

What if...

We Lived Without Conflict & Worry?

Philippians 4:1-7

PPT Title

What if We Lived Without Conflict and Worry?

Main Point: God wants us to live without conflict and worry.

Key Verse: *Don't worry about anything. Instead, tell God about everything. Ask and pray. Give thanks to him.* - Philippians 4:6

Props: a small basket; about 8 wadded up pieces of full-sized paper

INTRO/BACKGROUND

Who can tell me what conflict is? (Listen for answers.) It's arguing, disagreeing, fighting. Do you ever have conflicts? It's really tough to live in conflict with another person. What's the problem with conflict? (Listen for answers. Optional: write on whiteboard.) Conflict makes you angry, it keeps your focus on bad instead of good, tempts you to sin (gossip, revenge). But what if you could be free of conflict? Just imagine that! What would that be like? How would your life be different?

CONFLICT

Here's the amazing thing: We *can* live without conflict! Paul tells us how.

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. They worked along with Clement and the rest of my co-workers, whose names are written in the Book of Life.

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

Paul starts out this page of his letter with really kind words for his friends. "I love you...I can't wait to see you...you are my joy..." I bet they loved hearing that. And from those words, they could tell that Paul only wanted the best for them. But then he has to say something a little uncomfortable. You see, two of the women in Philippi were in conflict with each other. We don't know what the situation was, and we don't know who was right or wrong. But we know that the conflict was so big that Paul heard about it 700 miles away! Paul called the two women by name (in a letter that was intended to be read out loud!) and he asked them to please settle their argument. Both women believed in Jesus. Both women worked hard to spread the good news about God's kingdom. But they were also fussing and fighting and it needed to end.

As we said before, conflict makes you angry, it keeps your focus on bad things, you can't see the good stuff in the other person anymore, it tempts you to sin (gossip, revenge). But here's the biggest problem: When a believer lives in conflict, it gives Jesus a bad name.



Here's what I mean: Most of the time, conflict comes from pride. "I know I'm right! I couldn't be wrong. I know more than you. I'm up here; you're down there." But Jesus is just the opposite! Paul wrote earlier about Jesus setting aside all of His rights, even though He is God (Philippians 2:6-11). He belongs way up here (**reach as high as you can**) but He brought Himself way down here (**reach low**). He is God but He came to us as a poor, helpless, human baby. He gave up the praise of the angels in heaven. He came here and was treated terribly by many. And when He was being beaten and lied about, He did not even open His mouth to complain or argue! (Isaiah 53:7) Instead, He asked God to forgive them (Luke 23:34). Jesus brought peace instead of conflict.



If Jesus went through all of that without conflict, how much more should we let go of our pride and live in peace? If we get all riled up and angry over everything, we are not representing Jesus well at all. We are not letting His Spirit shine through our words and actions. People might think that Jesus is full of conflict. That would be completely wrong! That's how people in the kingdom of darkness act. People of the Light act differently!

In the book of Acts, we have a great picture of what happens when believers get along:



All the believers were together. They shared everything they had. They sold what they owned. They gave each other everything they needed. Every day they met together in the temple courtyard. In their homes they broke bread and ate together. Their hearts were glad and honest and true. They praised God. They were respected by all the people. Every day the Lord added to their group those who were being saved. - Acts 2:44-47

When people in God's kingdom work together, help each other, and get along, it draws people! The people around them think, "Well that's really cool. I'd love to live like that." So they want to know about our God.

As believers, we are all different; we have different talents and even different opinions. But we should use all these things together for good. In a way, it's kind of like an orchestra. In an orchestra, there's all these different instruments playing all these different parts, but they work together to make a beautiful piece of music. Listen to this: (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0zIPe9g1Fvw>) Isn't that pleasant to hear? I think that would draw people to it. I could stick around and listen to that for hours. But, if the notes are in conflict, it sounds more like this:

(<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sOUsbtUrXHk> This one is audio only.) Wow. Is that pleasant to hear? No, I wouldn't want to stick around for much of that! That how conflict in our behavior works; it drives people away!

