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BIBLICAL RESPONSE TO FEAR AND ANXIETY

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Ephesians 1:3-14

Psalm 56

Joshua 1:9

Hebrews 13:5b

Proverbs 18:10

Psalm 112:1, 7, 8a

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Right and wrong fears

Right Fear:

Fear of **God** (Eccl. 12:13-14; Prov. 1-7; Ps. 111:10; 2 Cor. 5:10, Hebrews 12:28-28)

For He is the only one who can destroy both soul and body (Matthew 10:28-31).

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Proverbs 1:7

The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge; Fools despise wisdom and instruction.

Psalm 111:10

The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom;
A good understanding have all those who do His commandments;
His praise endures forever.

Ecclesiastes 12:13

The conclusion, when all has been heard, is: fear God and keep His commandments, because this applies to every person.

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Hebrews 12:28-29

Therefore, since we receive a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us show gratitude, by which we may offer to God an acceptable service with reverence and awe; for our God is a consuming fire.

Reverence and Awe: positive fear

Hebrews 10:31

It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

To be afraid, to shudder, to hide: negative fear

Both describe a right fear of God

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Fear of God in Reverence and Awe

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1 Peter 2:17

Honor all people, love the brotherhood, fear God, honor the king.

Revelation 14:7

and he said with a loud voice, "Fear God, and give Him glory, because the hour of His judgment has come; worship Him who made the heaven and the earth and sea and springs of waters."

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Understanding Fear in the Bible

- Fear God (Ps. 111:10; Prov. 1:7; Eccl. 12:13)
- Don’t fear man (Jer. 17:5-7; Heb. 13:5)
- Fear not, or don’t be afraid (Luke 2:10)
- Be very afraid! (Heb. 10:31)

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Results of Obedient and Faithful Fear of God

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- We receive wisdom and knowledge
- We are obedient and faithful – it is right and proper!
- Humility and submission to the Lord
- Proper and appropriate worship

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Right and wrong fears

Fears that are right (cont.):

Fear of **danger** (Job 41, Genesis 4:14, 1 Corinthians. 6:19-20).

Fear due to guilt (Prov. 28:1; Matthew 14: 1-2; Leviticus 26:17-18, 36.

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Right and wrong fears

Fears that are wrong:

Fear of man, not **God** (John 12:42-43, Jeremiah 17:5-8)

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John 12:42-43 –

Nevertheless, many even of the authorities believed in him, but for fear of the Pharisees they did not confess it, so that they would not be put out of the synagogue; for they loved the glory that comes from man more than the glory that comes from God.

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Jeremiah 17:5-6

Thus says the LORD,
"Cursed is the man who trusts in mankind
And makes flesh his strength,
And whose heart turns away from the LORD.
For he will be like a bush in the desert
And will not see when prosperity comes,
But will live in stony wastes in the wilderness,
A land of salt without inhabitant."

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Right and wrong fears

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Fears that are wrong (cont.):

Fear of things that are **temporal** rather than **eternal** (Luke 12:4-5, 1 Corinthians 4:5; 2 Corinthians 5:9-10)

Fear of things that could happen, but have not….."Paralysis".

Fear of things we cannot control (Proverbs 3:25)

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Counseling Fear - What are you really afraid of?

- What makes you so afraid of it?
- Can you articulate it?
- Have you prayed about it?
- What have you done about it or doing about it?
- How have you sought help with it?
- Are you willing to overcome it?
- How much?
- Have you done Psalm 56:3-4?
- Do you believe Proverbs 3:25-26?

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Definition of Worry/Anxiety

Worry or anxiety may be sinful idolatry that things must go as I desire and an unbelief or doubt that God is sovereign and good

(Matthew 6:19-34).

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Matthew 6:32-34

34 "So do not worry about tomorrow; for tomorrow will care for itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

32 For the Gentiles eagerly seek all these things; for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things.

33 But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.

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Definition of Worry/Anxiety

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Worry/Anxiety is the opposite of <u>trust</u> in God. There is no such thing as "OK" or "right" worry.

Calling sin "sin" gives hope for change. Worry must be put off, gratitude and trust in God must be put on (Ephesians 4:23-25; 2 Corinthians 7:10)

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"Anxiety is real. Life gets tough, trials hit, pressure mounts, and our flesh takes over. Before we know it, we're overwhelmed with worry. In fact, that is exactly how the dictionary would define anxiety.
Thankfully, for those of us who trust in Jesus, we don't have to wander aimlessly when it comes to anxiety. If you struggle with anxiety and worry, you are not doomed to a life without answers. God's Word holds the key to your anxious heart."

Kyle Swanson

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Anxiety

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Are you tempted to place your hope in anything outside of the resurrected Lord Jesus Christ?

