

CONFRONTING ANXIETY & WORRY

INTRODUCTION

- We live in a society where anxiety, worry, and fear are rampant...we are living in an anxiety-ridden culture
- Many people experience more worry than they care to admit, living in a state of anxiety and rarely having a sense of peace
- This is often expressed as “panic attacks, nervous breakdowns, being stressed out”
- What’s ironic about this is that we live in probably the most comfortable and most materialistic society ever
- Yet, it seems to be the most anxious, stressed out, angst-ridden culture ever
- Millions of people are trying to manage their worry and anxiety

- 75% of doctor visits are stress related...About 50% of US population experiences some kind of psychiatric anxiety disorder during their lifetime
- The Journal of Clinical Psychiatry state that health costs for anxiety are more than \$42 billion per year
- Stress and anxiety in the workplace costs American business \$300 billion a year
- There are entire clinics that specialize in anxiety disorders and anxiety treatment
- There are hundreds of medications and therapy options for treating those with anxiety
- A number anxiety related disorders have cropped up in the last 20 years:
- **Generalized Anxiety Disorder (GAD)** is a pattern of frequent, constant worry and anxiety over many different activities and events
- It has the following symptoms: Difficulty concentrating; excessive sweating, palpitations, shortness of breath, and stomach/intestinal symptoms; fatigue; irritability; muscle tension; restlessness or feeling keyed up or "on the edge;" sleep disturbances
- Treatment includes: Cognitive-behavioral therapy (including pleasant mental imagery and relaxation techniques) and medications (including antidepressants and benzodiazepines)
- **Panic Disorder** – Panic disorder is diagnosed in people who experience spontaneous seemingly out-of-the-blue panic attacks and are preoccupied with the fear of a recurring attack...they often occur unexpectedly
- **Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder** – OCD is a common, chronic and long-lasting disorder in which a person has uncontrollable, reoccurring thoughts (*obsessions*) and behaviors (*compulsions*) that he or she feels the urge to repeat over and over (hand washing, counting, arranging things, etc.)
- **Social Anxiety Disorder** – This is the extreme fear of being scrutinized and judged by others in social or performance situations
- About 15 million American adults have social anxiety disorder
- Typical age of onset: 13 years old
- 36 percent of people with social anxiety disorder report symptoms for 10 or more years before seeking help
- Although they recognize that the fear is excessive and unreasonable, people with social anxiety disorder feel powerless against their anxiety and are terrified they will humiliate or embarrass themselves.
- **Phobias** – agoraphobia (fear of places and situations that might cause panic), claustrophobia (fear of confined places), acrophobia (fear of heights), etc.

- A caveat: Not all concern is wrong...there is a godly kind of concern
- This is evident in the fact that the word “concern/anxious” is used in the Bible to refer to right and wrong responses
- Godly concern is caring about important things for the right reasons and is accompanied by a trust in God’s sovereignty and faithfulness
- The right kind of concern is focused on what is true and helpful from God’s perspective

1 Corinthians 12:25 ~ so that there may be no division in the body, but *that* the members may have the same care for one another.

2 Corinthians 11:28 ~ Apart from *such* external things, there is the daily pressure on me *of* concern for all the churches.

Philippians 2:20 ~ For I have no one *else* of kindred spirit [i.e. Timothy] who will genuinely be concerned for your welfare

- This is not the kind of anxiety/worry we are dealing with here...we are interested in addressing the ungodly concern/anxiety
- Anxiety and worry involve an over-anxious concern about the future and things
- This kind of anxiety goes beyond reasonable concern and involves worry about mere possibilities
- It involves not being focused on God and what is true and helpful
- And even as believers we can succumb to sinful anxiety...even David, a man after God’s own heart, acknowledged anxiety and worry (Psalm 139:23)
- The issue then is not whether or not we get anxious...the issue is how we deal with anxiety when it comes

THE NATURE OF ANXIETY AND WORRY

- Since there are clear commands in Scripture against being anxious, anxiety and worry must be sinful
- There are several key things we must know about anxiety and worry

