**Philippians 4:5-8 – Advice for Handling Worry and Stress**

Many people worry and live stressful lives. Probably most of us have struggled with worry and stress. And we are not here to hammer on those of who worry. I at times do, and I get stressful. Situations and circumstances affect us. We worry about our jobs, get stressed out over money and rising costs. We worry about our families. The list could be quite long, and some people are, it seems chronic worriers.

According to [The American Institute of Stress](https://www.stress.org/daily-life): About 33 percent of people report feeling extreme stress, and in that 55 percent of people feel stressed every day. 77 percent of people experience stress that affects their physical health. 73 percent of people have stress that impacts their [mental health](https://www.therecoveryvillage.com/mental-health/). 48 percent of people have trouble sleeping because of stress.

The facts are, worry affects us physically. It can cause headaches, fatigue, at times, heart issues. It affects our relationships. Now, not all of these symptoms are because of worry or stress but it does affect us physically, emotionally, mentally, and spiritually. When we live in worry and stress, it weighs other people down.

It is something that many people deal with, stress and worry. But as we shall see this morning, God does have a remedy for worry and stress. And it does, at times, take time to overcome these things in our life.

**1) Practical advice for handling stress and worry.** This is not to make light of the fact that we do get stressed out, that we worry about things. **Vss. 5-7** gives us some help when we begin to worry about something or to feel overwhelmed, stressed out, you name it.

In **vs. 5** Paul, obviously hoping for the return of the Lord in his lifetime (The Lord is at hand can also mean that because of the Holy Spirit, the Lord is among His people), tells us to let our **“reasonableness”** be known to everyone. What does this word **“reasonableness”** mean? **Thayer** has it as **“equitable, fair, mild, gentle.”** **Mounce** has **“mildness, gentleness.”**

The **BKC** tells us that the word we are looking at suggests a **“forebearing, nonretaliatory spirit.”** Joy is seen in how we respond to situations and people. Think of the problem that was happening in the Philippian church that we looked at last week, the issue that was causing disunity. How this was handled would be noted by believers and those who did not know the Lord. Harshness in our response helps no one. In fact, it just causes more problems.

We don’t retaliate when things are going south, we show mercy and put others first. That is how our **“reasonableness”** is seen. Again, this does not mean we get walked on. It means that we take the high road and want unity in the body of Christ, the church.

Now, in **vs. 6** Paul begins with reminding us not to be anxious about anything. Worry, stress, fear, being overwhelmed, are just a few words that come to mind when we see the word **“anxious.”** We are to be in no way **“anxious.”** It is a command to not be anxious, which, unless there was some practical advice from Paul on what he means may not mean much.

Paul’s concern for us to not be overcome with worry and stress is seen at the beginning of the verse. We see that at the beginning with the phrase **“do not” which can mean “not at all, in no respect.”** We are not to allow things to make us anxious.

I realize that it is not always easy to not worry and fret. But we gain nothing from doing so as we have seen. Jesus talked about this in **Mt. 6**. Now, let us define the word used in **Phil. 4:6**, translated as “**anxious.”** **Joseph Thayer,** has it meaning **“to be troubled with cares.”** Finances, health, relational, cultural, I mean, we, if we focus on the bad stuff, we can get anxious and worry and it eats us up. These will hinder our walk with God, and we must as we are going to see, take these things to Christ.

Now, before going any further on this I want to mention something. I do think there is a “right” place for concern and care. What I mean by that can be seen in what Paul said regarding all the churches that he ministered to and had on his mind. In **2 Cor. 11:28** he talked about the daily pressure caused by his anxiety for the churches that he ministered to.

The word for **“anxiety”** in **2 Cor. 11:28** has the idea of **“caring for something.”** We should care about our kids, our friends, our church, but we are not to be overwhelmed with anxiety in a negative sense, stress, and worry. Paul is talking in **Phil. 4:6** about debilitating anxiety, care, and worry.

In **Phil. 2:20** Paul talked about sending Timothy to Philippi because no one would care for the church as well as he would. We are to care for people. We are not to live in worry and stress and not trust God.

