TRUSTING

"Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."

- Philippians 4:6-7-



Foreword

I think all of us can relate to struggles coming from worry, anxiety, and issues of control. Through it all, God extends an opportunity for us to trust Him and His plan.

Trust is more than a word we say during hard times. Trust is an action that changes the direction of our lives. Trusting God turns us away from ourselves and positions us to experience Jesus in the midst of the uncertain moments of life.

The book of Philippians is full of encouragement for followers of Jesus. The book was written to assure believers that Christ gives meaning and purpose to life. Paul, the author, wanted the original recipients to know that they could serve Jesus no matter the situation they faced. This message is just as applicable to us two thousand years later!

We embrace the truths taught in Philippians as we walk through uncertain moments inviting Jesus to bring meaning and purpose to our lives. Right now, in this moment, we have the chance to love and serve Jesus with hearts full of trust. This is especially true when we face hard times that tempt us to worry or try to control the situations going on around us. These hard times reveal the spaces and places where worry, fear, and control issues try to hide. These are the areas where we need Jesus the most. What can we do with these hidden areas? Thankfully, God's Word provides the answer!

Tucked away in the final chapter of Philippians is a passage of scripture that shares the path to experiencing God's peace. Before we look at the passage, take a moment and think about the area(s) of life causing you to experience anxiety, worry, and issues of control. Once you think about your area(s), write them down in a journal, then pray and ask God to help you get real about what is going on in your life so you can learn how to trust God more.



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(Philippians 4:6-7)

Each day we have an invitation to trust God with anything. Two words jump off the page in this invitation. The words are anxious and anything. Let's take a closer look at each.

- The word anxious can also be translated as worry or concern.
- The word anything really means anything.

The bottom line from this invitation is that we should not worry or concern ourselves about anything! Immediately, I'm hitting the pause button. "God, do you really want me to throw my hands up in the air and NOT care about the hard stuff going on in my life or the lives of others?" No, I don't think that is what God is saying! Throughout Scripture the invitation is clear, "Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you." (1 Peter 5:7)

So what should we do with the hard stuff that keeps us up at night or causes us to miss a meal because we can't eat or causes us to eat too much because that is all we know to do? I'm so glad God provides a clear answer. We are invited to trust God with the stressful areas of life. In fact, we are invited to have such a strong trust in God that our minds actually become free from anxiety and issues of control because of our deep dependence on God right in the middle of the hard times!

Naturally, this begs a question that has to be asked and answered. "Do I really trust God with the details going on in my life?" I remember the day I had to face this question for myself. I was driving down the road "talking" to God about all the things going wrong in life. From finances, to unknown things about the future, to friendships, to health issues with others- I was struggling in big ways.



During my conversation with God, I was reminded of an important fact. When I was a little girl, I trusted Jesus with the most important decision in life which was my salvation. At the age of six, I placed my faith in Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection. In that moment, I knew Jesus forgave me of my sins. I can't think of a bigger step of faith than that one! But, as an adult, when it came to the day-in-and-day-out areas of life where I needed to demonstrate trust, I held back from God. I kept God at arm's length as I tried to control the situations going on in and around me. This realization was staggering to me as a "church girl" who loved Jesus and served Him in many ways.

Not long after my realization that trusting God was a struggle, I started wondering, "What does trusting God really mean and how can I trust God more?" My quest for a deeper understanding of trust led me to many places. I read my Bible. I prayed. I talked to close friends. I invited others to join me in praying. Then I decided to look up the word "trust" in the dictionary.

As a little girl who grew up with dyslexia, one skill I was taught and lovingly forced to practice was looking up definitions for words in the dictionary. As a result, I got to know Webster's dictionary so well that I affectionately named it "Web." According to Web, trust is an "assured reliance on the character, ability, strength, or truth of someone or something. As a result, a willingness exists to place your confidence in that person or thing." As I read the definition, I immediately loved it. I know the definition provided a way for me to explore my level of trust in God.



