

# MESSAGE TRANSCRIPT //

WHEN WORRY RETURNS | REBEL'S GUIDE TO JOY

AARON BROCKETT | MARCH 26, 2023

I've always been told that whenever you get a chance to go to Israel, it takes your Bible reading from black and white to full color. And I really found that to be true. Even when I was over there, in the early morning, I was sipping my coffee and I was doing my Bible reading. And I read about Jesus in Capernaum and I was like, "Oh, I was there yesterday." It just brings it to full display.

So I want to encourage you, if you've never had the opportunity to go to the Holy Land, I want to encourage you, if you get the opportunity, to go. And I've had a number of you ask if I would ever consider taking groups from the church over. Yes I would. That's part of why I was over there just to scope it out. We're looking into that and planning that in the future. So if we get that opportunity, we will relate that to you. Anyone want to go to the Holy Land? I'm just kind of curious. Alright. We'll all go.

Really good to be back with you guys. One thing before we jump in, the weekend after Easter, Easter is two weeks from today, and then three weeks from today we start a new series. The weekend after Easter my wife is going to join me on stage for that message. Yeah, she's got a big following around here.

I just want you to know that, if you are relatively new to our church, she doesn't do that very often. In fact, the last time she did that she was pregnant with our youngest, and our youngest is 11. So it doesn't happen very often. She's got so much wisdom and discernment. So I can't wait for that day to be with my bride up here. You don't want to miss that day. She's going to draw some truth so it's going to be really, really good.

Alright. If you've got a Bible go ahead and find Philippians 4. Philippians 4 is where we are going to be today. And if you are just now joining us we are in week nine of a 10-week series on the book of Philippians, which really isn't a book. It started off as a letter. And it's really important that we read it that way and that we interpret it correctly.

So this guy named Paul is being held against his will. He's in prison, quite possibly house arrest, he's chained to a prison guard, getting ready to get shipped off and put to death. And he writes this letter to a group of people who he has done life with and who he loves very, very deeply. And that comes through in the letter.

## **The art of letter writing.**

Now, letters are kind of a lost art now a days. I'm going to show my age a little bit. I can remember a time, it doesn't seem that long ago, where when you wanted to



communicate with somebody with words, you wrote a letter. I'm not talking about text messaging, or even email, or DMs or emojis or anything like that.

When Lindsay and I started dating, email was just beginning, we signed up for an account but we didn't really use it yet. And there was no such thing as text messaging. There was no social media. And kids, it was glorious. The world without social media was amazing.

So my wife and I were dating and we had been dating for a couple of months and then I moved to the west coast for about three months to do an internship. So there were two ways that we communicated that summer. I didn't have a cell phone, so the first was I had to go buy a calling card. You remember those? Some of you, you don't even know what I'm talking about. You need to google it. So I would buy a calling card and I would have to find a pay phone at McDonalds—a pay phone. Google it.

So I would find a pay phone and I would call and it was really expensive so I didn't do that very often. The other way was that we would write letters. I actually kind of miss that. We're talking about pen to paper, full sentences, with punctuation, no emojis. I can't even imagine trying to communicate without emojis.

And so we would write these letters back and forth and send them in the mail. There is a lost art to that. And this is what Paul was doing. This was not like a quick thing. This is not Paul firing off some kind of text message or DM, this is Paul sitting down and he's putting some thoughts together and he's writing with great intention and purpose.

And Paul is unsure if he'll ever spend any time with this group of people who he loves, let alone ever see them again. He's facing these trials and these unknown circumstances in his life. So what he does is he writes. And he writes this letter to encourage them and to remind them of what they knew to be true, but maybe they'd drifted from it. He writes the letter to challenge them, to motivate them, and inspire them.

When you write a letter, you take your time. You choose your words carefully and the structure of your sentences and what you're trying to convey to other people. And Paul's primary theme throughout Philippians, as we have said, is joy. And it's *A Rebel's Guide* to it, primarily because joy both in that culture and in our culture today is the exception not the norm.

