

YESTERDAY'S GRACE BIRTHS TOMORROW'S FAITH 02 Dealing with Anxiety STUDY GUIDE

Anxiety is one of the things holding a lot of Christians back – they are nervous, they are scared for tomorrow. Anxiety is bad enough when it starts living in your mind – but it also opens the door and invites its friends in. A lot of sinful, selfish behaviour comes from anxiety:

- greed comes from anxiety: I don't know what will happen tomorrow, so I better eat it all today, I better hoard today just in case. I better not tithe; I might need it tomorrow.
- Stealing comes from anxiety. You do not believe God will take care of you, so you take things that are not yours to provide for your needs. You do not mind being immoral because you see the urgency to provide for yourself.
- A lot of bad behaviour in ministers – comes from anxiety
- Anxiety about what will happen if people know the truth – that leads to lies

If we can deal with anxiety – we can help you move forward into your promised land. So, let's look at this in the light of what I said last week: yesterday's grace births tomorrow's faith.

Read Matthew 6.25-34. In the ESV, four times the phrase is used "Do not be anxious", other Bibles have slightly different phrases, but they mean the same thing. We are told do not be anxious about life, anxiety cannot make you taller, do not be anxious about what you wear or eat, and do not be anxious about tomorrow.

These are the three areas in which anxiety in our life rears its ugly head:

1. The Uncontrollable – your height or lifespan represent things you cannot control
2. The Indispensable – food and drink represent getting your basic needs met
3. The Unknown – tomorrow represents things you do not know yet

These things make us anxious. We are anxious about things we cannot control. Getting worried about things that you cannot change is stupid, but it is part of human nature. One of the biggest things you cannot change is the past. So do not get anxious over it.

We get anxious about indispensable things. What we eat, wear, our job. Anything that makes us think we cannot do without – will make us anxious.

We get anxious about the unknown. God calls you to Tree of Life, and it's different from your last church. We had one lady tell someone recently "I really struggled when I first arrived at Tree of Life everything was unknown, it wasn't like any church I have ever been too, but I am glad I persevered" – unknown things make us feel uncomfortable, and that is a short-step away from anxiety. If all you have ever known is the sand of not enough, the promised land is going to make you anxious until you start dreaming it and getting used to it.

Now the way to deal with anxiety is to realize what the root of anxiety is. We need to lay the axe to the root, that way it will not keep coming back.

What causes anxiety? Read Matthew 6.28-30. The reason people are anxious is they are people of a "little faith". The reason you are anxious is this: you have little faith. You have not let yesterday's grace – the grace that has brought you safe thus far – birth in you a

faith for tomorrow. That lack of strong faith for tomorrow is why you are anxious. THE ROOT OF ALL ANXIETY IS A FAILURE TO HAVE FAITH IN GOD'S PROVISION!

He provided salvation, provided healing, provided stuff for you over and over – He feeds the birds, He clothes the flowers – He is more than able and more than capable of taking care of you today, tomorrow and for the rest of your life.

The root cause of your anxiety is you not trusting God to be everything He was at the cross in Christ reconciling the world to us – to be for you tomorrow everything He has been yesterday!

He is God and He is good, and He is so good. And He will still be good tomorrow.

We must let yesterday's grace birth a faith for the future. Think about the uncontrollable – you cannot control a lot of things, but God can! For the indispensable, God has proven over and over that He will take care of it. For the unknowable, I do not know what will happen tomorrow, but I know that God will be there tomorrow, and God will be good tomorrow.

Now I know what is going to happen as I say this. Someone will disagree with my diagnosis, even get upset or offended at it. They will say "that's just my personality, I have lots of faith, do not try and tell me that I do not trust God, I have great faith, I am just an anxious person"

Well, I disagree. And as much it might upset you to realize the reason you are anxious is that you have little faith in the truth that God will be good tomorrow, you need to realize if you do not diagnose the problem correctly you cannot fix it.

The most misdiagnosed disease by GPs in the UK is lung cancer, based on lawsuits against doctors. It is most often misdiagnosed as pneumonia. Now if you think you have pneumonia and are lying on the sofa taking your antibiotics and you have lung cancer, that is a bad place to be in. Knowing the actual diagnosis might sound a lot worse, but now you know what to fight, how to deal with it, and so on. You need an accurate diagnosis to get the right treatment!

And so: a lot of people have anxiety, and the world says "well, that is normal", "It's your personality", "you need to learn to cope" – and those people who accept that diagnosis – they go to an anxiety group, doing relaxation exercises – the top advice from the NHS on how to deal with anxiety is keep a diary.

