

# Overcoming

# Anxiety



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My first significant experience with anxiety occurred in 1993. I was 19 years old. I had been married less than a year and we were starting a church. We had someone move to town with "the desire to help us", but after a few months of his help, everyone but my wife left the church. We had 28 one Sunday and 2 the next. I was devastated.

I began to experience severe anxiety. I was so nervous all the time that I was unable to keep food down for several months. I had never experienced this before. I had trouble sleeping and couldn't shake the feeling that the world was falling in around me. You may be experiencing some of the same symptoms that I did. At the time, I didn't know how to deal with the problem biblically. Thankfully, God brought me through it.

The Bible does give an answer as to how to deal with anxiety. It is with great assurance that I tell you that you do not have to live with the problem of anxiety. God has peace for you and the Scriptures provides a step-by-step solution that if you put it into practice, you can live free from fear. It is important when you look at a problem to define it in the way that the scriptures do.

The Bible use several words to describe anxiety such as "careful", that is, being full of care over something. It also uses the words troubled, doubtful, take thought, and fret. These words describe different aspects of what we commonly call anxiety. Let's begin our look at this topic by examining some of the spiritual results of anxiety.

One of the first things the Bible tells us anxiety brings is found in Luke 12:22-24. *"And he said unto his disciples, Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat; neither for the body, what ye shall put on. The life is more than meat, and the body is more than raiment. Consider the ravens: for they neither sow nor reap; which neither have storehouse nor barn; and God feedeth them: how much more are ye better than the fowls?"*

This passage shows us that anxiety is directly related to a lack of faith. Maybe you have never doubted God's ability to work, but have you doubted His willingness to work for you. I have heard people say before, "I know God can, I am just not sure He will for me." This lack of faith hinders God answering your prayers. It says in James 1:6-8, *"But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord. A double minded man is unstable in all his ways."* It isn't that God doesn't want to answer your prayers, and meet your needs, it is your lack of faith that hinders Him.

The next thing that anxiety brings is a lack of vision. Luke 10:38-42 says, *"Now it came to pass, as they went, that he entered into a certain village: and a certain woman named Martha received him into her house. And she had a sister called Mary, which also sat at Jesus' feet, and heard his word. But Martha was cumbered about much serving, and came to him, and said, Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? bid her therefore that she help me. And Jesus answered and said unto her, Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things: But one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her."*

Jesus said that Martha was "careful and troubled". Her anxiety took away the vision that Mary saw, that of the joy of sitting at the feet of Jesus. Anxiety often causes a singular focus on a problem to the neglect of all the other gifts of God in your life. Anxiety over one thing can steal your joy in all others. Many times, those involved in the work of the Lord can find themselves with the same problem as Martha. We are in the same room as the Lord, and yet our hearts are far from Him. We allow ourselves to be "careful and troubled about many things" and forget that one thing that is needful.

Next, Romans 14:23 says, "*And he that doubteth is damned if he eat, because he eateth not of faith: for whatsoever is not of faith is sin.*"

Anxiety is operating without faith, which is sin. It separates you from God. It is unfortunate that it is one of those things that can become so familiar to the heart that a person can almost feel awkward not being anxious. It becomes a personality trait, and we excuse it as such saying "that is just how I am", instead of acknowledging that it is sin and contrary to God.

Another thing anxiety brings is found in Psalm 37:1 which states, "*Fret not thyself because of evildoers, neither be thou envious against the workers of iniquity.*" If we are not careful, anxiety can cause us to be envious of those who do evil. You may look around and think, "Those people who just do their own thing and don't have to worry about serving the Lord or giving or living for Him, that is the way to avoid this anxiety." God says in the next verse there, "*For they shall soon be cut down like the grass, and wither as the green herb.*"

The "grass is greener" thinking is wrong. They have more problems than you can see. They are trying to face the same problems you are, only without God to aid them. We know from the Bible that all men have troubles, the greatest of which is reserved for those who are without God after this life. Do not be envious of evil doers.

Now let's look at some of the physical and emotional results of anxiety. As I was sitting in Bible college one day, the teacher said, "90% of the things that people worry about never happen." Your anxiety and worry have never changed the outcome of one event. It has, however, changed you. It has brought you emotional instability. James 1:8 says, "*A double minded man is unstable in all his ways.*" Anxious people frequently have difficulty making simple decisions. They become double-minded; they struggle with being insecure emotionally.

Anxious people are also quite stressed out. I have heard doctors and nurses confirm the statement that 80% of all illness is caused by stress. As you stress out, your body tenses up and your organs stop producing the chemicals you need to have healthy function.

