

OVERCOMING ANXIETY

Finding Peace,
Discovering God

Paul J. Bucknell

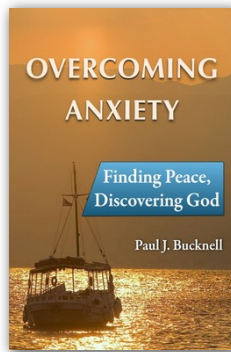


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Overcoming Anxiety: Finding Peace, Discovering God



Paul J. Bucknell

Overcoming Anxieties: Finding Peace, Discovering God

by Paul J. Bucknell

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Dedication

To the God of Peace,

Our eternal peace,

Through Jesus

Christ,

Be glory forever,

Amen.

Appreciation

Behind the making of every book are the contributions of many people. I am especially grateful for my daughter, Allison Bucknell, and her persistent attention to detail in fashioning this book.

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PREFACE

Every journey in life is different. Some of the adventures we encounter are welcomed, others are feared. Facing our anxiety is one of the things that we fear the most. Many of us hide our anxieties and hope they won't be discovered, even when they overwhelm us. We avoid confronting our fears and anxieties because we either do not know how to find peace or because we believe that it is impossible to find a real solution.

Release from the stress and anxiety in our lives can be found. Not only can worries be managed, but they can be overcome. One of the things that cause people to worry is the belief that they were not designed to handle the stress that they face.

Our goal is to enable you to overcome any anxiety that you face as you work through the training steps in this book. God wants us to have more than the absence of worries: He wants to give us His peace! The truth is, none of us were designed to live with worry in our lives, but God is there to help us overcome anxiety by bringing peace into our lives.

Our Creator has made a way for us to experience inner peace while walking through life. How do we experience this inner peace? Let me use the illustration of a bridge: the bridge leads us across from the difficulties of life over to His peace on the other side. He wants to take each of us across that bridge into His perfect peace.

Each chapter in this book acts as a stepping stone, taking you step by step across the bridge. Some steps are strenuous, others are more reflective, but each will take you closer to the other side where you can know and experience the peace of God.

We have three goals as we work through each chapter:

- Learn the principles presented
- Take the necessary steps
- Share God's victory

Each step is briefly outlined and illustrated with charts and diagrams. At the end of this book, you will find study questions for each chapter. These questions will help make sure you have worked through and understood each chapter's essential material. Without the practical application of these truths, you will not see much of a difference in your life. When you put them into practice, they may be awkward at first, but you will see God's tremendous power begin to eliminate your worries and fill your life with peace. Further teaching resources including handouts, exercises, answers and powerpoint slides are available as part of the [Discipleship #2 Digital Library](http://www.foundationsforfreedom.net/Help/Store/Intros/DLibrary-D2.html).¹

My goal is to show you how, by God's grace, you can overcome your anxiety so that you can develop a testimony of His work in your life. I encourage you to remember to thank God by telling other people how He has helped you overcome your anxiety. Tell him, "God has helped me so much this week." When he or she asks, "How did He do that?" simply share one way God is removing those anxieties from your life.

Overcoming Anxiety: Finding Peace & Discovering God provides a timely and powerful message for an increasingly anxious generation! God has revealed His precious truths on how to effectively eliminate worries and live in His constant peace. Common worries

¹ Discipleship #2 Digital Library:

<http://www.foundationsforfreedom.net/Help/Store/Intros/DLibrary-D2.html>

and extreme anxiety such as panic attacks are practically dealt with.

As we explore God's truth from the Scriptures, we are challenged to live in God's peace. As rumors of war, bioterrorism, world epidemics, financial distress, and suicide attacks inch closer to our front doors, as well as the concerns of daily life, these truths become vital for life. Instead of worrying, we get to see and experience God's love and holiness in a very practical way as He personally leads us across the bridge of hope. When we find refuge in Him, He will instill His peace into our lives.

Rev. Paul J. Bucknell

Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, USA

OVERCOMING ANXIETY

Finding Peace, Discovering God

THE JOURNEY OVERVIEW



This overview briefly introduces each chapter, allowing the reader to get a feel for the journey ahead, leading the reader, step by step, further away from anxiety and closer to finding peace.

Crossing the Bridge of Hope Chapter #1

Journeying with God from worry to peace.

Many people have lost hope. They don't believe that they can deal with the anxiety and stress of life. This first step will build a renewed hope in God by developing your faith in Him and how he cares for you. He wants to help you overcome and deliver you from your worries into His peace. After all, "Deliverer" and "Savior" is the meaning of Jesus' name.



God's peace is not the passing peace of the world; it steadies our hearts even in the most stressful times. A special illustration highlights how God personally brings us over the bridge of hope.

Understanding Worries Chapter #2

Understanding the reason people worry.

People worry. But why? Is it normal?

Worry is common, but it should not be considered normal. This chapter explains the source of our worries. Once we identify and uproot the problem, we can begin to take the necessary steps to eradicate it from our lives.

This chapter will bring revolutionary changes to our view of worry, and life in general. Found in the contents of this chapter is an example of the changes in one man's life and how it affected the life of an armed robber.



Recognizing Responsibility Chapter #3

Accepting responsibility for our worries.

Does taking responsibility for our worries produce dramatic changes in our lives? It sure does! This chapter explains the power of accountabil-



ity and the steps it takes to free oneself from the burden of anxiety.

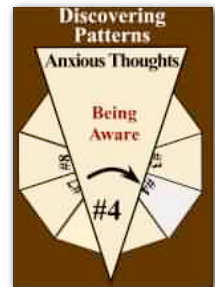
The difference begins when we stop blaming everything around us and admit to ourselves how our own worrisome thoughts stem from our choices. Those choices lead either to worry or peace. In this chapter, we will look at an account of when Jesus refused to worry and, as a direct result, found all He needed.

Discovering Patterns of Anxiety Chapter #4

*Discerning the relationship between anxiety and
anxious thoughts.*

Worries are not like someone at the front door asking for permission to come in. Rather, they are like silent intruders that sneak their way into our hearts and homes. This chapter uncovers how to detect the skulking thoughts and the patterns they use to get a grip on our hearts.

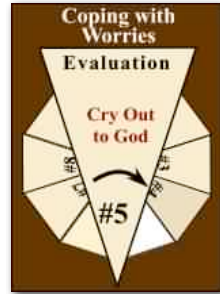
By discovering repeated patterns, we will gain a new awareness of our anxiety. As we explore these patterns, we will be able to train ourselves not to ‘fall’ into worry. We will observe how an expert avoided terrific confusion and emotional turmoil by following these principles.



Coping with Worries

Chapter #5

Realizing that only God can help us when anxious thoughts strike.



Felt a lump in an unusual spot? Have you heard that you might lose your job? Or do you have some whacky fear that keeps you up at night? Chapter five provides the ammunition one needs to fight against overpowering and fearful thoughts. We can apply the principles we learned about in the previous chapters in order to deal with overwhelming feelings.

Destroy and Occupy

Chapter #6

Detecting and destroying the roots of anxiety.



People have tried long and hard to get rid of their worries, and they haven't had much success. In the end, they give up hope. People say, "It's the way I am." Many of us seem to have just accepted the fact that we worry.

But we don't have to! What keeps us from solving our worries? This sixth chapter reveals the hidden power which serves as the root cause for worry and stress, which makes these worries so hard to overcome. We illustrate this insidious struggle by using a well-known battle scene.

Finding the Peace of God Chapter #7

Foiling temptation's plan.

Most people only dream of peace; they have never experienced it. Anxiety, stress, and fear are a person's constant companions.

In chapter seven, we not only want to clearly explain how temptations affect us, but we also want to illustrate how God's amazing promises counter these temptations. These lessons are so practical that they beg us to apply them. Come and look at the amazing words of God that guarantee real peace if we abide by them.



Handling Extreme Anxiety Chapter #8

Discovering and understanding the three levels of anxiety.

Worries can easily get out of hand, and nobody has long-term solutions for stopping their recurrent appearances in our lives. People might offer advice on how to make these 'anxiety attacks' less severe, but how do you get rid of them once and for all?



Chapter eight explains the mysterious roots of anxiety and describes its three levels. Accurate diagnosis leads to genuine solutions. An exciting historical story highlights the path that allows us

to regain and renew the faith we need in order to live above the reach of anxieties.

Steps to Overcome Anxiety Chapter #9

Mastering the three-stage process to overcome worries.

These last two chapters condense all the previous lessons into three summaries. Remember that peace results from a series of right decisions.

There is no magic or surprise. Only simple straightforward decisions we need to live by. This personal training and discipline enables each of us to tackle any anxiety that we might have hidden away in our hearts.

Nothing, of course, can be done without the preparation of the heart. However, if God is working, these steps will do the job of restoration. Exciting illustrations, along with many practical applications, dominate this lesson.



