

Adorn the Hidden Person of the Heart - Part 1

I believe that you are here because you desire to become more like Christ. You desire to grow in your relationship with Him so that you can be a godly woman, a godly wife, a godly mother, a godly coworker, a woman who serves God's people and others well, who brings God glory with her actions, attitudes and thoughts. Our desire is to be like the holy women of old in 1 Peter 3:5 who hoped in God, adorned themselves internally, and submitted to their husbands.

We understand that to hope in God, we have to know God's character so that we are able to trust and hope in Him, which is why we studied *Trusting God* where we learned about His sovereignty, wisdom and love. This has started us on our journey of learning to trust God. This year, we want to focus on 1 Peter 3:6 which tells us the holy women of old, like Sarah, did what is right without being frightened by any fear. We want to adorn the hidden inner person of the heart and nurture our souls by guarding our hearts against emotions like anxiety and fear.

Did you know there are 365 verses in the Bible that tell us do not fear? We know many verses that tell us not to fear. One many of us have memorized is Phil. 4:6 - Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. It continues in verse 7 - And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. God's peace guards our hearts and minds as we talk to God about our anxieties and fears, then focus on Who

God is, and trust Him to do what is best for us and for His glory.

Believers are not exempt from anxiety. We all have sinful flesh that we still wrestle with. However, emotions can act as a God-given capacity for seeing that something bad is going on in your world, whether past, present or future. Anxious thoughts are like that warning light on our dashboard that we so don't want to see. Emotions can lead us to express loving concern for others who are experiencing trouble. They can also draw us to take refuge in God when we are in trouble. Psalm 94:19 says, "When the cares of my heart are many, your consolations cheer my soul." Psalm 139:23 in the NASB says, "Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my anxious thoughts." Proverbs 12:25 says, "Anxiety in a man's heart weighs him down, but a good word makes him glad." So when we have anxious thoughts we need to slow down, take them seriously, and think through them biblically. We need to ask, Am I being led into sinful anxiety by these thought patterns?

We should define anxiety as we begin this weekend which is the emotion of uncertainty. Worry, discouragement, depression, despair, discontentment, fear -- those are all in some way included in the word anxiety. If I asked you to fill in the blank to "I need..." or "I want..." or "I don't want....", when those blanks are not fulfilled, you can easily panic. It's those "what if" scenarios that come into our mind that we begin to meditate upon instead of what is true. We think, "What if I don't get what I need?" "What if I don't get what I want or I get what I don't want?" In fact, those who worry are fantastic

at meditation! They can worry about something to the point that they have anxiety issues such as panic attacks, obsessive thinking, compulsive behavior, sleep disorders.

Let's think tonight about the nature of our emotions and the connection between our physical body and our mind and heart. Any fear we experience is first evaluated in our minds which then affects our bodies. We all have pressures in life, but when those pressures become a source of anxiety or fear, they begin to put a strain on our body as well. These emotions or feelings actually cause changes in our body chemistry which is why worry is the root cause of many physical problems. Now we need to be clear that disease and trauma to the body also changes our body chemistry and can affect how we feel. So can medications and caffeine.

Now God has created us with bodies, and we need to remember that the most important part is not our material body but our immaterial soul or inner man. The Bible often refers to this when using the term "heart". It is harder on our hearts (both physical and spiritual) when we go through stress which can cause us to think ungodly thoughts which create anxiety. So what is the root of anxiety and fear? It is unbelief. It's what Jim Berg calls the "Great Disorder of the Heart". It is a spiritual problem which believes that God is not doing enough for me. He is not enough for me, so I need something more and I am afraid I won't get it. When we try to control all those possibilities and uncertainties, fear then begins to control us. Anxiety takes hold.

There are many pressures in life - work, health, marriage,

children, church, relatives. We become anxious when we are mentally focused on the what if's and when we don't care for our body as we should. But God has provided a way out from this scenario. Because our anxiety and fear begins in our minds, He calls us to have a renewed mind. Romans 12:2 tells us to be transformed by the renewing of your mind. When we experience the pressures of stress with a disciplined mind and body, we are then able to withstand those pressures with less debilitating effects.

As we seek to apply this, it is important to understand that God has created our bodies such that doing certain things can help change our body chemistry and influence our emotions. One way is by exercise where getting just a brisk walk daily can get rid of excessive adrenaline. Sleep is another way to help lower your adrenaline and cortisol production as your mind and body relax. Your body will rest when your mind rests. Also what we eat affects our body chemistry. So when we are disciplined in our nutrition, rest, and exercise, it gives us the ability to better handle those pressures of life.

A disciplined body is helpful, but a renewed mind is essential. Thoughts also change our body chemistry and this is a big one. What we think about and the conclusions we draw from our thoughts affect the way we feel. Worry is actually not a feeling. It creates a feeling. Worry ultimately comes from a sinful thought pattern. You cannot sustain an emotion like anxiety without thinking about it. This is why it is imperative that we renew our mind. Otherwise, we will come to the wrong conclusions. Our physical bodies are to be servants of our

spiritual hearts. Our bodies will respond to what our heart and mind initiates. Thoughts come from our hearts which is why God holds us responsible for our thoughts. So that means our thoughts are a spiritual issue. We must learn to track our thoughts, not our feelings. Feelings and emotions follow what we believe, are immaterial, and cannot be trusted. Therefore, we need to increase what we know to be true about God so that we respond to our emotions rightly. We must recognize that God is more than enough for whatever situation we are facing.

