

LEADING GOD'S FLOCK THROUGH FEAR AND ANXIETY

Resources

Fitzpatrick, E. *Overcoming Fear, Worry, and Anxiety*.

MacArthur, J. *Anxious for Nothing: God's Cure of the Cares of your Soul*.

Mack, Wayne and Joshua. *The Fear factor: What Satan doesn't want you to Know*.

Moser, P. *Safe in the Storm: Biblical Strategies for Overcoming Anxiety*.

Welch, E.T. *When People are Big and God is Small: Overcoming peer Pressure, Co-dependency, and the Fear of man*.

Introduction

- A Common Problem
 - Anxiety is no small problem today
 - Some fears are natural
 - There is a right kind of fear – the Fear of God.
 - Many fears are harmful, and even destructive.
 - World gives labels:
 - General Anxiety Disorder; Obsessive Compulsive Anxiety Disorder etc.
 - Specific names – agoraphobia, claustrophobia etc
 - How do we in the church shepherd those who struggle with anxiety? The world says, "manage it." God says we can remove it.

-
- Definitions
 - Old Testament - *Yare* "to fear; be afraid"
 - Gen 3:10 - Adam - *I was afraid, so I hid*
 - Josh 1:8 God said: *Do not fear or be dismayed*
 - New Testament
 - Phobos* – fear, flight, dread, terror – mainly neg.
 - Mt 14:30 Peter saw the wind and waves, he feared.
 - Pos. sense (fear of God or fear of displeasing God)
 - Merimnao* – "anxious thought, worry" – mostly neg:

Mt 6:25 – Do not worry about your life
Phil 4:6 – Do not be anxious for anything
Lk 10:41 – Martha was anxious about food prep.

Positive sense:

1Cor 7:33 but one who is married is concerned about ... how he may please his wife.

- Definitions

- "Fear is a felt reaction to a perceived danger"
(Fitzpatrick E., p14)
- Worry comes from a word meaning "to choke" or "strangle."
- "Courage is not the absence of fear; Courage is controlling fear; it is the ability to face whatever happens without being overcome by fear."
(Mack, W. and J. p230)

- A Sure Source

- Temporary helps:
Meds, sleep, exercise, training thoughts, breathing
- God Word is sufficient
2 Pet 1:3; 2Tim 3:16-17
- Does Scripture address problem of fear, worry and anxiety?
It absolutely does! - A sure remedy, infallible source!

Ten Biblical Remedies for Fear and Anxiety

Purpose – key statements found in Scripture with two-fold purpose

- a. To help us to overcome fear and anxiety
 - b. To give guidelines to help shepherd others struggling with fear
-

1. Speaking Theology to Yourself

AW Tozer:

“What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us.”

(The Knowledge of the Holy, p1)

What we think and truly believe about God affects all our thoughts & behaviour, including how much we worry.

The Psalmist speaks theology to himself

Ps 118:6 *The LORD is for me; I will not fear; What can man do to me?*

Ps 9:10; Ps 42:5

Overcoming fear involves:

Changing the way we truly think about God

Reminding self of who God is, accepting this at the heart level

1. Speaking Theology to Yourself

Examples of speaking theology to yourself:

a. Reminding yourself of God's love

Key Scripture: Matthew 6:25-34

Key ideas:

- God feeds relatively insignificant birds and clothes lilies. We are far more precious to God

Your heavenly Father feeds the birds.

Are you not worth more than they? (v26)

Your heavenly Father knows what you need (v32)

- Why worry about material things? Remind yourself of your relationship to God and His love for you.
-

a. Reminding yourself of God's love

Homework

Memorize: Matthew 6:26

Daily readings: Psalm 121:3-4; Psalm 145:8; Isaiah 40:11; Isaiah 49:14; Romans 5:5, 8; Ephesians 5:25; Revelation 1:5

Note on memory verses:

Take one week to memorise the memory verse

Note on daily readings

Read and ponder each reading, one per day. There are seven readings, some just one verse. Ie You will finish in a week.

