

Youth Sunday Messages - 2022

Ask Questions (Philippians 4:6-7)

Taylor Hovis

Youth Sunday

First Baptist Church, Jefferson City, Mo.

February 27, 2022

WATCH/LISTEN: <https://www.fbcjc.org/sermon/youth-sunday/>

Before I begin my message, will you please pray with me. "Lord I thank you, I thank you for bringing all these beautiful people here today to worship you, show love to you, and spend time getting to know your word. Lord, I pray that you lead me today to show praise to your word and to show nothing but love and grace. I pray this in your sons name, Amen"

Good morning. My name is Taylor Hovis. I'm a senior at Capital City High School and a member of First Baptist. I am active in the Refuge Youth Ministry and was baptized here last May.

I once read a humorous but instructive story about the toll anxiety can have on a person:

"For several years a woman had been having trouble getting to sleep at night because she feared burglars. One night her husband heard a noise in the house, so he went downstairs to investigate. When he got there, he did find a burglar. 'Good evening,' said the man of the house. 'I am pleased to see you. Come upstairs and meet my wife. She has been waiting ten years to meet you.'"

The point is simple: A burglar hopefully would only steal from you once, although we'd prefer not at all. Worry and anxiety can steal from you for decades.

I have been dealing with anxiety for a while now. I have always been a bad test taker in school and my parents and I could never figure out why. I also would get so irritated at the smallest things and find myself stressing out about everything around me and the people around me. I then decided that I needed to see my doctor who then told me I had severe anxiety along with test anxiety. Anxiety has truly affected my day to day life with my family and peers tremendously. Once I was diagnosed with severe anxiety I started taking prescription medication to try and help me when I get anxious. The first

medication didn't work.

My friends started noticing a difference in my behavior but in a negative way. I was so grateful that my friends were there to tell me "hey Taylor, you're not yourself at all anymore" so i was able to switch medications and try another one.

Since I was diagnosed, I have had a lot of therapy sessions and doctors visits to make sure my medications were doing what they are meant to do. Anxiety is a very common struggle in our nation and world. The Anxiety & Depression Association of America's website states, "Anxiety disorders are the most common mental illness in the U.S., affecting 40 million adults in the United States age 18 and older, or 18.1% of the population every year."

Many of us deal with anxiety and each person's journey with anxiety is unique. Some battle with very severe anxiety, panic attacks, and/or social anxiety. Some struggle with depression or severe phobias. Some of us are just more anxious in nature, worrying about all the things out of our control. Some will need and should seek out professional help and/or receive the assistance of medication which helps regulate physical contributors to anxiety. All of these can be gifts from God to help us. Today, I don't want in any way to diminish or simplify this topic, but I do want to share how God's word is helping me with some of my anxiety. You see, anxiety is not a lack of faith. Instead, our faith can help us when we are dealing with anxiety.

The Apostle Paul spoke to worrying and anxiety when he penned two of the most hopeful, anxiety-curbing verses in the Bible: "Do not be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." (Philippians 4:6-7 ESV)

One of the worst things about anxiety is that it gives us spiritual amnesia: We forget who we are in Christ. We forget that as His coheirs, we have access to His power and glory, that when our priorities line up with His, He will meet our needs.

This doesn't mean we go from miracle to miracle in life or that life will be easy and free from pain and hardship. Rather, it means that whatever we are facing, Paul reminds us we should go to God in prayer over these things, and trust our heavenly Father is aware of it and will stick with us through it all, no matter what. He will even give us peace beyond our understanding and the grace and courage to face our challenges. You might be tempted to dismiss those verses in Philippians, thinking, Well, that sort of approach to anxiety is nice, but my problems are just more complex than that. Though these verses may be simple, they are not simplistic. They are grounded in God's unchanging

character and nature, which means they are trustworthy for us today and all our tomorrows.

So many of us live huge chunks of our lives trying not to worry but worrying anyway. We tell God what we need, and then, we bite our nails over whether He will provide. We believe He exists, but we're often not convinced He loves us enough to really help us or that we deserve God's help. We hold on to only certain bits and pieces of the truth, leaving us stuck in a world of anxiety where it's tempting to believe that failure, uncertainty, and worrying is all there is in life.

