BIBLE CONNECTIONS WITH JOSEPH

Philippians 4:6–7 (read in 4:1–9)

A companion study from the set Bible Verses for Anxiety, Through the Six Steps · Bible Connections with Joseph

> This study walks Philippians 4:6–7 (read in 4:1–9) through the six steps: 1 Read It — the passage and what's around it · 2 Cross Over — who wrote it, to whom, and what was happening · 3 Stand in Their World — hear it the way they heard it · 4 Verify It — hold it up against the fullness of Scripture · 5 Come Back — put what you found into today's language · 6 Carry It Home — what it asks of you, and how it points to Jesus.
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> If it's heavy, pray about it and talk to someone you trust (or the friend who gave you this sheet). If you don't have anyone yet, a local church is a good place to ask.
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> Keep your own Bible open; this page sends you into the passage rather than printing it. It quotes the Christian Standard Bible (CSB); where you see LORD in capital letters, that is how the CSB prints God's personal name. A reference like 4:6 means chapter 4, verse 6; 'v.' means verse.

1 · Read It — the passage and what's around it

Verse 6 is the line that usually travels alone: "Don't worry about anything." Verse 7 is where the real promise is, and it's the half that gets dropped when verse 6 goes on a graphic. The two verses are one sentence, joined by the word "And," so read them together. Then read the whole passage they sit in, Philippians 4:1–9, because Paul builds up to this sentence and then builds on it.

Here is the shape of what you'll read. Verse 1 looks back to the end of chapter 3, where Paul says our citizenship is in heaven and we wait for the Lord Jesus to come from there. From the beginning, Christians have expected that Jesus, who rose from the dead and went up to heaven, will come back one day (Acts 1:11), and Paul says that when He comes He will transform our lowly bodies to be like His glorious body (3:21). On that ground Paul tells the church to stand firm in the Lord. In Paul's letters "the Lord" usually means Jesus; earlier in this letter Paul says every tongue will one day confess Jesus Christ as Lord (2:11).

In verses 2 and 3 he turns to two women in the church, Euodia and Syntyche, who had worked side by side with him in spreading the gospel (the good news about Jesus). He urges them to agree in the Lord, and asks a trusted partner in the church to help them. It seems the two had fallen out, though the letter never says over what. Their quarrel sits here, just before "Don't worry," because Paul is speaking to the whole church as one body: he has already asked them to stand firm in one spirit (1:27) and to think the same way (2:2), and two of its leaders at odds would strain a church already pressed from outside. So he asks them to agree "in the Lord," the one they both belong to, and the peace he is about to promise is for a church learning to live at peace together.

Verses 4 and 5 call the whole church to rejoice in the Lord always and to let their graciousness, a gentle and yielding way with people, be known to everyone. Then come four words: "The Lord is near." Our sentence follows right after them. Verses 8 and 9 close the passage: set your mind on whatever is true, honorable, just, pure, lovely and commendable, put into practice what you learned from Paul and saw in him, "and the God of peace will be with you."

Notice how often the passage says "in the Lord": stand firm in the Lord (v. 1), agree in the Lord (v. 2), rejoice in the Lord (v. 4). Verse 7 ends on the same note: "in Christ Jesus." Everything Paul asks of this church happens in the Lord, and that is where the peace of God does its guarding.

◆ **Write down what verse 7 adds to verse 6. Whose peace is it, what does it do, and where does it do it? Then put verse 7 next to verse 9. Verse 7 promises "the peace of God," and verse 9 promises "the God of peace." What does verse 9 add?**

2 · Cross Over — who wrote it, to whom, and what was happening

Paul, one of the first Christian leaders and the man who started the church in Philippi, writes this letter in custody. Read Philippians 1:12–14 to see where he is and who has come to know why he is in chains. Many readers place the letter in Rome, where the book of Acts (the New Testament's account of the first churches) leaves Paul: allowed to live by himself, with a soldier guarding him, and wearing a chain (Acts 28:16, 20).

Then read Acts 16:11–40, the story of how the church in Philippi began. Its first members included women who met for prayer by a river outside the city, and Lydia, a businesswoman who opened her home to Paul. Euodia and Syntyche may well have been among those early women. In the same chapter, Paul and his travel companion Silas were beaten and locked in that city's jail, and at midnight they were praying and singing hymns to God. The church reading this letter may well have remembered that night, and now Paul is in chains again.

The church had pressures of its own. Paul tells them they face opponents and share the same struggle he does (1:28–30). They had also just sent him a gift, carried by Epaphroditus, a man from their church (4:18), and the rest of chapter 4 thanks them for it.

