

## Help When I Feel Anxious

Living in a season of heightened emotional stress.

We all have certain capacity for managing stress. When our capacity gets exceeded, our emotions can become more volatile.

These are stress-inducing times! In the past people would have named major causes of stress as: their job, a relationship failure, serious health issues for them or a loved one, money, social media, diet or lack of sleep.

In these pandemic times there's even more fundamental stresses we've all experienced (Dr Henry Cloud):

- 1) Lack of connection with people
- 2) Loss of structures and routines
- 3) Loss of control over day to day decisions
- 4) Feelings of not being able to "add value" in the world.

One of the common emotions we will experience in these times is worry. We may not immediately diagnose ourselves as "worriers" - but King David would encourage us to pray this prayer, because we all have this tendency:

**Psalms 139:23** Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts.

**Philippians 4:4-8** is the "go to" scripture to help us with anxiety:

Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.

**The starting point in dealing with anxiety is to receive PEACE.**

**Philippians 4:7** And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Peace isn't experienced when worries subside. Rather the Peace that God gives is the primary defence against worry.

But perhaps you feel robbed of peace right now. How do we regain it?

- Refuse to worry about Anything
- Talk to God about Everything
- Live in a place of Thanksgiving

## 1. Refuse to worry about anything.

“Do not be anxious about anything”. **Phil 4v6**

It’s all-encompassing! Greek for anything means “not one thing”. No exceptions! There’s nothing worthy of worry.

Worry is unhealthy. Worry causes sickness.

**Proverbs 12:25** Anxiety weighs down the heart

**Prov 14:30** A heart at peace gives life to the body

Jesus unpacks this more in **Matthew 6:25-31**

Rick Warren says Jesus gives four reasons why we’re not to worry.

It’s **unreasonable, unnatural, unhelpful** and **unnecessary**.

a) Worry is **unreasonable**. Matt. 6:27 Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life?

If you can’t change it then why worry about it? If you can then why not stop worrying and do something? It makes no sense. It exaggerates the problem.

b) **Unnatural**. Animals and birds and plants don’t worry. Matt. 6:26 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.

Creation rests in his Care.

Humans unique in that we don’t trust our Creator.

Born Worrier? No one is a *born* worrier. It’s learned. Therefore worry can be *unlearned*.

“Worry implies that we just don’t trust that God is big enough” Francis Chan

Elizabeth Elliot: “Worry is the antithesis of trust. You simply cannot do both. They are mutually exclusive.”

Rick Warren “Worry is Practical Atheism”

c) **Unhelpful**. Matt 6:34 Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself.

Worry can't change the past or control the future. It does mess up today!

Corrie Ten Boom: Worry does not empty tomorrow of its sorrow, it empties today of its strength

d) **Unnecessary.** Matt 6:30 "Won't he care for you!" ?

Worry is a choice. Refuse it.

**1 Peter 5:7** Cast all your anxieties on him- for he cares for you.

Cast = same word as used when disciples threw their coats on a donkey for Jesus to ride as people welcomed him as King entering Jerusalem.

You can wear worry as a coat - make it part of your image or personality. Or you can allow Jesus to triumph over your worries by giving them to him.

## **2. Talk to God about everything.**

Phil 4:6 ... but in every situation, *by prayer and petition*, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.

Our job is to ask. **PPP**- Praying, Petitioning, Presenting.

Our problem is we don't! **James 4:2** you don't have because you don't ask.

Our biggest problems are tiny to God

**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?

He already sorted your biggest need at the cross. Won't he help you with all the smaller details of life too?

## **3. Live in Thanksgiving.**

Phil 4:6 ... but in every situation, *by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving*, present your requests to God.

Develop the attitude of gratitude.

**1 Thessalonians 5:18** Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

Life is always a mixture. Give thanks in the bad times for the blessings you are still experiencing - call them out.

How do I become more thankful? Focus...

Phil 4:8 Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.

Be careful what you expose your mind to - beware of endless negative news cycles. Focus on what is good.

Corrie Ten Boom: “If you look at the world you’ll be distressed. If you look within you’ll be depressed, if you look at Christ- you’ll be at rest”

Thanksgiving leads to contentment. Contentment is *learned*. (Phil 4:11: I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances.) ... Anxiety must be *unlearned*.

Anxiety produces Discontentment.

Lean into Contentment in the areas Henry Cloud mentioned:

1. Connection with people
2. Structures and Routines
3. Making decisions within your control
4. Adding value to those around you (work, home, church etc).

### **Questions:**

1. Covid Stresses. Look at Henry Cloud’s four things we need to thrive. Which of these have been most changed for you over the last 6 months?
2. “Worry is learned”. Who have been your positive and negative role models in learning (not) to worry. How can worry be unlearned according to Jesus in Matt 6?
3. Which of the three points (Choosing not to worry, Talking to God about it, or Living in Thanksgiving) do you feel is most helpful for you right now?
4. Share something you’re worried about, allow others to speak truth in love to you and to pray for God’s provision and care to be evidenced.