It is a Problem of the Mind

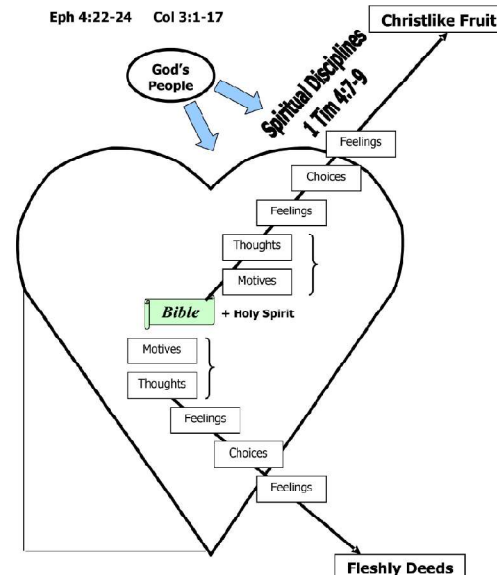
- Feelings come from what we think and believe...this means that what we choose to tell ourselves will either calm our anxieties or feed them
- How we think ultimately determines how we feel and act

Proverbs 4:23 ~ Watch over your heart with all diligence, For from it *flow* the springs of life.

- Anxiety, then, is directly related to what we are thinking
- It is a failure to think on what is true:

Philippians 4:8 ~ Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things.

Biblical Process of Change



It Involves a Distrust of God

- To be anxious and worried is to believe that God does not care for us and that He will not take care of us in the particular circumstances that are triggering our anxiety
- When we are sinfully fearful, we are focused on the circumstances rather than on God
- It is ultimately rooted in unbelief

Matthew 6:30 ~ But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is *alive* today and tomorrow is thrown into the furnace, *will He not much more clothe you?* You of little faith!

- Sinful anxiety is rooted in a lack of understanding or confidence in God's sovereignty, plans, and purposes

Psalms 55:22 ~ Cast your burden upon the LORD and He will sustain you; He will never allow the righteous to be shaken.

It Usually Results from Fearing Something More Than We Fear God

- This usually means that we want something or love something more than we want or love God
- When we fear something more than God, we always forget about Him and His promises
- We fail to accept God's providence in our lives and have difficulty accepting the fact that God does in fact orchestrate all events and circumstances
- The person who worries desires something in the place of God

Proverbs 14:26-27 ~ In the fear of the LORD there is strong confidence, And his children will have refuge. The fear of the LORD is a fountain of life, That one may avoid the snares of death.

Proverbs 29:25 ~ The fear of man brings a snare, But he who trusts in the LORD will be exalted.

Things we may fear more than God	Things we may want or love more than God
Man	Man's approval
Unwanted Circumstances	Life of ease, comfort with no pain
Losing something or someone dear	Money, health, a person, things
Bodily harm	Safety, no pain

It Will Most Likely Motivate Us to Commit Other Sins

- Anxiety and worry can become life dominating in that they lead to other vices
- When we give way to anxiety and worry, we will be tempted to sin in other ways also
- We might lie, follow the crowd, be inconsiderate of others, or even deny the Lord and His Word

Genesis 26:7 ~ When the men of the place asked about his wife, he said, "She is my sister," for he was afraid to say, "my wife," *thinking*, "the men of the place might kill me on account of Rebekah, for she is beautiful."

1 Samuel 15:24 ~ Then Saul said to Samuel, "I have sinned; I have indeed transgressed the command of the LORD and your words, because I feared the people and listened to their voice.

It Accomplishes Absolutely Nothing Worthwhile

- Anxiety and worry have been compared to rocking in a giant rocking chair: It involves a great deal of work but doesn't get you anywhere

Matthew 6:27 ~ And who of you by being worried can add a *single* hour to his life?

BIBLICAL EXHORTATIONS TO “ANXIETY-FREE LIVING”

- The English word "worry" actually comes from an old German word *wuergen* which means to choke or strangle
- It's talking about mental strangulation through fear and anxiety and stress and worry.

Matthew 6:25-34

- 3 times Christ commands us not to worry: vs. 25, 31, 34
- The command in vs. 25 – “Stop worrying;” The commands in vs. 31, 34 – “Don’t start worrying”
- Jesus’ point: if you are worrying...stop!; if you haven’t started, don’t!

Vs. 25

- If God can take care of the most basic necessities in life, can’t He also take care of all other things?

