

Anxiety

Historians will probably call our era “the age of anxiety.” Anxiety is the natural result when our hopes are centred in anything short of God and His will for us. —Billy Graham

When Billy Graham wrote those words in 1965, no one knew how true they would be 50 years later. But God has done so much more for us than to walk through life, full of fear, worry and anxiety.



What is Anxiety?

- Anxiety (or worry) is an emotional response to a thought or circumstance that we perceive as negative.
- Anxiety occurs because of the way we respond to a problem or troubling situation.
- Anxiety distracts us from our relationship with God and the truth that He is “Lord of heaven and earth” (Matt.11:25).
- Anxiety is a crippling disease, taking over our minds and plunging our thoughts into darkness.

Origin of Anxiety:

- We live in an age of anxiety. Whether it's personal concerns, family matters, financial needs, health issues, governmental policies, or global conditions.
- we all have reasons to worry and fret.
- We take our worries to bed with us, wake up with them, and carry them around with us all day. This is not how God wants us to live.



- Anxiety is a problem that has troubled us through the ages.
- Fear in the face of critical situations is natural.
- However, much of our anxiety is associated with everyday problems.
- God wants to settle our hearts in such a way that we can live with the stresses of life yet still experience His peace and joy.
- Anxiety stems from a lack of faith in our heavenly Father, as unbelief gets the upper hand in our hearts.
- Physical illness and broken bones people may understand. Even a broken heart gains a sympathetic shake of the head. But anxiety can get brushed off as being *in our heads*.

The Causes of Anxiety: (Matt.6)

1. Feelings of inadequacy: Problems can so overwhelm us that we feel insignificant and incapable of doing anything about them.
 - The Lord Jesus Christ advises us to “look at the birds” (6:26). They seem so small and inconsequential, yet
 - God takes upon Himself the responsibility to feed them.
 - We never see birds planting seeds or harvesting crops. They are totally inadequate for that task and can't even hold a hoe or shovel.
 - If God cares so much for them, we can be certain that He will be faithful to meet our needs as well.

2. Our attempt to change things we cannot control:

- Jesus reminds us that many situations are beyond our ability to alter. “And who of you by being worried can add a single hour to his life?” (6:27).
- Whenever we encounter circumstances that we cannot change, the only wise option is to turn them over to the only one who can handle them God.
- When we try to control them, we are demonstrating unbelief and multiplying the intensity of our pain and frustration.

3. Our failure to trust God to provide our needs:

After explaining how the Lord clothes the lilies of the field with more glory than even Solomon, Jesus

- The Lord exhorts us not to worry about clothing because He will provide whatever we need (6:28-30). When we worry that our needs won't be met, we demonstrate a lack of faith in God.
- Part of our problem is that we don't know what our needs truly are.
- Sometimes the situation may look like the Lord has let us down, but in reality, He's supplying a need that we may not even know we have.

- When the apostle Paul suffered so much mistreatment and hardship, Scripture never records him complaining about his circumstances.
- Shipwrecks and beatings were not happy times for Paul, but he endured them with inner peace and confidence because he knew and trusted the Lord.

4. Misplaced priorities:

- Instead of focusing on obtaining the necessities of life, Jesus tells us to “seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you” (6:32-33).
- In God’s creation His rule and authority is over our lives, and His righteousness is Christ’s character
- We must work out in us in such a way that we reflect Him. When we make Him our top priority to acknowledge Him as our Lord and Saviour, we will have the right priorities.
- We must be obedient in His ways, then God promises to supply whatever else we need would be fulfilled.
- He knows exactly what is best for us, as well as how and when to provide it.

5. Trying to live tomorrow today:

- Planning ahead is good, but sometimes our overloaded calendars lead us to an overwhelming sense of time pressure.
- Jesus said: “Do not worry about tomorrow; for tomorrow will take care of itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own” (6:34).
- Instead of becoming anxious about our responsibilities and commitments, we should turn our schedules over to God.
- If we’ll wake up each morning with our thoughts on the Lord, committing ourselves to do whatever He says, we’ll be able to go through the day with peace and joy as we watch Him work out everything.

