**[PP slide 1: – Title]**

 [Leader:  **“**Please join me now in prayer”

Dear Heavenly Father, “May the words of our mouths, and the meditations of our hearts be pleasing in Your sight, our Rock and our Redeemer.” In Jesus’ name, amen.]

**Introduction:**

Review

In our first session, I described a strategy called **No Hold** which is rooted in, and inspired by, Jesus’ statement in John 14.

**[PP slide 2: John 14:30-31]**

We noted that there seems to be a dynamic relationship between reducing influence and growing influence between the two “kingdoms”.

**[PP Slide 3: Inverse/build graphic]**

We next identified some tactics that the devil uses to produce **places of access and ownership** in our lives.

**[PP slide 4: Ephesians 4:25-28]**

In relation to that understanding, we emphasized the role of the **Holy Spirit** in this dynamic process.

**[PP slide 5: Eph 5:17-18]**

In session **2**, we talked about strategic structure – end point, pathways, and tactics.

We recognized our Biblical end point as full spiritual maturity,

**[PP slide 6: – Eph 4:11-13]**

and discussed a Biblical pathway called “standing firm”.

**[PP slide 7: – Eph 6:13]**

We then looked forward at several families of **tactics** connected to the **No Hold** strategy.

**[PP Slide 8: Outline]**



[Leader: Explain outline: These tactical families include: Forgiveness, Personal History, and Mind Renovation. Forgiveness and Personal History focus our attention on past events into present; then Mind Renovation is oriented to the present into the future. In our last session, we will return to the **No Hold** strategy to investigate its end point in more detail.]

In session **3** we moved forward to focus on the **tactics** of forgiveness connected to the **No Hold** strategy.

We recognized that Jesus’ **criminal justice system** is the context into which the tactics of forgiveness fit.

The next important concept we described in the context of forgiveness, was **sin** (lawlessness/criminal behavior).

The final concept we described in the context of forgiveness was the activity of Satan as the **accuser** of the Christian believers.

We then noted how forgiveness is defined:

 **[PP Slide 9: Definition]**

**aphiemi** (NT:863), primarily, **"to send forth, send away"** [regarding] ‎(b) sins…

1. ‎**firstly signifies the remission [dismissal] of the punishment due to sinful conduct…**
2. **‎secondly, it involves the complete removal of the cause of offense**

[Leader: read definition aloud starting with “firstly”.]

We emphasized that a court’s sole purpose is to establish guilt or innocence and dispense justice. Mercy and forgiveness are processes that could be termed **“out of court settlements”**. They are related to the maintenance of social order, but provide alternative processes to actual court action.

We also defined a family of forgiveness tactics included in the No Hold strategy:

**[PP Slide 10: Tactics]**

1. Receiving forgiveness from God
2. Receiving forgiveness from others
3. Granting forgiveness to others

[Leader: read tactics aloud]

In session **4** we investigated **two** of these forgiveness tactics;

* receiving forgiveness from God, and
* receiving forgiveness from others;

**and practiced them**.

We also noted a way of interpreting the definition of forgiveness:

 **[PP Slide 11: Interpretation]**

1. **To forgive – a sense of laying aside; getting rid of something; letting something go; sending something away.**
	1. **Opposite of holding onto; keeping something close; grasping onto something**
2. **If it’s laid aside, it’s gone.**

In session **5** we investigated and practiced the third forgiveness tactic, which is granting forgiveness to other people. We also recognized a **warning** that Jesus gave regarding forgiveness: if we forgive, we will be forgiven; if we don’t forgive, we will not be forgiven.

In session **6** we interacted with a set of No Hold tactics oriented toward our personal history. This tactic set is referred to as a Vine Replacement Tool.

**[PP slide 12: VRT]**

Tactics 1-2 enable you, with God’s help, to take back the places (given over to, and owned by, the devil) that give the vine a rooting place. Tactic 3 cleanses those places formerly owned by the Devil. Tactic 4 fills those places with the righteousness of God. Tactic 5 gives the places once owned by the devil to the Holy Spirit. That way, the devil can’t move back in. Tactics 6 and 7 are a way to benefit the people who have used the places to influence our inner man toward the kingdom of darkness strategy. The hope is that our prayer, as the injured person, will make it easier for one or more of those people to come to follow Jesus just as we have.

[Leader: Read statement aloud]

**Body:**

In this session, and next, we will investigate how to deal with one of the most common health challenges of our generation – that of fear. In this session we will deal with anxiety, and in the next we will interact with the fear of death.

**[PP Slide 13: Question]** - 5 Minutes

To get us thinking about this subject, starting with person #1, please discuss this question.

**When you think of anxiety, what comes to your mind?**

[Leader: read the question aloud]

Anxiety could be considered a continual state of mind lasting over many years. Terror, on the other hand, is usually associated with an immediate credible threat of serious injury or death.