You know, for most of us, our natural... Let me just speak for me and maybe you can identify with me. My natural reflex to life isn't joy. My natural reflex to the news and to unfortunate circumstances and to certain emails, my natural reflex isn't joy. My natural reflex is to complain. I don't even have to think about that. It just naturally boils out of me.

My natural reflex is to worry. I need no training. That just comes naturally. My natural reflex is to compare. My natural reflex is to get angry. I need to be trained in joy. I need to make an intentional decision to be joyful.



One of the greatest evidences that the Spirit of God is at work in your life is when you can experience and demonstrate joy even when, especially when, life seems to be falling apart, which Paul's was in a very real way. That's why there is so much weight and credibility to the words that he writes because he does not write this from a resort on a beach in Tahiti. He writes this from a prison cell and he's about to be put to death.

And if Paul can demonstrate joy in the face of those circumstances then there isn't any circumstance which you and I cannot. In fact, I would even say this. Paul writes to make us bullet proof to the circumstances of life. And the only thing, the only person who can rob you of joy—it's not your circumstances, it's not your boss, and it's not your ex—the only person who can rob you of joy is you simply by not choosing it, simply by not choosing to step into it.

Now, please don't misunderstand me. I am not talking about a Pollyanna, looking through rose colored lenses, pie in the sky, and in the words of that great theologically accurate worship song from the *Lego Movie*, "Everything is awesome." That's not what I'm talking about here. This isn't some pie in the sky, "Well, you know, the Lord is good, brother," and you're totally denying the pain. Listen, you can grieve and still hold on to joy. You can be upset and still be joyful. You can still walk through pain and circumstances and be real about them, and yet at the end of the day say, "But I'm going to hold on to joy."

Now, we are two weeks away from wrapping this study up. Philippians is four chapters long. It's one of Paul's shortest letters. And if Philippians was a mountain range, then chapter 3, what we just walked through over the past couple of weeks would be the peak of that mountain range. In chapter 3, Paul writes some of the most beautifully descriptive paragraphs that he ever wrote. It rivals some of the things that he wrote in Romans.

Some of my favorite verses in chapter 3, are verses 12 – 14. This is like Paul's locker room talk before the team takes the field to win the championship. And he says this:

*"Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus!"*

And we're all just like, "Go! Let's go."

See, here's the thing, if I'm Paul, and I got that in me, if I'm editing the letter, I'm saving that for the last thing I say. I'm going to write that and then I'm going to go, "Paul out." I bring that up to say this. Paul's got more to say. He's still got one whole chapter's worth to say. What in the world could he possibly say after that?

Well, the very first word in chapter 4, verse 1, look at your Bibles with me, indicates what it is that he's got to say. He says:

Therefore

Now therefore is a transitional word. Therefore is an application word. When you see therefore in the Bible what that means is he just got done describing something absolutely beautiful, and he says, "Therefore," this is him saying, "Now, I want you to apply what I just said to your life. And let me tell you how to do it." So, he says this in verse 1. Follow along with me. He says:

*"Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters," that is a term of endearment, that's family, you whom I love and long for. Paul loves these people dearly. He had led many of them to Christ. He had disciplined them. He loves them so much and he longs for them. He misses them. He knows that he will likely never see them again. And he longs for them. He says, "My joy and my crown." He says, "Hey, guys. When I think about you you make my life more joyful. And then he uses this word crown. What is that about? Well, he's talking about eternity.*

I want to be very clear. We are saved not on our merit, but on the merit of Jesus Christ. You are saved by grace through faith through the finished work of Jesus. That's what gives you access to God and heaven. But the Bible talks about a system of rewards. So this is this idea that when we get to heaven some of our mansions might be bigger than others. Some of our crowns might be bigger than others. It's this idea that it's not your salvation, Paul said, "Hey, guys. Your fruit and faithfulness are going to be part of my crown." He's looking beyond this into eternity.

He goes, I want you to stand firm because we have to in this culture in which we live. How do we stand firm? In the Lord. And then he goes, "In this way," and then he says, "Dear Friends." I love how he attaches that on there because he knows that he's getting ready to address something, he's getting ready to confront them.

