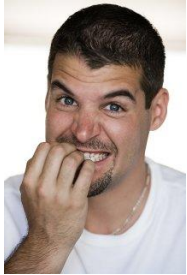


Anxiety: Its Cause and Its Cure

Daryl Wingerd

Anxiety is the natural human response to trouble. For some people anxious thoughts are short-lived and mild, even during severe difficulty. But for others, anxiety leads to sleeplessness, depression, and even physical illness.



Jesus was frank in calling anxiety sin. While telling His followers not to worry (a command given four times in Matthew 6), He says to the worrier, “You of little faith” (Matt. 6:30), thus informing us that anxiety is a form of unbelief. In the overall passage (Matt. 6:25-34), we learn that the worrier approaches life’s difficulties from the perspective of self-reliance rather than trust in a loving God who knows, cares, and provides.

Even though unchecked anxiety is a form of unbelief, Jesus doesn’t conclude that the person who struggles with “little faith” is necessarily an unbeliever. Nor does he rebuke the worrying believer harshly. Instead He reasons with us, relating truths about God’s care for His own, about why worrying is the wrong response to trouble in this life, and about why trusting our loving, dependable Father is better. In addressing anxiety in this positive, encouraging way, Jesus lives out the words of Proverbs 12:25:

Anxiety in a man’s heart weighs it down,
But a good word makes it glad.

Jesus’ “good word” concerning anxiety is one of many provided for believers in the Bible. Here are seven good words to make your heart glad:

1. When all is said and done, you cannot lose. Anxiety is ultimately about losing something you value (perhaps money, a job, the approval of others, social status, health, comfort, relationships, or even life itself). It is true that any one of these might be taken away, but since none of them are your greatest treasure as a Christian, the loss of them does not represent *ultimate* loss. Your greatest treasure, which can never be taken away, is the heavenly inheritance of eternal life. (Eph. 1:3-14 and 1 Pet. 1:3-9)

2. Whatever problems you are facing, God is on your side. Your greatest former enemy (God) is fully reconciled with you and is your most faithful Friend. God is for you, not against you. He is an all-powerful and faithful defender and protector. God loves you as one of His dear children, cares

about your troubles, and offers to carry them for you. (Ps. 34, Rom. 8:31-32, and 1 Pet. 5:6-7)

3. Your greatest problem has already been taken care of. Your sins are all forgiven because of the work of Jesus Christ. Though you will be disciplined by a loving Father, you will never face vindictive punishment for the wrongs you have committed. (Ps. 103:8-12 and 1 Cor. 15:50-57).

4. Your greatest struggle in this life has been overcome. Because of Jesus’ work on the cross and the Holy Spirit’s work in your heart, you have been set free from sin and are no longer a slave to fleshly passions. (Rom. 6:12-23 and 8:1-4).

5. Your greatest Advocate, Jesus Christ, understands your troubles. Having faced worse problems than yours and having successfully waged His own intense battle against the temptation to be anxious (Luke 22:39-44), Jesus now intercedes on your behalf in the presence of God the Father. (Rom. 8:33-35; Heb. 4:14-16, 7:23-25, and 1 John 2:1).

6. Your worst troubles in this life are God’s gift to you and are strengthening your faith. Even if what you are anxious about ends in the worst earthly outcome imaginable, God causes it all to work together for your ultimate good. (James 1:2-3 and Rom. 8:28).

7. The worst of all possible outcomes—separation from God’s love—can never happen to you. What you have gained by God’s grace can never be taken away through earthly trials. (Rom. 8:31-39).

Relief from anxiety is available to you right now, in the midst of your worst troubles. God promises His peace in any situation for those who will pray to Him and meditate on the “good word” of His promises (Phil. 4:6-8).

So what is there *really* to worry about? God is your Father, and many of your brothers and sisters (i.e., other believers) have experienced sweet relief from anxiety by trusting in His promises. Why should you not experience the same benefit? Why should His good word not make *your* heart glad?

When my anxious thoughts multiply within me,
Your consolations delight my soul. (Ps. 94:19)

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