Character describes who God is! What we believe about God is important. Our beliefs about God will impact every aspect of our lives. If we want to trust God more, we need to get to know God more. I love that Psalm 100:3 reminds us that we can know that the Lord is God!

"Know that the Lord is God. It is he who made us, and we are his; we are his people the sheep of his pasture." Psalm 100:3

Ability describes what God can do! God is willing and able to work on our behalf. There is never a situation that is too hard for God. God has a plan and will move life forward in a way that honors Himself and is beneficial to His children. We are never in "too much" trouble or "too much" of a hard spot for God. Trusting God means knowing God can handle any and every situation in life with wisdom, love, and grace. Psalm 68:19 reminds us that God daily bears the burdens that cause anxiety, worry, and issues of control.

"Praise be to the Lord, to God our Savior, who daily bears our burdens." Psalm 68:19

Strength describes how God will accomplish tasks in our lives! Trusting how God works during the difficult moments of life brings peace to our hearts and minds. This important step in the trusting process speaks to the way God works in and through us. Isaiah 25:1 reminds us that God works in perfect faithfulness. Let that truth sink into the hard situations going on in your life. In the midst of the confusion and unknown, God is perfectly and faithfully at work. The cherry on the top of this truth is that God's perfect and faithful work was hidden in His heart and mind long ago.

"O Lord, you are my God; I will exalt you and praise your name, for in perfect faithfulness you have done marvelous things, things planned long ago." Isaiah 25:1



Truth describes God's pure intentions along the way! God's motive is always clear. He is without sin. He is the very essence of light and life. The way God works and the purpose behind God's plan is full of love. In fact, God is love. Not only that, God is the perfect example of demonstrated love. When we understand that God is good, His ways are good, and His plans are good, we accept the truth that God's intentions towards us are never for harm even when our circumstances tempt us to believe something different. Psalm 145 reminds us that God's intentions are saturated in love.

"The Lord is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and rich in love. The Lord is good to all; he has compassion on all he has made. Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and your dominion endures through all generations. The Lord is faithful to all his promises and loving toward all he has made." Psalm 145:13

Confidence becomes our response to the above truths! When we know God's character, ability, strength, and truth, the outcome will be a powerful confidence in God even during hard times. God's peace will protect us from falling into the trap of judging the goodness of God based on our circumstances. (Loving God when life is good but fearing God when life is hard.) Rather, a steadiness will become our reality as we daily demonstrate the right way to live that results in quietness and confidence rather than worry and issues of control. Isaiah 32:17 reminds us that what comes out of our lives is a direct result of what is going on inside our lives.

"The fruit of righteousness will be peace; the effect of righteousness will be quietness and confidence forever." Isaiah 32:17



Friend, God CAN be trusted. His ways are higher than our ways. He is always on the move and working for our good and His glory. When we believe these truths, a firm reality grounds us. God loves us and He has a plan for our lives! At no point is life out of control. Our circumstances do not have to control us. God is always in control and always working. Daily the invitation from God is clear—"Child, you can trust Me."

The stakes are high when it comes to trusting God with anything. Worry, anxiety, and a desire to be in control can be a thing of the past. Focusing on who God is and how God faithfully works provides a way to build our trust in God. Once we trust God, we are ready to present our requests to God. However, if we don't trust God's character, ability, strength, and truth at a deep level, we will never truly give Him the areas of life that are causing worry, anxiety and issues of control.

Right now, talk to God about your fear of trusting Him. Sometimes it's hard to let go of control by admitting our need for help. If that is where you find yourself, don't beat yourself up. Just start an honest conversation with God about your struggles. Invite God into the brokenness and pain. You will find that God is so loving and tender. He is with you and for you. You are never alone, and you can trust Him!



"Do not be anxious about anything but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." (Philippians 4:6-7)

A strong foundation in life is built on truth. The truth is that when we trust God, we are willing to present the things going on in life to God. If we don't trust God, we will worry about things, experience anxiety in the midst of the unknown, and try to control the situation. Our attempt to fix the situation in our own strength will leave us exhausted and afraid.