I have some of my most passionate disagreements with some of my closest friends, because the relationships can handle it. I know that they love me, they know that I love them. And so we can speak very frankly with each other.

Paul is getting ready to do that. Now, before I read verses 2 and 3, I just want to remind you, all throughout our study, that Paul is periodically dropping in this urge for them to stay unified. He doesn't really tell us why. He doesn't really mention what is going on. We're going to find out why he keeps urging them and us toward unity in verses 2 and 3. Check it out. He says, "I plead." He's like, "I'm pleading with you guys. I can't control you guys but I'm pleading with," and then he names two names:

"Euodia and Syntyche".

I know that some of you are super impressed that I know how to pronounce those. Some of you are like, "Hey, is that what you learned in Bible College? That's impressive."

Let me just give you a little bit of a clue to Bible study, when you are reading the Bible out loud with other people, and you come across a word and you're unsure about it, you just say it fast and confident. Super fast. Super confident. Make it look like you know what you are doing, Euodia and Syntyche. I'm joking.

"To be of the same mind," this is unity, not uniformity, and how do we know that? It's because of how he finishes it, "in the Lord." And then he goes, "And I ask you, my true companion to help these women," so you can see Euodia and Syntyche were women, "they have contended at my side," they were partners with Paul when he was there, "in the cause of the gospel," so these were prominent leaders within the church at Philippi, and then he goes, "along with Clement," we have no idea who that person is, it's the only time that individual is mentioned in the entire New Testament. For whatever reason Paul seems it's necessary to specifically address him, "and the rest of my co-workers, whose names are in the book of life." NIV

Verses 2 and 3 are what I might affectionately call fly over verses. These are the verses that you read and you get into it and you're like, "I have no idea what is going on here." I'm just going to go out on a limb here and say Philippians, chapter 4, verses 2 and 3 is nobody's life verse. You're not getting these verses tattooed on your arm, at least not intentionally. This is where you come across this in Philippians and you are like, "I don't know what to do with this. I'm not going to do my devotions in that." This just seems like a strange thing. What in the world does Paul mean here?

Well let me make a couple of observations and then I'm going to make an application before I move on to verse 4. Here are some observations. Now we know why Paul keeps bringing up the issue of unity. There was something very specific happening in this church between two very influential, prominent leaders within the church. They had a disagreement.

We don't know what that disagreement was, but we do know that oftentimes Paul's letters to the churches throughout the New Testament were responses to letters he had received. So quite possibly there was a group of Christians in the church at Philippi who had written Paul a letter and they told him what was going on. So Paul is now, finally, he saved it for the very last chapter, he's finally addressing it.

We don't know what they were arguing about. Here's what we can surmise. It was significant enough that they couldn't resolve it themselves. Paul needed to say something. But it wasn't serious enough that Paul wasn't confident that they couldn't resolve it themselves. He goes, "You guys are fully able to bring resolution to this matter."

It was divisive enough that the church mentioned it in their letter to Paul. It was not dire enough that it bubbled up to a doctrinal issue, because Paul always addressed those very, very specifically. The fact that it shows up where it shows up is Paul saying, "Hey, you guys need to deal with this because interpersonal conflict will rob you of joy, it will rob you of peace, and it will splinter the church whose mission is so absolutely critical. Those are the observations.

Now you may go, "Okay, what in the world does this have to do with me and my life today." Well, as it turns out, like everything. Anybody have any relationships right now that need to be reconciled? Anybody right now at odds with somebody? Anybody right now, he offended you, maybe even years ago, and he doesn't even know that he offended you and you've been holding on to that offense and when you hold on to an offense it's like holding on to hot coals. Nobody else knows that you've got hot coals in your hands and the only person being wounded is you. And you've got to learn to let that go.

Listen. Maybe that other person who offended you is no longer in your life. Maybe he is not even alive anymore. This isn't about his response. This isn't about him feeling sorry. This isn't about who's right and who's wrong. This is about recognizing that the longer you hold on to an offense you become bitter. The longer you are bitter leads to contempt. Contempt of a relationship only hardens your heart and hurts you. So here's just a very simple application. Is there anybody you need to be reconciled with today? I don't know the details around that. I don't know who needs to hear this. Chances are there are a lot of broken, hurting relationships right now and it's because we're holding on to things that we need to let go of. That's the application. As we go on to verses 4 through 9, if you've been in our church for the last two to three years, I have preached on the following verses that I'm getting ready to read multiple times over the last three years. God has just continued to lead us to this passage and I think you're going see why in just a minute.