I know many who have shingles and hives that have been told it is because of stress. Heart attacks and a whole list of other ailments are often attributed to stress. Anxious people are stressful people.

Many times, anxious people stress over things that everyone else sees as a little problem. Truthfully, if it was someone else, you would probably call it a little problem as well. We tend to treat problems like surgery. The only minor surgery is the one happening to someone else, and the only minor problem is the one someone else is having. Matthew 11:29 says, *"Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls."*

Doctors will tell you that the cure for stress is to rest; the true cure is to rest in the Lord. So with anxiety causing all of these problems within our lives, where do we find an answer?

I can tell you that the answer is not in the latest drug that is on the market. No, the answer is found in Psalm 37:3-5. *"Trust in the LORD, and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed. Delight thyself also in the LORD; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart. Commit thy way unto the LORD; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass."*

There are four things listed in this passage that David used to overcome anxiety himself. These four things produce the antidote that is needed to exterminate the poison of anxiety. Let's examine them each beginning with the first statement made in verse three.

## 1. Trust in the Lord

At first glance you may say, "I have trusted in the Lord, and I even try to live by faith." However, if you are troubled by anxiety, the first thing that you have to face up to is that you have a lack of trust in the Lord. Romans 10:17 gives an answer to increasing your trust in the Lord. It says, *"So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."*

Sometimes the Scriptures are so simple, we pass right over the truth that they convey. If you want to increase your faith or trust in the Lord, you must hear the Word of God. Get a copy of an audio King James Bible whether online, MP3 or CD and play it on a regular basis. You will begin to increase your trust in the Lord. Don't take my word for it, just accept God's. 1 Peter 2:2 tells us, *"As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby:"*

He is not only talking to new believers, but to those who have grown in Christ as well. The admonition is the same. Desire the Word and it will cause you to grow. There is a danger that the longer we are saved, we will treat the Word with less and less significance. It becomes familiar. We think that we have heard it before and already have a predisposed idea of what it says. Yet we are to hear it as if for the first time. We are to listen to it as though we had never heard. This hunger and longing after the Word of God allows the Holy Spirit to minister faith to our souls as we grow through the Word.

I have been saved now almost twenty-six years. There have been times that I have read my Bible out of duty rather than love. I am amazed though that when I read it out of love, I often see things that I had missed before. How wonderful it is to see the scriptures in a fresh way. The excitement of God speaking to my soul never gets old. Immerse yourself in the Word of God. Read it, listen to it, hear it preached, and it will increase your faith.

## 2. Do good

The second statement is quite short yet carries a great deal of power. It simply says, "do good." One of the problems that anxiety creates is a "me" mentality. Everything becomes about you as you are thinking how will this affect you and how you will deal with this. The problem is that you are too concerned about you. I have had people tell me, "I am worried about what everyone thinks about me." How arrogant! They probably aren't thinking about you at all. They are probably thinking about what everyone else thinks about them as well.

*James 1:27 says, "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world."*

To do good is to serve others, and to serve those who cannot serve you back. Paul exhorts us many times to good works, such as in Titus 3:14, *"And let ours also learn to maintain good works for necessary uses, that they be not unfruitful."*

Doing good for others is a Biblical method of getting your mind off of all your problems. Frequently when you serve others, you find that they have worse problems than yourself. To exhort others to trust the Lord and then not to do so yourself would be foolish. I have encouraged people to do many things in service to others. You may spend time at a local nursing facility just talking to those who have no one else to talk to. Maybe you know someone who is homebound and needs company or assistance around the house.

I believe that this service should be done as anonymously as possible to allow the glory to go to God. My father quoted a song many times as I was growing up titled "Others". It said in part,

“Help me to live from day to day, in such a self-forgetful way, that even when I kneel to pray, my prayer shall be for others. Others Lord, yes, others, let this my motto be, Help me to live for others, that I might live like thee.”

The Christian life that is self-focused is not in line with the will of God. It should be centered on serving others. This is the example of our Savior. This explains why He said to take His yoke upon us. His yoke is service, not self-contemplation. His yoke is giving, not taking our burdens upon ourselves. When we give ourselves to doing good, He takes up our struggles and carries them for us.