How to overcome Anxiety?

- The first step to an anxiety-free mind is to **give your life to Jesus Christ**.
- Fix your thoughts on Jesus and the promise that He is preparing a place for His followers in heaven (John 14:2-3).
- “Do not be anxious about anything,” the Bible tells us in the book of (Phili.4:6-7) “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 your minds in Christ Jesus.”
- **True peace comes from a relationship with Jesus. Choose peace with God today.**
- **To overcome worry, we ought to adopt an attitude of joy and thankfulness:** Paul wrote his letter to the Philippians from a cold, damp Roman prison cell, yet he continually spoke about rejoicing. Instead of being anxious, he advised the Philippians to pray about everything with thanksgiving (4:6-7).
- There are so many things for which we can thank God—that He walks with us through hard times, He protects and provides, and He always keeps His promises.

- When we focus on these things, God's peace guards our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus no matter how difficult our circumstances may be.
- **The call of God never takes us where the grace of God cannot sustain us:**
 - He has promised to meet all our needs and to guard us with His peace and joy.
 - The choice is ours.
 - We can either live with mistrust and anxiety, or trust the Lord to provide and watch over us.
 - He has all the power to meet our needs and the omniscience to know what's best.
 - It may not be what we'd like, but His ways are always right, and His motive is always love.

Some Questions:

- 1) What kinds of situations or issues cause you to worry or feel anxious? Do you tend to worry more about what's happening now, or what could happen in the future?
- 2) Review the five causes of anxiety that are found in Jesus' sermon in (Matt.6:25-34). Which of them do you struggle with the most? How can you apply the Lord Jesus's recommendations for overcoming habitual worry?
- 3) What are the physical, emotional, and spiritual consequences of continually carrying a load of anxiety? How is worry an act of unbelief or distrust of God?
- 4) What changes do you need to make in your thought patterns, activities, and prayers in order to be free from worry?

A few tricks that help us when we have anxiety:

- **Ramble to someone** next to you. Monologue it if you're alone. This is great for when I'm freaking out in the car. My counselor recommends deliberate breathing, but that takes focus I don't always have. Talking is a good way to change the way I'm inhaling and exhaling naturally.
- **Sing along** with the radio or TV. This is another great way to change your breathing without trying even comes in handy in the car.



- **Stand up**—comedy that is. Find your sense of humor. What’s funny in your situation—or what will be funny once you’re out of it?
- **Get creative.** Paint. Draw. Write. Play an instrument.
- **Organize.** Cleaning, sorting, and rearranging gives me a goal to set my eyes on and something to focus on. Bonus—you also get a completed project to feel proud of. In desperate moments, I’ve impromptu-organized everything from my jewelry boxes to my husband’s underwear drawer to the closet underneath my stairs.
- **Take a shower.** Or a bath. Warm water relaxes me.
- **Distract yourself.** Read. Watch TV. Play a video game. Plan your grocery list. Clean up the emails in your inbox.

- Anything that gets your focus off what's going on in your body and mind and puts it somewhere else.
- **Take a tour.** A mental tour. Growing up, I lived in a lot of different houses. When my mind refuses to turn off at night, I mentally walk through each one and see what details I remember—the pink flowers on the wallpaper of my house, the deep end of the pool, the creepy basement of our house. Replay a visual of your favourite places.
- **Wave bye-bye** to obligations. Yes, there are certain things we have to do. There are also lots of things we only *think* we have to do. Prioritize. Step away from what you can and conserve your mental energy for what you can't.

- **Turn off the noise:** Sometimes you need to isolate temporarily. My anxiety gets worse with stimulation. Have an immediate getaway.
- **Pinpoint focus.** Social anxiety is a problem for some of us and backing out of an event.
- **Fail.** Give yourself permission to fall from perfection. A lot of us who suffer from anxiety also suffer from perfectionism. Give it a try. Failing really isn't the end of the world. Viz. games, sports, etc.