I've preached these verses multiple times. And I just want to say that to you because for those of you who have been in our church for a while, if what I say in the next few moments sounds like you've heard it before, it is likely because you've heard it before. And as a preacher, I hate repeating myself. But one of the things that I'm learning after 25 years of preaching ministry is that a big, big part of my job is to repeat myself. I'm not up here inventing new truths. I'm up here simply to remind you to apply the truth that you know. So in the following verses what I want you to see, especially if you are jotting down a few notes, is that Paul is going to give us three imperatives followed by a promise.

Now, here's what an imperative is. An imperative is stronger than a suggestion, less than a command. So it's stronger than a suggestion, less than a command. It is an



imperative and then after the imperatives he provides a promise. You're going to see what I mean here in just a minute. The first two imperatives are emphatic. So look with me at verse 4. Paul writes this. He goes:

Rejoice in the Lord always." And then he goes, "Hey, I'm going to say it again, "Rejoice!"

So, rejoice isn't necessarily a word that you and I use a whole lot throughout our everyday lives. I'm guessing we probably don't. So what does rejoice mean? Well, here's a definition of rejoice:

### **Rejoice: to feel or show great delight**

So you may not use the word, but you do that every day. We feel or show great delight in the NCAA tournament, until our team gets knocked out and our brackets get busted.

Those of you brand new grandparents—there you are—you are rejoicing in your grandkids. You are feeling and showing great delight in them.

Last night my wife and I took our 16-year-old daughter to dinner and then to a comedy show. And we rejoiced in chocolate mousse desserts. We were feeling and showing great delight. That's the meaning of the word.

Now, notice what word is in rejoice. Joy. So this is this idea... Here's what I wrote down in my notes.

### **Rejoice is joy on repeat**

Rejoicing is like joy on repeat. And Paul goes, "Hey, don't rejoice..." What are we supposed to rejoice in? Well, he goes, "Not in your circumstances but in who?" In the Lord. Because my circumstances may not always be praise worthy, but my God always is.

And then he says, "When should you rejoice?" And he goes, "Always." Just always. Always be feeling or showing great delight. And why would he repeat himself? Why say it again? Because he knows that the cynic within you and me doesn't want to do this. It's a double click.

He's double reminding us, "Man, it is easy to rejoice when things are really, really going your way or when things feel good." It is easy to rejoice in spring break, sunshine, and the beach. It is much harder to rejoice in clouds, rain, and snow in March. And I'm talking to you spring-breakers who are joining us from someplace warm via livestream. We are here in Indiana trying not to resent you, and we are failing. Alright?

So this is just this idea. When things are going great, it's easy to feel or show great delight. When things aren't—that is much harder. It's hard to show joy or great delight in cancer or divorce or a miscarriage. You just can't control those things when they come into your life.

Here's what Paul is saying, though. You can control your responses. Now, maybe not at first. Maybe not perfectly. But we can grow in this. And why is this an imperative? I think that if Paul just simply threw out these suggestions, there is no way that we would do them. So that's imperative number one: rejoice in the Lord always.

Here's imperative number two. It's found in verse 5:

“Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near.”

Now, we really don't have a great English word for the word that Paul uses in the original language here. So when they translated it into English they just translated it gentleness. And I just don't think that captures it. I don't know about you, but if someone comes up to me and says, “Hey, I just want to pay you a compliment. I think you're really gentle, bro.” It's like, “Thanks?”

I've never had anybody come into my office and be like, “Hey, Pastor. Would you pray with me to increase in gentleness?” It's not really something that we aspire to.