Becoming An Overcomer Chapter #10

Creating a testimony by overcoming difficult worries.

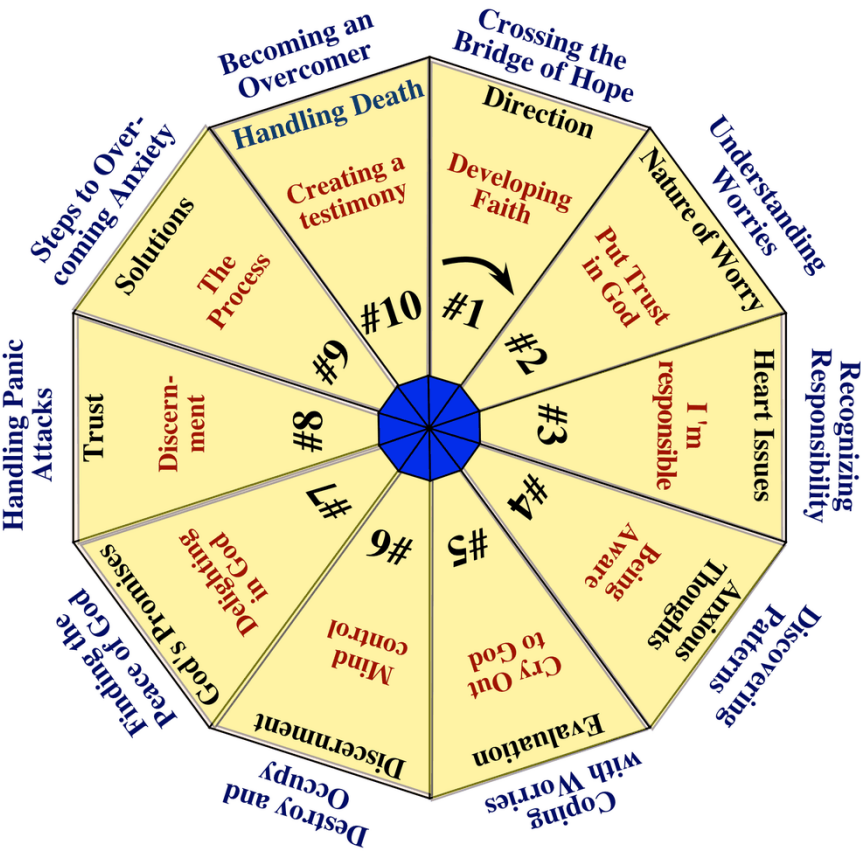
Behind many worries and fears is death. No one likes to admit this because they do not have a



way to handle death and the fears it is associated with.

God knows that as long as we fear death, we cannot be free to live for Him. Powerful truths are discussed throughout this closing chapter in order to inspire us to become one of God's triumphant children. Real life stories of Christians facing death will boldly illustrate this lesson's important principles.

**The Lord has formed a bridge from this land of worries
that crosses into the world of His peace. Let's start that
journey now together!**



OVERCOMING ANXIETY
Finding Peace, Discovering God

BRIDGE OF HOPE

Chapter #1

God has not designed us to live with worry.

Our major goal for this chapter is to encourage the development of your hope in God. This hope will increase your faith in His care for you and further enable you to trust Him to bring you from your worries into His peace. This part of the journey, however, will be discussed more in-depth later on in this chapter.

Expect to grow and increasingly discover God's peace. Many individuals have told me that they have found help by working only through the first few chapters. The principles of overcoming anxiety, at the end of each chapter, will help you walk through the swamp of anxiety into the peace of God.

We don't need to worry about things that may or may not happen, even if it threatens to frustrate our plans. Our Father has given us sufficient grace to trust Him in every frustrating circumstance. Can you believe such good news?

Now let's turn our attention to developing this hope. Throughout chapter one we will explore how God's care for you and me makes such a great difference in our lives.

Abounding Worry

People have given up hope on overcoming worry.

Anxiety is increasing these days! While familiar with the extra stress that anxiety brings, you are greatly surprised at how your regular routine can be threatened by certain worries. These problems shouldn't bother you, and maybe they have not in the past, but now you are frittering away valuable time or a beautiful day by fretting about some crazy scenario that might occur.



Anxiety is and always will be a very important topic. Books have been published, web sites established, and millions of drug prescribed each year to help cope with, or “cure” anxiety.

Many people, however, are convinced that there is no true solution to the worry that plagues their lives. They are told to put up with it and live their lives as best as can be managed. “I’ll just cover this problem and nobody will notice how deeply it affects my life, right?” The way we cover up our problems is similar to the way a woman might cover up facial flaws with makeup; applying a little coverup here and there to mask an undesirable mole, pimple, or freckle. We try to make the problems disappear by convincing ourselves and others that our problems are normal, or our issues aren’t a big deal. We can deal with them later, right? We throw a blanket over our problems, hiding them and pushing them off to

the side. We move on with our lives and fail to confront our problems.

But times are changing. Many people are discovering that they are no longer able to cope with the increasing numbers and types of worry that plague them, even with the coverups. The intensity of worry is increasing and lives are beginning to unravel as a result. If worry was only a temporary issue, maybe it would be okay, but what kind of attitude are people taking toward these problems? Many take a negative stance and remark on how “life will never be the same again” as a direct result of the frustrating problems that come out of neglected anxiety.

Yet some people are realizing that the overwhelming number of issues and problems in the world that create worry cannot be dealt with by simply using the age-old cover up method. They have been pushed to the edge of their coping abilities, and that is where God begins to show His grace by taking us across the bridge of hope, step by step.

Sources of Anxiety

One big question often dominates our minds, “Can we stop worrying?”

Those that worry are often fearful that their worries will get worse. They don’t want to answer the subtle questions bothering them. “What will happen if I get worse?” is a thought that Satan slips into our minds to intensify our worries. We start worrying about our worries! We simply do not want to face our worries because we do not believe there are any solutions to them. (After all, have we not been able to stop them, right?)



The intensity and number of stressful situations present in our daily lives are beginning to show how fragile a people we truly are. Some will, when looking at escalating trouble in the world, even ask if this is the tribulation period.

The truth is, stress uncovers our problems; it doesn't cause them. If we want to get rid of worry, we need to dig below the level of superficiality and uncover the true root of our anxiety.

• **Identify points of worry**

In order to start the training, we have provided some specific things people worry about and suggested reasons for why they get anxious about them. (If you have access to the Discipleship #2 Digital Library, make sure you fill out the accompanying exercise for chapter 1.)

• **Epidemic - I might get infected.**

Example: "I remember a scene once where many people got sick through some disease. I said to myself that I am going to do everything to avoid getting near contagious people. But to be honest, I am very nervous about this."

- War - I might be hurt.
- Visas - I might be sent back.
- Relationships - I am scared of being rejected.
- Lay offs - I don't know how I will pay my bills.
- Recession - My debts are piling up on me.
- Exams - I might perform poorly, or even fail.
- Parents - I don't know what my parents may say.
- Terrorists - I am afraid of a biological attack and dying.
- _____ - I might ...

Sometimes it's hard to know what we are really worried about, so let's take a look at some of the signs of worry so that we can more easily identify where our anxiety stems from.

Signs of Worry

Let's look at the signs of worry. Do you recognize them?

First off, we'll describe the surface problems, and then go on to introduce the emotional and physical signs. Lastly, we'll explore the spiritual symptoms of anxiety.

SURFACE PROBLEMS

Surface anxiety is the most superficial kind of worry that we run up against. For example, we might find ourselves running behind time and worrying about making an appointment. In moments like this, we may react to our stress and anxiety, which may be caused by running behind, by kicking the dog, driving recklessly, or looking a bit desperate when we arrive at our appointment. Let's look at three specific ways this worry pops up in our lives.

IRRITATION

Irritation becomes prominent in our lives when events that occur around us bother us to the point that we act out in frustration. Oftentimes, when people are worried that their plans may not go as planned, they allow their irritation to affect people around them.

IMPATIENCE

Impatience is the inability to wait patiently. Impatient people often pretend to have control of the circumstances that they are worried about. They are often manipulative and find themselves the source of hurt in other people's lives.

INSOMNIA

Insomnia is a condition that makes it difficult for people to sleep properly. Insomnia can be caused by a variety of reasons, but often it is because a person's mind is worried and unsettled.

EMOTIONAL AND PHYSICAL PROBLEMS

While surface worries introduce bothersome problems into our lives, if worries are not cared for, they develop more serious consequences affecting our emotional and physical health. A person can walk around a puddle, but they can not avoid a flood in their home. These problems are best understood by looking at three areas: irresponsibility, illness and incapacitation.

