

# Biblical Help for Anxiety

Session 1: “Answers for Anxiety”

Our primary objective today is to establish a basic, biblical foundation for understanding and addressing fear, anxiety, and worry.

The Bible sufficiently speaks to us on this issue in a way that is relevant, helpful, compassionate, authoritative, and necessary for all of us - no matter how simple or complex our struggles may be.

# Preliminary Observations

1. Anxiety is not a particular issue that affects only *some* people. It's an issue that we all struggle with to varying degrees.
2. Anxiety identifies what is important to us.
3. Anxiety tells us that something is wrong.
4. Anxiety is entwined with our bodies *and* our souls.
5. Anxiety is a description, not a diagnosis... getting rid of the stigma.

## Everyday Anxiety vs Anxiety Disorder (Per Modern Psychology Standards)

<b>Everyday Anxiety</b>	<b>Anxiety Disorder</b>
Worry about paying bills, landing a job, a romantic breakup, welfare of your family, or other important life events	Constant and unsubstantiated worry that causes significant distress and interferes with daily life
Embarrassment or self-consciousness in an uncomfortable or awkward social situation	Avoiding social situations for fear of being judged, embarrassed, or humiliated
A case of nerves or sweating before a big test, business presentation, stage performance, or other significant event	Panic attacks and the preoccupation with fear or having another panic attack
Realistic fear of a dangerous object, place, or situation	Irrational fear or avoidance of an object, place, or situation that poses little or no threat or danger
Anxiety, sadness, or difficulty sleeping immediately after a traumatic event	Recurring nightmares, flashbacks, or emotional numbing related to a traumatic event that occurred in the past

# Defining Overlapping Terms

## •Fear:

“Fear is the emotional response to a real or perceived imminent threat.”

- Fear is not necessarily sinful, and it is sometimes necessary.
- Fear can either help you to be sober-minded and vigilant, or it can help to mobilize energy and create a physical response within the body that equips you for action.
- Fear can become sinful if we are controlled by things we should not fear.

# Defining Overlapping Terms

## •Anxiety

“Anxiety is the emotional response to a potential future threat”

- Anxiety is typically accompanied by nervousness, uneasiness, and apprehension regarding an uncertain outcome
- Feeling anxious is part of the human experience and is to be expected. It is not wrong in and of itself, and can be a part of loving concern/care for others (Phil 2:19-20, 1 Cor 7:32-34, 1 Cor 12:25).
- Anxiety is an indicator that tells us what’s important to us... It may reveal sin in our priorities/allegiances.
- It may lead to sin in our response to it or in our attempts to alleviate it.

# Defining Overlapping Terms

## •Worry (v):

“The *activity* of worrying. Actively dwelling on and taking responsibility in one’s mind for matters outside of their control.”

- The attempt to think/scheme in order to settle uncertainty.
- Worry is excessive concern that is attempting to alleviate anxiety, but inevitably contributes to it.
- Worry, in this sense, is always wrong.



# Defining Overlapping Terms

When we fear a potential threat, anxiety is generally understood as what we *feel* in response.

When we feel anxious, worry is often how we describe what we *do* in an effort to settle the anxiety.

When the bible addresses the topic of anxiety, it addresses all three. Scripture instructs us regarding what we should ultimately fear, how we should feel, and what we should do.

# What should our goal be?

- Our primary goal should ***not*** be to make the feeling of anxiety go away... that is a secondary goal.
- Our primary goal ***should*** be to grow in our trust in the Lord and become anchored in His character and promises.
  - (Psalm 94:18-19) When I said, “My foot is slipping,” your unfailing love, LORD, supported me. When anxiety was great within me, your consolation brought me joy.
  - Not a promise to be trouble-free, but “a strategy to handle troubles in the right way”
  - This necessarily impacts practical matters in our day-to-day lives and inevitably shapes and leads us to contentment in the Lord, which is the God-honoring opposite of ungodly anxiety – even in the midst of troubles.

# Biblical Help for Anxiety

Session 2: “Answers for Anxiety”

(Matthew 6:19-34)

## Matthew 6:19-24 (NIV)

<sup>19</sup> “Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. <sup>20</sup> But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. <sup>21</sup> For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

<sup>22</sup> “The eye is the lamp of the body. If your eyes are healthy, your whole body will be full of light. <sup>23</sup> But if your eyes are unhealthy, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light within you is darkness, how great is that darkness!

