

G R O W

Get focused, Read, Observation, Worship

Peace and Prayer – Philippians 4:6-7

Who is someone that you have a close relationship? How was that close relationship formed? Close relationships are formed by spending time together and through communication. Those that we are closest to are those with whom we spend a lot of time together and communicate with often. Sometimes we are not able to spend time with or communicate with those that we are close to, and we maintain close relationships with them. But without time together and communication, the relationship won't continue to grow. This is true for our relationship with God as well. The Lord desires close relationships with us and we should desire the same. And for our relationship to grow, we must spend time in prayer with the Lord.

GET FOCUSED

Take a few moments to get focused, to silence distractions within and without. Spending time with God in His Word is vitally important for our growth, so let's make the most of this time.

READ

We can connect with God in a variety of ways: prayer, worship, fellowship, ministry. But one of the most important ways we connect with God and grow is by reading His Word. The Bible is God's revelation to man, so take time to read His Word and our selected passage.

OBSERVATION (COMB through the text)

In this step, we want to investigate the passage, to understand its message and meaning, so we use another acronym: C.O.M.B. to help us examine the passage. So, in addition to reading our main passage, read the verses around it to understand the **context**. We see that how we live our lives should point others to Jesus and to trust Him (v5). Philippians 4 also deals with contentment, where we are at peace with life no matter our circumstances (v11-12). We can find joy in God even in trials (v4). So, we see that prayer plays a big part in finding this peace and joy.

Next, we want to **observe** the key words and phrases. What stands out to you? You should see these key words and phrases: anxious, anything and everything, prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, peace of God, guard your hearts and minds.

To help understand the **meaning** of these words and phrases, invest in a good study Bible or utilize online tools like netbible.org. In this passage, anxiety and peace are contrasted. Anxiety is a word that means to divide or draw into different directions. It means to be unsure or unstable. Our word

“worry” comes from a word which means to grab by the throat and strangle. These are not pleasant words, and we understand the stress and insecurity that anxiety brings. But God does not want us to live with anxiety. In fact, this word from God calls to not be anxious about anything, which is something Jesus also taught clearly (Matthew 6:25-34). So, in everything we pray, trusting God with all our cares and everything in our lives (see also 1 Peter 5:7).

There are 3 words used in this passage to describe prayer: prayer, supplication, and thanksgiving. Prayer means to praise, supplication means to ask, and thanksgiving means to be grateful. All throughout scripture, we see that praise is a necessary part of prayer. In praise, we are reminded of who God is: sovereign ruler over all things, all powerful, all knowing, good and gracious, loving and caring, etc. We can trust that God knows all our needs and is at work (Matt. 6:8, Romans 8:28). We ask God for His help. We may ask God to remove something from us, but we have to trust that He knows best (Luke 22:42, 2 Cor. 12:7-10). Gratefulness must also mark our prayers, that we thank God for every circumstance. We know that God also uses trials to strengthen us (James 1:2-4).

When we pray in this way, we will know His peace. Peace is not just the absence of strife, but it speaks to a wellness of the soul, where we know contentment beyond our circumstances. This is a peace that only God can give; in fact, it goes beyond human understanding. Others can only see the circumstance, so it doesn't make sense to be a peace, but we see through the circumstance to God and His care and provision. We know ultimately, we have a hope beyond this world and that brings the greatest peace. A peace that is only found by being in Christ Jesus. This is the key not only for forgiveness of sin and salvation (Rom. 6:23), but for the abundant life He promises (John 10:10). The word “guard” was a military term that referred to soldiers standing watch and protecting others from hostile attacks. Anxiety and worry try to strangle the life out of us, but God's peace will stand guard for our hearts and minds, our desires and judgments. When we abide in prayer, we are under this protection, but when we neglect prayer, we are not living under this protection.

So, what's the **bottom-line**, how would you sum all this up? Prayer provides peace and protects us from worry.

WORSHIP

Remember, “reading the Bible is not where your engagement ends It is where it begins” (Heiser). Worship is about living out what we've learned. Worship is about honoring God with our lives, not just in words. To live this out, we need to develop our prayer lives. Don't just rely on sporadic prayers, offered up as things come up in your day. Yes, we should prayer this way as a way of praying continuously (1 Thess. 5:17), but we must also have regular times of disciplined prayer, where we focus our hearts and minds on the peace of God. Continue to meditate on this. What does it take for you to have regular disciplined prayer? Is it waking earlier? Is it watching less TV to spend time in prayer? What will you do to pray more?