

Fear, Worry, and Anxiety

A Biblical Perspective

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I. The Role of Feelings and Emotions in Fear, Worry, and Anxiety

- A. The battle with fear, worry, and anxiety is part of our fallen condition.
 - 1. Jesus addresses the subject in Matthew 6:19-34
 - 2. "anxious" is used five times. (ESV)
 - 3. "Worry" and worried" convey the same idea. (NASB)
 - 4. "Therefore, take no thought" from which we get "do not worry" or "do not be anxious." (KJV)

- B. Fear, worry, and anxiety are experienced in the emotions.
 - 1. We are culturally conditioned to process our problems as feelings.
 - 2. Our feelings are the result of judgments made of circumstances.
 - 3. "Feelings" covers a wide range of emotions.

4. Understanding Emotions

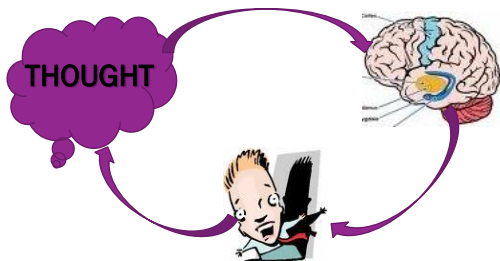
- a. "Emotion is complex, and the term has no single universally accepted definition.
- b. Emotions create a response in the mind that arises spontaneously, rather than through conscious effort.
- c. Emotions are physical expressions, often involuntary, related to feelings, perceptions or beliefs about elements, objects or relations between them, in reality or in the imagination."
Wikipedia

d. From where do emotions proceed?

- 1) Emotions almost always come from the inner man/heart.
- 2) The Inner man thinks or reasons. Matthew 13:15
- 3) The inner man contains feelings or affections. Ecclesiastes 7:9; Isaiah 35:4
- 4) The inner man contains the will. Deuteronomy 30:19-20; Psalm 25:12

5. How do emotions impact us?

- a) Emotions are chemical reactions in the body brought on by thoughts in the inner man.



- b) Emotions *always* reveal a person's faith.
- c) Emotions reveal what a person believes.
- d) Feelings reveal the heart.

- f. The Truth About Feelings
 - 1) Feelings affect and are a normal part of life.
 - 2) Feelings sometimes control our lives.
 - 3) We stretch the word "feelings" to include attitudes, judgments, and convictions. These things are actually beliefs.
 - 4) We live in a feeling-oriented culture.

- 5) Feelings are actually symptoms.
 - a) Feelings are actually by-products of our thinking.
 - b) Feelings tell us what is going on inside.
- 6) Making a distinction between what we believe and what we feel is critical because our attitudes reflect our inner beliefs about self and our problems.

II. Fear, Worry and Anxiety

- A. Fear: one of the strongest emotions that God placed within man is fear.
1. Fear is an emotional reaction to imminent danger.
 2. Fear can be both constructive and destructive.
 3. Fear can be abused.

4. Characteristics of sinful fear.

- a. When it proceeds out of unbelief, or distrust in God. Matthew 14:25;31
- b. When that which produces the fear is attributed more power than what the Bible allows.
- c. When it attributes to God characteristics that are inconsistent with His nature.

d. Fear is sinful when we fear what God forbids us to fear. Matthew 10:28

- 1) God forbids us to fear people. Psalm 27:1 – 3; Psalm 56:4; Proverbs 29:25
- 2) The Bible forbids us from inordinately fearing our environment and circumstances. Psalm 46:1 – 3; Psalm 91:5 – 6
- 3) The Bible forbids us from fearing bad news. Psalm 112:4, 7 – 8; Romans 8:28-29

e. Fear is sinful when it is rooted in the lost of some cherished idolatrous desire. John 12:42 – 43

“Idolatry is like a coin – it has 2 sides: desire and fear.”

Lou Priolo

f. When it is so paralyzing that it keeps us from fulfilling our biblical responsibilities (loving God and neighbor as the Bible commands). Matthew 25:14 – 30

g. When it is rooted in selfishness rather than love. 1 Corinthians 13:5.

B. Worry

1. Worry is the fear that seemingly adverse events will occur in the future. Philippians 4:6
2. Biblical Definition of worry: Greek, *merimna*, “worry,” “care,” or “anxious” thought.
3. Worry is anxiety over circumstances beyond our control.
4. Worry also indicates a lack of understanding of God’s sovereignty.