IRRESPONSIBILITY

Irresponsibility happens as a result of extensive worry; it becomes the regular mode of escape from stress a person might face. Irresponsibility causes one to leave positions or partners, and more often than not, find themselves stuck in addictive habits.

ILLNESS

People who worry a lot tend to have a higher rate of cancer, heart disease, high blood pressure, headaches, peptic ulcers, irritable bowel disease, allergies, chronic fatigue syndrome, fibromyalgia, depression, and many other problems. Our bodies were not designed to deal with constant stress.

INCAPACITATION

Aggravated worry can cause incapacitation, which is a condition where one can no longer carry on with normal life. When anxiety overloads our systems, we can easily let ourselves drift into an “I

give up” mode. Some form of depression has joined anxiety in these cases.

Summary

Most people will find ways to moderate their stress. When dealing with our worry don't wait for an overwhelming problem that you cannot handle. Instead, the best solution is to uproot the source of our problems before they happen. However, before we venture into this area of solutions, we need to understand the third level of problems that develop out of worry: spiritual problems.

SPIRITUAL PROBLEMS

Worry not only hurts our emotional and physical health, but also damages our spiritual lives.

Anxiety kills faith because it forces us to focus on our limited human resources, strips us of any sense of peace, deadens the effectiveness of God's word, and prevents us from loving others.

CRIPPLES OUR BELIEF

But if God so arrays the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the furnace, will He not much more do so for you, O men of little faith? (Matthew 6:30).

Worry cripples our faith, and we end up with an unhealthy 'little faith'. Worry thrives on doubt. More will be said on this important issue later, but remember anxiety and faith are intolerable of each other; they do not coexist. Worry concentrates on resolving problems on one's own while belief allows us to live in light of God's promised involvement in our lives.

LIMITS OUR RESOURCES

Do not be anxious then, saying, “What shall we eat?” or “What shall we drink?” or “With what shall we clothe ourselves?” (Matthew 6:31).

When we worry, we are acting on the belief that our only option is to rely on our own resources. Rather than trusting in God’s promises and faithfulness, we see what we do not have rather than what we do have. Our attention is on the negative doubts that play on our insecurity rather than the peace that God can provide.

UNFRUITFUL LIFE

Love... Does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered (1 Corinthians 13:5).

Worry creates a self-centered focus on one’s own needs rather than shifting the focus to other people and their needs. A worried person often finds themselves consumed by making efforts to solve their own problems, and in turn, this leaves them unable to perceive the needs of the people around them, serving as Jesus did. Our hearts need to be focused on Christ, if we want to serve Him faithfully.

CAN’T LISTEN TO GOD’S WORD

And the one on whom seed was sown among the thorns, this is the man who hears the word, and the worry of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful (Matthew 13:22).

Worry chokes the growth of the Word of God in our hearts and robs it of its power. Worry does this by causing us to focus on what

might happen rather than strengthening our faith in God, which subsequently takes away the power of the Word of God.

Have you ever felt unable to glean from God's word? It is quite possibly because of worry. It steals our concentration on God's word. Have you ever opened your Bible to read and found yourself distracted by your worries?

LACK OF PEACE

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, shall guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus (Philippians 4:6-7).

Peace is the first thing to go when we worry. If our problem is not dealt with quickly, our worries will only worsen. Peace is the opposite of worry. If we worry then we do not have peace. If we have peace, we do not worry. The peace of God is characterized by a humble trust that God will care for us. Worry is characterized by doubting whether God will care for us or not.

Exercise

Worry is a destructive, step-by-step, process. It quietly invades our lives, so it's important to detect the early processes happening in our lives for two reasons. First, it will motivate us to change. Second, we will be able to quickly distinguish under what circumstances we let worry creep in.

- Go back to the previous section on signs of worry in one's life and circle or write down the signs you see in your life.
- Expand on the first step by generally reflecting on how anxiety may be negatively impacting or crippling your physical, emotional, or spiritual lives.

- Think about this: why does worry have such disastrous effects? (More will be said later on this).

Starting Point

How can we spot traces of worry in our lives?

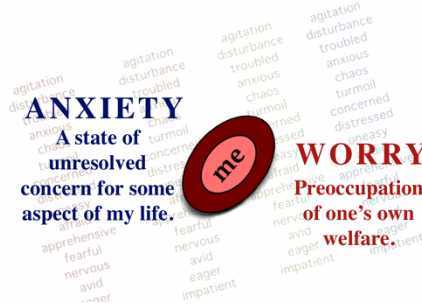
The presence of worry in our lives reveals excessive concern about ourselves. This shows up in the way worry compels us to concentrate on our life needs such as: who we might marry, where we will work, how we look, our grades, and personal performance, all directly affecting how our lives are lived. Worry, as bad as it may be, is not the root issue.

According to society today, worry is a troublesome, normal part of life. Experts explain that worry is a natural part of life, that it prepares us to cope with life events. Worry may alert us to problems, yet the biggest problem its presence creates is the impossibility of calculated and stable decisions.

Instead of helping us, anxiety causes problems in our lives. This is the reason we can easily identify a list of signs connected to the presence of worry. These problematic signs are not God's good design for us. Thank the Lord that He has a different opinion and a much better way to handle these anxieties.

Jesus has given us a wonderful example on how it looks to live beyond worries, and He had to jump tremendous life hurdles including the horrendous death on the cross, to give us that example. It shows us how, even in the most strenuous circumstances, worrisome situations can be effectively dealt with. He told us to stop worrying because we cannot love others when we focus on our own needs. We are unable to realize God's will when we concentrate on our personal inner struggles.

The Lord holds His people to a standard different from that of the world. It allows us to experience God's abundant blessing. So long as one is living with worry, he can never be the person God intended him to be. For example, if a person is solely focused on his success, then he may be willing to use people in order to accomplish his goals.



Worry is a preoccupation about something to the point we become restless in our souls. Worry is the opposite of peace. We cannot be genuinely compassionate or kind if we are worrying, and there are two reasons for this.

- We are focused on our own circumstances rather than the circumstances of the people around us.
- We are not very helpful. We lack the patience and clarity needed to pay attention to others. We can't hear what God is saying.

Jesus faced many difficult questions. Remember how the Pharisees tested and challenged Him during His ministry? He was calm because he was confident that the Father would give Him wisdom. Remember the hungry crowds that gathered to Him after a long day of teaching? Jesus didn't focus on the impossibility of

the situation, but rather, He discerned that the Father wanted to feed every one of them using a couple loaves and a few tiny fish.

Some people might get defensive at this point, largely because they think that the occasional worry is no big deal. They are convinced that there are both good worries and bad worries. The question is, then, is there such a thing as “good worries”?

Can Worry Be Good?

Usually, when we think of “good” worry, we think of three particular areas.

1. Worrying about warnings

People will worry when they haven’t listened to a warning. They might say to themselves, “I wish I had taken their advice. Now I might lose my investment.” Worry, when serving as a warning, typically only persists until we no longer need that warning. Following the advice of a warning will remove the red flag of worry from our minds. Buckling seat belts, following label directions on electronics, and warnings such as keeping off icy roads in lieu of bad weather will get rid of “warning worries.”

It’s good to worry about the reality of hell as it troubles us until we have resolved these eternal issues. Worrying in relation to warning has its benefits, but these worries should not continue. A warning should be heeded, and as a result, any worry related to the warning should subside.

2. Worrying for others

Another area of worry that many consider to be good is worrying for other people. For example, parents often worry, on various levels, about their children: where they go to school, their safety, and the friends they choose. This is better than absolutely no concern,

but it doesn't allow the parents to entrust their children into God's hands. As long as people worry for others, they are relying on their own resources rather than God's.

Worrying for one's child might look like love, but is really a cover-up for an underlying problem. Worry prevents real love from manifesting itself. Wouldn't it be better to lovingly entrust our children into the Lord's hands rather than bring our hopeless fretting into their lives? If this can happen, it's a sign that we are ready to work with the Lord during key moments in our children's lives.

The Scriptures advise us to work through our struggles with worry through prayer. God will take care of us and our concerns; we don't need to worry, even for our children.

3. Worry as a motivator

Many believe worry is a good motivator. This is not true except in the case of warnings where persistent worry causes a person to look at an alternative, often better, course of action. More commonly, worry leads us to thought without action, stress without relief, and distraction without focus.

In order to test this, examine the things that you worry about. Worries lead people to fear, over-reaction and bad decisions. Fear paralyzes a person's thought process and keeps them from thinking clearly about what is needed in order to work through a situation. Worry compels a person to focus on a situation with a wrong perspective. When decisions with a skewed point of view are made, the result ends up just as warped as the perspective we started out with. Our worries are unprofitable and inhibits a believer from involving God in their response to a situation. Worry is the devil's tool.

