

# LETTERS TO PHIL: MOVING FROM ANXIETY TO JOY

## OVERCOMING WORRY WITH JOY - DEVOTIONAL

### SUNDAY – Ecclesiastes 3: 11

**Thought** – Each day, God offers a new beginning to each of us. Our response to that invitation makes all the difference as we move from a place of anxiety to a place of joy. This practice will pave the way from worry to joy in Christ.

**Prayer** – *Lord, you promise to make all things beautiful in your own time. Let me find joy in Your time. In Your holy name. Amen.*

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### MONDAY – Read Psalms 51: 1-3

#### **Thought – Confess**

*Our sins keep us from close relationships with each other and with God. “Wash me clean from my guilt. Purify me from my sin. For I recognize my rebellion, it haunts me day and night.” (NLT) What sin has been haunting you?*

**Prayer** – *God, I realize you already know the place where I am guilty and feel so very ashamed. But I’m offering it out loud to you today. Amen.*

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### TUESDAY – Read Psalms 51: 4-6

#### **Thought – Acknowledge**

Sin harms everyone involved: the wounded, you and God. *“But you desire honesty from the womb, teaching me wisdom even there.” (Ps 51: 6 NLT) Acknowledgment of our guilt is a difficult but important spiritual practice. What sin do you need to own today? Be honest.*

**Prayer** – *Lord, I would say I’m more of a blamer than an owner of my guilt. Help me recognize and admit those shadows that follow me around each day. In Your name I pray. Amen.*

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### WEDNESDAY – Read Psalm 51: 7-8

#### **Thought – Request**

*“Purify me from my sins, and I will be clean; wash me, and I will be whiter than snow. Oh, give me back my joy again; you have broken me – now let me rejoice.” (NLT) Close your eyes. Imagine you are offering a particular sin to God. Now breathe in the cleansing power of our redeemer God.*

**Prayer** – Lord in your mercy, wash me clean from this sin that separates me from you. In Your precious name, I plead. Amen.

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**THURSDAY – Read Psalm 51: 10-11**

**Thought – Renew**

Remember the time when you first realized the depth of God’s love and your worthiness. If that’s still an area of struggle, sit with these truths: God’s love is inclusive and eternal. You are already worthy of that love.

**Prayer** – Lord of all, in you I place my trust. Renew my joy and faith in Your promises. Amen.

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**FRIDAY – Read Psalm 51: 15**

**Thought – Praise**

Joy is contagious. Now more than ever, our world cries out for hope and joy. “Unseal my lips, O lord, that my mouth may praise you.” (NLT)

**Prayer** – You are my rock, my salvation, and my joy unspeakable! Praise and glory be to Your holy name! Amen.

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**SATURDAY – Read Psalm 51: 16-17**

**Thought – Surrender**

At our core we long for control, but until we surrender everything to God, real joy will always be just out of reach. Quit searching in all the wrong places. Right now, admit your helplessness and accept the gift of God’s grace and mercy, and the plan He has for your life.

**Prayer** – Dearest Heavenly Father, here I am. Amen.

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## OVERCOMING WORRY WITH JOY– GROUP GUIDE

**PRAYER** – *God, we acknowledge that you are already here. May our hearts be open to Your presence and to Your direction. Amen.*

**BIG IDEA** – God’s plan, that we experience joy and share joy, requires first that we surrender control in multiple ways for a variety of reasons.

### SCRIPTURE – Phillipians 4: 4-9

#### Discussion Questions:

- As the living word, scripture speaks to us personally today as Christ’s body of believers. Remember, **Saint Paul’s UMC**, “...*always be full of joy in the Lord.*” (Phillip. 4: 4, NLT) Just as God, through Paul, spoke to the Phillipians, that command should still resonate with us today. Easier said than done, you say? Read Psalms 40: 1-3 aloud. What do you notice about joy in the middle of anxiety?
- **Paul goes** on to say in Phillipians 4: 5, “Let your gentleness be evident to all. *The Lord is near.*” (NIV) God’s presence among us as a community of believers should motivate, direct and enable us on this roller coaster ride we call 2020. How have you been uncomfortable in the ways St. Paul’s is adapting to this new reality? What areas might you release your personal need for control to further God’s kingdom?
- Be ready to laugh out loud as Paul basically says in verse 6, “Don’t worry; be happy!” **Pray. Ask. Thank.** Share with the group as you are able, what have been your most pressing worries. Take the time now as a community to pray for each other. Mention specific concerns. Remember to thank God and be concrete with your gratitude.
- We have been gifted with this very real promise of peace. “Before you know it, a sense of God’s wholeness, everything coming together for good, will come and settle you down. It’s wonderful what happens when Christ displaces worry at the center of your life.” (Phillip. 4: 7, The Message) Sometimes it’s feels almost impossible to get a sense that everything is coming together for good. Share with the group some practical ways to turn over worries to God. Phillipians 4: 8-9 might be a starting point.

**TAKE AWAY** – As we release personal and community control over our expectations and outcomes, the joy and peace of God will gradually replace the anxiety and worry within us.

**Pray the Lord’s Prayer.**