Anxiety/Worry/Care is defined in the New Testament in the following way:

**[PP Slide 14: Definition]**

**merimna** NT:3308; probably connected with merizo; **"to draw in different directions, distract," hence signifies "that which causes this, a care, especially an anxious care.**

[Leader: read definition aloud starting with the word “to”]

This is the word that the writer of Matthew uses in the following passage where Jesus focuses on this very challenge.

**[PP Slide 15: Matt 6:25-34]**

**Matt 6:25-34**

**25** "Therefore I tell you, **do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing?** **26** Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them.Are you not of more value than they? **27** And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to hisspan of life? **28** And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, **29** yet I tell you,even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. **30** But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you,O you of little faith? **31** Therefore do not be anxious, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' **32** Forthe Gentiles seek after all these things, andyour heavenly Father knows that you need them all. **33** Butseek firstthe kingdom of God and his righteousness,and all these things will be added to you. **34 "Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.** ESV

[Leader: Read passage aloud]

This is a very familiar passage. We all probably have it memorized. But we should probe our interaction with it.

**[PP Slide 16: Question]** – 10 Minutes

Starting with person 2, please discuss the following question:

**…Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow…**

**What do you think is the reason that we so commonly disregard Jesus’ urging?**

[Leader: Read the question aloud. Record a few reasons at the end of **5** minutes]

Let’s now look at another New Testament passage. This one is from Paul. It’s found in his letter to the Philippians. It is part of his general encouragements to them.

**[PP Slide 17: Phil 4:4-7]**

**Phil 4:4-7**

**4** Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. **5** Let your reasonableness be known to everyone.The Lord is at hand; **6 do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. 7 And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.** ESV

[Leader: Read passage aloud]

Let’s decode this a little bit, starting with verse 7.

First, the Greek word for”peace” is defined as:

**[PP Slide 18: Definition]**

**‎eirene** NT:1515‎; probably from a primary verb eiro (to join); **peace (literally or figuratively); by implication, prosperity:**

[Leader: read definition aloud starting with the word “peace”]

Next, the word “surpasses” is defined as:

**[PP Slide 19: Definition]**

**huperecho** NT:5242‎; from NT:5228 and NT:2192; **to hold oneself above, i.e. (figuratively) to excel; or superior, superiority:**

[Leader: Read definition aloud starting with the word “to”]

So, maybe the phrase could be read “the peace of God that is superior to”.

The object of the phrase is the word “understanding”. We need now to look to another Biblical passage to capture Paul’s meaning.

**[PP Slide 20: Prov 2: 6-8]**

**Prov 2: 6-8**

**6** Forthe Lord gives wisdom;

from his mouth come knowledge and understanding;

**7** he stores up sound wisdom for the upright;

**he is a shield to those who walk in integrity,**

**8 guarding the paths of justice**

andwatching over the way of hissaints. ESV

[Leader: Read passage aloud]

Here is the definition of the word “guarding”:

**[PP Slide 21: Definition]**

**‎shamar** OT:8104; **properly, to hedge about (as with thorns), i.e. guard; generally, to protect, attend to, etc.:**

[Leader: Read definition aloud starting with the word “properly’]

So, maybe a fair understanding of what Paul is saying might be something like: “the peace of God that is superior to understanding (which also is a thorny hedge or guard)”.

Or maybe, “God guards His people with understanding (as a thorny hedge), but also with a superior guard which is His peace”.

We need to look at one more term to capture Paul’s complete thought. That term is the “guard” that the peace of God provides, which is superior to understanding.

**[PP Slide 22: Definition]**

**phroureo** NT:5432 ‎; from a compound of NT:4253 and NT:3708; **to be a watcher in advance, i.e. to mount guard as a sentinel (post spies at gates); figuratively, to hem in, protect:**

[Leader: Read definition aloud starting with the word ‘to”]

Whew! Well, we’re almost there. Bear with me for another moment, and we will have unpacked Paul’s message.

Maybe we could paraphrase this passage like:

**[PP Slide 23: Paraphrase]**

**Phil 4:7**

**7 And the peace of God, which surpasses [is superior to] all understanding [which is a thorny hedge of protection], will guard [which is like a military guard at a town gate] your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.** ESV

[Leader: Read paraphrase aloud]

[**DRF note:** So here is my take: we have two layers of security around our hearts and minds. One is sort of passive (a thorny hedge); the other is very active (military).]

**[PP Slide 24: Question]** -- 5 Minutes

Let’s take a deep breath now. Starting with person 3, please interact with the following question:

**7 And the peace of God, which surpasses [is superior to] all understanding [which is a thorny hedge of protection], will guard [which is like a military guard at a town gate] your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.**

**How does Paul’s statement help an anxious person to forsake their anxiety?**

[Leader: Read question aloud]

To get the rest of Paul’s message, we need to backtrack a little bit.

