

Home Group Leader's Notes

Week of May 15, 2022

Topic: Anxiety

Why address anxiety? Anxiety is addressed throughout the Bible because we all suffer from it. People from around the world think that everyone in America (U.S. +) is wealthy, have everything they need and can be anything they want. So, they think that we don't suffer from fears and heartaches. Wrong. Some experts think that the U.S. is the anxiety capital of the world.

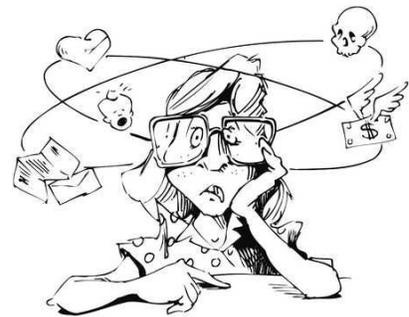
"An anxious heart weighs a person down." (Proverbs 12:25)

WHEN ARE YOU STRESSED?

Stress and anxiety is everywhere in the world throughout all time. In some places of the world, stress is about one's next meal. But even in America, where supply is abundant, stress and anxiety are a major challenge.

Which of these triggers are more likely to bring on stress and/or anxiety for you?

- Stress at work
- Stress from school
- Stress in a personal relationship
- Financial stress
- Stress from global occurrences or political issues
- Stress from unpredictable or uncertain world events, like a pandemic
- Stress from an emotional trauma such as the death of a loved one
- Stress from a serious medical illness



ABOUT ANXIETY

We live in changing times

We live in turbulent times

We live in confusing times

We live in stressful times

Facts and Figures

- 1) Everyone experiences anxiety. "**Anxiety** is an emotion characterized by feelings of tension, worried thoughts and physical changes like increased blood pressure" (APA). Stress is "A feeling of worry, nervousness, or unease, typically about an imminent event or something with an uncertain outcome" (Oxford Dictionary). "Anxiety is a normal and often healthy emotion." (MedicalNewsToday.com)
- 2) The root causes of anxiety are stress and fear of the known or unknown.
- 3) Anxiety disorders are the most common mental illness in the U.S., affecting 40 million adults in the United States age 18 and older

According to a medical website (WebMD), "Coping mechanisms may help you handle anxiety that comes from life's stressors. Here are some things you can try:"

- Exercise
- Meditation
- Relaxation exercises, including deep breathing
- Visualization
- Good sleep habits
- Healthy diet
- Learn interpersonal skills for dealing with difficult people and situations or get parenting skills training for help dealing with your children

QUESTION: What does God reveal in the Scriptures about worry and anxiety?

WHAT THE BIBLE TEACHES ABOUT WORRY AND ANXIETY

The Bible has much to say about anxiety (and worry). Read the following sampler and consider what we learn about the causes and solutions to anxiety and worry.

- According to Jesus' words in Matthew, what causes anxiety?
 - Pursuit of the treasures of earth
 - Attempting to store what we can't keep
 - Placing our hope in the wrong places
 - Serving security (e.g. money) somewhere other than in God
 -
- What are God's answers or solutions? What does God say that we should do?
 - Pursue God, trust in God, serve God
 - Trust instead of worry
 - Look around and look back and see that God is trustworthy
 - Seek His kingdom and His righteousness

Matthew 6:19-34

"Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal.²⁰ But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal.²¹ For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.²² "The eye is the lamp of the body. If your eyes are good, your whole body will be full of light.²³ But if your eyes are bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light within you is darkness, how great is that darkness!²⁴ "No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money.²⁵ "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes?²⁶ Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they?²⁷ Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life?²⁸ "And why do you worry about clothes? See how the lilies of the field grow. They do not labor or spin.²⁹ Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these.³⁰ If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith?³¹ So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?'

³² For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. ³³ But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. ³⁴ Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.”

Throughout the Bible, God repeats a command: “Fear not.” How can we not fear?

Isaiah 41:10

“So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.”

- Believe that He is God and will strengthen us for whatever is needed
- He is righteous and does all things right

Read the following passages about dealing with anxiety and answer the questions below.

Philippians 4:6-8

“Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. ⁷ And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. ⁸ Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.”

1 Peter 5:7

“Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.”

According to the above verses, what steps we can take? What do we learn about what God will do?

- Understand, believe, dwell on the fact that God cares for you
- Pray, petition God, and when you do, believe with thanksgiving
- Believe God’s promise of peace
- Set your mind on the right things (v.8)

DISCUSS TOGETHER

Why do you think stress and anxiety is an especially big problem in America?

We all have an underlying belief in the American dream. But It doesn’t deliver what it promises (e.g. that more is better, that you can be anything, that the grass is greener, etc.)

Problems and stress are an effect of the curse that came with sin (Genesis 3:14-19). Why do you think that God allows this to go on, even after we choose to follow Jesus?

Problems, pain, and brokenness keep us needing God, seeing that we are not all-sufficient. God uses these to keep us humble so that we might live in His grace and goodness instead of what we can be or do.

How does God use stress and anxiety in your life? What does God want?

Hopefully, people will share from their own experience.

**Grace to you,
Steve**