Vs. 26

- If God will feed the birds (which are basically insignificant), can’t He take care of you who are so much more important than birds?

Psalm 104:25, 27 ~ There is the sea, great and broad, In which are swarms without number, Animals both small and great...They all wait for You To give them their food in due season.

Psalm 147:9 ~ He gives to the beast its food, *And* to the young ravens which cry.

Vs. 27

- God has already fixed man’s days...worrying about life cannot add years to your life
- Whatever problem is causing you to feel anxious, you can be sure your anxiety will not lessen the problem...it will only make you miserable while you try to deal with it
- Anxiety has numerous negative consequences: It is a thief of your time...it produces unproductive thoughts...it wastes your energy...it damages your body...it affects many other areas of life

Vs. 28-30

- God has clothed flowers in beauty...Yet flowers have a very short life span...after they die, they are gathered up and burned...So if God cares for flowers that are here and then die, won’t He care for you?
- “You of little faith”...it is an issue of faith...do you believe God is good and trustworthy and faithful?
- To be anxious and worry about the issues of life is to act like an unbeliever
- If you can believe God for salvation, eternity, heaven, forgiveness, why not the lesser things?

Vs. 31-32

- God knows exactly what you need

Vs. 33

- This is the cure for worry/anxiety – move your thoughts up to divine level
- Fix your mind on the Lord and He will take care of your physical needs
- Don’t make being free from fear, worry, anxiety your primary goal – make the Lord your primary goal and He will take care of the rest

Vs. 34

- There are enough things to deal with and trust the Lord for today...don’t get ahead of yourself...don’t worry about the future...just deal with the issues that come your way...there’s no way to solve them in advance

- If you worry about the future now, you make it worse because He hasn't given you the grace to handle the future events...He has given you the grace to handle the events of today

Philippians 4:6-9 ~ 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 comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things. The things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.

- This is a command: Don't be anxious...literally "stop being anxious"
- Apparently, the Philippians had been anxious and they needed to stop being so
- In fact, he shows how comprehensive this instruction is when he says, "Be anxious for nothing"
- Literally, he says "for nothing be anxious"...the word "nothing" is emphatic
- Nothing should produce anxiety in the life of the believer!
- 3 ways to overcome anxiety and worry

Right Praying

- Notice the antidote to anxiety: Prayer.....Paul is saying "fight anxiety with prayer"

Pray frequently: vs. 6 ~ but in everything

- In the same way the command to not be anxious is all-encompassing, the command to pray is also all-encompassing
- You could say it this way: The way to be anxious about nothing is to pray about everything!

Pray thankfully: vs. 6 ~ with thanksgiving

- Praying thankfully is the acknowledgement that we are dependent on the Lord for everything and that we believe that He is sovereign and good
- Our prayers are to be offered with gratitude because we know that God will answer according to His will
- Thankful prayer is important because it expresses confidence in the Lord despite the anxiety

Pray specifically: vs. 6 ~ by prayer and supplication...let your requests be made known to God

- Paul uses 3 synonyms for prayer: 1) prayer; 2) supplication; 3) requests
- Paul's point is pray specifically...be specific and definite in what you're asking for

Pray expectantly: vs. 7 ~ and the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

- "the peace of God" is referring to the actual peace that God has within Himself
- It is that same peace God gives to believers who come to Him in prayer
- This is not normal peace, however...it is the peace "which surpasses all comprehension"...it is supernatural
- And it acts as a sentinel, guarding and protecting our hearts and our minds from thinking wrong thoughts about God and caving in to the pressures of the trouble we're in!

Right Thinking

Philippians 4:8 ~ Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things.

- Conquering anxiety and worry requires choosing to think on what is true about God and your present circumstances
- It involves reminding yourself of God's bounteous provision
- Thinking rightly is a discipline that requires replacing sinful thoughts with godly thoughts

2 Corinthians 10:5 ~ *We are* destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and *we are* taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ

Right Acting

Philippians 4:9 ~ The things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.

- Notice again where the peace of God comes from...practicing godly conduct
- It involves redirecting faith in self or other people to faith in God
- Putting on right praying, right thinking, right choices, and right acting puts off worry!