

Anxiety, Worry, and Stress - 1 Peter 5:7

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One of the biggest problems people have, and that you can't usually see, is that of anxiety, is being nervous, is being worried. Now anxiety is a very common condition, a common problem, and one of our most common sins. As people, we can look calm on the outside, but be anxious and worried on the inside, and this is not what God wants. It's like ducks swimming on a pond and they look so peaceful and calm as they are on the surface of the water, but then you look underneath the water, and you see their little webbed feet paddling like crazy.

What does the word anxiety mean? The verb form means to "*draw in different directions, to distract.*" Therefore, anxiety is speaking about those thoughts, things, situations, or people which result in you being drawn in the wrong direction. That is, anxiety affects you in such a way that you're distracted, and specifically you get your eyes off God. That is, you're to be thinking about God and focused on Him, but instead, you are focused on your problems, on concerns you may have.

Now we all get anxious, but God doesn't want us to stay stuck in this sinful condition. He doesn't want us to worry about anything, whether it's a big or little thing. He wants us to learn to get victory over our worries, to overcome our anxieties.
- Now I want to go through some vs. that talk about anxiety. And by looking at God's word, you'll learn how to deal with anxiety and stress, and get victory over it.

1. 1 Peter 5:7. This speaks about anxiety, and it's internal, and it is an emotion, a feeling based on thoughts. You are thinking about something, and they are not good thoughts or pleasant thoughts. But rather, they are unsettling, are upsetting, are confusing, are unresolved, are problematic, are bothering you, and are distracting.
- Now anxiety can stem from any number of things. It can relate to something at work, or your family, your finances, your appearance, your health, the weather, the traffic, a conflict you have with someone, or something in the church, or out in the world.

Now we're looking at just vs. 7, but the larger context is that of suffering, and that we need to be humble when we suffer. And a person can get anxious if he is thinking how he might suffer, or be persecuted. And he needs to be humble before the Lord, and if he's truly humble, he won't be thinking about suffering, but instead will be looking to the Lord and trusting Him, and then God will give him peace, a spiritual, supernatural calm in his spirit, in his soul.
- You know how a child cries when he's upset and worried about what he considers some potential danger or problem, but as soon as he's in his parent's arms, he stops crying - and we all need to be like that with the Lord. Deut. 33:12, 26-27

Now what does this verse say?

1. That you are to “cast all your anxiety.” This word “cast” literally means to “*throw something on someone or something else.*” When you cast something, you are letting it go, and it’s not yours anymore.

2. It says you are to “cast all your anxiety.” This means all your anxiety, every bit of it. If you get anxious 20 different times in one day about 20 different things, you are to cast it all. Or if you keep getting anxious about the same thing, you are to keep casting it.

3. It says you are “cast all your anxiety on the Lord.” When you get anxious or worried about something, you may call a friend, or tell your spouse, and I’m not saying you can’t do that, but you need to learn to first go to God, to the Lord God Almighty, and tell Him what you’re worried about. Tell Him what’s on your mind, what’s bothering you.
- And you can only do this if you trust Him, if you believe that God wants to help you and can help you. (Prov. 3:5). And this relates to the next point.

4. It says you are to “cast all your anxiety on the Lord because He cares for you.” God cares for people, He’s concerned, He’s interested, He wants to help. And He can help, He can solve problems, He can protect, He can make things better, and He can give peace.
- And it says that He cares for you. God is personal and He cares for individual people, individual Christians, and He cares for you. He loves you, He is greatly concerned about you, and your welfare, your well-being. Psalm 17:8

When you know God cares for you, and wants to help you, and can help you, only then will you cast your anxiety on Him, and trust Him to take care of them. And only then will you experience His grace, His peace, His comfort. And again, it’s a personal thing, for God really does love you, and wants to help you in any and every situation you are in, in any and every problem you face. Heb. 4:16

2. Psalm 55:22. I believe this is the verse Peter was thinking about when he wrote 1 Pet. 5:7. And it says that you are to cast your burdens, things which are on your mind, and are, spiritually and emotionally speaking, weighing you down, putting pressure on your soul. And God gives you two promises:

1. That He will sustain you, He will keep you going, He will give you the grace and peace to endure whatever you are facing. And sometimes these anxieties can be short-lived - it may be that you are driving and you’re anxious about the traffic.
- It may be that you’re anxious about a hurricane you hear is coming, and it’s still 5 days away – and so this anxiety could potentially last five long days.
- It may be that you get anxious about your children and how they are doing, and these kind of anxieties can potentially last the rest of your life. The point is, you are to keep casting your burdens on the Lord, and He’ll sustain you, He’ll help you make it through the stressful time, no matter what it is or how long it lasts. Psalm 68:19

2. That God will never allow the righteous to be shaken, and this is a great promise. Whatever problem you face, whatever comes your way in life, God never wants you, His child, to be shaken, not even a little shaken, a little worried or nervous. - It's like a mother who loves her young child – she hears her baby cry and right away she gets her baby and holds and comforts her. And so too, God doesn't want you to cry. O yes, God will let problems come up, but so you go to Him, and cast your burdens on Him, and He will sustain you, and not let you be shaken.

