

# JOY in DIFFICULT TIMES

Philippians 4:4-14

## DISCUSSION GUIDE

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### The Big Idea

Being people of faith means working intentionally at the things within our power to change. It means we can see things from God's perspective, and not just from our own narrow view. It means living a life of simple focus on doing what we believe God invites us, in Christ, to do. Faith is a source of deep joy because it aligns our life with what matters most.

### Discussion Questions

**1. What do you worry about?** Paul says, *"Don't worry about anything (4:6)."* That's tough! Paul struggled with being anxious (e.g. 2 Cor. 1:8ff). Peter says to *"cast your cares on God (1 Pt. 5:7)."* Jesus also struggled and questioned how He should pray about it (Jn. 12:27). So, don't think of yourself as a failure if you happen to worry. It could be helpful for you to share your worries. Perhaps, in vocalizing them, you might discover that you live in a fellowship of suffering (cf. 1:30; 3:10; 4:14).

**2. How is prayer and praise helpful when you are anxious?** Instead of worrying, Paul says to rejoice, show gentleness, tell God what is needed, and give thanks (4:4-7). Prayer and praise is our way of telling God who He is and who we are. He doesn't *need* us to inform Him. He delights in our praises, but we *need* it. **Why do we need prayer and praise when we are worried? Why do you need it? What does God promise to give?**

**3. Why is it helpful to pay attention to positive things in the world?** Conflict, crime, corruption, and conspiracies are all big sellers in the news and in social media. They intrigue us, but if we're not careful, we become absorbed with all that is wrong in the world. Paul warns about being influenced by destructive behaviors and says to focus on his example (3:17-19). In 4:8,9, He gives a practical list of several good things to observe. Ultimately, the example to follow is not simply good-acting people, but rather anybody who acts and thinks like Jesus. Even still, there is good all around us on which to think about. **How can that benefit you?**

**4. What does God give you to help you be content?** Paul insists that God provides His peace (4:7) and His presence (4:9,13). To him, it's a secret bit of advice that he has learned. God's gift of peace is like a protective shield and God's presence is like a source of energy. Without either, we are left to depend on ourselves, infecting our minds with worry and never finding contentment. It takes faith to believe that God helps in this unique way (4:11-13). However, there are other blessings given by God that we can see, touch, and hear. Paul mentions one of these in verse 14. After recognizing it, maybe you can think of some others.

There are all kinds of trouble in the world. God is there to help, but you need to make the decision of how you will respond to any difficulty. Will you be overcome with anxiousness or will you choose to be overwhelmed with the joy we have in Jesus our King?