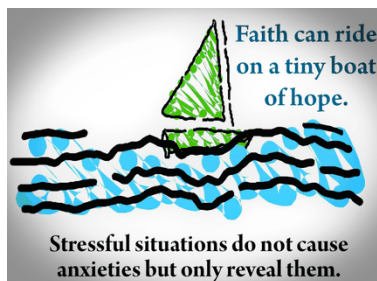
Worry is the preoccupation of some matter to the point that we are restless in our souls and confused in our minds. In situations like this, “peace” only comes when we are confident that the situation will turn out the way we want it to. This kind of peace is very unstable because it is dependent on other circumstances that are often beyond our control. Worry is the opposite of peace.

As Christians, we have the choice to live by faith in the invisible God who has promised to take care of all our needs. We can’t always be sure of how things will work out, but it doesn’t matter in the long run because we can rest in the knowledge of the fact that God will take care of the things we have no control over. We can trust God because we know that He works all things together for good. Philippians 4:19 confidently announces, “And my God shall supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus.”

Worries are a hindrance to our growth and renewal in Christ. Most of us know what it is to wrestle with our worry. How do we go about getting rid of them?

Discovering Hope

If we’ve lost hope, we’ve lost our motivation to press on in life. God wants to bring hope back into our hearts.



Our circumstances may be stressful and we may not see a solution, but we can still maintain an attitude of hope. Our faith does not need to be great; faith can ride on a tiny boat of hope. The Psalms are beautiful reminders of the struggles of a growing faith.

He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will abide in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say to the LORD, “My refuge and my fortress, My God, in whom I trust!” For it is He who delivers you from the snare of the trapper, And from the deadly pestilence. (Psalm 91:1-3).

As we can see in the passage above, the Lord helped the psalmist through his hardship. We can be confident that He will help us too. In a limited sense, bumps in the road of life can be thought of as blessings; the hardships that we experience create opportunities for us to discover God’s ability and desire to help us. Remember, stressful situations do not cause our anxieties; they unveil them. But how will He help you?

The Journey to Peace

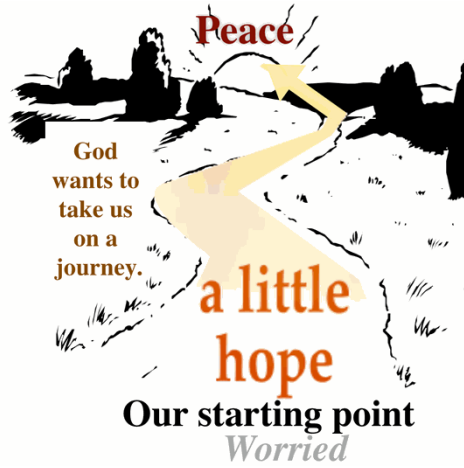
God wants to take us on a journey.

Where does God want to take us? He wants to take us from our mountain of worry and deliver us to His kingdom of peace.

However, there are many times when we only go halfway. We lose hope and give up on our journey before it’s hardly begun, thinking that we can’t possibly find true peace. Of course, if we don’t pursue our journey to peace, no true peace can be found!

How do you think the crowd would have responded if Jesus had only partially healed the people with problems?

- What if the crippled man had only one leg healed, the other left lame? (Matthew 15:30-31)
- What if the woman with the loss of blood now only bled on odd days? (Luke 8:43-48)
- What if only girls could be delivered from demons? (Mark 7:26-30)



We shouldn't be content with a partial peace (whatever that is) because it's not what true peace is. We use the phrase "I'm okay" to describe a quasi-peace. God doesn't want us to settle for this because He has a greater goal: "The peace of God which passeth all understanding" (Philippians 4:7).

God's purpose in healing the multitudes was restoration. God has the same purpose for our lives. He is concerned about our sleep, work, and everyday routines, but He is even more concerned for our souls and our relationship with Him.

Swimming the waves

In this book, we are trying to open your eyes to the joy that you can experience in undertaking a journey to peace in God. Many of us are wary about this kind of journey because we don't trust God, but let me share an illustration that might help you understand how God leads us by taking us step by step.

When I taught my children to swim, I liked to start them off in a normal swimming pool. There they could learn basic swimming techniques, get used to being in the water, and practice holding their breath.

However, the danger-less pool is not enough. Two close relatives of mine almost drowned at the same beach, and now, many years later, they are still afraid of putting their heads under the water. In order to become truly excellent swimmers, my children need to learn how to handle the ocean with its waves and currents, and not settle with treading water in a quiet pool.

When I visit my Dad, I bring my children to the beach and teach them to understand and appreciate the waves. I do not take them out when it is very windy because I know that the waves will throw them under. I take them out on the calmest days possible and introduce them to the currents. They begin to understand the push and pull of the small waves; they grow comfortable with them. Only later, after they have confidence in the calmer water, do I take them out deeper into the thrust of the larger waves.

The secret in this kind of training is my physical presence. Being with them allows them to see that it's possible to handle the waves. They know that I enjoy riding the swells farther out from the beach, and because of this, they gradually gain enough confidence to brave the waves as long as I am with them. At times they will cling to me when they see a big wave coming, but they know they don't need to worry because I am there, ready to hold on to them should the wave threaten to sweep them away. Their confidence will continue to grow, though it may take several more years. In the learning stages they stand beside me, but later, they venture out on their own. By now, most of my children have learned to love the towering waves of the ocean.

Undoubtedly, you've gone through tough times and have dealt with difficult situations. The question is, have you invited the Lord to be close to you during those times? Was He your main support? Was He the first one you turned to? The Lord wants to be close to us; He wants us to lean on Him when we're forced to undergo challenges. Similarly, He wants to be close and present as we go through the process that leads to a worry-free life.

More than likely, each of us will face situations that are more tragic, fearsome, startling, or stressful than those that we've already experienced. Death will always be lurking in the shadows until Christ returns. We might lose our wealth or the prized job we have been working for all our lives. One mother admitted to worrying about the future of her eight-year-old daughter, specifically when it would be time for her to leave home. This woman found herself spending more time worrying about the future of her child than enjoying the time she then had with her daughter.

There will never be any one person who will always hold your hand through tough situations. My goal through this book is to help you sharpen your ability to recognize God's constant presence, through tough times and good. It's typical for people to reject the Lord during the critically important points in their lives, which is often a result of doubting His love; they struggle to understand and accept God's discipline, and therefore end up feeling as though they're going through difficult times alone. God wants to use hard times to encourage intimacy with Him, to experience a God who proves Himself to be closer and more powerful than ever before.

The challenge comes in accepting trouble and recognizing that it's all controlled under the careful eye and hand of our Heavenly Father. He wants us to experience His peace during hard

times, a peace that allows us to live confidently in His perfect will and timing.

Finding Peace

How do we find real peace?

The world's peace is not really peace at all. The world's "peace" only exists in quiet and tranquil times. When life is calm and circumstances at home are good, the world is at peace. When the financial markets are stable and we have a solid savings fund in the bank, we can pursue our goals in security. Life on earth, however, is rarely like this.

Upon entering a hospital, a person may get infected with an illness that is passing around. Your whole life savings may have been cut in half because of the shaky stock market, or after watching the news, you may develop fear about terrorist action nearby. Anything can become a worry, and that worry has the full potential to drag us down with its destructive claws.

The world offers security in the form of insurance policies and big saving accounts, but they don't bring true security. Only God can offer us true peace because He knows His creations; their every fibre and emotion. Only He can completely care for us in a turbulent world.

Let's look closer at the differences between the world's peace and God's peace.

Comparing Promises of Peace

On the night that Jesus was betrayed, He spoke of true peace to His disciples and how it's not like the world's peace. In John 14:27, Jesus says: "Peace I leave with you; **My peace I give to you**; not

as the world gives, do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful.”

In essence, Jesus was defining His peace in contrast to the world’s peace. Indeed, the more we compare the two, the more differences we see.

World’s Peace	God’s Peace
1. Dependent on feelings	1. Dependent on trust
2. Must be seen	2. Doesn’t need to be seen
3. Doesn’t allow for difficult circumstances	3. Allows for troubles
4. Tries to control	5. Trusts God to control
5. Ultimately fails	6. Always endures
Do you want a peace that fails you when you need it the most?	Do you desire God’s peace that will provide a calm in the most threatening situations?

The world offers peace, but it’s a peace that doesn’t last; an unstable peace, which isn’t really peace at all. Peace in the world is dependent upon everything being just right. Many have lost a good portion of their investments through economic downtimes, but they not only lost their wealth but their peace and confidence in life.

How often is your life situation ‘just right’, really? In more affluent societies, wealth can be used to isolate a person from inconveniences and problems associated with a lack of money. If a person’s house burns down, an insurance policy can protect his fu-

ture. These protective devices, however, only go so far in guaranteeing a 'peaceful' life.