We know we're sinners who fall short of God's glory, and we know that Jesus died to save us from our sin, but somewhere along the way, we've failed to embrace what that means for our outlook on life.

To be a Christian means to be adopted by God as His child—to have access to His love, power, strength, and peace. That's why, if we can come to embrace and trust in the promise of Philippians 4:6-7, it can comfort and strengthen us when we are dealing with anxiety.

Life is hard. It can be overwhelming and scary at times - whether you are 8, 18, 48 or 88. When we have trouble sleeping, worrying about the things that might happen, the bad that might break in, may we remember these words from Paul, "Do not be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."

When Life is Anxious (Matthew 18:1-5)

Lucy Washburn

Youth Sunday

First Baptist Church, Jefferson City, Mo.

February 27, 2022

WATCH/LISTEN: <https://www.fbcjc.org/sermon/youth-sunday/>

Hello. If you don't know me, my name is Lucy Washburn. I'm a senior at Capital City High School and a member of the youth group here at First Baptist.

When Mel asked me to speak today I instantly knew that I wanted to talk about asking questions. That's something that I struggled with for a long time and am still working on. I went to a private Christian school from kindergarten through eighth grade. That meant I attended religion classes, a church service every week, and eventually confirmation classes.

Now, despite me being up here, I am not a very outgoing person. I don't speak up a lot in class and back then I really didn't. I didn't like asking questions, especially not in religion class. I was worried that I would be judged for my questions or that they would show a lack of faith. I kept this mentality until I got to confirmation class. One day, a girl asked a question on a somewhat controversial topic and you could hear the room hold a collective breath. Everyone was scared of where this question would go and how the pastor would react. But, we had no reason to worry. The girl was not scolded or judged for her question. The pastor didn't dodge the question either. He gave a very straightforward answer and answered all of our follow-up questions. That day showed me that I didn't need to be afraid of my questions because they weren't a sign of a lack of faith. Instead, they would bring me closer to God. I was worried about how those around me would perceive my questions and not how God would perceive my questions.

Matthew 18:1-5 says "At that time the disciples came to Jesus and asked, "Who, then, is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" He called a little child to him, and placed the child among them. And he said: "Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, whoever takes the lowly position of this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. And whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me." (NIV)

In this passage, Jesus is telling us that we need to have childlike faith, but what does that mean? To some Christians, that means blindly following without reason or explanations, but that is the exact opposite of what Jesus is saying. Jesus is

encouraging us to ask questions.

Anyone who has been around children knows that kids ask a lot of questions. In fact, research shows that kids ask an average of 73 questions a day. That's a lot of questions! Now some of those 73 questions may be silly, but they are a sign that children want to learn. That is what Jesus wants from us. He wants us to learn about him and be active in our faith. Asking questions means we are in constant conversation with God and being active in our faith rather than stagnant. Relationships are two-sided. God wants to hear from us which is why he wants us to pray and ask questions. God knows who we are and what our intentions are. He knows our questions aren't because we doubt him. They are because we want to get to know Him.

Plus, I don't know about you, but sometimes the Bible confuses me. How would I be able to understand it if I didn't ask questions? It's like in school. I can't expect to do well in my math class if I don't ask questions about the topics that confuse me.

Mel also sent me an awesome quote from Rev. Nejamin Cremer which says that "Faith has so much more to do with curiosity than it does certainty."

There are certain things in faith that we will never be 100% certain about. As much as we wish it was, the Bible is not very clear on a number of things. So, if that's the case, why not ask questions and try to figure it out? That process will bring us closer in faith because we would have to analyze God's word to get answers. If that's not a sign of faith, then I don't know what is.

Perhaps you, like me, have struggled with questions, because you were worried about what others would think or that they might be a lack of faith. Perhaps you, like so many of us, have confused certainty rather than curiosity as a reflection of strong faith. May we hear Jesus's words today as a loving invitation to become like children, asking questions and trusting Jesus knows our intention is to know him better.