

For the first few months of 2020, we are working on a new format for Life Group discussion guides. These new guides will still use the Bible passages and topics from the weekend message, but they will also be designed to help your Life Group members learn how to study the Bible on their own. We will be using the acronym HEAR as a way to teach people to read the Bible and to organize these discussion guides. HEAR stands for **H**ighlight the passage, **E**xplain the passage, **A**pply the passage, and **R**espond to the passage.

Each week, there will be a page to print off for each member of your group. The printed sheet will have the Bible passage you'll discuss and some questions in the margins to guide them in examining those verses.

Additionally, there will be a leader's guide that will give you helpful notes on the passage (i.e. background information and definitions) as well as discussion questions to lead your group. These don't need to be printed for each member of your group.

These guides are designed to be discussed BEFORE the sermon, so the group can discuss the passage before the pastor shares his insights. However, they can just as easily be used after the weekend message.

Our hope is these tools will (a) help your group members learn to study/read their Bibles outside of the group and (b) give you a helpful outline for facilitating the group discussion. If you have comments or questions about the new format, we'd love to hear your constructive feedback. Send your feedback to me at

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In the months of January and February, we will be looking at making first and next steps towards true change in the areas of purpose, mental health, finances, and relationships.

How to Use This Discussion Guide

- Use the summary statement for each week to quickly understand the text's theme. You can use that as a reference point to help guide your discussion or bring it back if your group begins to get off topic.
- Use the prayer prompt at the end of each guide to help you close in prayer.

Additionally, here are some tips and guidelines to help you lead these discussions:

1. **Choose the questions that best fit your group and your time constraints.** There are a lot of questions in this guide and your group may not be able to discuss them all. That's okay! You don't have to ask all of them. Before your group begins, choose the questions that are most likely to help your group understand what God is saying in the text and how to apply it to their lives.
2. **Prepare for your group time by reading the passages and the notes in a study Bible.** A good study Bible can give you some insights into the passages and how they connect to the whole book or the whole story of the Bible.
3. **Begin every group meeting with prayer.** We can only understand and apply God's Word with the help of the Holy Spirit. So, invite the Spirit to open your hearts and minds to what He says to His people.
4. **Keep the conversation focused on Scripture as much as possible.** Some people may want to bring in their opinions or continually refer to what the teaching pastor said during his message. This is helpful in small doses, but the goal of this discussion guide is to help you determine what God is saying in His Word. Encourage the group to continue to return to the Scripture. One way to do that is by saying, "That's a great insight! Where do you see that in the Scripture we're studying?"
5. **Encourage participation, but don't let anyone dominate.** Encourage everyone to share insights, ask questions, and read aloud. But don't allow any one person – even yourself, the leader – to monopolize the time. Some people are just unaware of themselves and how much they speak, so gently encourage them to listen and make space for others to talk.
6. **Help your group members to be specific in the application of Scripture.** It is easy to generalize when we talk about the Bible and how to apply it. So ask your group members specific questions – for example, "What part of the world do you sense God wants you to pray for? How will you do that? How will you make that a habit?"

We pray that you will hear God speak through His Word and that His Spirit will move you to obey Him. The Word of God – the Bible – lets us know the God who loves us and saves us. May this discussion guide help you and your Life Group to become more immersed in His story.

Date of Sermon: January 18-19, 2020

Topic of Sermon: Moving from anxiety to peace

Main Passage: Philippians 4:4-7

BEFORE your group meeting:

- Look up the main passage in a study Bible and read the study notes
- Print off or send the “Group Member Guide” (page 4) for your group members
- Review the “Group Member Guide” for yourself
- Have enough pens for each group member.

Topic of Life Group Meeting: A follower of Jesus brings his or her anxieties to God in prayer.

Icebreakers (optional)

- Who is your favorite person to talk to? When was the last time you spoke with him or her?
- How would your life be different if you couldn't talk to that person for an extended period of time?

Leader's Note: Introduce the next part of the group meeting. You can read this introduction or put it in your own words:

“Today, we're going to spend a few minutes studying the focal passage on our own before we discuss it as a group. I've printed out a copy of the Bible passage for you. There are some questions in the margins to help you. Spend most of your time on the Highlight and Explain questions. Feel free to mark up, underline or highlight the passage. We'll spend most of our time discussing Philippians 4:4-7. It's important to know that Paul – who was originally a murderer and persecutor of Christians before he encountered Jesus – wrote this letter from prison after being arrested for sharing about Jesus with others. I'm going to give us about 5 minutes to read and reflect. Let me begin by praying that God will open our minds and hearts to His Word.”