Paul says in **Phil. 4:6** that instead of worrying and being anxious, we are to give things to God in prayer. We can let Him know our needs as well as other’s needs. We are to come to Him in prayer with thanksgiving. That means that as we pray, we thank Him that He is in control, that He knows what is best and what is going on, and we leave it with Him. God is totally aware of our situation, so we trust Him.

We make our needs known, we pray for others, we ask God to help us in the situation that has led to us worrying about things, and we leave it with Him, thanking Him for caring for us. **The three words Paul uses regarding bringing things to God (prayer, supplication, requests) overlap**.

The word for **“prayer” is a general term about talking to God but carries the idea of worship and reverence when we go to God.** It is giving Him His proper place in our life. **“Supplication”** **are needs brought before His throne and “requests” is “a thing asked for.”** But the key is doing so with thanksgiving, with the right attitude and done with a worshipful heart as we ask for His help. And we need to leave those worrisome situations with God.

**Vs. 7** tells us what the result will be when we come to the Lord with the right heart. His peace, His comfort, His assurance, His giving us rest in Him, as we give our situation and any requests to God, will **“guard”** our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus, for He is Who we are identified with.

**“Hearts and minds” cover our emotions, intellect, will, conscience.** These two words speak about our inner person, who we are. Stress and worry affect us physically, emotionally, mentally, and spiritually.

When we go to Him in prayer and are willing to continually do so and let Him respond according to His will, He **“guards”** our thoughts, emotions, and actions. The word **“guard” comes from a word that was used to describe protection by a military guard.** Speaking here in our verse, it means **“to protect by guarding”** because of our connection to Christ. The **“in Christ Jesus”** is vital here.

We lean on the fact that we belong to Christ, that we are His. **William Mounce** notes that it means **“to keep in a state of settlement or security.”** We can rest in Christ, that He is walking with us in the good times and the bad.

**Note:** We must be willing to do what **vs. 6** says for **vs. 7** to have affect. Worry and fear stop the Lord from guarding our hearts and minds. We start thinking things we should not. We make things up. We freeze in fear of the future and the present. We worry about things that may not have even occurred. We must be willing to give our stresses to God and thank Him that He knows better than us about what to do.

Humanly speaking, this peace of God goes beyond what we may fully grasp or understand or perceive. When things are tough, we are to pray and lean on God. When taking any requests to Him we are to trust Him, to rely on Him and the peace He gives. We cannot comprehend the amazing peace God gives and it is based on our relationship **“in Christ Jesus.”** We have peace with God, and we have the peace of God.

Now, we move on to vs. 8 which is important as well whenever we are dealing with worry and stress. The things we allow into our minds affect us and so what Paul says here in this verse will help us in dealing with things that we think about.

**2) Things to think about.** Paul, in **Phil. 4:8**, gives us some ideas of what we are to focus and think on that helps us overcome worry, fears, and other struggles that we have in our mind. Let’s quickly define and apply Paul’s words to us today and I want us to think about something personable and practical that exemplifies each statement of Paul’s. So here we go. We begin with “whatever is.”

**\*\* True.** Where is truth found? In God’s Word. So when we hear things, or see things that are purposely trying to lead us astray from what we know to be true, we must think about truth, the truth as found in the Word of God. That is what is real. We do not listen to lies, rumors, falsehoods, false promises, etc. We know that truth and reality go together.

Things that are faithful, reliable. This is found in the character of God. When someone makes a promise that seems too good to be true, it usually is. So, we check things out. We use our minds to compare teachings, beliefs, etc. We know that many things that make us worry are not connected to truth.

**\*\* Honorable.** Things that are worthy of respect, dignified, exalted in character. It has the idea of taking life seriously. It does not mean we cannot smile and laugh. It is found in **1 Tim. 3:8** and **Titus 2:2**. We do not act like what is happening in the world does not matter.

But we also do not respond in panic and fear. We look at things from God’s perspective. When we begin to allow the thinking of the world, its negativity and attacks on us, to get to us, we must choose to turn our attention and respond in our thinking, believing that God is in control. Again, there is a trust factor.