But that is a misdiagnosis, your real problem is little faith. If you are anxious, you have a lack of trust in God to come through for you – and until you deal with that, all the diary writing and breathing in the world will not help you! So, do not get upset that I am telling you the truth. The truth will set you free. Here is the diagnosis of your anxiety – you have little faith that God will be there for you tomorrow! But now we know what the real problem is, we can now present the real medicine! We are going to fight the good fight of faith and get to a place of faith and anxiety is going.

We are going to leave a place of anxiety and reach a place of assurance. Assurance comes from believing the truth about God's goodness. Let me give you an example of how future faith can bring you from anxiety to assurance.

I meet Christians regularly who are anxious about whether they will get into Heaven. They are anxious about their salvation. They are worried about whether they are good enough to get into Heaven. When I teach that they are saved because of God's goodness not their goodness, and they grasp who they are, and they grasp what Lee talked about last week about being Established in Righteousness – then the anxiety fades away, and is replaced with assurance. You can have an assurance that Jesus will be there for you!

You cannot be sure that:

1. Things you cannot control will go the way you want. No. But you can be sure – you can be confident, you can have assurance that GOD IS WITH YOU, GOD WILL NEVER LEAVE YOU, HE WILL NEVER BE AGAINST YOU. He loves you.
2. Things you need will be provided by your resources and power. But you can be sure – GOD WILL SUPPLY ALL YOUR NEEDS ACCORDING TO HIS RICHES IN GLORY.
3. Things you do not know might turn out to be dangerous. You didn't know about COVID and LOCKDOWN in 2019, no one did. BUT I WILL TELL YOU THE TRUTH – God has not let you down. God has been with you. That is YESTERDAY'S GRACE. Let that grace birth faith for tomorrow in you, let it wipe out the anxiety and bring you to assurance.

Imagine you and I enter into a car race and the winner gets the other person's car. Imagine, I play dirty and get some people in the middle of the race to throw mud on your windscreen. You cannot see anymore! Now, you can either quit the race and just give up. Or you can turn on the wipers – spray water on the windscreen and get back in the race.

You might have lost a little ground, but you haven't lost the race, you haven't got on the wrong track, you just need to use the wipers and get re-focused.

Satan likes to throw the mud of anxiety at you:

- What are you going to wear? What are you going to eat? How are you going to feed your children? How can you survive this?
- How are you going to cope? How can you be sure this investment will work? How could you ever find love again? How could you plant a church, succeed in business?
- Did you hear what is happening with lockdown, we have to wear a mask at church, how can we have church with masks and what will we do if and when and how...

All that mud gets on our vision, and we stop being able to see a clear path forward. Now listen to me: don't quit over a little mud. Turn the wipers on – start THANKING GOD FOR YESTERDAY'S GRACE AND START REALIZING THAT IF GOD IS GOOD YESTERDAY, HE IS GOOD TODAY, HE WILL BE GOOD TOMORROW!

Anxiety is just mud temporarily obscuring your vision and hope for the future. Start praising God. The mud doesn't stop the car, it just temporarily stops visibility. Your anxious thoughts DO NOT STOP GOD'S PROMISES, they do not stop you entering the promised land, it doesn't stop your healing, your prosperity, it just causes you to lose focus. YOU ONLY STOP IF YOU TURN OFF THE ENGINE, if you stop believing, stop declaring, stop thinking, stop praising, stop thanking, stop walking in faith.

Read Psalm 56.3. Notice it does not say “I never get afraid”, it doesn’t say “I am a great apostle of faith, I am so mighty”. No, it says – when I get afraid – I trust the Lord. You could say “when the mud appears, I turn the wipers on”. True believers are not people who never have an anxious thought. They are those who know how to deal with them.

Read I Peter 5.7. It does not say we never have anxieties. It says we cast them on Jesus! Why? Because He cares for us. If you believe that Jesus cares for you, then you will find it easy to cast all your anxieties on Him. If you have little faith that Jesus cares for you, you will stay anxious.

You are going to have things in life that make you anxious! But you are never going to have an anxious thought that cannot be dealt with by casting them on Jesus and reminding yourself of how much He cares for you. He cared for you on the cross. He cared for you up until now. And tomorrow – He will still care for you!

You need now to stand against all anxiety by building faith in the future into your life and mind. Are you anxious about where you are going to live? About a house? About money coming in? About feeding your family? You have little faith, and it is time to get some more!