What do you currently think will bring you joy and satisfaction?

How have things in your life shown to disappoint you when you've placed your hope in them?

How has Christ shown Himself to you before to be an object of hope?

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Anxiety

The word anxious is the idea of being deeply concerned, worried, completely occupied with, or showing obsessive interest in that which is weighing heavily on our hearts.

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Anxiety

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All of us struggle at times with discouragement, with concerns that might build to worry or anxiety.

Despair and hopelessness are not uncommon even among us, the people of God. In those seasons of struggle, our hope seems to be quite inadequate and meager.

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Anxiety

We miss the mark when we expend mental energies and emotions on being anxious.

Worry and anxiety are rooted in a lack of **trust**.

When we allow our hearts to be anxious, we are essentially telling the Lord, "I don't trust you fully, you can't handle my situation, and I don't genuinely think you are powerful enough to carry this burden!"

Worry and anxiety can be rooted in our **selfish motives**: What if God doesn't work this out the way I want or give me what I want?

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There are genuine concerns for which we must give diligent, careful thought and priority to.

Concern: (*Cambridge Dictionary*)

- **something that is important to you, or the fact of being important;**
- **to be important to someone or to involve someone directly;**
- **to become involved with something, or worried about something;**

It is right and proper to have concern for those people and things we love and care for and have responsibility for.

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Concern

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God is concerned for us (Psalm 91:11) - *For He will give His angels charge concerning you, To guard you in all your ways*.

Paul was concerned for the Corinthians (1Cor. 1:4) - *I thank my God always concerning you for the grace of God which was given you in Christ Jesus,*

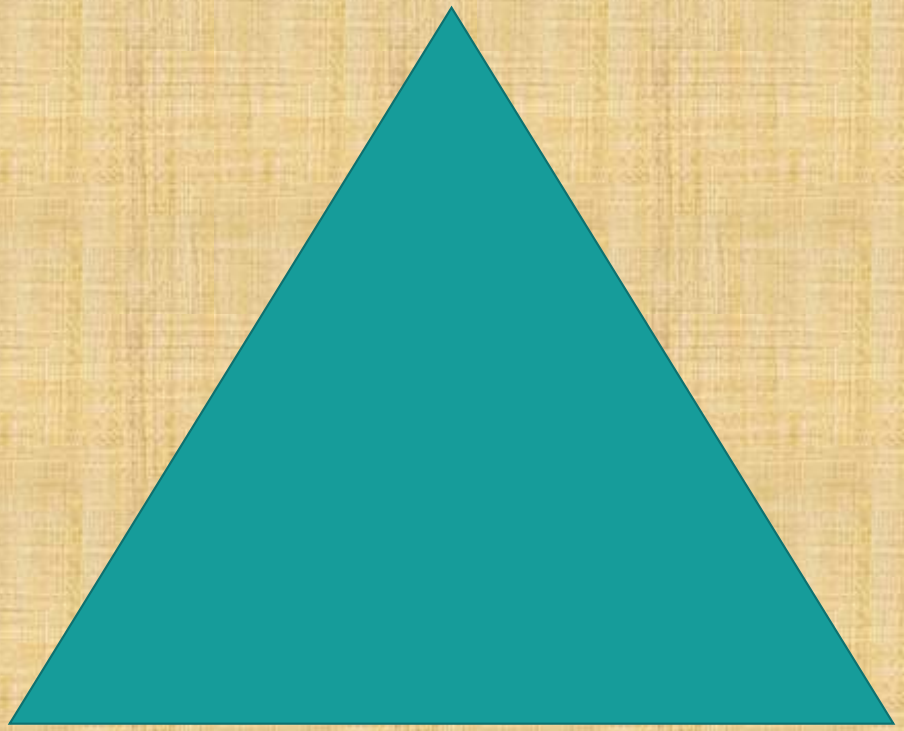
2 Cor. 11:28 - *Apart from such external things, there is the daily pressure on me of concern for all the churches.*

We are to be concerned for one another (Phil. 4:10) - *But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly, that now at last you have revived your concern for me; indeed, you were concerned before, but you lacked opportunity.*

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Concern



Apathy

Anxiety

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Concern or Anxiety

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How do I know if it's a biblical concern or unbiblical anxiety? Jesus answers that in Matthew 6.

1. Jesus says that self-concern as being your primary interest is wrong (vv. 25-26). Your life and body are not the biggest concerns you have, or at least they shouldn't be.

2. Jesus speaks of anxiety as being functionally God-less. That's why Jesus shows us the character of God: God feeds, God clothes, and God knows (vv. 26, 30, 32). A seminary professor once said, "Anxiety is a mild form of atheism."