- **Go there.** Make a plan. Visualize the worst thing that could happen in the situation you're in, or with the fear consuming you, and plan what you'd do. I like to be prepared. Just knowing I've already thought a situation from beginning to end calms some of my anxiety.
- **Pray for someone else.** If I focus on someone else's needs, I slowly begin to forget about myself.
- **Memorize Scripture** that speaks to you. God's word is a living, breathing gift to us. Verses I may find deep meaning in, you may not. We read the **Bible** where we are in life. Pick words that dig deep into your heart and stay there.

**Instead of remaining in anxiety which is negative, let's
move on to more constructive, beneficial way of
thinking i.e. Concern**

■ **Concern Differs From Anxiety**

- We must be careful not to confuse concern with anxiety. It is normal for a Christian to care.
- **Concern motivates to take action:** us to intercede and to take godly action toward meeting the needs of others and/or ourselves.

Viz. we are to be concerned about our families, health, and performances at work.

■ **Concern is rooted in responsibility:**

- As Christians, we are to fulfill God's commandments in our daily lives. In other words, we should live in an honest and moral manner—paying our bills, telling the truth, giving a full day's effort for a full day's wage, and so forth.

- We express this attitude in relation to the people under our protection.

Viz. a child is injured, her parent has a genuine right and responsibility to be concerned about whether the ankle is sprained or broken.

- Concern will lead to taking action and seeking medical advice.
- Concern causes people to respond and sets up harmonious life
- A concern rooted in caring or obedience is not the same as

- But anxiety is emotionally becoming paralyzed with fear, or allow thoughts of bankruptcy, homelessness, and a bleak future to overtake your mind which is absolutely not! That's anxiety.
- CONCERN MOTIVATES US TO TAKE ACTION; ANXIETY PARALYZES US.
- **Concern is positive:** it is forward-looking and constructive. Anxiety is the opposite—it is counterproductive, stuck in the past, and negative. In other words, concern motivates us to take action; anxiety paralyzes us.

- Concern may be marked with tears, expressions of sorrow or sympathy, thoughtful reflection, or quiet time for meditation.
- In the end, concern leads us to make decisions. Appropriate thinking in such cases might sound like this: "I choose to trust in God. I want to seek His purpose and plan in this. I'll take the action He leads me to take."
- Anxiety, on the other hand, tends to be marked by hand-wringing, uncontrollable crying, deeply furrowed brows and slumped shoulders, sleepless nights, nervous twitches, and endless pacing.
- Worry is a treadmill that tends to keep a person in a state of fear and negativity.

The Choice Is Yours:

- We are all human, so occasionally we will be blindsided by unsettling incidents or discoveries. At such times, it's normal to react emotionally.
- But as God's children we should not remain in that condition for long. Instead of falling into a downward spiral of anxiety over difficult circumstances, a healthier response is to pray something like this:

"Heavenly Father, I bring my problem to You. The situation is beyond my control and influence, and I feel helpless; but You have the power to change circumstances.

I know You love me perfectly and whatever You have planned for me is for my good. Show me how to respond, and I will obey You. I look forward to seeing the way You choose to express Your love, wisdom, and power.

I ask this in the precious name of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. – Amen.

- **" Friend, this is the way of peace. You can push out anxiety from your life.**

A few Bible verses for overcoming anxiety

- 1) And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Ph. 4:7
- 2) When I am afraid, I put my trust in you. Ps. 56:3
- 3) So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand. Is. 41:10
- 4) For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind. 2 Tm. 1:7

- 5) Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go. (Js. 1:9)
- 6) The LORD is close to the broken hearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit. (Ps. 34:18)
- 7) An anxious heart weighs a man down, but a kind word cheers him up. (Pr. 12:25)
- 8) Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. (Col. 3:15)

- 9) The LORD gives strength to his people; the LORD blesses his people with peace. (Ps. 29:11)
- 10) It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery. (Gal. 5:1)

Thanks for your patience.

May the Lord bless you.

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