3. Matthew 6:25-24. What do we learn from these verses?

1. That we can worry about our basic needs, like what we eat and drink, and what we wear, our clothing. It also says we can worry about tomorrow, about the future. And yes, there are Christians in the world who don't have enough to eat, and so their worries are based on real needs, but they're still not to worry, they are to trust the Lord. - Now one point I do want to make is that people worry about the littlest of things, things that aren't real concerns, but it's sinful to worry about anything.

2. It doesn't do you any good to worry. Worrying doesn't help at all - it doesn't change things, doesn't solve problems, doesn't get you someplace faster. Worrying, being stressed out, does you absolutely no good, and in fact, it often contributes to many health problems.

3. Worrying about the little things in life, or anything in life for that matter, keeps you from doing God's work, keeps you from carrying out God's will. That is, you are not to worry, but instead, you're to seek the kingdom of God. You're a Christian and so don't be like non-Christians who are focused on and worried about worldly things. - Be praying about God's kingdom, and be seeking His kingdom. Instead of spending all this mental and emotional energy on the small things of life, focus on what's most important, focus on building God's kingdom. Jonah 4

4. The person who's worrying isn't trusting God - he has little or no faith. When we worry, we're trusting ourselves, others, or things, but we're not trusting God. But we need to trust God, we need to rely on Him, believing that He will take care of us in all areas, and that He will help solve our problems, and that He will protect us. - Mark 4:35-41. There was this storm, there was good reason to be afraid, to worry, but they still weren't to worry. The disciples were God's children, and they should've known God would take care of them, but they were looking at the storm and weren't looking to God, to Jesus. In fact, Jesus was actually right there with them in the boat, the One who could solve all their problems, but they weren't trusting Him. And Jesus rebuked them for not trusting Him, and He rebukes us for not trusting Him.

4. Luke 10:38-42. Again, we read about anxiety, and what does God want us to learn?

1. Martha was preparing a meal, and Jesus says she was worried about many things. You see, sometimes we're not just worried about one thing, we're worried about many things. Our minds are going 100 mph, and that's not good.

2. Martha was distracted. She was thinking and worried about all these things, but she wasn't thinking about the Lord. Yes, it was fine to be serving and making preparations, but the problem was that her mind was consumed with her serving. And her anxious thoughts kept her from thinking about the Lord, and from spending time with Him.
- Psalm 1:2. We're to be meditating, we're to be thinking about God's word all day long. But Martha was thinking about her serving, and it wasn't her serving, but the anxiety about her serving that kept her from thinking about the Lord, and focusing on Him.

3. Only one thing is needed and that's being focused on the Lord, thinking about Him. Thinking about God's word is central and foundational to our life, and if we're doing that, then that will help eliminate anxiety, and result in being fruitful. Luke 8:14-15

Phil. 4:6-7. This is another instructive passage about anxiety, and what do we learn?

1. That you are not to be anxious at all, you are not to worry about anything. Yes, you may have legitimate concerns, some real problems, but you are not to worry about them.

2. You're to pray, and you're to pray specifically, asking God for His help, His wisdom, His answers, His direction, and His peace. And you are to pray believingly, believing and expecting and trusting God to come through for you.

- 2 Chronicles 20:1-13. The king and the people were afraid, were worried because of this vast enemy that was planning to attack them. And so they prayed, and their prayer was based on the person and character of God. They were praying to the Lord, to God, to the One who was the ruler, and was all powerful, faithful, and wise. And when you know God's character, then you'll be able to pray with faith. Psalm 9:10

- What's also important is knowing God's promises. Know that God will work all things together for good; know that He is always with you; know that He will protect you; know that He will lead you; and know that He will take care of you. Matt. 11:28-30

3. You are to be thankful. Thank God that He's sovereign, that He's in control of the situation, that He isn't surprised by it. Thank God that He can and will take care of all your problems, and that He will use them for your good and for His glory.

4. God will give you His peace. And this is the supernatural peace of God, which the Holy Spirit will give you. And if you are anxious and worried and stressed out, then you can be at peace, and that's because of God and His love for you. Psalm 94:19

This is such an important subject and so apply all these truths, and get victory over anxiety so you can be a successful, growing, and fruitful Christian. *"Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me and know my anxious thoughts; and see if there be any hurtful way in me, and lead me in the everlasting way."* Psalm 139:23-24