5. Worry feels like “mental illness” or a “disease” because most sufferers are not aware of any predisposing thoughts.
 - a. Thoughts have become habitual and so the person has fallen into a habitual response.
 - b. Chronic worry and anxiety is fear on steroids!
 - c. Worry can be chronic and crippling.

6. Worry is sin!

- a. Worry reveals a lack of faith in God. Matthew 6:25–34
- b. Worry is forbidden by God. Matthew 6:34; Philippians 4:6–7
- c. Worry destroys the body. 1 Corinthians 6:19

7. Christians should not be burdened by worry because of a strong belief in the sovereignty of God. Romans 6:14; 8:28

- a. The Sovereignty of God is exhaustive.
- b. God ordains, both causes and effects
- c. In His providential care God orchestrates every event in life—even suffering, temptation, and sin—to accomplish both our temporal and eternal benefit. Deuteronomy 8:15–16 (NASB)

9. God wants to progressively liberate us from worry.

- a. Fear (which is sinful) should have no dominion over the Christian. Romans 6:14; 8:28-29
- b. Rely on biblical truth rather than personal experience.

C. Anxiety

1. The word refers to a general feeling of tension and concern that something fearful may happen.
 - a. Anxiety disorders are the most common mental illness in the U.S., affecting over 19 million people.
 - b. People with an anxiety disorder are three-to-five times more likely to go to the doctor and six times more likely to be hospitalized for psychiatric disorders than non-sufferers.
 - c. Anxiety is often the result of wrong thinking.
2. Panic Attacks (severe anxiety)

III. Finding Freedom from Fear, Worry, and Anxiety

A. Jesus Teaches on Worry ...do not worry... Matthew 6:19-34

1. The word “thought” in the KJV in the Greek is, merimnaoô (mer-im-nah'-o). From that we get the English “worry” or “anxious.”
2. “Worry”- Thayer’s Greek: to be in a state of anxiousness, or deeply troubled with cares. The basic Greek word form means to be distracted.
3. Fear is also used in Matthew’s Gospel. The Greek word for fear is phobeoô - (fob-eh'-o) [phobia].

B. Jesus gives us two pictures

1. Worry is a type of idolatry.
 - a. Seeking and trusting in treasures (earthly things). vs. 19-21
 - b. What you are focusing on competes with God.
 - c. What you treasure rules you.
 - d. Worry expresses looking at life through competing eyes. vs. 22-23

e. The consequences of not having a good eye (a kingdom focus). Matthew 6:24 ESV

- 1) The darkness of chronic worry (and it feel likes it)
- 2) Sense of being invaded by acute worry (fear of being fearful)
- 3) Vision is clouded, limited, confused, ineffective, troubled

2. Worry is the fruit of remaining unbelief.

- a. Worriers are “of little faith.” Matthew 6:30
- b. To worry is to deny God’s power, wisdom and love for you in your situation.
- c. The solution is to feed your faith and grow in grace. Matthew 6:25-30; 2 Peter 3:18

C. Solution: Be Heavenly Minded

1. But seek first the kingdom of God. Colossians 3:1-2
2. The surpassing value of knowing Christ. Philippians 3:8

V. A Biblical Response to Fear, Worry, and Anxiety

- A. Fear, Worry, and Anxiety are heart issues.
1. They are rooted in our spiritual battle with sin.
 2. Thought life has direct bearing on the experience of fear, worry, and anxiety.
 - a. Thoughts, beliefs, and desires proceed from what the Bible describes as the heart. Prov. 4:23
 - b. The heart is deceptive and desperately wicked. Jer. 17:9; Mk. 7:20-23; Gen 6:5; 1 Tim 4:1-2
 - c. Only God can change the human heart. Ezk. 11:19, 36:26; Jer. 32:39
 - d. These promises extend to those of who call upon the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation. Rom. 9:23-25, 10:13

- e. In Christ we are enabled to have new thoughts, new beliefs, and new desires.
- f. We are never free from sin in this life. Gal 5: 19-24
- g. Fruit issues are the visible evidence of the inner man.
- h. We have been commanded to change, to be sanctified, to be transformed by the renewing of the mind. Eph 4:22-24; Rom. 12:2
- i. The mind/heart is where anxiety lives and thrives