God's peace enables us to handle the challenges that come our way. It grants us boldness and strength that originates from the Lord Himself! What is the result of finding God's peace in our lives? As God's people, we can joyfully accomplish His will for our lives.

Do you have God's peace or the world's peace? Does your peace quiver when you watch the evening news? The world's peace deceives people by trying to make them believe that life is manageable. If nothing happens to break them from this glowing, disastrous belief, they will never get to meet God and find His peace before Judgment Day. It is crucial that we find peace with God.

God's Peace

Let's learn a little more about God's peace.

Remember, we are aiming to replace our worries with God's peace. We need to know what our goal is. The clearer the goal, the easier it is for us to identify the steps that need to be taken in order to accomplish that goal, and the less likely it is that we become side-tracked.

Peace has two aspects.

We cannot have the peace of God until we first have peace with God. A good relationship with God shapes how He deals with us.

1. Peace with God

So how does peace-making between God and man take place? Or rather, how does God make peace with us?

Christ went to great lengths to make peace with us. Our appearance, level of wealth, job, race or sex doesn't matter; everyone was considered an enemy. Our disobedience places us in opposition with God.

Peace with Him became possible through Jesus' work on the cross, and a personal faith in Him. Once we turn from our sins and believe in Christ, we become children of God; this transaction of redemption changes our position with God.

Instead of remaining enemies of God, we become children of God. The Holy Spirit brings a deep sense of security – an assurance of faith – to our hearts. This is not only true on a general spiritual level, but also holds true in a practical sense.

Peace with God means that a person is able to enjoy a good relationship with God. We can pray, knowing that He hears, and we can cry out to Him in Jesus' name and be rest assured of God's deliverance. No matter how awful the outlook of a certain situation, we have a secure relationship with God that serves as the foundation of our confidence in Him.

Peace with God bears witness to a close relationship with God. The Lord walks with us on our journey in life.

2. Peace of God

The peace of Christ focuses on our emotional tranquility. Jesus perfectly exemplifies this throughout His life, even in the most trying of times. He was at peace and confident in the Father's care. He had peace not only because He perfectly observed God's will, but because He could trust God with His life, even in knowing it would be difficult.

Peace is the absence of chaos; it constitutes a calm and composed soul. It is a place of quiet equilibrium, even when whirlwinds of trouble surround you.

Summary

We cannot have the peace of God until we have peace with God. Peace with God has to do with relationship; the peace of God has to do with trust and obedience. These elements are intimately connected; you cannot have one without the other.

Discerning Kinds of Peace

Now, let's put into practice some of the things we've learned. Look at the Bible verses listed below and see if you can discern whether the peace with God (and others) or the peace of God is being spoken of. Some of the verses might include both types, so study carefully!

- These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world (John 16:33).
- "There is no peace for the wicked," says the LORD (Isaiah 48:22).
- And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, shall guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus (Philippians 4:7).
- Yet if the unbelieving one leaves, let him leave; the brother or the sister is not under bondage in such cases, but God has called us to peace. (1 Corinthians 7:15).
- Therefore having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ (Romans 5:1).

- Therefore say, ‘Behold, I give him My covenant of peace (Numbers 25:12).
- And He will speak peace to the nations; And His dominion will be from sea to sea (Zechariah 9:10).
- The word which He sent to the sons of Israel, preaching peace through Jesus Christ (He is Lord of all) (Acts 10:36).

Summary

Again, it’s good to remember that we cannot have peace of God without peace with God. Before peace with God can take place, we stand before God as enemies (Romans 5:10). True tranquility will come from a relationship with God.

If you are dealing with a person who is facing an anxiety problem, confirm whether or not they are a true believer in Christ. When a friend experiences problems in their life, view it as an opportunity to live as a witness to them in their darkness. In many cases, God uses uncontrollable events to prepare or cause a person to seek Christ and everything that He offers.

Let’s look at how we can reach our goal of gaining God’s peace.

Bridge of Hope



“When my anxious thoughts multiply within me, Thy consolations delight my soul” (Psalm 94:19).

Bridges allow us to cross over rough terrain, deep valleys, or bodies of water, and we hardly give them a thought when we use them. My city, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, has the highest number of bridges in the world; 446 bridge-spans within the city proper. Every time my family travels, we cross between one to three bridges, at the least. Bridges make it easy for us to bypass the risk and danger of what lies below. For some, crossing a bridge may be a challenge; however, when you consider what you’re avoiding in taking the steps to cross the bridge, it becomes less of a problem and more relief.

How do we cross the bridge that leads to the peace of God?

1. Leave our worries behind.

We need to take decisive steps in deciding how to handle the things that need to be left behind, such as bad habits, or particular points of weakness. We might be able to ‘handle’ stress up to a certain point, but what happens after that? Unless we admit these things, we will not let go of the rail of worries. These situations are areas in our lives where we can choose to trust God rather than let our fears grip our hearts.

2. Look ahead to God’s Peace.

The act of leaving something behind infers that there is something we are pursuing instead of what we are trying to get rid of. In this case, we learn how to focus on how God equips us with His promises, how He carefully trains us to battle any fears that return, instead of letting ourselves worry and obsess over a tough situation.

In the process of training, He provides opportunities to deepen our faith and strengthen our relationships with Him.

Can we make it across?

Yes! With the Lord's help, you and I as believers can experience and live in the peace of God. It is essential that we deal with our worries before they become deeply imbedded in our lives. The only equipment we need to cross the bridge is hope and Christ Himself.

Do you have hope in your heart? Are you willing to go with God on this journey across the bridge? In one sense, it will take a lifetime because you will repeatedly face situations where you will need to depend on the peace of God. On the other hand, you will see an almost immediate, dramatic improvement in your life once you put your hand in His.

A doctor once came to me seeking prayer. He loved the Lord, yet he was tormented with anxiety. I told him to start going through this book and, after a few chapters, I would meet with him to discuss what he was learning. During the first meeting, I didn't need to say much because of his excitement over the changes in his life. He remarked on how, after only a few chapters, the worries were going away. We met one more time, but again, the same thing occurred; the changes in his life were dramatic, and he rejoiced as he began to experience the true peace of God.

He was well on his way over the bridge of hope that God offers to all believers. All he needed was to be pointed in the right direction, and once he took the first step in faith, God took it from there.

A Request

I ask that you sign your name and date as a confirmation that declares your commitment to go on this peace-seeking journey with

the Lord. By signing, you are stating that: “I am willing for God to take me on this life journey; I am willing to leave my anxiety and seek His peace in my life.”

Signature & date

There are three guidelines for a smooth journey.

- Get closer to God (James 4:8).
- Listen intently to the Lord (John 10:27).
- Confidently do what He tells you (1 John 5:3).

Now let's see what steps we can take to practically overcome worry.

Our Destination

Each person's journey is different, but ultimately, we should all end up in the same place—in God's peace.

It doesn't matter where our journeys take us because we can rest in the knowledge that He will lead us in the direction that will help us serve effectively and grow in our relationship with Him. It may take a while to get used to letting go and letting God, but it is an infinitely better option!

*“Casting all your anxiety upon Him,
because He cares for you” (1 Peter 5:7).*

What could this journey look like for you?¹ The challenge is to take what we generally know about worry and apply it to our specific life situations.

Determining Our Destination

We will start by identifying two of our worries but to be thorough, identify and follow through each worry.

First, describe your major worries.

Second, record where you think your anxiety is on a scale of 0 to 5; 0 being none, 1 being minor, and 5 being severe.

Third, identify what causes these worries, and finally, entrust this area/situation to the Lord. This is the most important part of this exercise because it allows you to think about your situation and make a decision on how you're going to deal with it. Take your time with it.

When you write things down, it brings an additional sense of permanence to what you've concluded in your mind and serves as a good reminder whenever you need to go back and look at your resolutions. In writing your resolutions, you need to state four things regarding the worry/anxiety mentioned in column one. Feel free to copy it word for word until you get the hang of it:

"Whether I or lose ..., I will...." It is explained below.

"Whether _____ (this) {#1 *State what you would like to happen*} or _____ (that) happens, {#2 *State one bad way this situation might end up*} _____ {#3 *Affirm your trust in God's companionship*} will trust God to be with me/us and _____ me through this difficult situation" {*Affirm God will help you in your circumstances*}.

Here are two examples.

¹ We're not saying that this activity will solve your problems, but we do believe that it will help you focus on where you need to go.

• Worry #1: My husband might leave me.

Rate worry #1: (4) This worry is severe. My husband hates how I nag at him. I am so insecure; He has hinted at getting a divorce.

Affirm and entrust #2: Whether my husband goes **or** stays, I will trust God with the future of my family. God works out all things for good.

Worry #2: I might lose my job.

Rate worry #2: (2) Sometimes my worry keeps me awake at night, which stunts my effectiveness at work and enjoyment of life.

