

Part Three: The Way Out

Session 19

Overcoming Your Anxiety and Fear, Part 3

“Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice! Let your gentle spirit be known to all men. The Lord is near. Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things. The things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.”
Philippians 4:4-9

Sessions 17 & 18—Overcoming Your Anxiety and Fear, Parts 1 & 2 (REVIEW)

- Understanding the Nature of Your Emotions
- Understanding the Source of Your Fear
- Reviewing the Path from Unbelief to Anxious Thoughts
- Tracing the Path from Anxious Thoughts to Obsessive Thoughts
- Mishandling Anxiety with Controlling Behaviors

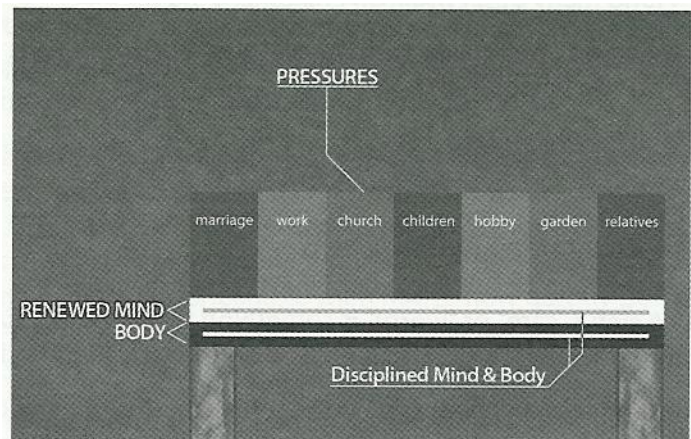


Figure 3

F. The Biblical Solution to _____

- Remember Figure 3 from Session 3? The two beams represent the two domains of life that need to be strengthened if we are to adequately sustain the pressures of life. We shall revisit them again as we summarize the steps you need to take to overcome anxiety and fear.
 - Guard your _____ (Philippians 4:4-9)
 - Understanding “The Way Down” prepares us for understanding “The Way Out.” Unbelief and discontent are the seedbed of anxiety. Therefore, we should expect that a right view of God and the right view of our uncertainties are at the heart of the solution. You must renew your mind about who God is and what He has promised you in order to strengthen the top beam in Figure 3.
 - _____ right
 - Overcoming fear and anxiety starts with the right kind of praying. Right praying is not “worrying online.” It is coming to a God, Whom we see as “more than enough.”
 - Prayer is a _____.
 - Am I coming to God, Whom I know loves me personally?
Romans 8:35-39; Jeremiah 31:3; John 17:23
 - Am I coming to God, Whom I know will wisely do what is best?
Romans 11:33; Colossians 2:3; Revelation 15:3-4
 - Am I coming to God, Whom I know wants to give me “grace to help in time of need?”
II Corinthians 9:8; I Corinthians 15:10; II Corinthians 12:9-10

- Prayer is a _____.
- Am I willing to come to God on His _____—confessing my sins and surrendering my desires to Him?
I John 1:9; Psalm 51; Isaiah 66:2b
- Am I willing to come to God for His _____—and not just for my relief?
Matthew 5:13-16; II Corinthians 4:15-18; 12:7-10
- Am I coming with “_____” because I anticipate that God in His love, sovereignty, and wisdom will do what is best?
Psalm 4 (and many other psalms); Philippians 4:6
- Do I come away from prayer with “_____” that God in His love, sovereignty, and wisdom will do what is best?
Psalm 37:1-7a; Philippians 4:7

b. _____ right

1) _____ your “enemy thoughts” of anxiety.

- The word anxious, or careful, in our Bibles comes from a Greek word meaning “to divide.” A sinful “care” or “worry” is something that divides your heart and places your attention on yourself rather than on God and what He has said.
- You can’t shoot at an enemy you don’t see. What do your anxious thoughts look like? Here are some practical steps to help you find out:

Keep a running list of “if only” thoughts and “what if” thoughts.ⁱ

Add to your list any recurring thoughts of doubt and uncertainties. Remember, you are scaring yourself with your thoughts. What do the “monsters under your bed” look like?

Keep a Journal of Upsets to track at what times during the day or evening you are most plagued with the “enemy” thoughts of anxiety.

2) _____ your “enemy thoughts” of anxiety.

- Since God commands you “do not fear” (Isaiah 41:10) and “be anxious for nothing” (Philippians 4:6), then it is entirely possible for you to obey that command with His help though it may seem difficult at first. Even if life seems overwhelming, you must corral every thought and bring it into obedience to Christ (II Corinthians 10:3-5).ⁱⁱ Here are some practical steps to help you reject the “enemy thoughts” of anxiety:

Sometimes “enemy thoughts” seem so intrusive. It’s as if you cannot get them out of your mind. You might even feel almost as if you were being attacked in your mind somehow. Understand, however, that these obsessive thoughts are the product of your repetition and concentration on the doubt or other evil thoughts.

Our memories work quite predictably. If we review something over and over, our mind remembers it better. If we concentrate on something very diligently, our mind is imprinted more deeply. Lastly, if the thing upon which we are concentrating elicits from us strong emotion, we are sure to remember it more vividly.

We must use these principles of repetition, concentration, and strong emotion to break the habit of thinking wrong thoughts and to imprint believing thoughts in our mind. We must diligently refuse to think

again upon the “enemy thoughts.” They will gradually lose much of their seemingly irresistible force.

- Here are some practical ways to give you practice at rejecting “enemy thoughts:”

Use STOP-*Think* cards to remind you what to do with anxious thoughts when you notice them.

As soon as you recognize an “enemy thought,” ask God to help you resist the temptation to meditate upon it. If you find you have been meditating upon it before you recognized it as an “enemy” thought, ask God to forgive you for allowing “enemy thoughts” to become more “real” to you than the truths about God Himself.