More accurately, the word that Paul uses here, most commentators agree, that it is better translated as this idea of selflessness. So this idea of an openhandedness, it's somebody who is not going to clamor or fight for his rights. Jot down 2 Corinthians, chapter 10, verse 1. This is how Jesus is described in that verse. Jesus is described as being gentle in heart. He was one of the most selfless persons to ever walk the face of the planet.

This is what Paul was embodying here as he writes this from prison. He's not saying, “Hey, guys. Can you hire a lawyer to send to represent me?” He's not clamoring for his rights. He's living very, very openhandedly.

Now, in a society that is always clamoring for rights, you get somebody who is able to do this it stands out in the absolute best way. This is what he is talking about.

While we were in Israel we had a guide, he was an Israeli Christian named Shamir. I've brought a picture of Shamir. One afternoon, this is actually when we were visiting the desert where Jesus fasted for 40 days and 40 nights. We were standing up on top of this hill. And Shamir was great. He was born in Jerusalem. He's a Christian. And he led us through the whole trip.



At one particular time as we were driving through Jerusalem he points to this house up on a hill and he says, "Guys, can you see that house?" And we were like, "Yeah," And he goes, "Well there is this dividing wall between Palestine and Israel." And he goes, "That house behind the wall used to be my house." And he was like, "I lost it. When they put up this dividing wall I lost the house."

I couldn't even get my head around that. I was like, "I can't even imagine that happening." Can you just imagine going into work one day and then somebody puts up a wall so that you can't get home? "Sorry, you just lost the property." Imminent domain. It was just gone. I think in America we would clamor for our rights.

I was like, "Well, Shamir, what did you do? And he was like, "Well, there is not a lot I can do." And then he said this. He goes, "The Lord is good. I'm a citizen of heaven. It wasn't really my house to begin with." This is the description; this is what Paul means when he uses the word gentleness. It's totally counter-cultural.

Here's the third imperative and it's found in verse 6. And we've got to read it this way. We often don't. We often read this as a suggestion. This is an imperative:

Do not be anxious about anything," now stay with me. I don't want to lose you. "Do not be anxious about anything but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God." NIV

So here are the three imperatives: take great delight in the Lord; be selfless in the way that you live; don't be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.

Now, your initial reaction to that may be like, "Well, how can he be so insensitive? I can't help but be anxious."

Now, I want to make a distinction here to what we might call clinical anxiety and anxious feelings. There is overlap. They are not always the same. One might require some therapy and some short-term or long-term medication. Here's why. You've developed or carved neurological pathways in your brain that need to heal and need to be re-carved.

Then there are the everyday, normal anxious feelings that we all have. And I don't want you to misread what Paul says. Paul does not say, "Never be anxious," he says, "Don't be." There is a difference. Here's what this means. We are all going to experience feelings of worry and anxiety because we live an uncertain life in uncertain times. Paul says, "Yes, but whenever you begin to feel those feelings you need to do something with them. You need to redirect them."

You've heard me say this before:

**Worry takes place in your brain, anxiety gets felt in your body.**

So as you begin to feel those in your brain you've got to make a decision as to what you are going to do with the worry and the anxious thoughts. When they come into your brain via the amygdala, totally okay, but then you need to start training what do I do with them next? Am I going to say there, am I going to dwell on it, am I going to just ruminate on it or am I going to do something with it?

**Worry/anxiety is you talking to yourself about your problems.**

It's all of the what ifs? It's rehearsing the worst-case scenario in your mind. It's you spending enormous amounts of emotional energy on things that may never happen. It is a down payment on a problem that you may never have. So why do we do it? Well, because it's a form of control. And this is how many of us relate to worry.

Recently I was kind of challenged on this. Occasionally I'll come home in the evening and Lindsay will meet me at the door and say, "Hey, how was your day?" And sometimes I'm like, "You know, it was kind of a bad day." And I began to think about, "Why do I say that? Why do I say it was a bad day? Did I really have a bad day or did I have a bad conversation that I thought about all day?" Because there is a difference.

Maybe the conversation lasted five or 10 minutes, but then I just thought about it for the rest of the day. Did I have a rough encounter that lasted just a handful of minutes but then I thought about it the rest of the day? So I really didn't have a bad day, I had a bad experience that I thought about for the rest of the day. This is a mental habit.

