

Pursuing Peace: Addressing Worry, Fear and Anxiety¹

INTRODUCTION

- Current Stats & Facts
 - “Anxiety disorders include disorders that share features of excessive fear and anxiety and related behavioral disturbances. Fear is the emotional response to real or perceived imminent threat, whereas anxiety is anticipation of future threat.” DSM5, 189
- In all ministry situations one must begin and explore the counselee’s

CONCERNS & WORRY/ANXIETY

1. A look at Concerns (Grk, merimnos)
 - A. Defined
 - “a matter of interest or importance to someone”
 - The Greek word stresses the action and effects of worry— “To divide, part, rip, tear apart, be anxious, distract your attention.”
 - B. Distinguished
 - i. Real (rational) and unreal (irrational)²
 - ii. Whose Responsibility³
 - a. My responsibility
 - b. Other’s responsibility
 - c. God’s responsibility
2. A look at Concerns handled well
 - a. Proper care and concern that causes you to attend to business in a responsible way – trusting God as you follow His commands and principles. (1 Cor. 7:32-35 – you can be divided between two good things/persons; 2 Cor. 11:28; Gal. 4:19; Phil. 2:20; Etc.)
 - b. Right planning in God’s sight (add, “Lord-willing” ...) —James 4:13 ff.

¹ Several points in these notes are taken from the booklet, *Anger, Anxiety and Fear* (Scott)

² There is such a thing as ‘derealization’ where a person wonders if things are real (e.g. so they pinch themselves to see if it’s real or drive into a tree to see if it’s all real)

³ A helpful chart and worksheet is found in Paul Tripp’s book, *Instruments in the Redeemer’s Hands*, 353-354.

3. A look at Concerns handled wrongly (Worry and Anxiety: anticipation of future threat _____ of faith or _____ in faith) Matt 6:21-34; 12:25; Mark 4:19; 6:41; Luke 10:41; Etc.

A. Worry is unproductive (Matt 6:21ff)

B. Worry is unbecoming (Matt 6:21ff)

C. Worry is _____

4. A look at the comparison of both ways (chart)

CONCERN – rightly handled	CONCERN – wrongly handled
Focus = Today	Focus = Tomorrow
Trust/Reliance = God	Trust/Reliance = Self, Others, Circumstances
Pursuits = Eternal	Pursuits = Temporary
One's Plan: Solution Centered: proper Dependent action: prayer, talk with someone, write or call, have someone else help out with the situation	One's Plan: Problems Centered: Improper independent reactions: gossip, laziness, murmuring, prayerlessness, discouragement, manipulate others, seek to control others/situation
One's attitude: Thanksgiving	One's attitude: Grumbling & Fretting
God's Word: The Holy Spirit helps one to Control their mind	God's Word: The Holy Spirit does not have control in their thought life
Responsibility: Trusts God with His and dependently does their own	Responsibility: Doesn't trust God and doesn't fulfill their own – self-reliant
Symptoms: restful sleep, a healthy diet, an encourager of others, an example to others	Symptoms: sleeplessness, stomach and intestine problems; ulcers; a discourager of others
Glorifying/Pleasing to God	Displeasing to God and eclipses God's glory
Properly loving others	Loving self

Summary – Concern becomes worry and therefore sin when:

5. A look at oneself (self-examination in light of God's Word)
 - a. Is there anything that you are presently anxious about?
 - b. Recall the last five times that you were fearful. Explain the situation that was involved.
 - c. What was your thinking for each of the situations in #2?
 - d. How did you respond to your anxieties? What did you do or not do?
 - e. What were the results of being sinfully anxious (if you were)?
 - f. How were you not trusting God? How were you not reflecting on the character of God and the precious truths of your salvation?
 - g. Do you know God's promises? Are you dwelling on them?
 - h. What have you done about those things, situation, or anxieties since?
 - i. What kinds of things typically contribute to your anxiety?
 - j. What sins do you tend to commit due to anxiety? Do you lie? Do you fail to do what God wants? Are you irresponsible?
 - k. Do you choose not to think of others or love and serve others?
 - l. Do you need to keep track of when and why you become anxious in the next few weeks?
 - m. Are you confident that you are God's child? On what do you base your confidence?
 - n. Are you neglecting God's ordained means to grow in His grace? Bible reading and application, prayer and fellowship with God's people at a Gospel-centered Church?