3. Jesus identifies anxiety as being self-terminating - "Which of you by being anxious adds a single hour to his span of life?" (v. 27). Anxieties are us trying to fix it—but we can't fix it.

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Anxiety

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There is currently much with which to be concerned, but nothing over which to be anxious.

We should not minimize cares or concerns in this life, but we neither dare to be anxious.
God knows. God provides. God is good.
So, we take our concerns to Him, knowing He is a good God who truly does care for us (Luke 12:32).

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Anxiety

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Where do you need to pause and identify concerns to which you must be more faithful?

What are the areas of sinful anxiety where you need to trust in the Lord?

How can you practically be faithful to your concerns while entrusting anxieties to the Lord?

Philippians 4: 4-7
1 Peter 5: 6-7

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Generalized Anxiety Disorder according to DSM-V

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A. Excessive anxiety and worry (apprehensive expectation), occurring more days than not for at least 6 months, about a number of events or activities (such as work or school performance).

B. The individual finds it difficult to control the worry.

C. The anxiety and worry are associated with three (or more) of the following six symptoms (with at least some symptoms having been present for more days than not for the past 6 months):

Note: Only one item required in children. 1. Restlessness, feeling keyed up or on edge. 2. Being easily fatigued. 3. Difficulty concentrating or mind going blank. 4. Irritability. 5. Muscle tension. 6. Sleep disturbance (difficulty falling or staying asleep, or restless, unsatisfying sleep).

D. The anxiety, worry, or physical symptoms cause clinically significant distress or impairment in social, occupational, or other important areas of functioning.

E. The disturbance is not attributable to the physiological effects of a substance (e.g., a drug of abuse, a medication) or another medical condition (e.g., hyperthyroidism).

F. The disturbance is not better explained by another medical disorder

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Anxiety - What do we do about it?

When we are encompassed and surrounded by pressure-filled circumstances, our temptation is to put our hope in changing the situation. We tell ourselves, "If only "X" were to happen, then life would be better."

Instead of focusing on our circumstances, we need to turn our eyes to the resurrected Christ. We find resurrected life in our resurrected Lord.

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Anxiety – What do we do about it?

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Instead of merely trying harder and "pushing through," we must put our hope in Christ. That is what brings us living hope.

There's no situation so torturous, impossible, agonizing, and depleting of vitality that the Lord cannot share His resurrection life with us and see us through it, and if He so wills, even deliver us out of that situation.

Colossians 3:1-3 **1 Corinthians 10:13**

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Here are three initial steps to take if you struggle with anxiety:

1. Recognize the Onset of Anxiety (Ps. 56:3-4 and Psalm 94:19)

Mark the moment when circumstances overwhelm you or you begin to doubt God's sovereign power. Recognize & Acknowledge it.

The hardest step in the process, but it is where victory over anxiety begins. Begin NOW in your discipline!

Psalm 56:3-4, "*When I am afraid, I put my trust in you. In God, whose Word I praise, in God I trust; I will not be afraid. What can flesh do to me?*"
In the moment, David recognized his heart's desire to be anxious, and he fought against it. He ran to the Lord in prayer and He trusted in God.

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2. Run to the Father in Prayer (Ps. 4:14; Phil. 4:7)

Like David, we must immediately run to the Father in prayer.

Prayer must be the immediate response to our worry because we are called to place our faith in God—our full and complete trust.

When we worry and embrace our natural emotional response to be overly concerned with our circumstances, then we are by nature denying the complete and perfect trust that we should have in God. To rob God of our trust in Him is to tell Him that He is unworthy to be our God.

Philippians 4:7 -
The promised result in verse 7 is: "*and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus*." This peace will guard our hearts against falling into fear for those who love the Lord Jesus Christ and trust in Him for our salvation and sanctification.

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3. Rely on God's Family for Strength

We must run to each other for support, fellowship, the building up of the body, and safety in faithful numbers.

Galatians 6:2 says, "*Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.*"

The family of God is an incredible gift. We are all designed to function in God's family to the benefit of one another, so when we see a brother or sister in Christ fall into anxiety, then it is the responsibility of the rest of us to build that individual up in love, strengthening their faith with the truth about God from the Word of God!

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Anxiety - A Biblical Response

1. Recognize that continued anxiety is sin and something to repent of—Jesus strictly condemns anxiety, and so does Paul (Matt. 6:25; Phil. 4:6).

2. When we're anxious, we must remember the nature and character of God (Matt. 6:26-32). Our anxieties are like viewing God through a drinking straw: it's a small and incomplete view. If we truly understood God's character, our anxieties would seem silly.