◆ **What is Paul's own situation as he tells the Philippians not to worry? What is theirs (1:28–30)? What does he tell them in 4:11–12 that he has learned?**

3 · Stand in Their World — hear it the way they heard it

Philippi was a Roman colony (Acts 16:12), a city Rome counted as its own. Cities in that world kept a roll of the names of their citizens, so a church there would hear something when Paul says our citizenship is in heaven (3:20) and that the names of his fellow workers are in the book of life (4:3), God's own roll of His people. Their place was secure in Him before Paul said a word about worry.

And the man writing to them was a prisoner, chained to a Roman soldier. So when he tells them to rejoice always and not to worry about anything, he is saying it from inside his own hard circumstances. When he says God's peace "will guard your hearts and minds," he uses a word that suggests soldiers on duty, like a garrison posted around a city to keep it safe. A man kept under guard by a soldier tells them they will be kept by the peace of God.

Hear “The Lord is near” in that setting too. Readers take these four words two ways. Some hear the Lord close at hand to help His people, as in Psalm 145:18, where He is near all who call on Him. Others hear Jesus’ return as near, as Paul has just described it in 3:20–21. Scripture teaches both. And if you wonder how Jesus can be near now, when Scripture says He is seated at the right hand of the Father (Colossians 3:1), it helps to remember who He is. He is fully God as well as fully man, one with the Father and the Holy Spirit, and He is with His people by His Spirit. That is how He can promise, “I am with you always” (Matthew 28:20). He promises not to leave His people as orphans, and that He and the Father will make their home with those who love Him (John 14:18, 23). And Paul can speak of Christ living in you through the Spirit (Romans 8:9–10; Ephesians 3:16–17; Colossians 1:27). So either way, the words come right before “Don’t worry”: the one who prays has a Lord who is close.

◆ **Write what “don’t worry about anything” sounds like coming from a prisoner rather than from someone comfortable. Then write what it would mean to a church under pressure that God’s peace stands guard over their hearts and minds.**

4 · Verify It — hold it up against the fullness of Scripture

A reading of one verse has to square with all of Scripture. Here is the reading so far: in a passage that keeps saying “in the Lord,” verse 6 is a real instruction to bring everything to God in prayer, with thanks, and verse 7 is God’s promise that His peace will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus as you do. Verses 8 and 9 then tell you what to set your mind on and how to live, with the God of peace Himself with you. Hold it up against these passages, and let the fullness of Scripture rework it if it needs to. Here is where a good commentary (a book that explains the Bible passage by passage) or a trusted pastor helps greatly.

Matthew 6:25–34 — Jesus gives the same command, and gives a reason for it. What reason does He give? 2 Corinthians 11:23–28 — after listing what he has suffered, Paul names a pressure he carries every day, his concern for the churches (v. 28). Does “don’t worry” mean he never felt concern, or something else? One way to hold it: there is a care that does its duty and plans wisely, and a care that comes from distrusting God. Which one is Philippians 4:6 speaking to? You don’t have to sort your own heart perfectly before you pray. Most of us carry both kinds of care tangled together. Bring both to God just as they are, the planning and the fear; verse 6 says “in everything,” and prayer is where He does the sorting.

Isaiah 26:1–4 — the prophet Isaiah, centuries before Paul, sings of a strong city and of God keeping in perfect peace the one whose mind depends on Him. How does that sit next to verses 7 and 8?

John 14:27 — Jesus speaks of a peace that is His own and that He gives. How does that fit “the peace of God” in Philippians 4:7?

Set one more line beside the passage. Of God’s care for His world, the Westminster Confession of Faith (a 1640s summary of Bible teaching used by Reformed churches; a tool, not an authority over the Bible) says God governs all things “from the greatest even to the least” (chapter 5, section 1). How does that help you read “in everything” in verse 6?

◆ **Does the reading hold? What, if anything, did these passages add to it or change in it?**

5 · Come Back — put what you found into today's language

Verse 6 pairs "Don't worry about anything" with the means: prayer and petition with thanksgiving. Prayer is talking to God; petition is asking Him for what you need. "In everything" means nothing is too big or too small to bring Him. Thanks belongs inside the asking, because it keeps the request anchored in what He has already done. That doesn't mean you have to tidy up your hurt first; Psalm 94:18–19 shows a man pouring out his cares to God, and God meeting him there. Handed over without verse 7, verse 6 can feel like one more thing you're failing. Verse 7 is the promise attached to it.

Look at who does the guarding: the peace of God. It's His peace, it rests on Him rather than on how things look, and it's doing the work. "Guard" is the soldiers' word from step 3, the garrison posted around the city, and what it keeps safe is your heart and your mind. The last three words, "in Christ Jesus," say where the guarding happens: in Christ, joined to Jesus by faith. ("Christ" is a title, not a surname: it names Jesus as the Messiah, the King God promised to send.)

