



What Does God Say About Anxiety?



PREVIEW

At some point in our lives, we all will face anxiety for various reasons. We will experience it at different levels of severity and we will find different pathways out of it. However, anxiety will knock on all of our doors at some point.

PRAISE

In Philippians 4:6 (ESV), we read, "Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God."

We can be confident that when we bring our needs and concerns to God that He will hear us. We know that when the righteous cry out to God, he hears them (Ps. 34:17).

PARABLE

Theoretical story: elaborate and add details as you see fit.

Imagine with me for a moment that you decided to cook breakfast for the P7 Club. And you agreed to make a bunch of desserts for your science class party today. And you agreed to make your family lunch to take to work/school today. And since Johnny is sick this week, you're helping him to finish up his project for Food Science.

You live in an old house, and, it's kinda weird, but you have only one plug. You start cooking at 6:00 a.m., plugging everything into one strip in the one plug: coffee, cookies, casseroles. You plug in the rice cooker. You plug in the Crock-Pot. You plug in the coffee maker. You plug in the hot water maker. You've got all burners on the oven going. You've got bread, muffins, and pizza crammed into the oven. You're trying to get everything done before you leave for school. Your siblings start running in and causing problems. Then you realize you forgot to take the dog out, so you do that. You come back in only to see smoke coming out of the plug. But you can't worry about that now. You've got too much to do. (Add more details of how stressful it is doing all of these things.)

You glance back at the plug and see flames shooting out! The flames burn a path up the wall, and now your house is on fire! Smoke alarms start screeching, splitting your years. You've got to get that alarm turned off. The clamor is driving you crazy. You think, I have to get everyone outside, but I don't want to go outside. I have too much stuff to do. You start to call someone to ask how to turn off smoke alarms, but you end up googling it. Meanwhile, your house is burning down. But the fire alarm is the problem, right? Wrong. The fire alarm is alerting you there is a problem. Anxiety is not the problem. Repeat: Anxiety is not the problem. Anxiety is simply alerting you that there is a problem.

PRESENT

Proverbs 12:25 tells that anxiety weighs down the heart. Has anyone else ever felt weighed down by anxiety? Anxiety is not the problem at the core, but it's alerting us that there is a problem inside of us. The problem is our crazy ecosystem that we call "normal life," where we're overcommitted, where we haven't dealt with relational issues, where we try to just power through and not address heart issues. Anxiety is our body's notification system that our brain is detecting danger. That we need sleep. That we're disconnected. That we're lonely.

Never in Scripture does it say that God will step into your life uninvited and fix you. You know what He does say?

I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand (Isa. 41:10, ESV).

"Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths" (Prov. 3:5-6, ESV).

Jesus was addressing this subject when He said to a crowd, "Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble" (Matt. 6:34, ESV).

The solution isn't simply "don't be anxious," which is one of the worst things you can tell someone in the middle of an anxiety attack.

But God gives this wonderful invitation: "Cast all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you" (1 Pet. 5:7, ESV).

The invitation is further explained in Matthew 11:28–30 (ESV) when Jesus said, "Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

PRACTICE

Here are some quick truths about anxiety that can give you some encouragement this week.

Anxiety is neither a disease nor a genetic condition. Sure, you might be pre-disposed to it because of your surroundings, your upbringing, or your current life situations. But anxiety is not something that is attached to you like eye color or height. You don't have to have a life plagued with anxiety long-term.

Anxiety is not an identity. Don't allow yourself to form your identity based on what you're going through. It may be a hard week, month, or year, but you don't have to make it part of your DNA. You are more than your past hurt, trauma, mistakes, and failures.

Reminder: you can't have it all, do it all, all at the same time, with no major consequences or tradeoffs. We like to think we can, but we can't. It's not sustainable to be in eight different clubs, five sports, make a 4.0, work twenty hours a week, and volunteer at the animal shelter fourteen hours a week. At some point, something will crash and burn. Pick fewer things in your life that you can give your "best yes" to.

PRAY

Lord, today I pray for this group of students. Help us to see how valuable we are in Your kingdom. I ask that You would help us to see all of the great things You've done for us. Help us to be strengthened by Your Word today. Help us to be encouragers to each other. Help us to be there for each other. When anxiety knocks on our door this week, give us the strength we need to pursue You and cast that anxiety on You so that You can give us peace that passes our understanding. In Jesus' name, amen.

PLUS

Make a list of things you can control, and a list of things you can't control. Focus on the things you can control, and let go of things you can't. Oftentimes we exhaust too much energy (and have anxiety) on things we can't control.