Affirm and entrust #2: Whether I keep my job or lose it, my employment and financial security are in God's hands. He will care for my daily needs.

Make sure you identify your major worries and do the assignment. After that, work on the less intrusive anxieties.

Nobody can do it on their own.

Each of us need the Lord's help. You might think it's impossible to progress as far as the destination suggests, but go ahead and write it down. Learn to pray it through. You will gain a stronger faith.

Fear often cripples our confidence and trust in the Lord, sometimes to the point where we find ourselves believing that He can't take us all the way. Have a little faith because He *can* take us all the way!

For each area of worry, I encourage you to fill out the 'whether' statement. Admit that you can't handle it on your own, and that you need God's help in order to find peace and security. Somehow, someday, God will help you. It may be through people

in your life, or through the mysterious work of God. Regardless of how it happens, you can trust that it will happen if you entrust your situation to him.

Many people think that Jesus was too perfect to be able to set a realistic example. However, this is not what the Bible says. We are to be disciples of Jesus, and discipleship requires imitation. Jesus is the only one who can successfully lead us on this journey. He will serve as our coach, protector, and healer, the only one who is able to get us through the journey.

The first step

The first big step in overcoming worry is coming to terms with the fact that we can only take this journey when the Lord goes with us.

Taking the first step leads us closer to Him and creates in us a desire to allow Him to straighten our relationship with Him. When we put our hand in His, we will find ourselves dropping the things in our hands that displease Him, and taking up an attitude that seeks to please Him. How do we discover the things in our lives that need to be dropped? Simply, we ask and leave our hearts open for His conviction.

I think that it's safe to say that when we accept His guidance and loving discipline, He is ready and willing to pour blessings on our lives. Going into the next section, pay attention to the example of worry-free living that He gave us through a life lived in the will of the Father.

Jesus Gives Us Hope

Jesus didn't worry.

In spite of all the surprising, impossible, and treacherous circumstances that Jesus often found Himself in, He lived a life that was

free of crippling worry. This kind of example is a picture of the lives that God desires to see us live. He wants us to live lives modeled after Christ.

Let's look at four different situations Jesus faced and examine how our natural responses differ from how Jesus responded. In order to effectively examine these examples, we should ask ourselves questions such as: Did He worry? Why or why not? What gave Him confidence to believe that everything would work out?

Event #1

Now it came about on one of those days, that He and His disciples got into a boat, and He said to them, "Let us go over to the other side of the lake." And they launched out. But as they were sailing along He fell asleep; and a fierce gale of wind descended upon the lake, and they began to be swamped and to be in danger. And they came to Him and woke Him up, saying, "Master, Master, we are perishing!" And being aroused, He rebuked the wind and the surging waves, and they stopped, and it became calm. And He said to them, "Where is your faith?" And they were fearful and amazed, saying to one another, "Who then is this, that He commands even the winds and the water, and they obey Him?" And they sailed to the country of the Gerasenes, which is opposite Galilee (Luke 8:22-25).

- Jesus was shaken awake by panicking friends in a flooding ship in the middle of a stormy sea (Luke 8:22-26).
- Ask yourself: "If this happened to me, what would I have done?"
- Look at Jesus' response in Luke 8:22-26.

Event #2

And when He went ashore, He saw a great multitude, and He felt compassion for them because they were like sheep without a shepherd; and He began to teach them many things. And when it was already quite late, His disciples came up to Him and began saying, “The place is desolate and it is already quite late; send them away so that they may go into the surrounding countryside and villages and buy themselves something to eat” (Mark 6:34-36).

- Jesus was faced with the responsibility of caring for the needs of the multitudes (Mark 6:30-37).
- Think about it: What would you have done in this situation?

But He answered and said to them, “You give them something to eat!” And they said to Him, “Shall we go and spend two hundred denarii on bread and give them something to eat (Mark 6:37)?

- Compare your first response to Jesus’ response in Mark 6:30-44.

Event #3

But the Pharisees went out, and counseled together against Him, as to how they might destroy Him. But Jesus, aware of this, withdrew from there. And many followed Him, and He healed them all, and warned them not to make Him known (Matthew 12:14-16).

- Jesus’ life was threatened by opposing leaders who plotted to kill Him (Matthew 12:14-16).
- If your life was threatened, what would you do?
- Study Jesus’ response in Matthew 12:14-16.

Event #4

And Jesus said to them, “You will all fall away, because it is written, ‘I will strike down the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered.’ But after I have been raised, I will go before you to Galilee.” But Peter said to Him, “Even though all may fall away, yet I will not.” And Jesus said to him, “Truly I say to you, that you yourself this very night, before a cock crows twice, shall three times deny Me.” But Peter kept saying insistently, “Even if I have to die with You, I will not deny You!” And they all were saying the same thing, too (Mark 14:27-31).

- Jesus’ otherwise faithful disciples fell away and abandoned Him (Mark 14:27-31).
- When dealing with abandonment, how would you react?
- Jesus’ response, found in Mark 14:27-31, shows that despite being betrayed, He remained trustful of God.

Summary

The Father guided Jesus through many difficult circumstances; He lived under the threat of murder for at least one year during His ministry time, He didn’t know where the funds for His ministry would come from, His disciples were dependent upon Him, people’s expectations of Him were high but wrong, He was betrayed, and His disciples were eventually scattered.

At the end of it all, it seemed as though Jesus’ whole life was pointless: He died, His disciples scattered to the winds, and hope seemed to have been lost. Though it may have seemed otherwise at the time, Jesus completed what He had come to do; His purpose was fulfilled. Despite the trials in His life, He didn’t give up or lose contact with His Father. In fact, in the course of things, He became even surer of His faith in the Father. His level of trust was deep-

ened throughout His life. This is the pattern He sets for us, through both His life and death.

Jesus didn't worry - Why?

Some of us might feel more discouraged than strengthened by looking at Jesus' life. The reason behind this is based on how we perceive Him. If we think of Him as only a supernatural being who is able to do anything, we're bound to feel discouraged because that image is brutally inhuman. This is the wrong way to understand Jesus' life and ministry because it will prevent us from striving to be like Him; we don't want to strive to be something that we know is an impossibility, right?

...Fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you may not grow weary and lose heart (Hebrews 12:2-3).

If we take a closer look at Jesus' life, we will find that He did not change events, but rather trusted God in the midst of them. It's crucial to understand the differences between the two perspectives of Jesus' life because, without a clear definition in mind, we can get lost in our goals.

Jesus was following His Father's will with faith, fulfilling what He was sent to do. I think we can safely assume that Jesus would not have personally chosen some of the paths He was led through. The Father led Him into difficult circumstances for a purpose, and Jesus knew that He could trust His Father to give Him everything that He needed. Jesus' life is a model of how we should live our lives, entrusted to God.

God is with us on our journey. He will take us to and through the places that we wouldn't normally choose to go. From our earthly, limited vantage point, there is no way out of the pit of worry and anxiety. Jesus, however, offers us peace in exchange for our worry, urging us to trust Him to deal with whatever is going on in our lives. He knows the big picture, so doesn't it make sense to trust the One who knows? We can trust that God will work out sticky situations because He has the ultimate plan for our lives, a plan that no man or evil entity can ruin.

I encourage you to go through the Gospel stories, one by one, and study them with a new frame of mind; study the situations that Jesus was put into, look at how He handled those same situations, and think of how you can apply what you discover in the pages of Scripture to your life. Think of Jesus as your example.

Overview of chapter one

We are so glad that you've decided to start this journey! Once we discover the root of our worries, we can begin the process of extracting it from our lives. Before we go on to discuss Chapter 2, let's review what we have learned so far in "Touching Our Lives."

Chapter 1: Touching Our Lives

God has given us a hope that allows us to pursue a peace that supplants our worries. We don't have all the answers, and we probably never will, but we have a goal and a blueprint for the bridge that will allow us to cross over into peace in God. Even better, we can rest in the fact that God is with us, just as He was with Jesus. Reflect now on the key lessons from this chapter:

Principles

Which principles stuck most with you? Circle the most significant.

- God's goal for our lives is to eliminate our worries and replace them with His peace.
- Worries are not helpful; they bring confusion and often lead to poor decisions. They make us less likely to try to solve our issues.
- Worries have adverse effects on a person's emotional, physical, and spiritual life.
- God wants to take us on a peace-seeking journey with Him.
- The world's peace is very different from God's peace.
- When we think about our worries, we might feel overwhelmed. This is okay, because it is a realization of our inability to solve our problems on our own. It should bring us to God when trying to solve our problems.
- Jesus is the greatest example of a worry-free life. We can see through Scripture that He not only faced difficult tests like we do, but He also showed us how to rely on the Father.