The rest of the passage says the same thing in today's terms. You stand firm in the Lord, in His strength. You can rejoice in Him in hard places, because He is near. With the guard posted, verse 8 gives your mind good things to dwell on, and verse 9 says the God of peace Himself will be with you as you live it out. That is a road to walk with Him, not a test to pass: earlier in this same letter Paul says it is God who is at work in you (2:13).

◆ **So when you pray about what's making you anxious and the feeling doesn't change, does that mean you've failed, or that the verse isn't for you? Read verse 7 again, then write your answer in your own words.**

6 · Carry It Home — what it asks of you, and how it points to Jesus

Little faith is still faith. Bringing God the thing you're anxious about, with thanks for what He has already done, is itself an act of trust, and each time you do it, that is a reason to trust Him more deeply. If you pray and the anxious feeling stays, you haven't failed, and the verse is still for you. The security it promises is true even if your anxious feelings linger: the guard is posted. Lean on the Holy Spirit to help you with the emotional side. Leaning on the Holy Spirit is worth slowing down on, because He is God's own help given to you for everything, these anxious moments included. He is God Himself, and He lives in every believer. On the night before He died, Jesus promised His disciples that the Father would give them another Counselor (some translations say Helper) to be with them forever, the Spirit of truth, who remains with them and will

be in them (John 14:16–17). That Counselor would teach them and remind them of everything Jesus had told them (John 14:26). The peace Jesus gives comes in the very next verse (John 14:27, which you met in step 4). On the same evening He promised His peace, He promised the Spirit who would be with them in it.

So what does leaning on Him look like when anxiety rises? Pray, even if all you can manage is a few words, or only a sigh toward God. Romans 8:26–27 was written for the moment you don't know what to say: when we are weak and don't know what to pray, the Spirit prays for us with groaning deeper than words, and God, who searches our hearts, knows what the Spirit is asking, because the Spirit asks according to God's will. You are not praying alone. Remind yourself whose child you are. A few verses earlier Paul writes, "you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear. Instead, you received the Spirit of adoption" (Romans 8:15). Adoption means God has taken you into His family as His own child, so you can call God Father right in the middle of the fear, and the Spirit Himself assures you that you are God's child (8:15–16). Ask Him to help you hold on to what God has promised. Jesus said the Spirit would remind His people of His words, so ask Him to bring verse 7 back to mind, and read it again. Ask Him for strength too: Paul prays that believers be strengthened with power in their inner being through the Spirit (Ephesians 3:16), and 2 Timothy 1:7 says God has given us a spirit of power, love, and sound judgment rather than fear. And trust the peace He brings even when the feeling lags behind. Paul prays that God will fill believers with joy and peace as they trust Him, so that by the Holy Spirit's power their hope spills over (Romans 15:13). Peace is fruit the Spirit grows in us (Galatians 5:22), and fruit grows: on some days you will feel it settle, and on others it will come more slowly, but the guard is posted either way, and God is at work in you (2:13).

Here is what that peace is. It is a settling of your whole inner life, and the Holy Spirit is the one who produces it. It comes from knowing that God has forgiven you and looks on you with favor. It gives hope in the depth of despair and strength in the depth of weakness, which is beyond anything the mind can work out, and you come to know it through God's word and the Spirit's own guarantee in your heart, like a down payment on everything God has promised (Paul uses that very picture for the Spirit in Ephesians 1:14 and 2 Corinthians 1:22: God's first installment, guaranteeing the rest). And this peace comes from God and rests in God. It keeps you steady, so troubles don't sink you or pull you away from Him.

That is how verse 7 works. The peace that guards your heart and mind is the peace of God, and the guarding is God's work in you: the peace comes from the Father, it guards you in Christ Jesus, and the Holy Spirit who lives in you brings it home to your heart. Your part is the one verse 6 names: bring everything to Him, with thanks, and lean on the Spirit as you do.

The passage hands you two more things to do with a guarded mind: set it on whatever is true, honorable, just, pure, lovely and commendable (v. 8), and keep practising what you have learned (v. 9). And it puts you among other believers. Paul asked a trusted partner in Philippi to come alongside Euodia and Syntyche and help them (v. 3). If what you're carrying is heavy, talk to someone you trust, a pastor, teacher or mentor, and pray about it together.

◆ **What does this passage ask of you this week? Name one request you will bring to God, and one thing you will thank Him for as you bring it. Then pick one thing from verse 8 to set your mind on. And how does this passage point you to Jesus? (Start with the last three words of verse 7, and with what Paul says about Jesus in 3:20–21, just before this passage.)**

> This study is one of eight in Bible Verses for Anxiety, Through the Six Steps. The full set: bibleconnectionswithjoseph.com/companions/anxiety-verses/

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