3) _____ your “enemy thoughts” of anxiety.

- Philippians 4:8 gives us a checklist for our thoughts. We are to think on things that are true, honest, just, pure, lovely, and of good report.

The kinds of thoughts that meet this checklist most accurately are thoughts of God Himself. David exemplified this in the psalms where he quickly turns to meditation upon God when he is concerned about his own safety and well-being. You can read almost any psalm (try starting with Psalm 2) and notice David’s concerns about his enemy or about his loneliness. Then notice how quickly David turns his thoughts to God’s nature and His promises. It is not long before David is praising God in the middle of his trial.

- Work on memorizing the following truths about God and the Scripture verses suggested by the references. To help you learn the truths, write out the truth(s) and verses that apply and use them as STOP-*Think* cards. You will actually be using temptations to worry as reminders to meditateⁱⁱⁱ upon our great God.

The kinds of thoughts that meet this checklist most accurately are thoughts of God.

Stabilizing Truths for Noisy Souls

The Knowledge of God

1. God is always good—always! That means...

- a. He will always meet my genuine needs—always!
☞ Philippians 4:13, 19; Matthew 6:31-33
- b. He will always forgive my sin—always!
☞ I John 1:9; Psalm 51; Isaiah 66:2b
- c. He is always up to something good in my life—always!
☞ Jeremiah 29:11; Romans 8:26-34
- d. He will always love me personally—always!
☞ Romans 8:35-39; Jeremiah 31:3; John 17:23
- e. He will always give me the grace I need—always!
☞ II Corinthians 9:8; I Corinthians 15:10; II Corinthians 12:9-10

2. God is always _____—always! That means...

- a. He is always in control of all things—always!
☞ Psalm 103:19; Isaiah 14:27; 46:9-10
 - b. He is always present with me—always!
☞ Psalm 139:7-12; Isaiah 41:10; Jeremiah 23:24
 - c. He is always the same—always!
☞ Malachi 3:6a; Hebrews 1:10-12
 - d. He is always trustworthy—always!
☞ II Timothy 2:13; Psalm 36:5; Numbers 23:19; Deuteronomy 7:9; 31:8
 - e. He is always wise is what He does—always!
☞ Romans 11:33; Colossians 2:3; Revelation 15:3-4
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- Remember, “Grace and peace [is] multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord” (II Peter 1:2).

c. _____ right

1) Face your _____ with God’s help.

- Anxieties are unpleasant emotions that result from your meditation upon _____.

“God hath not given us the spirit of fear [cowardice]; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind [self-control]” (II Timothy 1:7).

“In God I have put my trust; I will not fear what [mere man] can do unto me” (Psalm 56:4b).

- Ask yourself, “What is really bothering me right now? What uncertainties and possibilities am I meditating upon?”

I am afraid I might lose control in public.

I am afraid I might be a failure if I attempt this task.

I am afraid people might laugh at me or reject me.

I am afraid that I might have a disease and die.

- Tell yourself the _____ about God and what He has said about _____ (as we have seen in *Replace your “enemy thoughts” of anxiety* in the previous point).

2) Fulfill your _____ with God’s help no matter how you _____.

- Ask yourself, “What would I be doing right now if I weren’t so fearful?”
- Surrender to God to do what is His will right now. Then do what you should be doing right now. Remember, *“Therefore, to one who knows the right thing to do and does not do it, to him it is sin.”* (James 4:17).
- Of course this is hard, but there is no other way out but to *face your fear* and *fulfill your responsibility* with the help of the great God you have been learning about. He has promised to be with you in hard times. Listen to His words to you.

“When you pass through the waters, I will be with you;

And through the rivers, they will not overflow you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be scorched, nor will the flame burn you. For I am the Lord your God, The Holy One of Israel, your Savior...Since you are precious in My sight, since you are honored and I love you...Do not fear, for I am with you” (Isaiah 43:2-5a).

- Courage isn't the absence of fear. It is fulfilling your responsibilities with the help of God no matter how you feel.
2. Care for your _____
- The most important part of overcoming anxiety is guarding your thoughts—strengthening the “top beam.” But you can also significantly relieve the physical effects of pressures by strengthening the bottom beam—your _____. That means you must take seriously the need to eat right, exercise right, and rest right.

CONCLUSION: There was no _____ in the Garden of Eden before the Fall, and it will not be present when Jesus Christ rules in the new creation. In fact, in the new creation all will be at peace *“For the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.”* (Isaiah 11:9b).

- In the meantime, Peter admonishes us that *“Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord”* (II Peter 1:2).

And the apostle Peter even closes his last epistle with similar words. In II Peter 3:18 he admonishes believers to “grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.”

- Growth in the knowledge of God is the only ultimate solution to anxious, fearful hearts. May God help you overcome your fear and anxiety as you increase in your knowledge of God!

ⁱ *Taking Time to Quiet Your Soul* will guide you through a thorough examination of your “if only” and “what if” thoughts.

ⁱⁱ The “strong holds” in verse 4 that we are to be “pulling down” are the “imagination”—literally, the “reasonings”—we have been entertaining in our minds. They are the thoughts we have entertained and accepted as valid even though they are contrary to everything we know from the Scriptures to be true about God (verse 5). They would include the statements of unbelief that drive “The Way Down” for us and lead to discontent, and eventually anxiety.

ⁱⁱⁱ Worriers are masters at meditation. They are used to taking one thought and looking at it from every possible angle and figuring out every implication of that thought to their lives. You must start using that same process of meditation with something that is certain—what God has promised and said about Himself—instead of using it to meditate upon uncertainties.