

Sermon Series: More Than Enough: How Jesus Meets Our Deepest Needs

To be used with: Session Four: Our Need for Peace

Sermon Title Possibilities: The Believer's Peace;
Our Peace in Christ

Scripture: Philippians 4:4-9

Connection with Unit Theme: To complement the small group study *More Than Enough* these sermon outlines will use similar Scripture passages to reinforce the same themes as the study regarding our need for peace.

Introduction: Americans live in comfortable homes, but domestic violence is at an all-time high. Our cities are the most modern in the world, yet the streets are unsafe. Our communication technology is unsurpassed, but there is constant misunderstanding. In fact, people come to church so filled with anxiety that it is almost impossible for sermons to put them to sleep.

We desperately long for peace. The businessmen facing the pressures of a merger, a homemaker trying to corral the kids, a student coping with insecurity at school, a single adult desiring a mate; they all want peace. But most of us, if we're honest with ourselves, have to admit that we experience more stress, frustration, and hostility than peace.

Sitting in a jail cell in a prison in Rome with a death sentence hanging over him, the apostle Paul had all the outward signs that would lead to stress and a lack of peace. At the time Paul wrote his letter to the Philippians, he had been in prison for four years. He was dependent on others for his survival, misunderstood and opposed by many, uncertain about his future. He should have been stressed, but he was not. He provides us with some simple yet profound steps to peace.

1. Rejoice no matter what. (v. 4)

Rejoicing is clearly a scriptural command. To ignore it is disobedience. Paul commanded us to release our sense of humor, find the bright side, look for the sunny side, find the joy, and delight in laughter. Paraphrasing, Paul instructed, "Don't be uptight. Loosen up. Poke some fun. Laugh freely. Live lightheartedly."

Rejoicing is to the soul what aeration is to a lawn. Aeration pokes holes in the lawn to loosen the soil so it can breathe so the roots of the grass can grow and the lawn can become healthier.

2. Don't be anxious. (v. 6)

Worry and anxiety are a great source of stress. Worry is assuming responsibility that God never intended for us to have. It's playing God, trying to control the uncontrollable.

Worry is worthless. It cannot change the past or control the future. It only messes you up right now. It is an incredible waste of energy. Worry divides the mind. We get our English word *worry* from the German word *wurgen*, which means “to strangle, to choke.”

Worry is like weeds in the lawn. Weeds will choke the grass out. Left unattended, a lawn will eventually return to a pasture of weeds. That’s what worry does to our lives. It chokes out our joy, stifles our spirit, harasses us mentally, strings us out emotionally, strangles us spiritually, and diminishes our motivation.

3. Pray about everything. (v. 6)

When the stresses of life come we have two options: Panic or pray. Try to deal with them ourselves or turn them over to God. If we spent our time praying instead of worrying, we’d have a whole lot less to worry about.

The word *everything* means everything. We are to pray about everything, not just the religious stuff. God is interested in every detail. And, speaking of details, the word *petition* means a specific, detailed request. Get specific with God. Tell him exactly what you desire and what you need. Most people pray vague and general prayers that are lifeless and powerless.

To root out the weeds of worry in the lawn of our life we need healthy grass. Water is essential to a healthy lawn. Water loosens the soil, nourishes the roots, and provides nitrogen and oxygen to the grass. Because of the abundance of rain in the spring, or a sprinkler system, the grass is healthy and lush.

Prayer is like that rain. God showers us with his blessings, raining down his care upon us.

4. Think positively. (v. 8)

Paul doesn’t tell us to behave differently; he instructs us to think differently. Instead of focusing on the negative and reviewing everything that could go wrong, think positive, happy thoughts. It sounds like advice from a greeting card, but thinking happy, calming thoughts can counteract the physiological changes that occur when we’re under stress.

Philippians 4:8 is like a nutrient list on the fertilizer bag. It tells us exactly which thoughts to supply in order to grow a peaceful, stress free mind. Thoughts that are: true, consistent with God and his Word; noble, worthy of respect; right, just and holy; pure, morally clean; lovely, pleasing and gracious; admirable, highly regarded; excellent, top quality; praiseworthy, deserving of high recognition.

Our thinking may not clear up immediately. Re-growing a lawn takes some time and effort, too. Once it’s done, maintenance is a whole lot easier. When a weed invades a healthy lawn, it’s obvious. But if a weed appears in a larger patch of weeds, it just blends in with all the rest, and we are overwhelmed. In the same way, a thought of worry is more obvious when the mind is filled with peace. As thoughts become more peaceful, worry becomes a trigger that reminds us to analyze our thinking.

5. Reap the benefits of peace. (vv. 7,9)

The peace of God will guard our hearts and minds. The word *guard* is a military word meaning to guard or post a sentinel. The Philippians knew the word *guard* well for they knew the Roman legion kept the peace in Philippi. In like manner, God will guard our minds and hearts when we have a relationship with Him and trust Him moment by moment. When the stressful events of life come, God will put a garrison, a sentry guard, around our hearts and when worry comes knocking on our doors He will protect us with His peace.

Conclusion: The God of peace will be with us. Not only do we have protection from God, we have the presence of God. Just as God was with the children of Israel in the desert, just as he was with Paul in prison, He is with us when we face the disappointments, problems, and stresses of life. That is one promise we can count on. He is with us. What better guarantee do we need?

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