We have the astounding privilege to be a part of this perfect plan.

To rejoice in the Lord, we must have a deep **belief in his sovereignty over our lives**. The more **we believe in his control, the more we relinquish our control**.

If we need proof, take a look at a few scriptures

Scripture includes many verses that can bring comfort and peace to the worried heart. Read Psalm 56:3; Matthew 6:25–34; and 1 Peter 5:6–8.

What prescription does each passage give for anxiety?

How does the world teach us to cope with anxiety? How does the world’s solution for anxiety differ from God’s solution?

--Eugene Peterson says, “[The fact] that God followers don’t get preferential treatment in life always comes as a surprise.”²

Have you ever expected special treatment from God? If so, how did it affect your relationship with him when you experienced hard times?

Read 2 Corinthians 11:23–28 aloud. What trials did Paul face?

Now read 2 Corinthians 12:1–10, where Paul talks about a constant trial God would not take away. What is God’s response to Paul’s prayer in verse 9?

How does God display his strength when we are feeling weak or anxious?

The first prescription Paul gives for anxiety is this: **“Rejoice in the Lord always.”** Hundreds of years before Paul wrote his letter, the prophet Habakkuk wrote similar words. Read Habakkuk 3:17–19.

How does Habakkuk describe God in these verses?

What names does Habakkuk use for God?

Why does Habakkuk say he can rejoice in God though the fig trees wither and crops fail?

If you want to rejoice in God regardless of your circumstances, it is crucial that you learn to trust in his sovereignty. What prevents you from trusting in the sovereignty of God?

How does trusting in God's sovereignty affect the way you perceive life's trials?

In today's session, Max described the difference between fear and anxiety. Fear **sees** a threat, while **anxiety imagines** one. Fear screams, "Get out!" Anxiety ponders, "What if?" **Take a minute to write down three "what ifs" that are causing you anxiety—three worries that are weighing you down.** Keep this paper safe so at the end of this study you can reevaluate the list and see how God has brought supernatural peace to these anxious places in your heart.

CLOSING PRAYER

Wrap up this time by talking to the Father. You may want to begin the prayer time by reading aloud Isaiah 45:9–12, a powerful passage about the sovereignty of God:

Woe to those who quarrel with their Maker,
those who are nothing but potsherds among the potsherds on the ground.
Does the clay say to the potter, "What are you making?"
Does your work say, "The potter has no hands?"
Woe to the one who says to a father,
"What have you begotten?"
or to a mother,
"What have you brought to birth?"
This is what the Lord says—the Holy One of Israel, and its Maker:
Concerning things to come,
do you question me about my children,
or give me orders about the work of my hands?
It is I who made the earth and created mankind on it.
My own hands stretched out the heavens;
I marshaled their starry hosts.