How do we respond when the things of the world, often trivial things, begin to fill our mind. We immediately choose to think about the attributes of God, the doctrines of the faith, God’s amazing grace. These are honorable. It takes a thankful heart before God, to do this.

**\*\* Just.** This has to do with doing what is right according to God’s standards. It is not about what is convenient. It is about what is right. It is seen in how we treat people. it is seen in how we do business. The world says we are divided over social standing, education, etc. When we think about what is right by God’s standards, we will treat everyone as Christ would want us to.

When we are bombarded with false narratives, messed up worldviews, etc., and our mind begins to focus on them, we must turn our minds to thinking of God’s standards. How are we to treat others? How are we to do business?

At times, this means clarifying truths of God from the things being taught in the world. We speak up against CRT, gender confusion, abortion, etc. These things going on around us lead to worry and stress. We need to take a different approach. Instead of worry, we choose, because we are thinking of what Scripture says, to do what we are supposed to in accordance with God’s Word. We choose to do this.

**\*\* Pure.** We are bombarded in our world by immorality, greed, selfish advertisements, etc., etc. If not careful, we can allow thoughts into our life that are flat out wrong, that lead to stress and worry. The word **“pure”** reminds us of the need to make decisions when our minds wander into immorality or greed.

Do you ever get thoughts in your mind that are bad. They sometimes just pop up. When they do, we have a choice. We can allow the flesh to take that thought, which has been planted there by the flesh, and go for it, or we can at that point ask God to help us and start thinking of something different. The more we grow in our relationship with God, we will find that it is in fact, because we are drawing close to God, easier to change our thoughts with the Lord’s help. Pure is thinking the right kind of thoughts.

**\*\* Lovely.** What does this mean, to think about things that are lovely? The word means **“acceptable, pleasing, agreeable.”** Obviously, to be bitter, or angry, is unacceptable and not pleasing to God. It also leads to worry and stress. Do we bring conflict and problems?

This is why we are to forgive, and be kind, and be patient with each other, as **Col. 3:12-16** gives us a list of what we are to think and how we are to act. The flesh loves to bring into our mind things that are not honoring to God. Those are seen in passages such as **Gal. 5:21-22**.

One writer notes that this word has to do with being one who promotes peace. As **Rom. 12:17-21** tells us, we are to do our part to be at peace with others. Thus, the willingness to forgive, be kind, and give every situation to God to let Him work.

Again, the decision to think on acceptable things does rely on us. We have a new mind in Christ, but it is growing, developing, being renewed. But as **Eph. 4** tells us, that new life in Christ is what we build off. Instead of worrying, think of things that are pleasing. Be patient with others, forgiving, caring.

**\*\* Commendable. Thayer** describes this word as **“things spoken in a kindly spirit, with good-will to others.”** Do we enjoy destroying people’s character? Or gossiping? How about slandering? God is not pleased when our mind goes in that direction. And this can lead to stress and worry. No one wants to be caught saying these things, or we worry about what someone may say about us.

If someone could see our thoughts, what would they see. Stuff that we do not have to be embarrassed by? Our words speak to the condition of our heart. Are our conversations full of negativity because of what we are thinking or are they encouraging and uplifting. Our minds do determine what flows out of our mouth. And what flows out of our mouth at times causes worry and stress.

These six words are wrapped up with the idea that if anything else is **“excellent”, which describes moral excellence, modest, our pure, think on those things also.** One of its usages has to do with a virtuous course of thought, feeling, and action **(2 Peter 1:5)**. Think on things that bring praise to God. We must feed our thoughts, our minds, with the proper things. It is a growing experience but one that we must work on.

In closing, let us consider a few things:

**1) Worry and stress do not have to control us.** We must take God at His Word, do what He advises us to in **Phil. 4:6** and when we do, **vs. 7** will become real. We may have to continually do this, but there is no reason to live under the weight of worry and stress.

**2) Recalibrate, if necessary, our thinking.** What we allow to control our minds leads to worry and stress. Think of practical ways to apply **vs. 8** and what to think about that lines up with each of these words that we see here. Write it down if necessary.