One of the most profound moments in my walk with God happened when I realized that my issues of worry, anxiety, and control were directly linked to my lack of trust in God. Because I didn't fully trust God in the everyday areas of life, I tried to handle things on my own. This led to sleepless nights, constant fear of the future, feelings of inadequacy, and heaviness in my heart.

As I slowly addressed my trust issues, my willingness to present the situations going on in life to God dramatically increased. This led to less anxiety, less worry, and less of a need to be in control. The process of presenting all the things going on in our life to God is so important.



What does it mean to present God with everything? Two words in Philippians 4:6 paint a vivid picture. The words are everything and present. Let's take a closer look!

- Everything: all, all things, whole, or all manner of.
- Present: make known, declare, and reveal. (Please read that definition again. It's important that we understand this definition!)

The implication of these words is profound. There is nothing too big or too small for us to make known, declare, or reveal to God. An important point to understand is that God already knows the situation we face. In fact, He knows more about the situation than we do. Nothing about life surprises God or overwhelms God. As a result, the best thing we can do in the midst of hard times is run to God and place the situation at His feet.

How do we present everything to God? Philippians 4:6 shares three specific ways to make known, declare, or reveal. Understanding the original meaning of each Greek word that is used in the verse provides a path to follow in the presentation process.



Prayer: The Greek word used means to offer a general prayer to God. This is the type of prayer you offer in the morning when you wake up or the type of prayer you offer as you are going through your day. As life happens, you have the chance to immediately stop and offer a prayer to God and present the things going on in your day in "real time." Imagine walking through your day and keeping a constant line of communication open with God when you are talking to Him, listening for His reply, and watching for His move in the everyday of life. This type of communication is a picture of abiding in Christ as you lean on Him for moment by moment direction. Again, there is nothing too small to take to God in prayer. The smallest thing that can lead to issues of anxiety, worry, and control needs to be presented to God. God does not have a scale determining what is important and what is not. We are invited to pray about everything!

Petition: The Greek word used conveys intensity in your prayer life. This is the type of praying you offer when the stakes are high. This is beyond the day-in-and-day-out communication over the "normal" things of life. To petition means to pray, beg, or implore God for a specific benefit. This is the prayer you offer when a specific situation in life is hard and as a result anxiety, worry, and control are rising up in you. I like to think of this type of prayer as going to the next level in my presentation process. Therefore, it may involve fasting, journaling, accountability, and finding scripture that addresses the specific situation going on in your life. We all know what it is like to have a situation that is extreme, and the outcome is life-changing. As a result, our presentation process involves seeking God with intensity and focus.



A quick note of caution is important when we petition God. While petitioning is intense, it does not necessarily secure a desired outcome. We miss the point if we believe we can beg God enough or if we think we got a "no" because we didn't ask enough. Thankfully, God is bigger than us and His ways are always right. God knows what is best for us in every situation we face. The beauty of petitioning is our hearts are drawn into a deep place of communion with God so that our focus and desires meet up with God's plan. This leads to letting go of control as we surrender in the situations of life that easily cause worry, anxiety, and issues of control.

Thanksgiving: As we offer prayers and petitions, we need to make sure every request and every desire is wrapped in thanksgiving. Incorporating thanksgiving provides a safeguard for our hearts and minds which are the very places where anxiety, worry, and issues of control sneak into our lives. Thanksgiving helps us identify and appreciate all the ways God is present, active, and moving even when we are not sure what is going on in the situation we face. Think about this truth. When we are thankful, we see life in a different way. Instead of focusing on what is missing or what we think we need, we focus on how God is with us and providing in the midst of our need.



Let's look at an example of the presentation process. Jesus walked on this earth and experienced hardships and challenges. Like us, Jesus faced overwhelming situations that were difficult to navigate, yet Jesus did it without sin.

