

ICEBREAKER

Name three things that makes you smile or brings you joy.

SCRIPTURE READING

Read together as a group: **Philippians 4:4-9**. Take turns reading a verse at a time.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- **Are you a worrier? Did you grow up with a worrier? Did you or do you live with a worrier?**

- Philippians 4:6 states: *Do not be anxious about anything.*

Is it ok to worry about some things? What are some other words we use to camouflage our worry. (ie: concern)

- **Read:** Luke 1:26-38

In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed[a] to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. And the virgin's name was Mary. And he came to her and said, "Greetings, O favored one, the Lord is with you!" But she was greatly troubled at the saying, and tried to discern what sort of greeting this might be. And the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end."

And Mary said to the angel, "How will this be, since I am a virgin?"

And the angel answered her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born[d] will be called holy—the Son of God. And behold, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son, and this is the sixth month with her who was called barren. For nothing will be impossible with God." And Mary said, "Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word." And the angel departed from her.

Mary had good reason to be anxious and worry. Put yourself in Mary or Josephs shoes for a moment.

What legitimate worries would you have had?

You may have related to Mary and Josephs story – what was your reaction to your circumstance?

- **Read:** 1 Peter 5:6-7

"Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time. Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you." (NIV)

What is your automatic response when trouble finds you?

Is it easy for you to "cast your cares" or do you enjoy fretting?

What are some barriers for you to "casting your cares" ?

- **Read:** Philippians 4:8 (*Read from each version within your group aloud to each other.*)

Message Version: *"Summing it all up, friends, I'd say you'll do best by filling your minds and meditating on things true, noble, reputable, authentic, compelling, gracious - the best, not the worst; the beautiful, not the ugly; things to praise, not things to curse."*

- **Read:** Romans 12:2

"Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is – His good, pleasing and perfect will." (NIV)

Max Lucado says: *Your challenge is not your challenge. Your challenge is the way you think about your challenge. Your problem is not your problem; it is the way you look at it. You can't always control your circumstances, but you can control the way you process them. We are the sum of our thoughts.*

What steps would you be willing to take to change your thinking patterns, your response patterns or your emotional reactions?

PERSONAL REFLECTION

Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Are you rejoicing - in - the - Lord - always?

THIS WEEK'S CHALLENGE

Meditate on habits in your life that you know you should change. Ask Jesus to show you areas that He would like you to change. Make a plan to change and start to follow the plan.

PRAISE REPORTS / PRAYER REQUESTS