

Counseling the Anxious Heart

Paul Tautges

DEFINE ANXIETY BIBLICALLY.

1. Anxiety is an emotion, but it's more than a feeling.
2. Anxiety often includes a physical reaction and, sometimes, a cause.
 - Anxiety is entwined with our bodies (Gen. 37:35; 42:38; 44:29; Job 3:26).
 - The body/soul interplay is constant (Ps. 31:9-12).
3. The writers of the New Testament employ two different, but related, words.
 - Noun (*merimna*) = care
 - Verb (*merizo*) = to draw in different directions or distract
4. To be anxious, then, means to have a distracting care—to have our minds and hearts torn between two worlds.
5. These distracting cares divide our mental energy and cloud our spiritual vision.

COUNSEL YOUR ANXIOUS SELF AND OTHERS LIKE JESUS COUNSELED

1. BUILD A FOUNDATION OF TRUST IN THE LOVING CARE OF THE FATHER
 - a. Jesus says, “Your heavenly Father cares for you” (Matt. 6:26-27).
 - Being at peace with God is foundational to experiencing the peace of God; i.e. God must be our heavenly Father (See also Rom. 5:1-2).
 - Worry distracts us from enjoying the love of our heavenly Father.

- “Look at the birds...”
 - Your heavenly Father feeds His creatures (v. 26).
 - You are more valuable than any non-human creature (v. 27).
 - Your heavenly Father has a plan for the span of your life (v. 27).

- b. Jesus says, “Your heavenly Father provides” (Matt. 6:28-30).
 - Smallness of faith exposes itself in our disposition to worry.
 - Jesus directs us to think about God’s provision

- c. Jesus says, “Your heavenly Father knows your needs” (Matt. 6:31-32).
 - The peace *of* God is rooted in being at peace *with* God through personal, repentant faith in Jesus.

 - Through saving faith in Christ, *the* heavenly Father becomes *our* heavenly Father.

 - Unlike unbelievers, Christians have a heavenly Father whom they can turn to anytime. He knows and cares!

- 2. GIVE INSTRUCTIONS AS TO HOW TO SHIFT THE FOCUS OF ONE’S HEART (MATT. 6:25).
 - Jesus commands us not to be anxious (v. 25).

 - Jesus directs us to “look” somewhere else (v. 26).

 - Jesus tells us to keep eternal matters as our central priority (v. 33).

- Seek God first. Pursuing your relationship with God will build your faith in His faithful care, and fight off anxiety. Focus on today's responsibilities, taking today's cares to the Lord in prayer.
- Worry brings tomorrow's problems into today; it's double trouble (v. 34).

COUNSEL YOUR ANXIOUS SELF AND OTHERS LIKE PAUL COUNSELED

1. Joy Is a Choice (Phil. 4:4).
 - Rejoice" is a command from God.
 - Rejoice in the Lord, not your circumstances.
 - Joy is part of a Christian's witness.
 - Anxiety is a joy-killer. Therefore, choosing to rejoice in the Lord always will help you fight off your anxiety.
2. Worry about nothing; pray about everything (Phil. 4:5-7),
 - Remember the promise: The Lord is near.
 - Prayer includes worship, crying out to God, gratitude, and verbal requests
3. Find inner peace through prayer (Phil. 4:7).
 - God's peace is an indescribable calm.

- God's peace protects your emotional and mental stability.
 - God's peace belongs to believers only.
4. Think positive (Phil. 4:8).
- What you think about matters a lot.
 - Christians are commanded to renew their minds with God's truth (Rom. 12:1-2).
 - God has already given you everything you need to have a Christian mind.
 - Choose to think God's thoughts.
 - Discipline your mind to think on the right things.

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