Make a few notes on what the reading teaches you about God and does the reading give any reason why you have no reason to worry?

b. Reminding yourself of God's power

Key Scripture: Isaiah 40:9-31

Key ideas:

➤ Remind yourself of who God's power

➤ Illustrated by Joshua Mack:

"When I was boy, I struggled with fear. My vivid imagination plagued me. Many times, when I was really scared my mom would come to me and say, 'Josh do you really think God is that small? Do you really think that God can't take care of you in this situation? Do you really think that God could part the Red Sea, but He can't help you when your room gets dark?' She was right! Why was I frightened? Now when I am in situations when I am tempted to shrink back and become fearful, I remind

myself of Who the Bible says God is, and I apply it to my situation.” (Mack, p235)

b. Reminding yourself of God’s power

Homework

Memorize: Isaiah 40:28-29

Daily readings: Genesis 18:14; Joshua 1:1-9; 2 Kings 19:15;
Jeremiah 32:17; Psalm 27:1-5; Psalm 139:1-18; Hebrews 13:5-6

c. Reminding yourself of God’s sovereign control over your life

Key Scripture: Romans 8:28

Key ideas:

- If you are a child of God, nothing is going to happen to you that He has not allowed, and what He does allow will work out for His glory and for your good
- Overcoming fear_involves accepting God’s Sovereign rule over your life.

Arthur Pink

“Deny that God is governing matter, deny that He is upholding all things by the word of His power.” And all sense of security is gone”

Wayne Mack

“In times of trouble, stop focusing on your circumstances, and start focusing on the One who rules over your circumstances.”

(Mack, p134)

- A small view of God always results in fear and anxiety

c. Reminding yourself of God’s sovereign control over your life

Homework

Memorize: Romans 8:28

Daily readings: Genesis 50:20; Ezra 1:1; Job 42:2; Isaiah 46:9-10
1 Chronicles 29:11; Proverbs 21:1; Jeremiah 18:5-6

2. Memorizing Scripture

Key Scripture: Joshua 1:8

Key ideas:

- Meditating on Scripture is a key to overcoming fear
- The Word of God and courage are closely connected.
- Supporting Scriptures: Ps 119:165; Ps 119:11; Heb 4:12
- Memorizing Scripture equips us for spiritual battle, including giving way to fear and anxiety
- Taking action involves memorizing Scriptures in our area of struggle so as to hide God's Word in our hearts (Ps 119:11)

2. Memorizing Scripture

Memory verses for overcoming fear:

Psalm 4:8; Psalm 27:1; Psalm 37:3-7; Psalm 56:3-4;
Psalm 91:1-2; Isaiah 41:10; Isaiah 43:1-3; Matthew
6:34; Matthew 10:29-30; Romans 8:15; 2 Timothy 1:7;
Hebrews 13:5-6; Philippians 4:6-7; 1 Peter 5:6-7; 1 John
4:18.

Homework

Memorize: Joshua 1:8

Daily readings: Psalm 119:11; Psalm 119:165; Matthew 6:34

Matthew 10:29-30; Ephesians 6:17; 2 Timothy 1:7; James 1:23-25

3. Putting Faith into Action

E. Fitzpatrick

“Your worry is a road sign pointing to a deeper problem:
Unbelief” (Fitzpatrick, p113)

Key Scripture Ps 56:3-4

Key ideas

- The link between faith and a lack of fear is quite clear
- Jesus affirms this:
 - Mt 8 Storm at sea *“O you of little faith”*
 - Mt 6 Worrying about food & clothing
“O you of little faith”

3. Putting Faith into Action

George Muller

“Where faith begins, anxiety ends”

Moser

“Our struggle with anxiety is ultimately a struggle of belief. Will we believe what our feelings are telling us or what God’s Word is proclaiming?”
(Moser, p13)

Summing up

How often do we blame our fear on our circumstances?
Though circumstances may trigger fear yet for the child of
God ongoing anxiety comes when we don't exercise faith.
It comes when we live as though God does not exist.

