

Fear & Anxiety (A Summary of Paul Tautges book, "Knowing God's Peace")
July 30, 2023

Introduction

Anxiety can range from mild worry to full-blown panic and everywhere in between.

No matter what your anxiety looks like, the Bible speaks truth and peace into your mind and heart. Scripture directly addresses the anxious heart in helpful ways.

An estimated 23 million Americans suffer from panic attacks, while millions more identify themselves as having some form of anxiety disorder.

Anxiety becomes a complicated matter because it is not limited to just our minds. Rather, it is entwined with our bodies.

- Mental and emotional turmoil can affect the physical body. (Jacob – Gen. 37:35; 42:38)
- Physical suffering can affect our mental and emotional state. (Job – Job 3:26)

To goal today is to help you connect with the healing words of Scripture so that mental and emotional peace will reign in your heart, despite whatever physical or circumstantial challenges your face.

Colossians 3:15 – *And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful.*

God intends that His people live in a peace that only He can give. That peace is to be a defining mark of believers that sets them apart from the world. For those who are in Christ, the Spirit has been granted to them as a helper and comforter, and that help and comfort comes in large part by the fruit that He produces in the life of a believer. Galatians 5:22 makes plain that part of the fruit He produces in His people is peace. That peace is to mark our lives where fear and anxiety once ruled.

Anxiety – What Is It?

Google would say that anxiety is: *a feeling of worry, nervousness, or unease, typically about an imminent event or something with an uncertain outcome.*

Google would go on to say that anxiety in a psychiatric sense is: *a mental condition characterized by excessive apprehensiveness about real or perceived threats, typically leading to avoidance behaviors and often to physical symptoms such as increased heart rate and muscle tension.*

The New Testament authors used two different words that help us define anxiety:

- Merimna – noun, “care” or “thought”
- Merizo – verb, to divide, to draw in different directions or distract

To be anxious then means to have a distracting care – to have our minds and hearts torn between two worlds.

Anxiety diverts us from what is most important. It causes our eyes to see only what is before us at that very moment.

Matthew 6:25-33

As we read this and renew our minds and discipline our hearts to keep eternal matters as our central priority, we, like them, learn to rest in God, the One who has promised to meet all our needs.

An Example of Anxiety in the Bible

Martha - Luke 10:38-42

The Character of God and His Promises Regarding Anxiety

Jesus is our faithful Good Shepherd. (John 10:11-15)

1. The Good Shepherd laid down His life for you. (11)
2. The Good Shepherd will not leave you. (12)
3. The Good Shepherd is committed to you. (13)
4. The Good Shepherd knows you, in relationship, just as He knows the Father in relationship. (14-15)

Jesus promises that when we come to Him, He will give us rest. (Matthew 11:28-30)

1. Jesus commands all who are burdened to come to Him. (28)
2. Jesus commands us to be learners. (29)
3. Jesus promises "soul rest". (29-30)

Your heavenly Father cares. (Matthew 6:26-27)

1. Your heavenly Father feeds His creatures. (26)
2. You are more valuable than any non-human creature. (27)
3. Your heavenly Father has a plan for the span of your life. (27)

Your heavenly Father provides. (Matthew 6:28-30)

- No matter how hard we work, God is always working harder on our behalf.

Your heavenly Father knows. (Matthew 6:31-32)

- He knows our every need and will provide for us.

Practical Ways You Can Fight Anxiety

Philippians 4:4-9

1. Choose to rejoice. (4-5)
 - A command is given: "Rejoice in the Lord always".
 - Have a singular focus (not a split one), and choose joy in the Lord at all times.
 - When you choose joy, your gentleness will be seen by all who watch you.
2. Worry about nothing; pray about everything. (5-6)
 - A two-fold command: do not worry; pray.

- Do not worry about anything.
 - Worry and anxiety are forbidden for the Christian. It is therefore sinful to live a life of worry and anxiety.
 - Instead, pray about everything.
3. Find peace through prayer (7)
- The result of such prayer is that the peace of God will rule/guard your heart.
 - Isaiah 26:3 – *Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee.*
4. Think positive (8)
- Reject the unwholesome, negative thinking that leads to anxiety, and rather to think positively.

Conclusion

Christian, be careful of speaking about your fear and anxiety in a way that is antithetical to the Scriptures – making it your identity.

Instead, recognize that before being born again, your way of thinking was futile and your understanding was darkened. But at the new birth you received the Holy Spirit, and He has revealed God's thoughts to you through the Scriptures. As a new creature in Christ, you are responsible to put off the old self and your natural way of thinking, and to be renewed in the spirit of your mind. As you renew your mind with Scriptural truth, your life is transformed, which results in your fulfilling the will of God.

Don't be anxious – having split cares. Look to the Lord and seek His kingdom, trusting that "all these things" will be taken care of.