Earlier in his letter, Paul said, "Make me truly happy by agreeing wholeheartedly with each other, loving one another, and working together with one mind and purpose." (Philippians 2:2) On the biggest, most important issues, the people of God should have the same mind set because they all follow the same guidebook - the Bible. If something is written in the Bible, then all believers should agree with it. If I agree with the Bible and you agree with the Bible, will we agree with each other? Sure! If we all agree with God, we can't disagree with each other on these important Biblical things (like how to enter God's kingdom, and how to treat others). And the unimportant things, well, they're not that important! Let go of your pride, and compromise.

For things that aren't mentioned in the Bible—like what game to play with your sister, what song to listen to in the car, the rules in 4-square—sometimes you have to let the other person have their way. If you are willing to give a little on things that aren't in the Bible, and be considerate by thinking of others as more important than yourself (Matthew 7:12), that will take care of just about every conflict between believers.

(For Older Kids: Paul's advice here is for *believers* to get along with other *believers*. Some people in your life are not believers. They probably won't agree with God's word.

Play video -
for about 1 min

Play **sound**
from this video

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So for them, even more so, don't be argumentative. Treat them with extra love and kindness. See if you can draw them to God by being a great representation of Jesus! He never ever said sin was okay, but He was loving to all the sinners. Matthew 9:12)

WORRY



The next thing Paul mentions is worry. What is worry? Worrying is when we imagine something bad is going to happen. Do you ever worry? What do you worry about? And what's the problem with worrying? (Listen for answers. Optional: write on whiteboard.) Worrying makes us sad and takes away our joy. What would your life be like without worrying? Do you think it's possible? It is!



Let's go back to Paul's letter. Remember, Paul was locked in a jail cell. Paul had plenty that he *could* have worried about. He could have worried that he'd get really sick, or that he never get out of jail, or that he'd never see his friends or family again. But Paul didn't worry. So we should listen to his advice! Paul said:

Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank Him for all He has done. Then you will experience God's peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus. - Philippians 4:6-7

PPT Verse

Romans 8:28 says, "God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love Him." No matter what happens—no matter what—God will make sure it works out for our good. Is God powerful? Is God loving? Does God know everything? Yes! And He will only allow what's best for you. We worry when we believe that something in our life is out of God's control.

Both worry and faith happen in our mind when we think about the future and imagine what will happen. (Future could be next year, next week, or even the next hour). We worry when we believe that bad things will happen, and we have faith when we believe that God is in control and He will make everything work together for our good. Worry and faith are opposites. You worry when you don't have faith, and when you have faith you don't worry (Matthew 6:30, 8:26).

Our mind is an amazing thing. A lot can go on in there! Let's pretend this basket is my mind. (Show an empty basket.) Yep, it's pretty empty right now! But let's say I start thinking about school. Let's say that my teacher had to move away, and last Friday was her last day here, so tomorrow we'll be getting our new teacher. I can spend all day imagining bad things. (Put in a paper wad for every thought:) Man, I bet she'll be really mean. I bet she'll give twice as much homework. What if she doesn't like me? What if she doesn't like anyone? What if her tests are way harder? What if she cuts our recess in half? All these thoughts are worry (or fear). I'm imagining all the bad that can happen.

But if I take Paul's advice, I'll pray, tell God what I need, and thank Him.

Pray

If this were my mind, I would probably start by saying, "Lord, it makes me so nervous that my teacher is moving away. I really want to hear from You about this. First, I confess to you that I've been worrying and I ask you to take away all my thoughts of worry and fear. Please show me any other lies I have been believing." (Dump out the paper wads!)

When we pray, we not only talk but we... listen! So I would ask, "What do You want me to know about this situation?" That's when God's Spirit can remind you of His amazing promises in the Bible (John 14:26). (Put your Bible in the basket.) He ALWAYS agrees with His written word! I would jot down any verses that come to my mind.

Then thank God. I'd thank Him for giving me my last teacher, thank Him for choosing my new teacher, and thank Him for all He will do in the coming months. And just see

if this doesn't fill your heart and mind with peace that you can't even explain. The faith you have when you read God's word and believe His promises will fill you with great peace and it will guard your heart and mind from allowing worry to slip back in!

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PPT Main Point

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