Homework

Memorize: Psalm 56:3-4

Daily readings: 1 Samuel 17:31-50; Daniel 3:12-18; Esther 4:9-17
Psalm 121:3; Isaiah 26:3-4; Matthew 6:28-30; Matthew 8:23-27

4. Praying with Thanksgiving

Key Scripture: Philippians 4:6-7

Key ideas:

- We are encouraged to hand over all our concerns to God (see also 1 Pet 5:7)
- Paul's prescription includes prayer and thanksgiving.
- See the example of thanksgiving in 2 Chronicles 20:19-21
- The result of prayer with thanksgiving will be the peace of God (Phil 4:7)
- Daniel is an example of courage and prayer (Dan 6:10)

Spurgeon said Daniel's prayerfulness was the secret of his power

Homework

Memorize: Philippians 4:6-7

Daily readings: Psalm 3; Psalm 34:17; 2 Kings 19:14-19;
2 Chronicles 20:1-30; Daniel 6:10; Matthew 6:9-15; 1 Pet 5:6-7

5. Loving God, Not Idols

Key Scripture: 2 Tim 1:7

Key ideas:

- Even godly people can struggle with fear eg Timothy
- Fear does not come from God
- John agrees with this eg 1 Jn 4:18
- Fear has to do with self-love and self-protection.
- The love John speaks of is love for God and others
- When we love God we have no need to fear His judgment.
- We are emboldened by receiving and offering the love of Christ

5. Loving God, Not Idols

Ed Welch

“Regarding other people, our problem is that we need them (for ourselves) more than we love them (for the glory of God)”

E. Fitzpatrick

“The only way that we can cultivate the kind of love we need for God and others is by experiencing God’s love. We know He loves us because He has chosen us; we have been made His sons and daughters through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ (Galatians 3:26). Because we have peace and acceptance from Him, we are free to love Him and others the way He calls us to.” (Fitzpatrick, p174)

Homework

Memorize: 2 Timothy 1:7

Daily readings: Proverbs 12:25; Matthew 6:24; Matthew 22:36-40;
John 13:34-35; Romans 12:10; 1 John 4:18; 2 Corinthians 5:14

6. Humbling ourselves before God

Key Scripture: 1 Peter 5:6-7

Key ideas:

- Humility is a prerequisite to overcoming fear
- Humbly submitting to God's rule must precede casting our cares upon Him

Moser

"We worry about all kinds of stuff, like: job security, our kids' success, the dreaded doctors' call, or conflict among friends. There is a common feature in most of the things we are anxious about: we can't control the outcome. When we are not walking in humility, we are susceptible to the false belief that if we think about it long enough we can control the outcome. When the situation is outside of your control, such a thought reveals a prideful spirit. You think you can do what only God can do. God is ultimately in control of all things. You are not. That's why Peter warns us, "Humble yourself under the mighty hand of God." The point of the context is this: If you are unwilling to humble yourself before God, you will be unable to cast your anxieties upon Him." (Moser, p11)

6. Humbling ourselves before God

➤ Masks of Pride

a. Perfectionism

- Perfectionism is an unbiblical standard you set for yourself.
- It is to elevate personal preferences and to live up to a standard which you have invented, not God.
- For example, the house must be dusted everyday or the car must be cleaned and polished every day.
- Lk 10:38-41 – Martha was a perfectionist
- The perfectionist becomes obsessed with his or her own goals. When these goals are not reached the result can be fear, panic, anger or depression.

6. Humbling ourselves before God

b. Low self esteem

Ed Welch:

“That’s the paradox of self-esteem: Low self-esteem usually means that I think too highly of myself. I’m too self-involved, I feel I deserve better than I have. The reason I feel bad about myself is that I aspire to something more. I just want a few minutes of greatness. I am a peasant who wants to be king. When you are in the grips of low self-esteem, it’s painful, and it certainly doesn’t feel like pride. But I believe that is the dark, quieter side of pride-thwarted pride

(Welch E.T., *When People are Big and God is Small*, p32)

Homework

Memorize: 1 Peter 5:6-7

Daily readings: Isaiah 66:2; Matthew 26:39; Luke 10:38-42;
John 12:42-43; John 13:3-5; Galatians 2:11-13; Philippians 2:5-11

7. Putting Off and Putting On

Key Scripture Colossians 3:5-15

Key ideas

- Putting off and putting on Christlike thoughts and behaviour is a prerequisite to enjoying the peace of Christ (Col 3:8, 10-14)
 - It is important to examine ourselves under the spotlight of Scripture
 - Fearful people live by feelings and consider the easy path
 - Courageous people live by God's principles. Their feelings go up and down but they do not allow them to control decisions.
 - Philippians 4:8-9 supports this idea
 - We need to take all our thoughts captive (2 Cor 10:4)
-