Now the good news is Jesus never diagnoses a problem without giving us the cure. And the cure is normally remarkably close to the problem in Scripture. Here, the way to develop faith is in the same passage that we find out that our anxiety is caused by little faith.

Read Matthew 6.25. You need to realize your life is greater than food. Your life is better than food! You are alive. Do you understand how great that is? God has given you the gift of life. You have the greatest gift of all – you are alive. You can think and reason and love and be happy, and life! YOU ARE ALIVE! God gave you the remarkable gift of being alive and you are still wondering whether He will give you breakfast – there is something wrong there!

Your body is greater than clothes. God has given you the most amazing machine that ever existed. Isaac Asimov calls the human body “The most complex arrangement within the entire universe”. Your body has a built-in thermostat – it gives you goosebumps in the cold to keep you warm, you sweat in the heat to keep cool. Your brain is the greatest computer ever. Your stomach is a factory that can turn spaghetti bolognaise into muscles, and nerves, and fresh skin. Your body self-repairs! It has two automatic focus cameras; it has a voice recorder.

I think having given you just a complex machine, God will give you clothes for it. If I bought you a laptop – a top of the range laptop, graphics card, it costs me thousands of pounds with a HD screen, beautiful keyboard, charger, all the software, and it is a grace gift, it’s all free for you. Would you go – oh no, it doesn’t have a bag? Or do you think maybe I will get you a bag. God gave you the body, He will give you a bag for it!

Read Matthew 6.26. You are more valuable than a bird. Did you ever read in the news about thousands of birds found dead in the streets of London because they starved? No – birds get fed. Someone might think God will not take care of them because they did not save – but birds do not have saving accounts. Someone might think God will not take care of them because they did not tithe, but birds do not tithe. You are more than important to God than a bird.

Read Matthew 6.27-28. Anxiety changes nothing. Worrying only messes up your day. Stop worrying, get on with what God has called you to do. Anxiety is useless – it is totally non-fruitful and non-productive. You cannot make yourself taller by worrying. So stop worrying and do something useful!

Read Matthew 6.28-30. You are worth more than a flower. God clothes the flowers, and you are worth more than a flower. Flowers do not even go to church, never pray, never fast. But God still clothes them with the most beautiful colours! God is not just going to clothe you; He is going to clothe you in style!

You are more valuable than Solomon. God wants to prosper you to Solomon levels. He wants you clothed like a king. He wants you to rule and reign in life.

Read Matthew 6.31, in the KJV if you can. In the KJV it says not to take the thought. The word for thought in the Greek is “merimao”, it means a thought full of fear and care and anxiety. An anxious thought. Those thoughts cross our mind – but we do not have to take them. Kenneth Hagin used to say, “you cannot stop a bird flying overhead, but you can stop it building a nest in your hair”. You cannot stop satan throwing mud at your windscreen, but you do not have to leave it there. You can turn the wipers on and start thanking God for His goodness. Resist the anxious thought.

Now how do you take a thought. Well, the Scripture teaches, “take no thought, SAYING”. You take a thought when you say it. If you never say it, it is not your thought. So when an anxious thought flies overhead, do not say it, say “I thank you God for your grace and goodness, I thank you that my future is glorious”. Speak the Word!

Read Matthew 6.31-32. You are not a lost man without a heavenly Father, do you not need to be consumed with how are you going to make it work and make ends meet and make it happen. You have a heavenly Father! You have a God in HEAVEN – He knows what you need, better than you know. And your response to this revelation that God is your loving Father – PUT HIM FIRST, HE WILL GET YOU THERE! SEEK THE KINGDOM – means PUT THE KINGDOM FIRST – look for the way GOD DOES THINGS – keep your MIND STAYED ON THE LORD, keep your imagination on HIM!

Read Matthew 6.33. God’s will is that things are added to you – all the things! And the context here is food, clothing, a place to sleep. God will add them to you, more and more and more. His will for your life is addition not subtraction. God supplies your needs according to His riches (Php. 4.19) that means better than you ever could, better than you ever would. God is El Shaddai, not El Cheapo. The streets in Heaven are paved with gold! God is not against money; He is not against your success. He is more than enough!

If you are not embarrassed by how well you are doing, you are not doing well enough yet, you haven’t stood on the WORD ENOUGH YET. That’s where I am headed, watch this space! I am already embarrassed at a lot of pastors conferences where people ask questions about how I am doing, and they are bouncing from one problem to another, and we are growing and increasing and moving from glory to glory, but I haven’t seen anything yet. It does not yet appear what we shall be!

