



[**Teacher Note:** Before class, I gave a note card to every student as they entered the room. I asked them to write down the top 2-3 things they worry about most and turn it back in. They do not need to write their names on the cards.]

Alex is in 9th grade. He is head-over-heels in love with his first “real” girlfriend, Cassie. They just hit the three-month mark. Whenever Alex isn't with Cassie, he's texting her. And when he's not texting her, he's daydreaming about her.

Now, up to this point in his life, Alex has had a great relationship with his parents. However, lately he's been getting in trouble more and more. His grades are slipping, he's been missing curfew, and he's not doing his chores the way they want. Sometimes he snaps at his mom, even when she doesn't deserve it, and even *he* can't figure out why.

Whenever he talks to Cassie about his problems with his parents, she convinces him that his parents are just being too strict, and they need to loosen up.

Well, one day, it all comes to a head. Alex gets in a huge fight with his parents after failing a big math test. When Alex's parents tell him he can't see or talk with Cassie for a week, he explodes. This prompts his dad to ground him for an additional week, take his phone from him, and send him to bed early.

If you were Alex, what would you spend most of your night in bed worried about?

- How to communicate with Cassie
- How to get your sentence reduced
- What if Cassie gets sick of your parents and dumps you?
- What if she falls in love with another guy while you're MIA for 2 weeks?
- What will they find in your phone if they look through it?
- Why are your parents so unfair?
- How can you get your Math grade back up?

Ok, maybe you've never been in that exact spot before. But I'm guessing you've experienced similar nights full of pain, frustration, and worry.

According to Google, here are the seven areas teens worry about most:

1. Grades
2. Belonging
3. Body image
4. Overscheduling
5. Family conflict
6. Love interests
7. Future

I was curious to see how accurate that would be. So, as you walked in, you were asked to write down the things you worry most about. Let's see what some of you wrote.

[Read through 10-15 pre-screened answers that were turned in. Feel free to pick out a couple funny responses but be sure to include several real responses as well.]

Tonight, we are beginning a new series titled *Don't Worry Be Happy*. Now, I get it. For some of you, telling you not to worry is like telling you not to breathe. There's no question that worry is a natural emotion we all experience. And worrying is not all bad! After all, worrying is a sign that you care! We call that kind of worry "concern." But worry, like every emotion, can become a problem when it takes over the controls. At its worst, worry can become so heavy that it begins to crush our faith, our hope, and our happiness.

For the next few weeks, in our quest to not worry and be happy, we are going to be studying in the book of Philippians.

Philippians is a letter written by the apostle Paul. He was writing to the church in Philippi. And in this letter, he seems to be trying to cheer the church up. He talks a lot about joy, unity, advancing the Gospel, and how much he cares for them. As we will see eventually, he even tells them not to worry!

That's because when Paul wrote this letter, there was a lot to worry about! The church in Philippi was under extreme cultural pressure to conform to

the world around them. What was trendy and cool often flew in the face of the wisdom of God. Sound familiar?

But even worse, at the time they received this letter, Paul was in prison awaiting a trial that could result in his execution. The church in Philippi was, no doubt, fearful of what might happen to them next. Would they be arrested? Would they die for their faith?

If anyone has a right to be worried and sad, it's Paul! Yet, he writes from a heart that is full of joy! Paul uses a form of the word "joy" fourteen times in this letter. That's more than any other letter he wrote in the Bible.

So, if Paul is in prison, on trial for a crime that could get him executed, how can he be so joyful? Where does his joy come from? And can we have that same joy? Let's dig in and find out.

Philippians 1:3-5 (NLT)

³ Every time I think of you, I give thanks to my God. ⁴ Whenever I pray, I make my requests for all of you with joy, ⁵ for you have been my partners in spreading the Good News about Christ from the time you first heard it until now.

So to kick off his letter, Paul gives thanks to God for this Philippian church. And we see right away that when he prays, he is filled with joy. Why is he filled with joy? Because they are partners with him in spreading the Good News about Jesus.

This is important! Let's read a little more, but remember WHY Paul is filled with joy when he prays for this church.

Philippians 1:9-10a (NLT)

⁹ I pray that your love will overflow more and more, and that you will keep on growing in knowledge and understanding. ¹⁰ For I want you to understand what really matters...

Here we see Paul is VERY concerned that they continue to grow because he doesn't want them to lose sight of what matters most.

Ok, before we read on, we need to stop here and think about that. What matters most to you? I know what we say matters most.

1. God

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