When you come back together, use the questions below to guide the discussion.

HIGHLIGHT the Passage

- What key ideas, words or phrases stood out to you from the passage today? What is the significance of those?
- Did this passage raise any questions for you?
- How would you summarize this passage in your own words? Would anyone else add or emphasize something to that summary?

EXPLAIN the Passage

- What are some things this passage revealed about God? His nature, His work, or His character?
- What are some things this passage revealed about people?
- If the Bible says, “Do not worry about anything,” what does that tell us about worry?
- What things tend to cause anxiety for people? What causes you anxiety right now?
- Why do you think Paul prefaced the command to not be anxious (verse 6) with the command to “rejoice in the Lord” (verse 4)?
- What is your response to this statement? “Worship provides perspective.”
- What does Paul say will happen when we devote ourselves to praying to God about our troubles? (verse 7)

APPLY the Passage

- What truth from this passage do you need to cling to? What makes that truth significant to you?
- By God's power, what is God calling you to change in how you think, speak, or act?
- What is the biggest hindrance in your life right now that is keeping you from humbly and regularly praying to God?
- How might you commit yourself anew to prayer this week?

RESPOND to the Passage

- Close in prayer, thanking God for inviting us into a relationship with Him through Jesus. Pray we would see prayer not just as an opportunity to get from God what we want, but as an invitation to a deeper, sweeter relationship with Him.

COMMENTARY NOTES ON THE MAIN PASSAGE

4:4. Rejoice in the Lord, Paul wrote (v. 4). Paul did not command his readers to be happy. People are happy when they consider the things that happen to them to be lucky or fortunate. Happiness, in other words, depends on outer circumstances. Instead of calling the Philippians to happiness, though, Paul called them to joy in the Lord. Whereas happiness flows from outer circumstances, joy comes from an inner conviction that God is working in our lives even in the worst circumstances and from our relationship with Jesus Christ. Paul's point is that in every circumstance we can rejoice in the Lord.

4:5. The term translated graciousness is a strong word (v. 5). The term conveys the idea of a patient individual who is able to submit to ill treatment by others without being overcome by a desire to strike back at the offending party. Only through a strong and vibrant trust in God when facing trouble could a person display such strength of character. The phrase translated the Lord is near could refer to the fact that the Lord is always with us spiritually as well as to the fact that the second coming of Christ is close at hand.

4:6. Paul again gave a strong admonition when he wrote, "Don't worry about anything" (v. 6). The term translated worry means "to be torn apart." He instructed his readers to discard their worries and anxieties and encouraged them to make time for fervent prayer, which is the true antidote for anxiety and worry.

4:7. We cannot fully comprehend the peace that God graciously bestows on all who seek Him through prayer in times of anxiety (v. 7). Such peace is not the absence of trouble but a state of well-being that comes from a right relationship with God. Worry is anxiety (Mt 6:25-34). Prayer is the antidote for worry. Three words express different aspects of prayer: Prayer, a worshipful attitude; petition, a need; and requests, the specific concern. Thanksgiving shapes prayers with gratitude. In response, the peace of God brings power to endure. The peace surpasses knowledge, calming a troubling situation when explanations fail. Further, peace guards by keeping anxieties from hearts (choices) and minds (attitudes).

Life Group Member Guide

Focal Passage: Philippians 4:4-7 (ESV)

Passage in Context: Philippians 3:17-4:9 (ESV)



Bible-Reading Tip: Know your history. Use a study Bible to find out what was happening when the book you're reading was written. This letter to the Philippians was written by Paul – a former murderer and persecutor of Christians – and he was writing from prison for sharing about Jesus with others.

¹⁷ Brothers, join in imitating me, and keep your eyes on those who walk according to the example you have in us. ¹⁸ For many, of whom I have often told you and now tell you even with tears, walk as enemies of the cross of Christ. ¹⁹ Their end is destruction, their god is their belly, and they glory in their shame, with minds set on earthly things. ²⁰ But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, ²¹ who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself.

4 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.

HEAR Bible Reading Method

HIGHLIGHT the passage

- Underline any repeated words or key ideas you see.
- Note any questions you have about what you read.
- In 2-3 sentences, summarize what was said or what happened.

EXPLAIN the passage

- What was revealed about God? His character, desires, and/or actions?
- What was revealed about people? What we are/do or what we should be/do?

APPLY the passage

- From this reading, what truth do you need to embrace?
- By God's power, how will you THINK, SPEAK, or ACT differently based on what you read?

RESPOND to the passage

- Talk to God about what you've seen and learned in this passage.
- Ask Him to help you apply the truth to your life.