And this is the lie that we believe subconsciously. If I worry today, then I'll have peace tomorrow. But I won't. So Paul says, "Instead of worrying about it, he goes, present your requests to God." See:

**Prayer is redirecting your worry toward a trustworthy God.**

And if you've got a list full of worries, then you will never run out of things to correct. We don't get to choose what we are going through. We do get to choose what we think about. And what we think about is God's invitation to give us His promise of peace. And what Paul talks about here is not transactional, it is all relational. What do we do? How do we experience peace? He just says, "When you are concerned about something, tell God what you need and thank Him for all that He has done."

I love what Teresa of Avila says. She says, "You pay God a compliment by asking great things of Him."

So three imperatives followed by the promise. Here's the promise in verse 7:

“And the peace of God,” the peace that comes from God, not your circumstances and not your understanding of your circumstances, “which transcends all understanding,” which means you can’t explain it. You can’t say, “Well, here’s why I’m at peace.” No, this peace actually comes to you from God because you trusted Him with your issues. And that “will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”

In other words, I am coming to God and I am asking for His supernatural power to give me peace that transcends anything that I can explain or understand. And then he finishes with this great descriptive paragraph in verse 8. He says:

“Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.”

Why? Because you’re carving new neurological pathways.

“Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice.” That’s application. And then he says this, this is the promise. “And the God of peace will be with you.”

He doesn’t necessarily say that God will deliver you. He doesn’t say God will remove that painful person from your life. He doesn’t say that God will beam you out of the issue. He goes, “God will be with you in the midst of your struggles and your pain.”

And he’s urging us. He says, “Man you cling to these things.” There is very little in life right now that is true and admirable and praise worthy, you’ve got to find it and you’ve got to fight for life to hold onto it.

In 1990 during British Airways flight 6390 the glass blew out of the cockpit and sucked the pilot out of the window. And this was pre-911 so these were the days when the cockpit was open to the rest of the plane. And a flight attendant by the name of Nigel Odgen was walking into the cockpit as the pilot was being sucked out of the plane and they caught this picture where he is holding onto the pilot at 30 thousand feet.

So as I read what Paul just writes, when he says, “Finally brothers whatever is true, noble... This is what I’m thinking. I’m throwing myself spread-eagle style toward what is true, noble, right, admirable, praise worthy and I’m holding on for dear life. That I’m clinging to these things that I know to be true even though I don’t necessarily feel them to be true.

This is so practical here. This is not Paul saying something that is in defiance of good therapeutic practices in science. This is Paul saying something that backs it up. We’re

talking about mental training and the technical word for that is healing and re-carving the neurological pathways.

Here's what this is. He goes, "Hey, when you experience pain, anxiety, and anxious feelings that's totally normal. That's human. Don't stay there. Clean it up. Redirect it. Come before God and say, "God, this is me and this is what I am struggling with. God, I just want to give it to you." And then you train in that moment. It's not going to happen overnight. It is a mental practice that requires exactly that—practice.

Now hear me. For those of you who feel so defeated right now because you've been facing anxiety for years and you just haven't been winning the battle, I know you can do this. And the reason why I say that so confidently is because if you have ever house trained a puppy or potty trained a toddler, you can do this. What happens is, they have an accident, you clean it up, and then you train.

When I have a mental accident in my head, when I dwell and ruminate on something that happened all day long, I clean it up, and then I retrain. I take that concern and I redirect it with prayer and petition toward God.

Here's the other thing that I want to mention. I've used this example before so for some of you, you're going to go, "I remember this." And for some of you, you've never seen this before.

I've always been told that our nervous systems are like containers and they can only handle so much. It's part of the reason why mental health and anxiety issues are so high now a days, because our nervous system containers are chocked full and they can't handle anything else.

So this is why we need to pay attention to what we expose ourselves to and think about because right now, more than ever, the world seems out of our control. It isn't any more out of control than it's ever been, we're just reminded of it all of the time. And our nervous systems can't handle it.