Read Matthew 6.34. This will help you when under pressure – a day is only ever one day long. This is good news. A day is only a day. You got trouble today, it is not following you into tomorrow. There might be new trouble tomorrow, but there is new grace and new glory too!

God will supply your needs. Read Php. 4.6. We should not be anxious about anything. We should pray but pray with thanksgiving. Praying with thanksgiving will cause you to focus on yesterday's grace and then start expecting great things for the future, and that will lead to no more anxiety. Read Php. 4.19. God will supply your needs. Will supply means future. I know prosperity is a done deal, but not all your prosperity is behind you. Not all the glory is behind you. There is new glory tomorrow. There is new prosperity tomorrow. There is new mercies tomorrow. GOD'S RICHES IN GLORY ARE VERY RICH INDEED! RICHES IN GLORY – that's more than you can possibly EVER spend.

What do I do when anxious thoughts come at me? I stand on the promises. I meditate on yesterday's grace until it births an expectant faith for tomorrow, I am constantly stepping out in faith. In January this year, I signed a contract that instantly doubled our TV ministry costs with one signature! I had to get into Isaiah 41.10 and Php. 4.19 and meditate on them and speak them until I started to get an expectation that bill would always be paid by my Father. I would remember

You stand on the promises. You meditate on YESTERDAY'S GRACE UNTIL IT BIRTHS A FAITH IN THE FUTURE.

I step out all the time, I remember signing the contract with WORD TV – it doubled our TV costs with one signature. I went to ISAIAH 41.10 and Php. 4.19. I reminded myself that God has always met our bills when we had one venue and when we had eleven! I reminded myself that we hosted Andrew Wommack and spent over thirty-five thousand pounds to make the meeting, and then gave the entire offering to Andrew's ministry. And then gave another several thousand on top of that because I was embarrassed by how little the guests gave. I reminded myself of when God paid my Bible College fees, how God met my needs in the past. I focused on yesterday's grace until all my thoughts for the future were expectant faith and I stood on the Word and there was no anxiety. That is how you do it. I am not preaching what I do not practise, and I practise what I preach.

You need to get some SCRIPTURES BEHIND YOU! YOU NEED TO KNOW THE WORD!

Sometimes I get anxious about not being fruitful. At the start of the first lockdown, I started to wonder if I was really making a difference in people's lives with the teaching we were doing. In addition (and obviously I do not mean anyone doing this study) some people have been with Tree of Life for a while and they are still sick, still negative in their thinking. Not many, most people have testimonies of changed lives, healings and miracles are commonplace. But anxious thoughts came flying over my head and put pressure on me to take them, to speak them, to declare them. I was wondering if what I was doing was worth it. Now, I am not saying this for pity, pity cannot solve this kind of battle, only faith can. So, I went to the Word of God.

Have you ever got mud or dirt on the windscreen and you decide to clean it, and you are out of screen wash? All you get is a pitiful squirt that does nothing but spread the mud around further. You need to top up the screen wash! When you are trying to stand and have faith for the future, but you are empty of the Word it is ridiculously hard to do, and anxious thoughts will overwhelm you.

So, I went to the Scriptures. Specifically, I used Psalm 107.35. That is the verse God called me to preach with in 1994. I meditated on that; I spoke that. I did not take the anxious thoughts by speaking them, I spoke the Word. And since that time, which was around last April and May time, our ministry has increased in influence in countless ways, we have a

new location opened, new people, people coming back to the Tree, our online audience has shot up, our YouTube channel is growing rapidly, and I am watching Psalm 107:35 manifest in my life, to the point where people who do not know that Scripture, could not quote it are using the same language as that verse to describe their life now they have joined the Tree of Life Family!

I remind myself of that over and over, I bring the Word into my mind and mouth. And it changes my mind and melts anxiety and brings assurance.

What are you anxious about?

Are you anxious you are not strong enough to keep going? There are Bible verses on that you could use to fill up your screen wash! Are you anxious you are not smart enough or wise enough to do what God has called and designed you to? There are Bible verses on that you could use to fill up your screen wash! Are you anxious you are lacking the resources to do what God has called you to do? There are Bible verses on that you can use to fill up your screen wash.