6. A look at a Christlike approach to our concerns

- a. Wrong ways

- b. Right ways—Matt. 6:33; Phil. 4:4–9 (practice a Biblical Methodology)
 1. Right Awareness of God, His blessings and nearness = _____ - :4-5
 - Turn towards a Biblical Doxology from the heart (reflect on the basic truths of who God is, His character, His promises and the salvation He graciously gifted you with – Living in light of the Gospel of Jesus Christ) – :4-5

2. Right praying—vv. 6, 7 = _____

3. Right thinking —v. 8 (cf. Isa. 26:3) = _____

4. Right action—v. 9 = _____

c. Possible Homework Assignments:⁴

- i. *Trusting God* - Jerry Bridges (chapter at a time and fill in the questions at the end of the chapter)
- ii. *Anxiety Attacked* - John MacArthur (read a chapter and pick two major statements out and apply the truth to your present situation)
- iii. Daily Journal (write down your anxious thoughts)
- iv. Thought Journal (take one thought and renew it like the template we went over, e.g. fear of flying)
- v. Do a study on God's attributes (sovereignty, goodness, love, wisdom and faithfulness, etc.; Isa 40; 46:9-11; Gen 50:20; Jer 32:27; Rom 8:28-29, etc.) – write down two major points and how they apply to your present situation (e.g. A.W.Pink's book on *The Attributes of God*)
- vi. Start a list of the Promises of God (be careful that they are truly promises to God's children)
- vii. List what God holds you responsible for, others responsible for and what is He is responsible for
- viii. Memorizing and meditating on key passages
- ix. Review the one-anothers in the New Testament and focus on serving others for the glory of God

⁴ Keep Scripture primary and supplemental books secondary. When using secondary books, please focus more on the Scriptures the author is using rather than on their own wisdom and personal quotes. Remember Jn 17:17 – God sanctifies us with His Word. These assignments are not to be done all at once.

Fear

1. A look at Fear

a. Definition of fear (Grk, phobos)

- “Fear is the emotional response to real or perceived imminent threat” DSM5, 189
- Fear is the emotional response to real or perceived imminent threat _____ of faith or _____ in faith

b. Phobia:

2. A look at fear handled rightly

- The fear of God – reverential awe (Ps. 115:11)
- Self-preservation from mischief and danger (Acts 2:40)⁵

3. A look at fear handled sinfully

- Ungodly fear – self-focused and unbelief towards God (Ps. 112:7; Mt. 10:28). The tendency is, in self-love and unbelief, to cease (or cut back in) loving God and cease (or cut back in) loving others
- a. Ungodly fears are directly related to what we are wanting and thinking (Gen. 12:11-13; Prov. 4:23; Phil. 4:8).
- b. When we are fearful we are focused on self (Deut. 7:17-18; Is. 51:12-13; Phil. 2:4) and not loving others as we should
- c. When sinfully fearful, we are focused on the circumstances rather than on God (Gen. 32:7-12; Num. 13:25-14:5; Ps. 55:22; Ps. 77:4-14; Mark 4:35-41).
- d. When we are engaged in ungodly fear we are fearing something else more than we fear God (Job 1:13-20; 3:25; Prov. 14:26-27; 29:25; Matt. 6:31-33; 10:28; Gal. 1:10; 2:12; Heb. 13:5-6; 1 Pet. 3:13-14).
- e. Ungodly fear will most likely motivate us to commit other sins (Gen. 26:7; 1 Sam. 15:24; Matt. 26:69-70; Gal. 2:12).
- f. Ungodly fear accomplishes absolutely nothing worthwhile (Prov. 13:15 NKJV; Mt. 6:27).
- g. Not being right with God can lead to fear and anxiety (Ps. 38:17-18; Prov. 4:32; Prov. 28:1; Heb. 9:27).

⁵ An excellent treatment on two kinds of self-love (righteous and sinful) by Richard Alleine, Instructions about Heartwork, 170-191.

4. A look at the comparison of the two responses

FEAR (Unbelief)	LOVING TRUST
Focus on self	Focus on others
Self-protecting (What will happen to me?)	Self-giving (John 3:16) (How can I love and serve others)
What will I lose?	What can I give to God and others?
Moves away from the problem	Moves toward the problem (tackles it for resolution)
Secludes self	Sacrifices self, reaches out
Hesitates	Starts
Highly suspicious	Believes all things and thinks no evil (1 Cor 13)
I won't try	Acts obediently and is all the while totally dependent on God's grace
Might fail	Even if fails, continues to reach out
Trust in self and man (unbelief)	Trust in God (belief)

5. A look at oneself (self-examination)

- a. Is there anything that you are presently fearful about?
- b. Recall the last 5 times you were fearful. Explain the situation that was involved. Did the situation come about due to other sins of yours?
- c. What was your thinking for each of the situations in #2? Were you thinking about tomorrow? Were you concerned about temporal things or eternal things? Was your focus on unfounded possibilities? What were you fearing more than God? How were you focused: on self or not loving others?
- d. How did you respond to your fear? What did you do or not do?
- e. What were the results of being sinfully fearful (if you were)?
- f. How were you not trusting God? How were you not reflecting on the great truths of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ as it applies in your life?
- g. What have you done about those things, situations, or fears since?
- h. What kinds of things typically contribute to your anxiety or fear?
- i. What sins do you tend to commit due to fear or anxiety? Do you lie? Do you fail to do what God wants? Are you irresponsible? Do you choose not to think of others or love others?
- j. Do you need to keep track of when and why you become anxious or fearful in the next few weeks?