7. Putting Off and Putting On

Spurgeon

"Many of God's people are constantly under apprehensions of calamities that will never occur to them, and they suffer far more in merely dreading them than they would have to endure if they actually came upon them. In their imagination there are rivers in the way, and they are anxious to know how they shall wade through them, or swim across them. There are no such rivers in existence, but they are agitated and distressed about them...these timid people are continually crossing bridges that only exist in their ...fancies. They stab themselves in imaginary graves." (Spurgeon)

Summary

Sometimes the reason for our fear and anxiety is that there is some kind of thought or behavioural pattern that we have not either put off or put on.

Homework

Memorize: Colossians 3:15

Daily readings: Romans 8:5-9; Romans 12:2; 2 Corinthians 5:17
2 Corinthians 10:4-5; Galatians 2:20; Ephesians 4:22-24; Phil 4:6-9

8. Fearing God

Key Scripture Psalm 112:1, 7

Key ideas

- The fear of God is a remedy for the fear of man
- The psalmist affirms this: In the fear of the LORD there is strong confidence, and his children will have refuge (Ps 14:26).
- Having the fear of God does not make us fearful people but people who love God and desire to obey & serve Him.
- If we fear God we will not fear people, circumstances nor the future

8. Fearing God

John Flavel

“The fear of God will swallow up the fear of man, a reverential awe and dread of God will extinguish the slavish fear of the creature.”

W. Mack

“The key to overcoming sinful fear is to replace it with holy fear. Heroes of the past weren’t courageous because they were fearless, but rather because they were full of the right kind of fear.” (Mack, p135)

Homework

Memorize: Psalm 112:1, 7

Daily readings: Genesis 39:9; Exodus 1:17; Job 1:1;

Proverbs 14:26; Isaiah 8:12-13; Matthew 10:26-28; Hebrews 11:7

9. Planning Ahead

Key Scripture: Prov 6:6-8

Key ideas:

- Thinking and planning ahead can alleviate stress & worry. It is common sense to not procrastinate, eg you study for exams etc
- Proverbs 31:10-31 describes the noble wife. Verse 21 says "She is not afraid of the snow for her household, for all her household are clothed with scarlet." A principle we learn from her is that diligence leads to confidence and a lack of fear.
- The main theme in Nehemiah is building the wall. Sanballat and Tobiah were opposing the work. Nehemiah 4:9 "But we prayed to our God, and because of them we set up a guard against them day and night." There is no conflict btw trusting the Lord, & taking precautions
- We should act responsibly, doing what we can, pray, trust Lord, and leave results to Him.

9. Planning Ahead

Proverbs 15:22

"Without consultation, plans are frustrated, but with many counselors they succeed."

Summary

While trusting God is so important, we must also plan ahead and not worry ahead.

Homework

Memorize: Proverbs 6:6-8

Daily readings: Nehemiah 4:9; Proverbs 15:22; Proverbs 21:5

Proverbs 24:27; Proverbs 24:33-34; Mark 6:30-32; Luke 14:28-32

10. Keeping an Eternal Focus

Key Scripture John 14:1, 2, 27

Key ideas:

- On the eve of Jesus departure His disciples had become anxious. Jesus comforts them by drawing their attention to their eternal home. He gives us a peace infinitely greater than the world can.
- In 2 Corinthians 4 Paul says we do not need to lose hearts, because "our inner man is being renewed day by day. For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison, while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal" (2 Cor 4:16-18)

10. Keeping an Eternal Focus

- In Colossians 3 Paul exhorts us to "Set your minds on things above" (v2) with the "Peace of Christ ruling in your heart." (v15)
- Other supporting scriptures: Ps 30:5; Mt 6:19-21; Rom 8:39
- Our courage is linked to the belief that our souls are extremely safe

Matthew Henry

“The best way to be comfortably provided for in this world, is to be most intent upon another.”

(Matthew Henry Commentary, on Mt 6:33)

Homework

Memorize: John 14:1, 2, 27

Daily readings: Psalm 30:4-5; Matthew 6:19-21; Romans 8:18, 38-39;
2 Corinthians 4:16-18; Colossians 3:1-3; 2 Timothy 1:8, 12; 1 Peter 1:6-7.
