DEFINING IMPERATIVES 2
Don't Worry, Pray

PHILIPPIANS 4:4-9

The IMPERATIVE: Be ANXIOUS for NOTHING.
The ACTION: In EVERYTHING, by PRAYER & PETITION, with THANKSGIVING, present your REQUESTS to God.
The THREAT: It starts with a THOUGHT-SEED. Give it AIRTIME & it slowly GROWS until it becomes ANXIETY.
The OPPORTUNITY: To KNOW God's PEACE.

Why can this imperative sound so difficult or even unrealistic when we are facing genuine pressures?
Worry begins with a thought-seed which, given airtime, gradually grows. How good are you are 'trapping' that thought-seed or are you prone to letting it go wild? Why?
What do you think it means in practice to know God's peace when the circumstances themselves have not changed?

The GOSPEL

We HAVE peace WITH GOD because of the finished work of Christ on the cross.

Peace is:
1. A POSITION we can now STAND in
2. A REALITY we're GROWING into
3. A FULNESS we'll ONE DAY enjoy

We have:
1. Peace WITH the Father – Justification (Rom 5:1)
2. Peace THROUGH the Son – Reconciliation (Isa 9:6, Eph 2:13-14a)
3. Peace BY the Holy Spirit – Transformation (Gal 5:22, Rom 8:6)

How does knowing that our peace with God rests on Jesus' finished work, rather than our own performance, give us a secure foundation when life feels unsettled?

The DIRECTION: What is God telling us to do?

1. TELL God what you NEED (v6, Matt 7:7-8)

Why is it sometimes difficult to be specific & honest with God about what is troubling us?
Is there a concern you need to stop carrying alone & deliberately bring to God in prayer this week?

2. THANK Him for what He's DONE (Heb 13:5, Rom 8:28, Lam 3:22-23)
   * Turn your mind to God's CHARACTER, past FAITHFULNESS & rich PROMISES.

How can remembering God's character, past faithfulness and promises change our perspective on a present difficulty?
How can thanksgiving change our perspective without requiring us to pretend that everything is fine?

3. FOCUS on His GOODNESS (v8)
   * Don't just RESIST wrong thinking, REDIRECT your mind to what is TRUE.

What kinds of negative thought patterns are you most likely to fall into when under pressure?
What practical difference might it make to redirect your mind towards what is true, rather than simply trying to suppress unwanted thoughts?

4. Keep PRACTISING good principles (v9)

The FRUIT

1. PEACE in the STORM
2. HEALTHIER thought life
3. TRANSFORMED OUTPUT
   * As you WITNESS, people will want to KNOW what you've got.
   * In PASTORAL CARE, you'll have a FULL TANK from which to give, rather than being DEPLETED by stress & anxiety.

How might experiencing God's peace in unresolved circumstances change the way we face those circumstances?
How could a healthier thought life affect the way we relate to other people, witness to our faith, or care for others?

The NEW HABIT

Prayer isn't the LAST RESORT, but the FIRST OPTION.
1. NAME it
2. THANK Him
3. KEEP RETURNING whenever worry resurfaces

Honestly, when something worries you, what tends to be your first response? Do you instinctively turn to God, or do you usually try to work things out yourself first?
What might help you develop the habit of bringing worries to God earlier, rather than allowing them to dominate your thinking?