



In Everything: A Two-Part Study on Prayer

by Jason Glaskey

“Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.” Philippians 4:6 (NIV)

Part One

Opening Activity

Anxiety. We tend to be anxious about many things in our lives — family, school, money, relationships, etc. Everyone worries about something, whether they’ll admit it or not.

Pass around a bag of M&Ms candy. As you take an “M,” name something that worries you or people that you know. Write a list on a white board or pad of paper. Keep passing the bag until ideas or M&Ms run out, or your group gets tired of writing — whichever comes first.

- Teen anxieties, worries and concerns can often be separated into four categories: 1) friends, 2) dating, 3) family or 4) the future. Go back to your list and see if the group’s worries fit into those categories. Which category does your group worry about the most?
- Read Philippians 4:6, our focus verse for this study. What does God say about our worries and anxieties? “Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.” Philippians 4:6 (NIV)

Background

Do you know Paul? The author of the book of Philippians has a dark background. Once a Jewish authority, Saul (as he was then called) hunted down Christians and had them imprisoned, beaten, or worse. The risen Jesus appeared to Saul and changed his life and his purpose (and his name). The Christian-hater became a preacher and a missionary, traveling all over the region to spread the Good News of Jesus and to grow new churches in many towns.

Philippians is a missionary’s thank you letter, written by Paul to the growing church in the Roman city of Philippi. Paul spent some time in Philippi, preaching and working to start up a new group of believers and followers of Jesus. Despite beatings and jail-time from the Roman authorities during his time there, Paul has a lot of love and joy for this group of Christians.

In this letter, written some time after he leaves the Philippian people, Paul encourages and advises the congregation to live “a life worthy of the Gospel” as they stand firm in their faith and follow Jesus together (1:27). He also encourages them to follow His example by caring for one another, being peaceful, and praying for one another in all things.

Studying the Word

Why We Pray

1. Sin and burdens weigh us down. Read Matthew 11:28. When we’re weary and burdened, Jesus tells us to come to Him. What does He offer as we come to Him with our burdens? What has Jesus done with the burden of your sin? See Isaiah 53:6.
2. Read 1 Peter 5:7. The word “cast” in this verse means “to throw upon” (NOT to throw-up on). What does it mean to “cast your anxieties on Him”? Why does He want us to do this?

3. How would you answer someone who says that their prayers are “too small” or “not important enough” for God to listen to?
4. Jesus prayed often, and He encouraged His disciples to do the same (to learn more, see Lk 11:1-4 or Mt 26:26-46). Why do you think Jesus prayed? Why should we pray?
5. Read Philippians 4:7. What is the result of praying to God? What does it mean to have God's peace?

What We Pray For

Look again at Philippians 4:6 with emphasis added.

“Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.” (New International Version)

“Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.” (English Standard Version)

The words “petition” and “supplication” are defined as “a specific request for help.”

1. What kinds of specific prayers are you living with right now? Divide into pairs and share some specific prayer concerns with one another. (You might want to take notes for the closing prayer.)
2. Jesus encourages us to come to Him individually (Mt 11:28), and also to pray for others. Read 1 Timothy 2:1. Who does God want us to pray for?
3. God also wants us to be thankful as we pray to Him. (We'll talk more about thankfulness in part two of this study.) Discuss with your partner some of the things that you would like to thank God for this week.

Take Action

Close your time together praying in pairs, for one another's prayer concerns.* Remember to add prayers of thankfulness too. When the “pairs prayers” time quiets down, ask someone to read this closing prayer to end your time together:

Heavenly Father, thank you for allowing us to come to you in prayer, and for hearing our many requests and concerns. No prayer is too small or too big for you to answer. Give us your peace as you guard our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus, our Lord. Amen.

* Remember also to pray for your partner's concerns throughout this week!