<sup>24</sup> “No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money.

## Matthew 6:25-30 (NIV)

<sup>25</sup> “Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes?”

<sup>26</sup> Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they?

<sup>27</sup> Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life?

<sup>28</sup> “And why do you worry about clothes? See how the flowers of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. <sup>29</sup> Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. <sup>30</sup> If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith?”

## Matthew 6:31-34 (NIV)

<sup>31</sup> So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' <sup>32</sup> For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them.

<sup>33</sup> But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be \*added to you.

<sup>34</sup> Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

## Matthew 6:25

<sup>25</sup> “Therefore I tell you, **do not worry** about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes?”

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Worry is an activity that we do and not something that passively happens to us.

Jesus commands us “do not worry”, which makes the activity of worrying an act of disobedience.



## Matthew 6:19-24 (NIV)

<sup>19</sup> “Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. <sup>20</sup> But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. <sup>21</sup> For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

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<sup>24</sup> “**No one can serve two masters.** Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money.

<sup>25</sup> “**Therefore** I tell you, **do not worry** about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes?

The underlying issue beneath worry is an issue of heart-allegiances.

Worrying is “serving two masters”.

The fear that consumes or controls us is our master.

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<sup>25</sup> “Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. **Is not life more than food**, and the body more than clothes?

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Jesus argues from greater to lesser. He goes for the big stuff: food, drink, clothing... essentials for life.

This leaves no exceptions for your big stuff that you reserve the right to worry about, and it certainly includes all the small stuff.

## Matthew 6:26

<sup>26</sup> **Look at the birds** of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. **Are you not much more valuable than they?**

Jesus argues from lesser to greater... If the Lord takes care of the birds, how much more will He care for people made in His image?

How much more His elect whom He died to save?

(Romans 8:32) “He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?”

## **Matthew 6:27 (NIV)**

<sup>27</sup> Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life?

## **Matthew 6:27 (King James Version)**

<sup>27</sup> Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature?

Jesus argues that worry is unproductive and accomplishes nothing.

## Matthew 6:28-30

<sup>28</sup> “And why do you worry about clothes? See how the flowers of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. <sup>29</sup> Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. <sup>30</sup> If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith?

1. The flowers don't labor
2. God clothes them
3. He clothes them better than Solomon
4. They are totally temporary and will be gone soon
5. In contrast, you are eternal and exceedingly more valuable than grass

Wouldn't it be more likely that God would make sure you have what you need?

## Matthew 6:30

<sup>30</sup> ... “you of little faith”



## Matthew 6:30

<sup>30</sup> ... “you of little faith”

Jesus compassionately confronts their lack of trust by assuring them that God is trustworthy.

A key theme: Jesus draws our attention to God in our anxiety.

## Matthew 6:31-32 (NIV)

<sup>31</sup> So do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ <sup>32</sup> For the pagans run after all these things, and **your heavenly Father knows that you need them.**

## Matthew 6:31-32 (NIV)

<sup>31</sup> So do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ <sup>32</sup> **For the pagans run after all these things**, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them.

Worry is fundamentally pagan.

Psalm 16:4 “The sorrows of those will increase who run after other gods.”

## Matthew 6:32-33

<sup>32</sup> For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them.

<sup>33</sup> **But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness**, and all these things will be \*added to you.

Jesus calls us to seek after something better than temporal needs and refuse to settle.

## Matthew 6:33

<sup>33</sup> But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and **all these things will be \*added to you.**

The result of seeking first His kingdom: Rightly ordered priorities.

Temporal needs are no longer misplaced as the first priority as it is with the pagans. Instead, they become mere additions – favorable appendages without which we still truly live.

## Matthew 6:34

<sup>34</sup> Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. **Each day has enough trouble** of its own.

We are given grace for today. (Lam 3:23)

Borrowing trouble from tomorrow is assuming a burden that we have not been given the grace to bear yet.

# Biblical Help for Anxiety

Session 3: “The Practical Pursuit of Peace”

(Philippians 4:4-9)

## Philippians 4:4-7

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

<sup>8</sup> Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.

