

Spiritual How-to's
Handling Anxiety
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INTRO. According to "Mind Essential", anxiety is the most prevalent mental disorder in the U.S.

- You know it – **"the anticipatory fear of a future problem"**. We all experience it. Worry, stress, anxiousness, nervousness, tension, panic...
- It is a learned **coping mechanism**, and is found in women twice as much as men
- Statistics tell us that 30% of all adults have anxiety **disorder** at some point in their life. Disorder is when this generalized worry begins to impair your ability to function in a normal manner
- So, learning how to handle these learned patterns of negative thoughts or catastrophic thinking is vital for all of us. Learning how to handle anxiety is a life skill and practice.

I. Continuing through our look at the **Beattitudes** in Matthew 5-7, we find Jesus **addressing this very issue – ANXIETY.**

In the **20 topics He taught** about in the **Beattitudes**, **ANXIETY** is given the **most time, the most verses. Character, The Lord's Prayer and ANXIETY all receive 10 verses in the Matthew text.** Let's read the text, Matthew 6:25-34 ESV

A. Six times He tells the disciples "Don't be anxious". 6, the number of man, and his overwhelming **human struggle** of being anxious, worrisome.

1. v. 25 – don't be anxious about life: what you eat, drink or wear
2. v. 27 – can you add anything to your life by being anxious
3. v. 28 - don't be anxious about clothing
4. v. 31 – don't be anxious saying what shall we eat, drink and wear
5. v. 34 – don't be anxious about tomorrow
6. v. 34 – tomorrow will have it's own anxiety

B. The word anxiety has these root meanings –

1. The **English word** comes from the **Latin** = *anxius*, meaning 'troubled in mind'
2. The **Latin word** is thought to come from *angere or anguere*, meaning "to choke, to squeeze". We say, to be angry.
3. In Matthew 6, **in the Greek**, all 6 times anxiety is used, it is the word, "*merimnao*" (G3309), which has the meaning "to be anxious about, to be **troubled with cares about life, or tomorrow.**"
 - a. 3 other words contribute to it's definition:
 - b. G3308, *merimna*, meaning "**the idea of distraction.**"
 - c. G3307, *merizo*, meaning "to part, to apportion, share – disunite. To **divide, separate into parts, cut into pieces.**"
 - d. G3313, *meros*, meaning "**a division** or share; piece, side. **A lot, destiny**"

C. What these definitions tell us is that anxiety troubles our mind, it chokes and squeezes us. Anxiety distracts us and divides us into angry, unsettled parts causing us to live believing anxiety is our lot, our share, our destiny. We feel frazzled, disjointed and angry.

1. Remember, **we learn this response** and we are programmed by our experiences with it.
2. This can lead to physical symptoms & emotional issues
3. It affects job performance, academic performance, and relationships
4. But it doesn't have to. There is hope, help.

II. Anxiety, being anxious about things causes us to focus on the future. It distracts us from the present, from today, from what is happening now.

A. We have trouble engaging in convos about the immediate, or today's issues without being overcome with and distracted by thoughts of "what-ifs" about tomorrow.

1. **We are never fully engaged in today**, cuz we are worrying about tomorrow
2. **Our life is disjointed & divided into messy piles of "what about..." and "well maybe..."**
3. We find ourselves frustrated, fragmented and consumed with the future, totally missing the present.

B. I'm not discounting the present situation may be overwhelming. I am certain it is. And that is exactly where we first deal with our anxiety. Smack, dab in the middle of being overwhelmed with what appears to be an immediate and desperate need.

III. Look what Jesus says, in these 6 times He tell us not to be anxious. Look what He offers.

A. To "Don't be anxious about your life" (what you'll eat, drink or wear) - He tells us to do something strange – **LOOK AT THE BIRDS**. GO to the window, or step outside and look up at the birds! Watch them for 5 minutes!

1. **Why? It brings you back to the present.** It causes you to see how they are **carefree and cared for**. They don't worry, they just live and fly and make noise.
2. **It also is meant to remind you that YOU ARE MORE VALUABLE THAN BIRDS.** And if God can manage to care for the needs of those birdies, He certainly will take care of the overwhelming situation or need that you are presently facing.
3. **And that's key- by taking a deep breath and looking up to the birds, you are forced back into the present and God's desire and ability to care for you.**
4. You are **breaking free from the distraction of anxiety** and settled again in His care and faithfulness.