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Anxiety - A Biblical Response

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3. We must take our concerns to God.
1 Peter 5:7a reminds us to take our concerns to the Lord. We take our anxious moments to God who cares for us (1 Pet. 5:7b). Paul says we do this by prayer (Phil. 4:6).

4. Respond by being faithful to our concerns. Ps. 131:1b-2, "*I do not occupy myself with things too great and too marvelous for me*." We don't respond to our anxieties by shirking our concerns in life! Rather, we respond by being faithful to what God has called us to do—planning for the future, working hard, going to the grocery store, washing our hands—and trusting Him with the rest.

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Keys to overcoming sinful fear and worry:

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Find biblical **solutions** to problem

Put off anxiety and fear, and establish realistic goals and plans, putting on working hard at them.

- Define problem
- Prioritize list of what TO DO and HOW to do it (What does the Bible say?)
- Watch out for perfectionism!

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Keys to overcoming sinful fear and anxiety/worry:

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Make a list of items to praise God and be thankful for (e.g. Notebook listing 10 things per day)

Confess sinful fear, anxiety, and worry (1 John 1:9).

Think as a saved person, dead to sin (Romans 6:11, 8:28-29)

Think right, do right, feel right (John 13:17; James 1:25).

Focus on God's grace (2 Corinthians 9:8)

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Psalm 37:1-9 - Path to Peace -

3 *Trust in the LORD* and do good;
Dwell in the land and cultivate faithfulness.

4 *Delight yourself in the LORD*;
And He will give you the desires of your heart.

5 *Commit your way to the LORD,*
Trust also in Him, and He will do it.
6 He will bring forth your righteousness as the light
And your judgment as the noonday.

7 *Rest in the LORD and wait patiently for Him;*
Do not fret because of him who prospers in his way,
Because of the man who carries out wicked schemes.

8 *Cease from anger and forsake wrath;*
Do not fret; *it leads* only to evildoing.

9 For evildoers will be cut off,
But *those who wait for the LORD*, they will inherit the land.

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Philippians 4:4-9 –

4 Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice! (Praise/Rejoice)

6 Be *anxious for nothing*, but in everything *by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving* let your requests be made known to God. (Do not be anxious, but pray with thanksgiving)

7 And the *peace of God*, which surpasses all comprehension, *will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus*. (Peace of God)

8 Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if *anything* worthy of praise, *dwell on these things*. (Possess your mind – think right)

9 The *things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things*, and the *God of peace* will be with you.
(Practice the pattern) (God of Peace)

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Heart Work

- Philippians 4 Model and Worksheet
- Psalm 37 Path to Peace
- Fear and Anxiety Evaluator
- Heart Journal

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The Anxiety & Fear Evaluator

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Instructions: At the moment you realize that you are feeling anxious or fearful, take a moment to think through the following questions in order to evaluate how you got to this point and to determine how you need to respond in order to overcome the anxious/fearful thoughts and feelings. By using this tool you will find that you are able to quickly determine the area of disobedience, temptation or weakness that has allowed the anxious/fearful thoughts to take hold.

Evaluation Questions How Am I Doing In This Area? Set A Specific Goal

Scale:

1-Not Practicing At All

2-Practiced Occasionally

3-Practiced a Few Times

4-Practiced Most Times

5-Practiced Regularly as Needed

Evaluation Questions	How Am I Doing In This Area?	Set A Specific Goal
Am I obediently following the principle of right praying, right thinking and right acting? Philippians 4:6-9		
Have I prayerfully given God my concerns thanking Him for His past, present and future faithfulness?		
Am I focused on the reality of God's love for me and that perfect love casts out fear? 1 John 4:17-19		
Have I reminded myself that I'm a new creature in Christ and free from any yoke of bondage? 2 Corinthians 5:17; Galatians 5:1		
Am I drowning out negative, anxious, fearful thoughts by focusing on Biblical truth? Romans 12:2		
Am I overcoming fear and anxiety in my life by determining what is my responsibility and by following through on my responsibilities?		

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Heart Journal

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1. Situation: What was going on?

2. Responses: What did I *do* in response to what was going on?

3. Thoughts: What did I *think* about what was going on?

4. Motives: What did I *want* out of what was going on?

5. Outcome/Consequences: What actually did happen?

6. Biblical Motives: What *should* I have *wanted* out of what was going on
   (i.e., What *should* I *want* the next time something like this happens)?

7. Biblical Thoughts: What *should* I have *thought* about what was going on
   (i.e., What *should* I *think* the next time something like this happens)?

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Jeremiah 17:7-8

Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord
And whose trust is the Lord.
For he will be like a tree planted by the water,
That extends its roots by a stream
And will not fear when the heat comes;
But its leaves will be green,
And it will not be anxious in a year of drought
Nor cease to yield fruit.