

Overcoming Anxiety

Relief for
Worried People



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 CCEF

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You know the feeling—the same thoughts keep spinning around and around in your mind. You feel like a frenzied juggler. Your worries, problems, and fears whirl around in your head like so many china plates. And you feel so afraid, preoccupied, obsessed. You're afraid that if you lose focus for even one second, your whole life will come crashing down.

You have plenty of company. Anxiety affects everyone—no one escapes. In a worrisome world, we all feel anxious sometimes. You might not feel all of the unpleasant effects of extreme anxiety—the churning stomach, the fluttery feelings, the cold hands, the going over something in your mind a hundred times—but the problem of worry and obsessing is universal.

God made you, so he knows all about your anxious thoughts. He knows the troubles you face. He knows that everyone experiences anxiety. So his Word, the Bible, is filled with many good, useful, and true things that are meant to help you in your struggle with worry and fear.

The Capacity for Anxiety Is God-Given

Begin by asking yourself this question: Would you want to live your entire life with no anxiety? Before you quickly and enthusiastically say, “Yes!” think for a moment. Isn't the opposite of anxiety being inert—indifferent to the world around you? If you really want to be anesthetized, there are drugs, meditation techniques, and life philosophies that

will stop you from caring. When you stop caring, you won't be anxious anymore. Detachment doesn't feel anxiety and concern.

But what would you be missing? Anxiety, when you get to the bottom of it, is a God-given capacity for knowing that something bad is going on in your world—either in the past, the present, or the future. This is not necessarily negative. There's a right kind of anxiety that leads us to express loving concern for others in the midst of their trouble, and draws us to take refuge in God when we are in trouble (Psalm 94:19; 2 Corinthians 11:28).

Think of it this way: Anxiety is like the red light flashing on your car's dashboard. When the "check engine" light goes on, you know something is wrong with your car. You don't know exactly what's wrong, but you do know that it's time to visit the mechanic. Would you want to drive without those lights to warn you of an engine problem? Probably not. It's better to take care of car trouble before you break down on the open road.

The same is true of your anxiety: It is warning you about trouble in your world and trouble in your heart. God has hardwired us to be aware of trouble. If you don't feel intense concern from time to time, you are ignoring real trouble. Instead of looking for a technique to numb yourself, you need to understand, harness, and channel your anxiety in constructive ways.

You Have Good Reasons to Be Anxious

When you look at your world, it's easy to find reasons to be anxious. See if you can find some of your worries on this list:

1. *Death is a fact of life.* No matter how pleasant our lives are, some very big, bad news is waiting at the end: Each of us will die. Everyone we love will die. Death is the source of very intense anxiety for almost everyone. This anxiety fuels our fears not only about our death, but also about our health and the health of those we love.
2. *Relationships don't last.* Relationships are also a huge source of anxiety. We value relationships, but they change and sometimes break apart—a spouse dies, a marriage fails, children leave home, and friends drift away or even turn on us. We fear the loneliness, loss, hurt, and betrayal that comes with broken relationships.
3. *We don't have enough money.* All of us worry about money. We can't escape this anxiety. It touches every part of our lives. Money worries are tied to so many things: security, identity, status. Each can be affected by how much money we have or don't have.

This list could go on and on. Jesus said that in this world you will have trouble (John 16:33), and you do.