

**Peace:**

**Overcoming Anxiety and Conflict**

**By Jack Kuhatschek**

**Study 1: Coping With Anxiety**

## **WARMING UP**

1. What sorts of things make you feel anxious?

## **DIGGING IN**

2. Read Philippians 4:4–9. Paul begins by telling us repeatedly to “rejoice in the Lord always” (v. 4). What does it mean to rejoice in the Lord?

Why is this kind of rejoicing possible in any circumstances?

3. Why is prayer (v. 6) our first and best defense against anxiety?

4. Why is it important to be thankful in the midst of our requests?

5. Paul compares the peace of God to a sentry guarding our hearts and minds from anxiety (v. 7). Why do you think Paul adds that God’s peace “transcends all understanding”?

6. Anxious people can become obsessed with negative thinking. How can focusing on the good things in verse 8 free us from the grip of anxiety?

7. Give specific examples of the kinds of good things you might think about to combat anxiety.

8. According to verse 9, what is our third defense against anxiety?

9. How can observing the godly example of others and putting into practice what we see bring greater peace to our lives?

10. What anxious thoughts have troubled you recently?

## **PRAY ABOUT IT**

Take time now to bring your anxieties to God in prayer. Remember to thank him for what he has already done and for what he will do for you in the future.

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**Study 2: Why We Shouldn't Worry**

## **WARMING UP**

1. What are some common reasons why people worry?

## **DIGGING IN**

2. Read Matthew 6:25–34. What, specifically, does Jesus tell us not to worry about (vv. 25, 28, 31–32)?

Which of these, if any, causes the greatest anxiety in your life? Why?

3. In what sense is life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes (v. 25)?

4. According to Jesus, how can we be confident that the Father will feed us and clothe us (vv. 26–30)?

5. Many people, including some Christians, have little food to eat and are dressed much worse than Solomon, not to mention the lilies. How, then, are we to understand Christ's assurances about food and clothes?

6. In what ways have you seen God provide for your basic needs?

7. According to verse 27, why is it futile to worry?

If worry is a waste of time and energy, then why do you think it is such a popular pastime?

8. In what sense are we acting like pagans when we fret about food or clothing (vv. 31–32)?

When you are anxious, how does it help you to know that your heavenly Father knows your needs (v. 32)?

9. In contrast to pagan pursuits, what does it mean to “seek first his kingdom and his righteousness” (v. 33)?

10. According to Jesus, why is it best to take one day at a time (v. 34)?

## **PRAY ABOUT IT**

Thank the Father for the way he cares and provides for our basic needs. Ask him to help you to act less like a pagan worrier and more like a kingdom seeker.

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**Study 3: Finding Peace in God's Presence**

## **WARMING UP**

1. What frightens you most about such natural forces as hurricanes, tornadoes, and earthquakes?

## **DIGGING IN**

2. Read Psalm 46. What portrait of God emerges from verse 1?

3. As you read verses 2–3, what images come to mind?

4. What kinds of personal events can make us feel like the world is falling apart around us?

5. How does the scene described in verses 4–5 contrast with the previous scene?

What aspects of the city of God seem most inviting to you?

6. Verses 7 and 11 describe God as our fortress. What purposes does a fortress serve in wartime?

How is it reassuring to know that our fortress is the Lord Almighty?

7. Verses 6–10 also describe the Lord as a warrior. What effect does he have on the battles among nations?

8. What active role does the Lord take in the battles we face in life (see, for example, Romans 8:26–27; 1 Corinthians 10:13; 2 Corinthians 1:3–11; Ephesians 6:10–18)?

9. In our active, take-charge culture, the command to “be still” (Psalm 46:10) seems completely out of place. What does it mean to be still before God?

How can our obedience to this command bring about a more exalted view of God?

## **PRAY ABOUT IT**

Think of the battles you are currently facing. How can you allow the Lord to be both your fortress and your warrior in those battles? Bring those battles to him in prayer.

## **WARMING UP**

1. When you were a child, what made you feel safe and secure?

## **DIGGING IN**

2. Read Psalm 91. What images does the psalmist use to describe God's protective care?

3. How does each image affect your feeling of safety?

4. What types of danger are mentioned in the psalm?

What modern-day counterparts might we face?

5. Is the psalmist really promising that nothing bad will happen to those who trust in God? Explain.

6. In Luke 4:10–11 Satan applies the promise of this psalm to Jesus. Yet how do Christ's own experiences cause us to examine the type of protection God offers?

7. What does it mean to make the Most High our "dwelling" and "refuge" (Psalm 91:9)?

8. Verses 9–13 speak of God's commanding his angels to guard us. How do you respond to the idea that you have guardian angels?

Have you ever sensed their presence in the midst of danger? Explain.

9. In verses 14–16 the psalmist becomes silent and God speaks. Read these verses to yourself, substituting your name for the pronouns *he* and *him*.

How does it make you feel to have the Lord speak to you in that way?

10. What current circumstances make you feel unsafe or vulnerable?

How does this psalm help you to feel safer in God's care?

## **PRAY ABOUT IT**

Bring your current circumstances to the Lord in prayer. Thank him for being your dwelling and refuge.

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**Study 5: Living At Peace With Others**

## **WARMING UP**

1. How would you have responded if someone had dumped a load of garbage in your yard? Why?

## **DIGGING IN**

2. Read Romans 12:17–21. Why are we often tempted to repay evil with evil?

3. Give examples of some of the ways people and countries repay evil with evil.

How does revenge frequently make things worse rather than better?

4. Paul commands us to live at peace with everyone — with two qualifications: “if it is possible” and “as far as it depends on you” (v. 18). Why are these qualifications important?

5. Why do you think God forbids us to take revenge, reserving vengeance for himself (v. 19; see also Deuteronomy 32:35)?

6. How can the promise of God’s wrath help restrain our desire for revenge?

7. In verse 20 Paul quotes Proverbs 25:21–22. What is radical about the advice of this proverb?

8. What do you think it means to “heap burning coals” on our enemy’s head (v. 20; see also Proverbs 25:21–22)?

9. In addition to giving food and water to our enemy, what are some other ways we might overcome evil with good (v. 21)?

10. Think of someone who has recently mistreated you. What might you do to promote peace with that person?

## **PRAY ABOUT IT**

Spend time now praying for the person who has mistreated you, asking God to help you overcome evil with good.

## **WARMING UP**

1. Why do you think people often feel a need to distinguish between “us” and “them”?

## **DIGGING IN**

2. Read Ephesians 2:11–22. The Jews called the Gentiles “uncircumcised” (v. 11) and even referred to them as “dogs” (Matthew 15:26). What labels do people today apply to those who are different from them?

What is wrong with such labels?

3. In what ways were the Gentiles truly separated from the Jews (Ephesians 2:12)?

4. In what ways are non-Christians today truly separated from Christians?

5. What did Christ do to end the hostility and separation between Jews and Gentiles (vv. 13–18)?

6. Why does Christ’s death destroy all the racial, ethnic, and social distinctions that often separate us from others?

7. What do we now have in common with everyone who is “in Christ” — even with those whom we formerly despised (vv. 14–22)?

8. In what sense, if any, does Christ bring peace between us and those who do not yet know him?

9. If we are truly one in Christ with all who know him, then why are so many churches divided on the basis of race, ethnic origin, and social status?

10. What might we do to encourage greater diversity in our churches?

11. What might you do in your family to encourage greater acceptance of those who are different?

## **PRAY ABOUT IT**

Think of one way in which prejudice is still a problem for you. Ask God to allow the fruit of peace to overcome that prejudice.