**(PP Slide 25: Phil 4: 4-7)**

**Phil 4:4-7**

**4 Rejoice in the Lord always**; again I will say, Rejoice. **5** Let your reasonableness be known to everyone.The Lord is at hand; **6** do not be anxious about anything, but **in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. 7 And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.** ESV

[Leader: read passage aloud]

Paul gives three alternatives to anxiety in this passage:

1. Rejoice always (heavily emphasized)
2. Pray filled with thanksgiving
3. Choose to walk in the peace and understanding that comes from God

So now let’s see if we can tie all this together.

**[PP Slide 26: Question]** -- 5 Minutes

Starting with person #4, please discuss the following question:

1. Rejoice always (heavily emphasized)
2. Pray saturated with thanksgiving
3. Choose to walk in the peace and understanding that comes from God

**What condition/mind-set, in your opinion, supports/enables all three of these alternatives?**

[Leader: read the question aloud]

[**DRF note**: The condition, in my opinion, is a mind-set of actually TRUSTING God. Trusting God, for me, always seems to be a matter of choosing to trust in an immediate situation – an act of my will.]

Notice what **Peter** says about repentance, which is defined as changing your mind:

**[PP Slide 27: 2 Pet 3:9]**

**2 Pet 3:9**

The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. **He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish [utter destruction], but everyone to come to repentance [think differently, reconsider].** ESV

[Leader: Read passage aloud]

OK, now it’s time to talk **tactics**.

[**DRF note**: To start, we need to understand something about fear. Fear, in my opinion, is not, in itself, a legal issue; *but*, actions done out of a mind-set of fear can certainly produce legal complications. For instance; stealing bread because you are anxious about what you will eat is still thievery, and could produce legal complications for the thief.

We also need to understand that a habit of being anxious – an ongoing, daily walking in anxiety, can be identified as a vine. So, removing the vine could go a long way in changing a mind-set habit. This result happens because the weight of “kingdom of darkness” influence that has accumulated over (possibly) years is now removed, and the presence of the Holy Spirit in those places one occupied by the devil is now bringing different influences.]

So we have two tactics regarding worry:

**[PP Slide 28, Tactics]**

1. Use the VRT to remove the vine(s) of worry/anxiety.
	1. (individual practice 1) --5 Minutes
		1. Remove a vine of worry – for the next 5 minutes, quietly ask God to reveal to you a vine of anxiety (if one exists).
		2. If a vine exists, remove it with your VRT.
2. Keep the worry vine from growing again:
	1. It’s a matter of choosing [changing your mind] to trust God, and continuing to walk out that decision in your immediate situations.

[Leader: instruct your students to get out their VRT]

**[PP Slide 29, VRT]**

Vine Replacement Tool (VRT)

1. Reclaim the places owned by the Devil. If you haven’t yet done so, confess (freely admit) the sin that gives the vine a place to put in roots. (1 John 1:9 **…**If we confess our sins, he isfaithful and just to forgive us our sins)
2. Ask Jesus to totally destroy the vine. (1John 3:8 … The reason the Son of God appeared wasto destroy the works of the devil...)
3. Ask Jesus to cleanse/purify the places and traces previously occupied by the destroyed vine. (1 John 1:7 **…**the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin…)
4. Ask Jesus to fill the places and traces of the vine with His righteousness. (Rom 5:17 … If, because of one man’s trespass, death reigned through that one man, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousnessreign in life through the one man Jesus Christ…)
5. Ask the Holy Spirit to extend his dwelling space to include the area that was once filled with the vine, and to write His word there. . (1Cor 6:19 … your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you,…); (Eph 5:18… be [continuingly] filled [to the brim] with the Spirit,…); (Jer 31:33…” I will put my law within them, and I will write iton their hearts” ….)
6. Formally [before your heavenly Father] forgive all the misdeeds by any of the agents of the kingdom of darkness done in order to maintain the vine. (Matt 6:14…For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you,…)
7. Ask your heavenly Father to bring every person involved in the misdeeds into salvation. (John 6:44 [Jesus said] …No one can come to me unless the Father who sent medraws [drags] him…)

Here is a final encouragement from John.

**[PP Slide 30: 1 John 5:14-15]**

**1 John 5:14-15**

**14 And this is the confidence [boldness] that we have toward him, that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us. 15 And if we know that he hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have [hold] the requests that we have asked of him**. ESV

[Leader: read passage aloud]

**Conclusion:**

The Bible counsels us around 50 times to stop, or not start, or keep from fear/worry/anxiety.

And Paul gives three alternatives to anxiety:

1. Rejoice always (heavily emphasized)
2. Pray filled with thanksgiving
3. Choose to walk in the peace and understanding that comes from God

Also, the Bible plainly says that we need to, and are able to (with God’s help), change our minds.

The only question left to answer is: Are we *willing* to change our minds? The tactics will only be effective if we ***do*** them.

[Leader: instruct your students to bring their VRT with them for each of the remaining sessions. They will be using them often.]

In our next session, we will be establishing tactics which may be able, for whoever chooses to do them, to help us walk free of the fear of death.

**[PP Slide 31: Personal History Graphic]**



[Leader: who would be willing to close us in prayer?]