- k. Are you sure that you are in good standing with God because you are in Christ? Are you confident that you are God's child? On what do you base your confidence?
 - l. Do you have any unconfessed sin in your life?
6. A look at a Christlike approach to our fears (Phil. 4:4-9)
- a. Before fear hits again:

 - b. During the time of fear:

 - c. After - If you fail and give way to anxiety or ungodly fear:

RESOURCES:

- *Trusting God.* Jerry Bridges
- *The joy of Fearing God.* Jerry Bridges
- *Overcoming Fear, Worry and Anxiety.* Elyse Fitzpatrick
- *The Fear Factor.* Wayne Mack
- *Fear – Breaking its Grip,* Lou Priolo
- *Anger, Anxiety and Fear,* Stuart Scott
- *When People are big and God is small.* Ed Welch
- *Running Scared: Fear, Worry and the God of Rest.* Ed Welch

There is a progression to obedient faith

_____ &
_____ God

• Absolute Divine Truth
This knowledge doesn't
fluctuate neither is it
uncertain

_____ of God

- Focus on God's Majesty and Goodness
- Not a slavish fear of punishment but filial reverence
- The fear of God sanctifies love

_____ God

- He is beautiful and we are attracted to Him not for what we get but just because of who He is and also to enjoy Him
- Origin of all sin is want of true love to and fear of God's majesty
- The highest affection

_____ and
_____ with
delight

The Progression of Christlike Living

Taken from various Puritan Sources: Charnock, Swinnoock, Baxter, Watson

Adapted by Drs. Stephen Yuille and Stuart W. Scott

Wh

What am I wanting, thinking and feeling? (Pick one major thought/belief/desire)

RESPONSE to and AWARENESS of God (what can I rejoice in the Lord about? How encouraging is it to your faith to know the Lord is with you in this situation?) Phil 4:4-5

What can I PRAY and be thankful for in light of this thought? (Is there anything I need to confess?) Phil 4:6-7

What scriptures will help me with this thought/desire? Phil 4:8

Now, what can I BE DWELLING ON about this situation that is loving (to both God and others) true, thankful, hopeful, and God-glorifying in light of the Gospel of Jesus Christ? (The Renewed Thought is...)

What can I DO with this renewed thought (with Spirit's help) to honor and obey the Lord & serve others with my affections, mind and actions? Phil 4:9

What happened?

My son is graduating, and I have an extreme fear of flying.

What am I wanting, thinking and feeling? (Pick one major thought/belief/desire)

I just can't go; couldn't handle it! I may face a terrifying death.

The door is going to fly open and I will be sucked out

I'm feeling very anxious, overwhelmed, fearful, doomed, want to feel safe and secure

I am not in control if I fly

RESPONSE to and AWARENESS of God (what can I rejoice in the Lord about? How encouraging is it to your faith to know the Lord is with you in this situation?)

I rejoice in You Lord, you are my Savior and Lord and I know that you are near me right now; you promise to never leave or forsake me (Heb 13:5-6, 139:7-12). You see all that's going on in this situation (Ps 94:9). You are my Father and are able to do, in and through this situation, more than I can think or imagine as I submit to walk

What can I PRAY and be thankful for in light of this thought? (Is there anything I need to confess?)

Lord, please forgive me of my fear and presuming the worst in this situation. Please help me to not be paralyzed with fear and have a willingness to go see my son graduate. I want to and need to love others. I thank you Lord that you care for me and are good and in control!

What scriptures will help me with this thought/desire?

Ps 147:5, Ps 34:4; Ps 56:3-4, Ps 139:7-12, 2 Cor 9:8, 1 Cor 1:3-4, Eph 5:1-2, Phil 4:4-9, Heb 4:16

Now, what can I BE DWELLING ON about this situation that is loving (to both God and others) true, thankful, hopeful, and God-glorifying in light of the Gospel of Jesus Christ? (The Renewed Thought is...)

God, because You are sovereign over all (including my life, health, safety, & longevity) and I am "in Christ" as a new man & a child of Yours - I will love and trust You by flying over (w/my husband) to love my son & see him graduate. I will find comfort and a refuge in who You are and, in Your promises concerning Your presence, Your care, Your grace in time of need, the hope of heaven, Your protection and Your wisdom. If You should ordain any trouble or even my death - I will be sustained by Your grace & even transported into Your presence. I want to grow in my faith and worship you more each and every day. (I can pray this new redeemed thought to God as I walk with Him in light of the resources of the Gospel)

What can I DO with this renewed thought (with Spirit's help) to honor and obey the Lord & serve others with my affections, mind and actions?

Buy a ticket, pray with others, make flashcard of new thought, ask church to pray, tell son I am coming, plan vacation there after graduation, etc.