Application

What clear decisions, plans, or confessions do you need to make as a result of what God has spoken to you during this chapter?

- Have you committed to go on this journey with God in order to find true peace for my life?
- Have you decided to follow Jesus?
- Did you fill out the *Start to Destination* anxiety evaluation?

Testimonies

What are one or two special lessons, stories, illustrations, warnings, etc. that you can share with others for the purpose of encouraging their faith? Write them down!

OVERCOMING ANXIETY
Finding Peace, Discovering God

UNDERSTANDING OUR WORRIES

Chapter #2

Worry is universal.

Just before I began writing this chapter, I read an article that explored the cost of raising a child.¹ At \$241,770 – almost a quarter of a million dollars – it’s easy to wonder whether having children is a good idea, especially during these hard economic times.

How can I provide for my children on a less-than-average budget? If the aforementioned estimation is anywhere near true, anxiety over this issue is definitely understandable. But my thoughts didn’t stop there. I considered the number of children I have and did the math in my head. Eight children! It would cost about two million dollars to raise my children. Impossible.

Though there are lots of things we could worry about, the great thing about these surging worries is that we don’t have to be

¹ Parenting Teens (11/2001).

troubled with them! Once our lives are free from worry, we can begin to find joy in both the little and big things that happen in our lives. God wants to take our burdens and usher us into His peace, even in the midst of a harsh world.

The goal of this chapter is to understand where our worries come from so that we can be well-equipped to extricate them from our lives. Once we know how to approach our problems, the solutions will be more readily applicable. I sincerely hope that this chapter will bring revolutionary changes to your view of worry.

Let's pray. I provide suggested prayers to familiarize you with what should be in a prayer. You should want to personalize it and, in the end, make it your own.

"For He has shattered gates of bronze, and cut bars of iron asunder" (Psalms 107:16).

Father, I have needlessly soaked myself in anxiety. My heart has become tough; my doubts have increased. Now is the time for you to shatter the gates of worry leading into my life. Regardless of what they are made of—bronze, steel, or iron—break through! The time for advance has come. Come and break down the gates of anxiety. I welcome You; I desire your peace. Cleanse me by the blood of Christ. Help me understand worry and the way it captures me. In Christ's Name I pray, Amen.

Discovering the Solution

New experiences lead to worry; but they don't have to.



It wasn't too long ago when one of my daughters obtained her driver's permit and began using the car regularly. As I recall, on one of many occasions, my then-six-year-old was buckled up in the back seat of the car. He looked up to see his sister in the driver's seat, instead of me. Naturally, he was concerned because he'd never seen her drive before; it was a totally new experience for him. Seeing me take the passenger seat, he relaxed a little because he knew that I, the trusted driver, was still present and watchful while he went through a whole new experience.

This illustration is similar to how our journey is going to be. We'll encounter a host of situations that we can't handle on our own. Our peace and joy in these situations will depend on the level of faith that we have in God's omnipresence. God is not only overseeing our journey, but He's experiencing it with us; He's a support that is with us through thick and thin. When we put our hope in God, our hearts foster a faith that allows us to leave our worries

behind us as we cross the bridge into God's peace. We may not know the details of our journey right now, but unless we step out in faith, we never will. Finding peace is a process that won't happen until we're willing to take the first step.

The bridge that stands between our present lives and a life of peace represents a journey of life with God. When we seek peace, we are, in actuality, seeking God because there can be no true peace apart from Him. We will explain why this is so later in the chapter.

Increase of anxiety

Many people are experiencing an increase in stress and anxiety. Alarm and panic skyrocketed when two planes crashed in New York City in late September during the 911 terrorist attack. Just minutes after the horrific event, the stock market took a steep, sudden plunge.

The peace of man is very much like that day's stock market: unstable and prone to ups and downs. Circumstances change from moment to moment; both good and bad things will happen, regardless of what man does. In lieu of that, people will do their best to hide their anxieties. They acknowledge the existence of anxiety, but they try to downplay the seriousness of the presence of it in their lives.

Focusing on the solution

We shouldn't think of our problems as unsolvable dead ends, but rather as opportunities through which we can be refined. As long as we try to escape our problems, they will always find a way to tag along and be involved in our lives. They will never give up, and will take every chance to make our life journey difficult.

God will use these problems to deepen our relationship with Him, but when we insist on complaining or giving up, it shows that we either aren't ready to face our problems, or we don't know where to begin solving them. However, if we are willing to accept that God will be with us through the problems and storms of our life, we will be willing to accept His gifts of grace and hope. Only then can we be willing and ready to take on the problem of worry and anxiety, equipped and ready to defeat them and live our lives to the full potential that God intended.

The next step over this bridge is designed to help us understand why there is such a thing as worry in the first place. Charles Spurgeon once said:

Monsters that revel in darkness must be dragged into the open, that they may be withered up by the light.²

We need to adopt an accurate understanding of worry so that we can understand how to deal with it. By understanding how our worry operates, we will be able to understand our problems. Once we identify the problem, then we can deal with it and promptly move on.

Note below how the psalmist in Psalm 94:19 did not deny his battles with worry, nor did he pretend to have a life untouched by anxious thoughts. “**When** my anxious thoughts multiply within me, Thy consolations delight my soul” (Psalm 94:19).

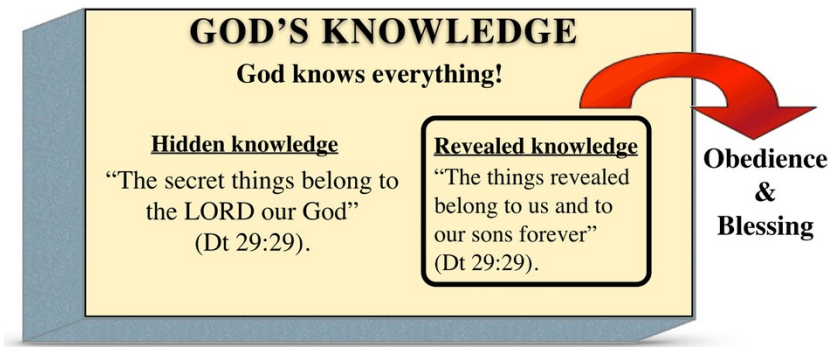
He acknowledged the presence of his anxious thoughts. By stating ‘when’, he acknowledged worry as something that touched his life. Our next chapter will get even more practical and focus on our personal worries, but we first need to get an overall picture of what worry is.

² Spurgeon's Gold, p. 150.

- Why is there such a thing as worry?
- If worry is natural, then why does it bring so many bad consequences into our lives?

God's Knowledge

Before we go on, let me share with you where our knowledge of worry comes from.



You will hear many people promote their own solutions to anxiety, a supposedly “proven, quick-fix” program that will solve everything in record time. It’s good to be skeptical of claims like this. You have every right and responsibility to question a person’s proposed solutions.

If someone is thinking about starting a new medication, not only will he examine the claimed health benefits of the said medication, but he will also consider the authority and qualifications of the one promising help through the medication.

The Bible speaks clearly of the Creator God, the One who knows and understands all things. The Designer God is far greater than the design or the designed, and which basically means that God inherently and completely comprehends all the ins and outs of

life as a human and the situations that surround us. All knowledge is God's knowledge.

From our perspective, what He knows is either “hidden knowledge” or “revealed knowledge.” The term “hidden knowledge” encompasses everything that only He knows and ever will know. “Revealed knowledge” is the mass of information that God has allowed mankind to discover and explore. His own people have a way to interpret this database of critical information because they have God's word.

- If there was a solution for death, would you want to know it?
- If there was a way of knowing God, would you look for it?
- If there was a way to get rid of anxiety and find peace, would you try to obtain it?

The Bible is a basic source of information that was given to man. God has revealed to us what we need to know in order to eliminate the anxiety and worry that we experience.

How does one go about finding this knowledge?”

God has revealed a lot of knowledge to us, but it's carefully concealed throughout the world that He's created. The best place to start your search for insight and wisdom is the Bible itself. Seek and you will find; diligence in studying His word will reap many rewards. Discover what is hidden, and your world will be blown open!

My children enjoy scavenger hunts. Looking for a gift is exciting, sometimes even more exciting than finding and opening the gift. The gifts my wife or I hide are always hidden in accessible places. What is the point of hiding a gift in a place where it would

never be found? My children would get frustrated and give up the hunt!

The gifts are hidden with the purpose of being found. In the same way, God hides wisdom in the world so that it can be found. Scavenger hunts might have the children running back and forth for twenty minutes, following the clues from the attic to the kitchen, and back up to the second floor, but the clues keep them going. Clues give them the motivation they need to keep searching for what they're looking for. Clues are little rewards that give them hope that there is something hidden.