3. Anxiety is helpful because it's a powerful diagnostic.
 - a. Anxiety exposes what we fear.
 - b. Anxiety exposes what we most value. 2 Tim.3:1 – 5; Matt. 22:36 – 40
 - c. Anxiety the nature of our treasures. Jas. 5:13 – 16; Jer. 33:6; Ps. 3:5; Phil. 2:5 – 9
 - d. Anxiety exposes our unbelief. Romans 8:28 – 29; Matthew 6:25 – 34
 - e. Anxiety exposes our self-centeredness.
 - f. Anxiety exposes our need for control, Philipians 2:4; Luke 9:23 – 25
 - g. Anxiety exposes past wounds or difficult experiences. Eph. 1.
 - h. Anxiety exposes our pride. Phil. 2:5 – 9; 1 Cor. 10:24; 13:5; Ps. 31

4. To overcome any sin habit, we must put off the old practices, be renewed in our mind or heart, and put on the new practices. Eph.4:22-25

a. Put off the old man- V22

- 1) Utilize a Thought Journal
- 2) Ask yourself diagnostic, heart-level questions examine my thoughts and discern the truth about myself and my circumstances.
 - a) Is there a true reason to panic or will staying calm be more helpful to me?
 - b) Am I thinking about things that are true and real or things that are imagined?

- c) What am I focusing on right now?
- d) Do I believe God is in control of this person or situation?
- e) What specifically am I thinking about right now?
- f) Is there anything I can do to address the situation that is leading me toward panic?
- g) Am I unknowingly thinking about things that are contributing to how anxious, fearful, worried I feel right now?
- h) Am I unknowingly thinking thoughts that are leading me to have this physical reaction in my body?

- h) What can I do to stop this panic process now, before it goes too far?
- i) What's the worst thing that will happen to me if I actually have a panic attack?
- j) Have I stopped thinking about God and his sovereign control over the situation?
- k) What am I thinking about instead of thinking about God and his sovereign control over the situation?
- l) Will thinking these anxious thoughts help or hurt my ability to handle the real issues that are going on?

- m) Are there real situations in my life that are overwhelming? Do I have too many responsibilities? What can I do to ease my load?
- n) What was I thinking about prior to experiencing feelings of panic or anxiety?
- o) What Are my "What if?" Thoughts?

b. Renew your mind Eph. 4:23; Rom. 12:2; Col. 3:10

- 1) Focus on the Truth. Jn 17:17; Phil 4:8-9
- 2) Repent.
 - a) Repentance is critical in overcoming any sin.
 - b) "Repentance" in Greek is an ongoing activity requiring daily concentrated effort.
 - c) Have a change of mind about your fear and anxiety. Matt. 3:2; Mk. 1:15; 1 Jn. 4:18
 - d) Have a change of heart with respect to the sin of worry and anxiety. Matt. 6:33 Ps. 112:1, 7-8.

e) Put on the new man. 24 (Make a change in the course of life.) Eph. 4:

- 1) Take every thought captive. 1 Cor. 10:5
- 2) Focus on the love of God. 1 Jn. 4:18
- 3) Focus on the faithfulness of God. Isa 41:10
- 4) Focus on the attributes of God.
 - i. God's omniscience – Matt.10:28 – 31
 - ii. God's omnipotence – Jer. 32:17
 - iii. God's sovereignty – Eph. 1:11
 - iv. God's wisdom – Rom. 12:3
 - v. God's goodness Ps. 31:9

- 5) Focus on the promises of God. Heb. 13:5-6; Ex. 34:6,7; Ps. 121; Prov. 3:1-26
- 6) Study Bible doctrine
 - a) Justification Rom. 8:33
 - b) Perseverance of the saints. Phil 1:6
 - c) Union with Christ Rom. 6:3-6
 - d) Forgiveness. Ps. 103; 1 Jn. 1:7-9. 2:12

B. Anxiety with a purpose

"Neither this man nor his parents sinned," said Jesus, "but this happened so that the works of God might be displayed in him. John 9:3 (NIV)

1. Consider that your sufferings with anxiety as ordained by God, for God's glory and your sanctification.
2. Sometimes the victory is in the pursuit of Christ in spite of the difficulties and obstacles
3. Welcome adversity as a friend-Jas. 1:2-4
4. Find the rest, refuge and peace found in God alone. Psalm 62:1-2, 91:1, 94:19, 116:7; Isa 40:1-2, 66:13; 1 Cor. 1:3-4; Jn. 14:18