We find Jesus in a difficult situation in Mark 14:32-41. Jesus was in the Garden of Gethsemane and praying to the Father. More specifically, Jesus was petitioning the Father and asking God to remove the cup of God's wrath from Jesus' time on earth. In short, Jesus was asking if there was a way He could avoid going to the cross. Jesus dreaded the cross because He would be separated from the Father in order to pay for the sins of all people.

As Jesus looked ahead to the cross, He prayed, "Abba, Father, he said, 'everything is possible for you. Take this cup from me..." (Mark 14:36) Many things in this statement of faith stand out to me and provide a perfect example of how to live out the truths taught in Philippians 4:6-7. Each word has deep meaning for us today especially if we are facing a difficult or confusing situation of life.

Jesus trusted God the Father. This prayer was a beautiful moment of trust as Jesus turned to the Father, in the midst of His anguish, and said, "Abba, Father" (This phrase can also be translated as Daddy.) Jesus, in His humanity, was hurting. He was overwhelmed to the point of sweating drops of blood. Jesus knew the Father was His safe place. Jesus trusted the Father with complete abandon. We know that God the Father, Christ the Son, and the Holy Spirit our guide are three in one. They function in perfect unity. There is trust, communion, and synergy between the Trinity that is hard for us to fully understand.



What we can understand is that in a time of trouble, Jesus ran to the Father in distress and called Him, "Daddy." For us today, we need to trust God. We need to run to Him in our distress. We need to call Him, "Daddy."

Jesus recognized that everything is possible with God. An important correlation between Philippians 4:6 and Mark 14:36 can't be missed. In Philippians we are told to present everything to God. In Mark we are reminded that everything is possible with God. This means in the most dire situation, God is not without options. He is in control no matter the situation we face. When we take our "everythings" to God, no matter how big or how small, we find a loving Heavenly Father who is willing and able to move in the midst of our situation according to His plan. No matter how overwhelming your situation is or how big the mountain is in front of you, God is able to do more than we ask or imagine. Like Jesus soid, everything is possible with God!

Jesus made a bold request. Can you imagine the intimacy and anguish as Jesus made known, declared, and revealed His desire to God? "Take this cup from me," Jesus asked. (Mark 14:36) Jesus' bold request shared what was on His heart and mind. As Jesus proyed, He was open and honest with God as He presented His situation to God. Let's read on and see what happened next. As soon as Jesus made His bold request, He added one more statement. A statement that completed His presentation process. "Yet not what I will, but what you will." (Mark 14:36) Awww... there it is! Often the missing piece in our presentation process is the step of surrender to God and His plan. This is the point where we say, "Not my way, Lord. I want your plan" To surrender means to give oneself up into the power of another. Each day, as we trust God, we can give ourselves and our circumstances up to God's power and plan.



When we do, we experience an incredible promise of peace. This, my friend, is how we present our requests to God. It is a process of faith and surrender! Before we get to the peace that guards our hearts and minds, I want to share the full truth with you on the process of surrender. I don't want to stop short and mislead you. You see, Jesus asked for the cup of God's wrath to pass from Him, and God clearly answered with a, "No." Jesus went to the cross. What can we learn from this truth? Comfort and ease in this life are not always at the top of God's agenda for our time on this earth. Sometimes a greater glory is at stake.

What do we do when we get a "no" or a "wait" or what seems like "no answer at all"? We embrace a big picture perspective. This is vital to freedom in our daily lives. Each moment of each day we can know that there is more going on in us and around us than what we can see, measure, or comprehend. Jesus made a bold request and He went to the cross anyway. But the cross was not the end of the story. Jesus' temporary separation **from** the Father led to our eternal connection **with** the Father. Jesus surrendered to God's plan and lived His life full of obedience and faith. Daily we can do the same thing.

Jesus is our perfect example. Each day we face situations that provide an opportunity for us to trust God with anything as we present God with everything. Surrendering to God's plan leads to a life that is full of His strength, not our own.