### 3. Delight thyself in the Lord

The third step in overcoming anxiety is found in verse four of our text, “Delight thyself in the Lord”. David repeatedly told us that he delighted himself in the law of the Lord. Look at these passages:

Psalm 1:2 – *“But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night.”*

Psalm 119:16 – *“I will delight myself in thy statutes: I will not forget thy word.”*

Psalm 119:24 – *“Thy testimonies also are my delight and my counsellors.”*

Psalm 119:35 – *“Make me to go in the path of thy commandments; for therein do I delight.”*

Psalm 119:47 – *“And I will delight myself in thy commandments, which I have loved.”*

Psalm 119:70 – *“Their heart is as fat as grease; but I delight in thy law.”*

It is clear from the scriptures that the first step to delighting in the Lord is to delight in His Word. The Webster's 1828 dictionary has this statement about the word delight, "Delight is a more permanent pleasure than joy, and not dependent on sudden excitement."

This delighting in the Lord is not due to an accident, it is a purposed direction, a choice of life. David says in Psalm 40:8, "*I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart.*"

Most things in life are a choice; it is not God's will for us to leave our lives up to the winds that blow. We are to choose to be what He desires us to be. In that choosing, we must put those things around us that cause us to see how good it is to delight in Him. Being thankful and keeping lists of things to be thankful for is an excellent way to delight yourself in the Lord.

#### 4. Commit thy way unto the Lord

The fourth step addressed in Psalm 37:5 where it says, "*Commit thy way unto the Lord.*" Committing your way to the Lord is two-fold.

First, there is the part of doing everything that God has already told you to do in His Word. David said in Psalm 119:105, "*Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.*" Many times, anxiety in the life of a Christian is directly related to disobeying a direct instruction in the Scriptures. Examine your path. Are you being obedient to what you know that the Bible has commanded you to do?

Joshua 1:8 says, "*This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success.*"

Did you notice that verse that says when you observe all that is written in His Word that you would reap the rewards? Most people obey as much as they want to, but they have drawn a line that God is not allowed to cross in their lives. These are areas that they place off-limits to God. Do you have such areas? If so, it could be the reason you do not have freedom from anxiety is that you have not yet committed every way to the Lord.

The second part of committing your way unto the Lord is taking each decision to the Lord. Proverbs 3:5-6 says, *"Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths."*

Often, we go to God in prayer only when we run out of our own ideas. As long as you believe that you are wise enough to run your own life, you will continue to face the anxiety of those decisions. The Bible tells us that we are not capable of running our own lives. Jeremiah 10:23 says, *"O LORD, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps."*

Our decisions must be based either on direct instruction from God's Word or filtered through prayer. This is why 1 Thessalonians 5:17 says, *"Pray without ceasing."*

Philippians 4:6 tells us, *"Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God."* Remember that careful is a Bible word meaning full of care or anxious. Instead of being full of care, we are to pray and commit our way unto the Lord.

How wonderful it is to see the promises in the Word of God that accompany these four steps to eliminating anxiety.

Psalms 37:3 promises, *"so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed."*

Here, God promises possession and provision for those who trust in Him and do good. Jesus reinforced this in Matthew 6:25-34,

*"Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment? Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they? Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature? And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith? Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof."*

If your anxiety is primarily over your possessions and provision, then you should focus on the aspects of trusting the Lord and doing good. The promises for these things follow those instructions.

Psalm 37:4 promises, *"and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart."* This promise comes after telling you to delight yourself in Him.

James 4:1-3 says, *"From whence come wars and fightings among you? come they not hence, even of your lusts that*

*war in your members? Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not. Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts."*

The truth is that when you delight yourself in the Lord, the desires of your heart will change. Your desires will no longer be after your lusts, but they will be after His will. When you desire His will, He is willing to give it to you. If you have a problem being anxious over things you desire to have, you should center your attention in the action of delighting in the Lord.

Psalm 37:5 tells us that if we commit our way to Him, *"and he shall bring it to pass."* If your anxiety stems from being uncertain over what will happen in the future, or upon certain events, then you need to commit your way unto Him. The problem is that you continue to take control back from God when you do not have the ability to run your life.

Psalm 37:6 follows this passage and says, *"And he shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy judgment as the noonday."* When you do these things to overcome anxiety, God's righteousness will shine in you. Your judgment will be clear, you will be able to make the right decisions, and expect the right outcomes because you are depending on Him and not on yourself.

Philippians 4:7 promises that if you commit your way to God, *"And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."*

To learn more about the life of peace that God intended you to have, we encourage you to take our free Bible study entitled, "Finding Hope in Jesus". Contact us at [biblestudyglobal@gmail.com](mailto:biblestudyglobal@gmail.com) to learn more about our FREE Bible study program.

Also, below are some other helpful articles written by Pastor Carter. Please feel free to share these articles with someone who might be helped by them.



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