I do not want to do it all for you. Find them! Go hunting, there is a joy in the hunt for Bible verses. I will give you some:

My grace is sufficient for you, my power is made perfect in weakness (2 Cor. 12:9)

If God is for us, who can be against us (Romans 8:31)

Give and it shall be given to you, pressed down, shaken together, running over shall men give to my bosom (Luke 6:38)

Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the LORD DELIVERS HIM FROM THEM ALL (Psalm 34:19)

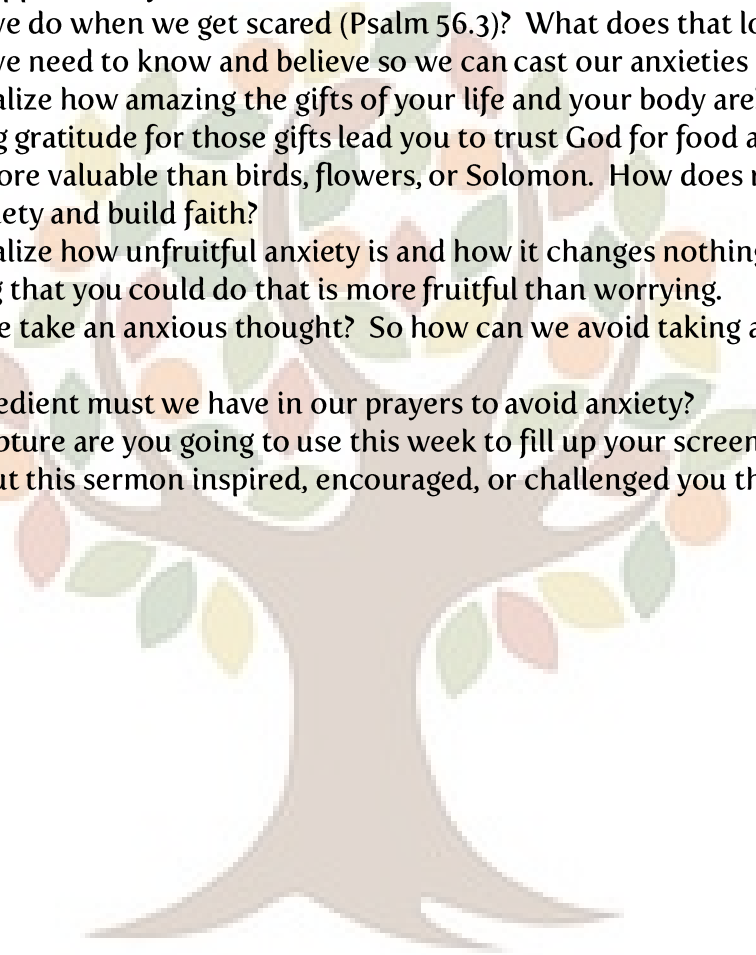
If things are making you anxious, get the Word inside you. You need ammunition to fight satan! You need bullets to fight anxiety and win! This is how you need to live – stop fighting people and start fighting anxiety. Really the battle is not against anxiety – it is against your little faith. So turn the wipers of praise and thanksgiving on, keep your eyes on the Word, keep your eyes on God's goodness, remember how glorious God has been and how good He is to you, start dreaming of a better tomorrow. Take a stand against every anxious thought.

Declare right now: I CHOOSE TO TRUST GOD. I reject anxiety in JESUS NAME. I praise the LORD for always taking care of me, and I THANK YOU LORD for your peace!

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where dreams come true

YESTERDAY'S GRACE BIRTHS TOMORROW'S FAITH 02 Dealing with Anxiety STUDY
GUIDE QUESTIONS

- I. What is the underlying cause for anxiety?
2. What kind of problems result from us being anxious?
3. What are the three main areas which Jesus told us not to be anxious over?
4. Which one of those three "birds" fly over your head more?
5. "satan likes to throw the mud of anxiety at you" – can you describe a time when this has happened to you?
6. What do we do when we get scared (Psalm 56.3)? What does that look like?
7. What do we need to know and believe so we can cast our anxieties on Jesus?
8. Do you realize how amazing the gifts of your life and your body are? How does developing gratitude for those gifts lead you to trust God for food and clothing?
9. You are more valuable than birds, flowers, or Solomon. How does realizing that dispel anxiety and build faith?
10. Do you realize how unfruitful anxiety is and how it changes nothing? Name something that you could do that is more fruitful than worrying.
- II. How do we take an anxious thought? So how can we avoid taking an anxious thought?
12. What ingredient must we have in our prayers to avoid anxiety?
13. What Scripture are you going to use this week to fill up your screenwash?
14. What about this sermon inspired, encouraged, or challenged you the most?



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