<sup>9</sup> What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me—practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.



## Philippians 4:4

<sup>4</sup> Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice.

1. Rejoicing in the Lord is the first practical step toward peace and joy.
  - a. Our rejoicing is *in the LORD*... He is the reason for and the subject of our rejoicing.
  - b. *Rejoice* is not passive (like an involuntary response), it is an active verb, meaning **it is something you do**.
  - c. It means to call attention to and make much of or magnify the Lord & what he has done

## Philippians 4:5

<sup>5</sup> Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand

Remembering that the Lord is near should help us to be reasonably settled and stable.

## Philippians 4:6

<sup>6</sup> **do not be anxious** about anything, **but** in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving **let your requests be made known to God.**

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<sup>6</sup> do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.

- a. The Command is to: present our requests to God
  - i. prayer is the way we present our requests to God (we come to Him by prayer)
  - ii. supplication means we are asking specifically (you have specific hurts, desires, etc)
    - a. It does little good to pray generally when you are burdened specifically
  - iii. thanksgiving implies trust and gratitude toward God, and an acceptance of His will

**“Turn every anxious care into a specific, grateful prayer”**

## Philippians 4:6-7

<sup>6</sup> do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. <sup>7</sup> And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

4. A promise of God's peace that:

a) Surpasses understanding

b) Will guard your heart and mind in Christ Jesus

## Philippians 4:8

<sup>8</sup> **Finally**, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, **think about these things.**

Paul exhorts us to dwell on Christ and His excellencies.

## Philippians 4:9

<sup>9</sup> What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me—**practice these things**, and the God of peace will be with you.

Paul tells us to take action and do the next right thing.



# Biblical Help for Anxiety

Session 4: “Hope Through Humility”

(1 Peter 5:6-7)

## **1 Peter 5:6-7 (NASB)**

“<sup>6</sup>Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, so that He may exalt you at the proper time, <sup>7</sup>having cast all your anxiety on Him, because He cares about you.”

## 1 Peter 5:6-7 (NASB)

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## Psalm 10:14 (NASB)

You have seen *it*, for You have looked at harm and provocation to take it into Your hand.

The unfortunate commits *himself* to You; You have been the helper of the orphan.

## 1 Peter 5:6-7 (NASB)

“<sup>6</sup>Therefore **humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God**, so that He may exalt you at the proper time, <sup>7</sup>having cast all your anxiety on Him, because He cares about you.”

So, when you consider what you might be able to do about this concern, or that concern, be humbled and put your confidence in the Lord's ability, rather than your own...

Your hand is not mighty, but His is.

## 1 Peter 5:6-7 (NASB)

<sup>5</sup> ... **GOD IS OPPOSED TO THE PROUD**, BUT HE GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE.

<sup>6</sup> **Therefore humble yourselves** under the mighty hand of God, so that He may exalt you at the proper time, <sup>7</sup> having cast all your anxiety on Him, because He cares about you.”

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# Biblical Help for Anxiety

Session 5: “A Handbook for Helping”

(1 Thessalonians 5:14-15)

## **1 Thessalonians 5:14-15 (NASB)**

<sup>14</sup> We urge you, brethren, admonish the unruly, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with everyone. <sup>15</sup> See that no one repays another with evil for evil, but always seek after that which is good for one another and for all people.

## 1 Thessalonians 5:14-15 (NASB)

<sup>14</sup> We urge you, brethren, admonish the unruly, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak...

1. Providing suitable soul-care requires us to care for one another according to our disposition and needs.
  - a. The unruly (dysfunctional) need to be firmly warned or admonished
  - b. The fainthearted (small-souled) need to be compassionately encouraged
  - c. The weak and vulnerable need to be held up and supported

## 1 Thessalonians 5:14-15 (NASB)

<sup>14</sup> ... be patient with everyone. <sup>15</sup> See that no one repays another with evil for evil, but always seek after that which is good for one another and for all people.

3 . Discipleship requires selflessness and mercy (vs 14-15)

- a. Everyone (even the unruly) require patience and longsuffering
- b. Do not repay evil for evil
- c. We earnestly seek that which is “good” for others

# Biblical Help for Anxiety

Session 6: Q & A