For a moment, think about the hard area(s) you identified earlier. How would it change your daily experience if you really presented the area(s) to God by praying, "Lord, this is what I want, but more than anything, I want what You want." Do you believe that peace and resolve would take the place of worry, anxiety, and control? Let's read on in Philippians 4 and see the incredible promise that is ours to claim!



"Do not be anxious about anything but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." (Philippians 4:6-7)

When we trust God to the point of surrender, there is a promise that is ours to claim through Jesus Christ. This promise leads us to experience God's peace in a real way. Yes, we can experience peace in the hard area(s) of life. Peace is not illusive for followers of Jesus. Remember, Jesus came to bring peace on earth. Jesus is the Prince of Peace. And one of the fruits of the Spirit is peace. Peace is a real reality that is available to you and me. When we have peace we have rest even during the ups and downs of life. Peace is demonstrated when we are able to "Be still and know that He is God." (Psalm 46:10)



Peace defined. The Greek word used for peace in Philippians 4:7 means tranquility, calm, harmony, and repose. Biblical peace is more than a feeling although a feeling is associated with it. God's peace is a protective barrier that forms around two important areas that can produce a lack of rest in us. Let's take a closer look at each!

- Our Hearts: Our heart represents our emotions. I am from the south. I grew up in Arkansas. One phrase that I not only heard but also experienced is a good ole fashion "tizzy." A "tizzy" happens when our hearts beat fast, our palms get sweaty, and the hair on the back of our neck stands up. A "tizzy" is usually brought on by an unexpected situation or an uncomfortable turn of events. Anxiety, worry, and issues of control always accompany a "tizzy."
- Our Minds: Our mind represents our intellect. This is the part of us that tries to solve a problem, come up with a plan, and feels the weight of having to figure out the the answer. Growing up in Arkansas, I had a sleeping bag with my favorite super hero on the front of the bag. In fact, I still have the sleeping bag to this day. Wonder Woman was my hero. When problems arise, we can try to be like Wonder Woman having the ability to swoop from situation to situation always finding a way to "save the day." A Wonder Woman complex puts our minds in overdrive because we take on the weight of figuring out problems rather than trusting God in the midst of the situation we face.



God's peace which flows from trust and surrender leads to a restful place of knowing God is God and He can be trusted every step of the way. It's easy to see how trusting God with anything and presenting God with everything produces tranquility, calm, harmony, and repose. The steps of trusting God and presenting to God provide protection from the natural human tendencies of the heart and mind. Therefore, instead of going to a place of being stirred up in a "tizzy" or trying to take on a Wonder Woman complex, a supernatural peace guards our hearts and minds as we remember we can trust God's character, ability, strength, and truth to the point of surrendering even in the hard moments of life.

The outcome will be a *confidence* in God rather than our circumstances. This doesn't mean we don't care about life or that we give up on life. Rather, it means we dig deep into our faith as God changes who we are, how we live, and how we define a "good" life. The moment we do, peace fills us up and flows out of us thus producing rest.

How can we remain in the place of peace when the situations of life tempt us to return to the place of worry, anxiety, and issues of control? The simple answer, that is not always simple to live out, is by saturating our hearts and minds with God's Word and God's presence. The life we live is a journey full of ups and downs, steps forward and steps backwards. We all have moments when we are making progress and moments when we blow it in a big way.

Friend, God is a safe place for you. You do not have to beat yourself up when you have a bad day. God is loving and gracious. At the same time, we need to prepare for this reality and take steps to protect our hearts and minds from the tendency to turn to ourselves, others, and our circumstances looking for the peace only God can provide. Daily we need to find a promise to claim and a precept to follow for the hard area(s) of life that we face.



Promise to Claim- God's Word is full of hope when it comes to facing the challenging circumstances of life. A promise from the Word of God is a specific commitment from God that He graciously bestows on His children. God's promises remind us that He loves us, sees us, fights for us, and will never leave us. God's promises provide extra protection for our hearts by bringing continual peace into our life as we are reminded of God's deep love and commitment to us.

