



We Lived Without Conflict & Worry?

Philippians 4:1-7

In the fourth chapter of his letter to Philippi, Paul hones in on two key things we are far better without: conflict and worry. Both of these rob us of the full life that God wants us to have. So let's get rid of the conflict and worry, and live joyfully!



Day #1: Compliment Sandwich

How do you make a ham sandwich? Bread, meat, bread, right? Paul uses a similar pattern when writing to some folks who needed to hear some hard truth.

+ *Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, stay true to the Lord. I love you and long to see you, dear friends, for you are my joy and the crown I receive for my work.*

Now I appeal to Euodia and Syntyche. Please, because you belong to the Lord, settle your disagreement. And I ask you, my true partner, to help these two women, for they worked hard with me in telling others the Good News...

Always be full of joy in the Lord. I say it again—rejoice! Let everyone see that you are considerate in all you do. Remember, the Lord is coming soon. - Philippians 4:1-5

If you need to criticize someone, try making a "compliment sandwich."

1. Say something nice about them first. This lets them know you care about them and want what's best for them. And it gets them to listen to what you are saying—after all, who doesn't want to receive a compliment?!
2. Then deliver the "meat" of the conversation. Tell them kindly and Biblically what it is they have done wrong or what they need to work on.
3. Then end with another compliment or blessing.

***** Practice this with each other right now. Come up with a situation and make a sandwich for it!

For example, if you need to tell someone that sometimes they speak too harshly, instead of saying "Quit yelling all the time!" you might say: (1) Susie, I think you have great ideas and you are right a lot of the time. (2) But sometimes the way you say it comes across like you are mad at the person. (3) I bet if you spoke slower and softer, people would be more willing to listen and they would follow your good advice.

Day #2: Way to Represent

How would you describe Jesus? Would you ever say, "He's kind of mean, He never puts other people first, He always wants things His own way, He never listens to other people, and He argues all the time." Of course not! This is just the *opposite* of Jesus' character! But, sadly, this is what people might think if they judged Jesus by seeing His followers in conflict. The truth is that as followers of Jesus, we represent Him to those people who don't know Him.

+ *So we are Christ's ambassadors; God is making His appeal through us.* - 2 Corinthians 5:19-20a NLT

Unbelieving people notice us. They watch what we say, how we say it, and how we act, and they believe that's how Jesus speaks and acts.

That's one of the reasons that Paul wanted the two feuding women in Philippi to stop their fighting. If Paul, being 700 miles away in a jail cell, had heard about the conflict, how many other people must have heard about it? How many people in Philippi who did not know Jesus were starting to think that life in God's kingdom must include lots of arguing? Paul even had to ask a close friend in Philippi to help the women settle their differences (Philippians 4:3).

Arguing and fighting do not reflect who Jesus is! Love, joy, and peace are what flow out of Jesus. When we are humble and we treat others as better than ourselves, then we look a lot like Jesus!

I give you a new command. Love one another. You must love one another, just as I have loved you. If you love one another, everyone will know you are My disciples. - John 13:34-35

***** How are you doing at representing Jesus? Ask Jesus for help to stop conflict and to love others more.

Day #3: Consider This

One way to end conflict is to treat other people well! Paul said:

+ *Let everyone see that you are considerate in all you do. Remember, the Lord is coming soon.* - Philippians 4:5

The root word of considerate is consider. That means "to think carefully about, to pay attention to." When Paul says to be considerate, he means think carefully about the other person, pay attention to what they would like or what they need.

Day #3 continued:

Jesus had a simple rule about this: *"In everything, do to others what you would want them to do to you."* (Matthew 7:12) It's pretty easy, isn't it? Whatever you do, think about the other person and treat them how you want to be treated.

If you leave a dirty dish on the counter, CONSIDER who will have to pick it up. Is that how you would like to be treated?

If you snag the last piece of dessert, CONSIDER who won't get to have any. Is that how you would like to be treated?

If you whine and complain to your mom or dad, CONSIDER their having to listen to that. Is that how you would like to be treated?

If you push someone out of the way so you can get to the swing at recess, CONSIDER the child who runs a little slower than you. Is that how you would like to be treated?

 Think about the people in your family. Consider who might need a little extra TLC today. (That stands for tender loving care.) What is one way you can be considerate today? Remember, consideration is not a one time action! Paul said to think of others in all you do!

Day #4: Who's in Charge?

After talking about conflict, Paul spoke about worry. There's one thing you must remember to keep you from worrying: God is sovereign.

Sovereign is a word you probably don't hear much, but it means: in control, absolute authority, highest ranking, greatest, utmost, supreme power, above all others, most important, unlimited, imperial, reigning. The Bible calls God, "The Sovereign Lord" almost 300 times! (NLT)

 *O Sovereign Lord, You have only begun to show Your greatness and the strength of Your hand to me, Your servant.* - Deuteronomy 3:24a

The truth is, God is in control. Period. We just have to remember that so that we can live in peace instead of worry. When we remember that God is sovereign, it's like a huge weight is lifted off of us! It's not up to us to figure out how to arrange things in the future. It's up to God.

Jesus once asked, "Can all your worries add a single moment to your life?" Of course, the answer is No! Jesus was making the point that worrying doesn't do any good! Your worrying doesn't take the power out of God's hands and put in yours! It just robs you of the joy God wants for you.

Since no one and nothing can keep God from doing what He wants to do (Job 42:2) it's wonderful that He is utterly good! He always does what's right, and He

Day #4 continued:

makes all things work together for good for those who love Him (Romans 8:28).

 Read this verse out loud right now to help you remember who is in control:

Lord, you are great and powerful.

Glory, majesty and beauty belong to You.

Everything in heaven and on earth belongs to You.

Lord, the kingdom belongs to You.

You are honored as the One who rules over all. -

1 Chronicles 29:11

Reread this the next time you start to worry about something!

Day #5: Don't Worry, Be Prayin'!

Grab a plastic cup from your kitchen and two different color washcloths. Stuff one of the cloths into the cup. Is it pretty full? What is the only way to get the other cloth into the cup? (You'd have to take out the first cloth.) Our mind can be just like this!

One day, Jesus and His disciples were crossing a huge lake in a boat. A wild storm came up and the disciples began to panic, certain they would all drown. Jesus responded, "Why are you afraid? You have so little faith!" You see, faith and fear (or worry) are opposites. If your mind is full of worry, there's no room for faith, and if your mind is full of faith, there's no room for worry.

You are not the first person to worry! It is very common, but it is not what God wants for you. Look at this list of big-time Bible heroes who worried, and look at what God had to say to them.

- God told Abraham, "Abram, do not be afraid. I'm going to give you a son." (Genesis 15:1)
- He told Jacob, "Do not be afraid. I am with you." (Genesis 26:24)
- He told Joshua, "Do not be afraid of the enemy armies. I will fight for you." (Joshua 10:8)
- He told Mary, "Do not be afraid. You will have a baby and name Him Jesus!" (Luke 1:30-31)
- And He told Paul, "Do not be afraid. I will keep you safe as you travel." (Acts 27:24)

Did you notice something? Every time God said, "Do not fear," He also gave a promise. He told of something amazing He would do because He is in control and He is good. Each person had to choose to empty out the fear and fill their mind with God's promises instead. It's the same for us today.

 *Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank Him for all He has done.* - Philippians 4:6

 Your mind will either be filled with worry (which steals your joy) or filled with God's promises (which brings peace and joy). Which would you rather be filled with? Tell God about anything that you are worried about right now. Ask Him what His promises are. Thank Him for all He has done and what He is going to do!