5. You are **reminded that God indeed loves you as His child** and will take care of your needs for living, as you refocus on Him.
 6. **THIS settles your divided heart and diffuses your restless anxiousness.**
 7. **This refocuses you back onto what life is really about. Union with Him.**
- B. The 2nd anxious Jesus mentioned was that of adding to your life – specifically time.**
1. His lesson here is simple, **wishing you had more time and freaking out about it will add nothing to your life.**
 2. **Settle in with what you have and make it work, Do your best with what you have and leave the rest to God.**
- C. Anxious about your wardrobe? That was Jesus next topic. His response to us worrying about if we have the right clothes or enough clothing is....**
1. "Walk into the fields and look at the wildflowers". **Look at the flowers!** Look at their colors, textures, design genius. Most flowers are not even noticed and yet, God designed each one beautifully.
 2. **"How much more will be clothe you. You of little faith."**
 3. Again, He cares about your clothing and will provide for you. Stop worrying and **go look at the flowers. Get get back to what really matters.**
- D. The 4th time He talks about us being anxious, seems like a repeat – don't be anxious about food, drink and clothing – your daily needs.**
1. **But it's more. He tells us how to avoid being distracted by anxiety, He says, "Steep your life in God-reality, God-initiative, & God-provisions." MSG**
 2. **Focus on God's love, care and provision for you, His sovereignty over you and your needs will be met. Period.**
 3. **When He is first in your life, anxiety cannot be first!** When He is first, everything else falls in place.
- E. Anxious challenges 5 & 6, both have to do with tomorrow.** Jesus tells us "Don't be anxious about tomorrow". We've listed reasons why, foremost is because **we need to focus on the present with The Great I Am. Not "I will be".**
1. It does us no good to jump ahead into tomorrow. We gain nothing Jesus said.
 2. Besides, tomorrow will have a brand new set of issues for us to consider being anxious about. We should not borrow tomorrow's troubles.
- F. Let's sum it up – "Give your entire attention to what God is doing right now and don't get worked up about what may or may not happen tomorrow."**
- G. There can be numerous causes for our anxiety.** Genetics, environment or preexisting conditions or so many other possibilities.
- H. There are also many symptoms that reveal our anxiousness.** Restlessness, irritability, muscle tension, sleep issues, fatigue, upset stomach and more.
- I. We recognize the causes and we live with the symptoms.**
- J. But do we even consider attempting Jesus' solution for our anxiety?**

IV. How to not be anxious.

In the very moment you are feeling nervous and worried, exercise some self-talk and self-control by:

1. Remembering that life is so much more than this thing you are concerned with now. v.25
2. Look at the birds v. 26
3. Realize your value v. 26
4. Consider the flowers and their color and care v. 28
5. Tell yourself God will take care of you too v. 30
6. Confess that your heavenly father knows what you need v. 32
7. Focus and actually seek His will and ways v. 32
8. Actually look for His righteous way of dealing with your situation v. 32
9. Remind yourself, if you put Him as your #1, everything else will work out v. 32
10. Focus on only today, but plan for tomorrow without worrying and being anxious about it. V. 34

A. When we learn this response to anxiety and worry we don't become a statistic but a victor over anxiety.

B. Here's what a victor possesses:

1. **perfect peace** because our mind is stayed on Him Isa. 26:3
2. Peace and a **guarded heart** because we learned to pray instead of being anxious. Phil 4:6-7
3. Peace at all **times and in every way**. 2 Thes. 3:16
4. The Lord as our **stronghold and defense**, so we don't fear but trust in Him Isa. 12:2
5. God and His peace rule in our heart, not anxious thoughts. Col. 3:15
6. **We are justified**. Rom. 5:1
7. a mind governed by the Spirit not the flesh. Rom. 8:6
8. The Lord's strength and blessing. Psa. 29:11

C. You can be victorious over anxiety. It doesn't have to cripple you.

D. Jesus offers you another way of coping with your daily situations... simple...refocusing, spiritual acts.

1. Will you humble yourself and follow His advice?
2. Life is more than your problem.

Go out and look at the birds and flowers
remind yourself you are more valuable than they are and God has got you covered.

Ask Him to help you see Him beside you and
show you how to maneuver through this present situation with His help
and direction.

E. I promise you, your anxiety will lift !

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