Here's what happens. I think we need to be very, very clear. I want to encourage you to go home maybe later today and pull out a piece of paper and just write down two categories:

**I CAN**

**GOD CAN**



What are the things that I can do? And what are the things that God can do? Now, I just want you to know that the things that you can do are going to be much, much less than the things that God can do. But this leads to emotional health and spiritual health.

Let me just give you a bit of an example. For many of us, a big worry and concern, a source of our anxiety is finances. And there are so many things that are outside of our control. So you and I we cannot control the stock market, we cannot control the price of gas, we cannot control the ripple effects in the economy—we just can't control them. It doesn't do any good to worry about it. It doesn't do any good to just get all tense and anxious over it.

So you've got to stop and go, "Well, what can I do?" "Well, I can employ good stewardship practices in my life. I can develop a budget. I can give 10 and save 10 and live on 80. That's what God told me to do so that I can have peace and fruitfulness in my life. That's what I can do. So, I'm going to keep that in my can."

Others of us are like, "You know what? Right now I'm just in a dead-end job and I don't really like what I'm doing. And I don't think that this is what I want to do for the rest of my life."

Well, a lot of times there is not a lot that we can do in that category, you can't control your boss, his emotions and how he reacts to you and all of that. "I can develop a good resume and I can get some good experience and I can actually show up and do what I say I'm going to do. Those are the things that I can do."

I've talked to a lot of young men who are like, "Man, I really want to meet the right girl. She needs to be beautiful and she needs to be funny and she needs to be athletic and she needs to be charming." And I'm like, "Who are you looking for? A unicorn?"

And I'm like, "Well, what are you doing to prepare to meet her?"

"I'm playing Call of Duty a lot."

I'm like, "Hey, man. You can't really control that. But, how about we start here? Dude, take a shower, bro. That's something you can do. Get that down first."

I think you get the idea. These are the things I can do.

Now, here's where anxiety boils over, when we try to own things that we cannot control. So I just want you to know, right now, yes work hard. Scripture says that a wise man will leave an inheritance for his children. Man, you work hard. But listen to me. Provision is

God's deal, not yours. So when you try to take provision and you try to put that in your bucket, you try to over own it, it overflows and the result of that is anxiety.

When it comes to feelings. Maybe there is some sort of an ailment or issue going on with your body—I prayed with multiple people first service who are dealing with cancer, miscarriages, diabetes—there are so many things that are outside of your control. You're not telling your heart to beat right now. It's just doing it. So many things are outside of your control. So healing, man, that's God's deal. And when you try to over own that, you just put it in your bucket and it overflows and the result is anxiety.

When it comes to the protection of your family... I've got a teen-aged girl who is driving right now. I totally get this. I'm constantly creeping on her through the Life 360 App. And it's just increased my prayer life. Here's the deal. I can't protect her. Protection is God's deal. So I try to take protection, try to be an overbearing parent. I put this in my category and it overflows and the result is anxiety.

So much of this is saying, "God, here's what You can do, here's what I can do. I release it to you in prayer and petition and now I'm going to go sleep and I'm going to trust in the God of the universe."

Now, here's the challenge that I think we have to face for those of us in the church. I've grown up in the church and I've got a lot of experience and observations. When it comes to relationships that are falling apart, when it comes to interpersonal conflict and divorce and estrangement, there is so much that is outside of our control. We are sinful, broken people. And we can't fix it.

When it comes to something like anxiety, there are two great errors those of us in the church can make. We can over spiritualize it and say really harmful things like, "Well, you clearly have some unrepentant sin in your life and if you just repent of your sin, God would take away your anxiety." Or we say things like, "You just need to have more faith." Or, "Have you prayed about it?"

For some of you, you grew up in a really legalistic church background and people didn't know what to do with your anxiety and they said these things that just harmed you. We can have an overreaction to that.

And we can under spiritualize it and we can say things like, "Well, I've tried prayer. It didn't work. So now I'm going to go try this medication." I would say that the God of the medication is the God of all of it.

So I would simply say to you, "I don't know where you fall in this, whether you under spiritualize it or over spiritualize it, but the answer is that we come to God and we say,



“God, I’m going to actually utilize the tools that you’ve given me to bring some healing in my life, but I am not going to under estimate Your power to bring peace and healing.”