God always holds us accountable for our thoughts. Mark 7:21 - For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts. We are not excused from wrong thinking when our body is struggling. 2 Corinthians 10:5 - We are to bring into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ. Hebrews 4:12 tells us that God's Word is the final judge of our thoughts because it discerns the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

Although it is true that our emotions are chemically induced by our thoughts, that is not our problem. Our problem is our response to these emotions. Our lifestyle choices and the way we think about the stresses in our lives really matters as we seek to renew our minds. Those will reveal our unbelief, begin to impact our body chemistry, and cause the majority of our anxiety and fear. Therefore, we need to track our thinking and not our feelings. We need to renew our mind and move from unbelief to belief that God is enough for us. That God is enough for you and me.

Even though God has given us ways we can deal with anxiety,

we cannot handle them on our own. I am sure we are well aware of that fact! Along with a renewed mind and disciplined body, I need to recognize that God is enough for me and my situation. There may be some responsibilities we need to eliminate that God never intended us to handle. He does not give us grace to do something that He has not asked us to do.

There may be unconfessed sin or unresolved sin in our lives that we need to deal with. There may be thoughts such as "If only I had or knew..." "If only I could avoid or could get..." "I should be..." or "I should have..." or "I don't like..." We are going to give you time to think about what your list of thoughts might be that are causing discontentment and anxiety.

What we need to remember is that anxiety is caused by unbelief and discontentment. We do not believe God is able or will deal with our anxiety. We think we must handle it or that we can handle it on our own. We focus on what we think we need or want or don't want in our lives which means those desires become our master. Those desires are the lust of our flesh and 1 Peter 2:11 tells us to abstain from sinful desires which war against our souls.

So the main thing that is necessary is structured saturation in God's Word as you grow in your understanding of Who God is and then you must renew your mind with the truth that He is more than enough for you in every situation. We set our mind on what is true and good as we see in Philippians 4:8. We believe and trust that God is sovereign over all things, that He has our best interests at heart, that He loves us and is able to do what is best for us and that His plan will bring

Him the most glory.

But it is more than just quoting verses to ourselves. God is after a deeper relationship with us. Yes, He wants us to tell Him our fears. He wants us to need Him, to come to Him and plead with Him about our problems. He wants us to confess our sins that are causing our sinful anxiety. He wants us to recognize that those things we are anxious about have become idols in our lives. God wants us desperate for Him and that is honestly a wonderful place to be. It causes us to seek Him, to seek His forgiveness for our lack of trust in Him and for desiring His good gifts more than Him.

Then there is something God calls us to do. He calls us to be content in our circumstances. He also calls us to address only today's troubles. Let's imagine two circles: One 6 feet in diameter and another is 6 inches in diameter. What God is calling you to do with today's trouble goes in the 6-inch circle. That is all that you can control. How much of our anxiety is about things in the future or possibly things that may not even happen? How many of those are things you have no control over? Those troubles go in the 6-foot circle. We have to leave those troubles in God's hands because we can't control or do anything about those worries. Jesus says in Matthew 6:34, "Do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own."

If you listed the ten top things that cause you worry, fear or concern, how many of them could actually be solved today? You have a loved one who is not a believer. You are fearful of a cancer diagnosis or Alzheimer's for your parents. What could

you do today in those situations? What is in your 6-inch circle that you could control? For example, you could reach out to that unbelieving family member or friend and share a note of encouragement or share the truth of the gospel. You could pray for that person. You could be in contact daily with your parents and meet their needs, however small. You can get appropriate medical tests and aid from doctors to battle the impacts of the curse on our bodies. You can pray for healing. You can look around you to get the focus off yourself and see who God brings into your life that you can serve in some way today. Ultimately, you should seek ways to trust God with His 6-foot circle. You can focus on Who God is and lean into Him with your concern about a medical diagnosis, or unbelieving family, or whatever it is and put your trust in His power and goodness.

Our step of obedience is always going to be smaller than our problem. It is stepping out in faith in and love for God. It is recognizing we can't fix those things causing our anxiety and God never intended for us to be able to do so. We ask God to show us what small, constructive thing we can do today and then leave the issue for Him to solve in His time. We grow in our relationship with God so that we learn to cast all our cares on Him because we know He cares for us. It is then that we experience the peace that truly passes all understanding which will guard our minds and our hearts. God is faithful and is trustworthy.

Nothing is too big or small for God to handle. So in accordance with Phil. 4:6-7 - We pray. We thank God for His

past faithfulness to us and for the fact that He is in total control of our lives. We thank Him that He is able to work our situation for our good and He won't let us be tempted beyond what we can bear. The promised result is not deliverance, but the peace of God, peace in God. One of the reasons we don't find this peace is because we won't settle for anything less than deliverance from our problem. But God promises us peace that is unexplainable that will guard our hearts and minds against the anxiety to which we are so prone if we humbly come to him in trusting prayer. Whatever our struggle, we want it to be a sanctifying work, not a sinful anxiety.

In summary, we have seen in our study together tonight that: The root of anxiety and fear is unbelief. And anxiety is a product of discontentment. We have seen that our response to anxious thoughts must be the renewing of our minds by correcting our unbiblical thinking with the truth of God's Word. We learned that pursuit of a renewed mind includes both discipline in our bodies with health, sleep, exercise, and nutrition, but even more importantly it includes discipline of our thoughts. We must take every thought captive. Additionally, emotions follow what we believe and cannot be trusted as a source of truth, so we must respond rightly to our emotions by applying biblical truth. Our step of obedience is always going to be smaller than our problems, but we serve a big God who is all powerful and more than trustworthy with everything that is out of our control. So let's fight anxiety together and put our hope and trust in God.