Precept to Follow- We are never without direction in the midst of our challenging circumstances. God has given His Word to us so we can know how to act and react. Having a precept to follow means having a clear direction or path to walk when life seems very unclear. God's precepts provide extra protection for our mind. Instead of trying to figure out what to do in the midst of our challenging circumstance, we ask God, "What does your Word tell me to do?"

Incorporating our promise to claim and our precept to follow as we walk through our day results in God's peace rising up inside of us. This process produces more and more peace protecting us from returning to the human tendencies of worry, anxiety, and issues of control. God's peace guards our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus as we daily (sometimes hourly) trust God with anything and present God with everything!



Saying goodbye to worry, anxiety, and issues of control

Philippians 4:6-7 really does apply to every area of life. God is faithful and we have the chance to daily experience His faithfulness in the good, bad, and ugly. Think back to the area(s) of struggle you identified at the beginning of our time together. What is God calling you to do with this area(s) of life? I encourage you to return to your journal and answer the following questions for each area of struggle:

- 1. Do I trust God at a deep level? As you ask and answer this question, remember trust requires you to examine God's:
 - Character- Who God is!
 - Ability- What God can do!
 - Strength- How God will accomplish tasks in our lives!
 - Truth- God's pure intentions along the way!
- 2. How can I present this area to God?
 - Bold Request- What is my bold request?
 - Surrender- How can I surrender this area to God's heart and plan?
 - Big Picture Perspective- What is the greater glory that may be at play in my situation?
 - With Thanksgiving: How is God present and active in your situation? List the ways God is moving!
- 3. What does resting in Christ look like in the midst of this situation(s)?
 - What is my promise to claim? (To get started, check out the list of promises on page 22!)
 - What is my precept to follow? (To get started, check out the list of precepts on page 23!)



Saying goodbye to worry, anxiety, and issues of control

As we take the necessary steps of trusting God with anything, presenting God with everything, and resting in Christ continually, we experience peace! I wish we were sitting in my living room and having this conversation together. I would tell you the ways God has brought me to a place of peace with Him, peace with myself, peace with others, and peace in the midst of my circumstances. I have the same hope and prayer for you! I want you to know you can come to a place of peace with God, peace with yourself, peace with others, and peace in the midst of your circumstances.

Friend, freedom is available and peace is possible even during the hard times. Don't ever give up fighting for the peace that is yours in Jesus Christ. Do the hard work by digging deep into your faith. As you do, your heart and mind will flood with peace that passes all understanding. Don't hold back. Run to God and find Him to be the very One you were searching for from the beginning!



Promises to Claim

The Lord is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and rich in love. The Lord is good to all, he has compassion on all he has made. Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and your dominion endures through all generations. The Lord is faithful to all his promises and loving toward all he has made." Psalm 145: 8, 9, and 13

"And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose." Romans 8:28

"No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us." Romans 8:37

"God, who called you into fellowship with his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, is faithful." 1 Corinthians 1:9

"I have loved you with an everlasting love; I have drawn you with loving-kindness. I will build you up again and you will be rebuilt." Jeremiah 31:3

"Call to me and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know." Jeremiah 33:3

"In this world you will have trouble. But take heart I have overcome the world." John 16:33



Precepts to Follow

"Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful." Joshua 1:8

"Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life." Proverbs 4:23

"Jesus said, 'If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me." Matthew 16:24

"Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you." 1 Peter 5:7

"Love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength." Mark 12:30

"Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is— his good, pleasing, and perfect will." Romans 12:2



Meet Andrea

An "on the go" kind of girl who loves Jesus, Andrea is a Bible teacher whose life calling is to teach women to know the truth, live the truth, and share the truth. Her passion is honest conversation about the topics that drive our everyday lives and how we can always weather the storms of life through the love and power of God and His Word.





