I don’t understand it, and that’s exactly what Paul says, it transcends all understanding. But it could quite possibly be that God wants you to employ these imperatives: feel or show great delight; be selfless, which shows your identity in Christ; don’t be anxious about anything but through prayer and petition present it to God. And then the God of peace will come.

And could it quite possibly be that you want the promises without the imperatives? I know for some of us it doesn’t make any sense, “I need some big thing. I need some big breakthrough in order to be released from this.” Do you? I think God actually wants you to demonstrate a child-like faith so that He can demonstrate His power.

A great biblical example of this is Naman in the Old Testament. Naman was a captain of the Assyrian army, this incredibly powerful dude in the world at that time. And he captured all of these kingdoms of the earth. And Naman comes down with leprosy. That was a death sentence in those days.

And he hears that there was Elisha, not Elijah but Elisha, who is now a slave, he was a part of one of the kingdoms that Naman had conquered. And he hears that Elisha’s God could quite possibly heal him from leprosy. And he’s desperate enough to actually check it out. So he brings in Elisha and he’s like, “Could your God heal me of leprosy?” And Elisha is like, “Yeah. He could.”

He said, “Well, what do I have to do?” I think Naman is thinking of some great feat or some great thing that he has to do to try to earn this as a reward. And here’s what Elisha says to him. Absolutely brilliant. He goes, “I want you to go down to the Jordan River, this muddy creek.”

I was actually at the Jordan River last week. I snapped this picture of it. It’s muddy. It’s not that impressive.

Elisha goes to Naman, “Hey, I want you to go down to mud creek and I want you to get in and I want you to dip, not once, not twice, not three times, but seven times. And six times you’re going to dip and you’ll still have leprosy. On the seventh time you’re going to come up and you’re going to be cleansed.”

And Naman got offended. He was like, “That is the stupidest thing I’ve ever heard in my life. There’s got to be something more to it than that.” And he leaves. And Elisha stands his ground.

Eventually Naman comes back, he dips in the muddy Jordan River seven times and on the seventh time he is cleansed. Now, why did God do it that way? To demonstrate His power when it doesn't make sense.

And I just simply want to say to you, today, maybe what you need is the Jordan River figuratively speaking. To invite the power and the presence of God into your life when it doesn't make any sense. Just petition God in prayer.

I love what E. M. Bounds says about this. He says, "God is waiting to be put to the test by people in prayer. He delights in being put to the test on His promises. It is His highest pleasure to answer prayer to prove the reliability of His promises. The question is, do you trust Him with that?"

So here's how we're going to end together today across all of our campuses. If you need reconciliation of other relationships or you need to be released from something, I simply want to invite you to come and figuratively speaking, dip in the Jordan. Here's what I mean by that. I'm going to be down front. Our prayer team is going to be down front. Your campus pastor is going to be down front.

Here's what I want to ask you to do. Last hour we had people lined up all the way to the back of the room. You just simply come up. It is a 20 second exchange, "I need released from \_\_\_\_\_." People give all kinds of things. "I need to be released from anxiety." "I need to be released from lust." "I need to be released from worry." That's all that they said. And we prayed.

Or, this, "I need to be reconciled with to \_\_\_\_\_." I had people come up and say, "I need to be reconciled with Liz." "I need to be reconciled with Mike," "I need to be reconciled with Sally." That was all they said.

And we just laid hands on them and prayed that God would bring release and God would bring reconciliation. This is an opportunity for you to find the power and the presence of God in your life, when you've thrown everything else at it. And watch what God might do in people who believe His promises.

Lord God, we come to You right now and I know that represented across this room and others that there is a tremendous amount of pain. Pain over anxiety. Pain over health. Pain over worries and concerns. Relationships that are broken and feel irreconcilable and estranged. So, God, we come to You today and we just want to acknowledge that You are a God who can bring release from and reconciliation to.

So, simply in faith, I pray that You would honor those who would step out today and lean into the God who can bring healing and restoration. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.