Each clue reveals where the next clue is, and so it goes until the very last clue, which results in finding a gift. The point of a scavenger hunt is to, in the end, lead the seekers to the gift. It would be a disappointment if they searched, only to end up with empty hands. The discovery of each clue increases the expectation of the gift; each clue sparks a hope that the answer to the next clue will yield the gift. When the child finally discovers the gift, it is with delight and excitement. In the same way, God has hidden wisdom within His Word and our world so carefully that only those who are hunting for it will find it. The scriptures themselves state that we are to search and acquire wisdom no matter what it takes.

The beginning of wisdom is: Acquire wisdom; And with all your acquiring, get understanding. Prize her, and she will exalt you; She will honor you if you embrace her. She will place on your head a garland of grace; She will present you with a crown of beauty (Proverbs 4:7-9).

If we refuse to seek wisdom for our daily lives, we will become a people who lack the gift of Godly wisdom. If any generation understands the vital importance of knowledge, it's ours. We

are a society built on the increase of information, a technologically advanced world. Let's go beyond the common knowledge of the world and seek the knowledge that God makes available to those who seek it.³

The condition of our lives depends on how much we commit to searching out the truths both in God's word and outside of it. In order to allow for the full effectiveness of these discoveries, however, we need to apply what we learn.

Let's continue through this book and discover what God's word reveals about worry.

A Squirrel and Flower

Let's look at an example in the created universe that seems to point out that worry is not natural. Think about the life of a squirrel, or that of a flower. One thing you'll notice is that neither one has legitimate worries; they don't have room for anxiety in their lives.

Squirrels gather nuts because it is ingrained in their nature, not because they're worried about what they're going to eat during the winter. The squirrel inherently knows to gather and store a supply of food for the winter. Year after year it goes through the same routine, unconcerned about technicalities such as amount, quality hiding spots, and whether they'll find their stashes again. It is instinct that drives them to do what they do, not concern over winter supplies.

³ True knowledge can be observed by the world, but this does not mean that the world's assumptions, desires, or purpose for seeking knowledge is the same. The world corrupts knowledge for its own purposes. Science is distorted by evolution, psychology by man's adoption of the perspective of certain psychologists.

Also, the flower isn't aware of its own existence or its needs in the same way as animals or humans. The flower isn't concerned about its nectar being taken by bees, nor does it obsess over how beautiful it will be. Flowers don't fret over the quality of their pollen, and whether visiting bees will recommend the pollen to other bees.

Look at the birds of the air, that they do not sow, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not worth much more than they? (Matthew 6:26).

Observe how the lilies of the field grow; they do not toil nor do they spin, yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory did not clothe himself like one of these (Matthew 6:28-29).

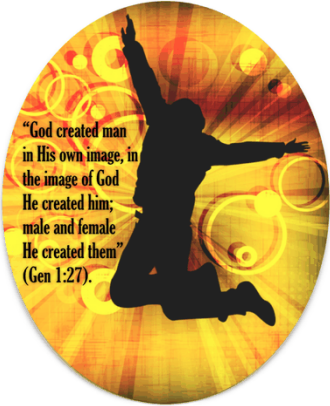
In these verses, Jesus highlights God's care for the lesser of creation: birds and flowers. If God is able to provide for the needs of the least, then certainly He can and will care for the needs of the greater. The fact that the majority of His creation runs by instinct and not conscious decision all the more emphasizes this point.

God created humans very different from the other created plants and creatures. Let's look at what makes man so uniquely designed.

Marks of Humanity

Here are four of the marks that distinguish man from animal.

We are here to answer the question, “Why do humans worry?” I believe that people are capable of worry because they are time, self, God, and morally aware. There are other characteristics, but these four cover the basics. These qualities are part of man’s nature, his inherent capability. Mankind reflects God’s own person because he is made in God’s image.



Now before you blame God and wish you were oblivious to time, remember God’s purpose for mankind. Genesis 1:27 states that God created man and woman to have similar characteristics to God so that human beings could relate to Him and enjoy communing and working with Him.

Four parts to human nature

There are four functions of man that sets him apart from other creatures.

1. Time Aware: Hope

Man does not just live within time, he observes time. Verbal tenses are built into our languages because man functions in time. People make the best decisions in the present by taking into consideration the lessons of the past and anticipating their future needs.

2. Self aware: Love

Man is conscious of his personal needs. This is the reason businesses use billions of dollars to advertise. They are trying to convince us of what we need. People are also aware of others, so we use names in order to more easily relate to others. Selfishness is an attitude we have when we seek our own needs without taking into consideration the needs and feelings of others. Love is shared when we make our decisions in light of the needs of others.

3. God aware: Faith

Even though man can and will deny God's existence, an eternal and powerful God stands in the backstage of every person's mind and conscience (Romans 1:20). This knowledge ought to stir in us a sense of worship and awe, or when we fall in disobedience, fear. In times of crisis, man seeks God for understanding, mercy, and help. Although he may not have a clear understanding of God, in turning to Him in times of trouble, man acknowledges that God is concerned for his welfare of our lives on earth.

4. Morally aware: Holy

Because of our consciences, we know that some decisions, thoughts, and activities are good, while others are wrong. Violation of these standards will add to our insecurity and anxieties. Those who do wrong will turn around and make sure no one is pursuing them because they are worried about getting caught.

Man is uniquely set apart from other created things. Because of these special gifts, he is able to both commune with God, and also project himself apart from the care of God. This exposure to the world makes us vulnerable to worry.

So why is it that man can worry?

In order to understand why people worry, let's look at how some of the basic functions of man work in conjunction with each other. When we combine man's time awareness along with and self-awareness, we can understand why man is not only conscious of his needs but also able to anticipate his future needs.

Both people and animals get hungry, and as a result, both search for food. Man, however, might remember that he does not have enough money for food. As a result, he starts to worry about his future and present. He may get so worried that he never even starts to look for a way to get food!

Animals are not able to worry about such things. They might starve, but they won't get anxious about not having enough food. They function with what they have. Man, however, regularly evaluates how he can or cannot do things, and the consequences of those situations.

We have compared our basic needs to that of animals so that we can see that squirrels, flowers, and humans all have some basic needs such as water and sunlight. However, only humans have the capacity to worry about them.⁴

But it's not the need that makes man worry. The squirrel and flower face needs similar to that of yours and mine. The difference stems from man's awareness of his needs and his ability to project

⁴ For argument's sake, we are not trying to differentiate man's needs to be very different from animals. Man does possess spiritual needs, but this is on top of the common worries of life. Humankind and animals equally share these physical needs but respond differently to them. Spiritual needs have arisen because of man's disobedience.

these needs into the future without possessing a confidence that they will be cared for.

Our body chemistry

Before pursuing our point further, we must understand how our body chemicals have an impact on our lives. There is a lot of misleading information being spread about. People hear that worry comes from a chemical imbalance, but we should be careful at what is being stated and assumed.

A person does not initially worry because of a chemical imbalance, but because of his or her perception of things. An inner chemical imbalance might occur due to some long and pronounced worry. Worry, however, is not chiefly perpetuated by those chemicals, nor is the adjustment of our chemistry the solution to our worries; this is hype for promoting big businesses.

Man is more than the sum of his chemicals; he has a spiritual and emotional element. The four characteristics of man mentioned earlier all flatly reject a materialistic presentation of man. Because of this, we cannot believe that chemical solutions will solve our problems.

Drugs can lessen or even distract us from our worry. Any solution that doesn't take the source of our worry into consideration, however, will be more damaging than helpful. Drugs dull awareness and don't provide peace from God. True healing brings so much more than what these chemical solutions offer.

Reliance on drugs will disable man from finding real short- and long-term solutions. These drugs can limit extreme and dangerous responses, but unfortunately, this is not how the millions of drug prescriptions are being prescribed or used for today—they merely dull a person's perception.

Man is able to worry because he has the capability to project himself and his situation into the future. The gifts that God has given us are wonderful if used well, but if used badly, worry will become prominent in our lives.

Here are some special insights from the scriptures on why man worries. We will see that worry is not natural. We were never designed to handle worry.

A Penetrating Look

When did man first worry?

I am excited to share this historical picture of man. These five stages show us how man came to worry. Which stage are you in right now?

1. Man before the Fall

Man was made to totally trust in the Lord. He was created to believe that God would take care of his needs; worry was non-existent. He was aware of the future in addition to his own needs, but his trust in God was so profound that it prevented any concern over the fulfillment of these needs to surface.

2. Man during the Fall

During the fall, man was tempted to question whether God cared for him. He had the option of acknowledging God's care and trusting His word, but instead, he chose to question the depth of God's care. Man decided to care for his own needs from his own resources, rather than trust God to do it. In the end, it was a choice that separated man from God, known as the Fall of Man.

3. Man after the Fall

After the Fall, man became preoccupied with meeting his own needs. In the Garden, he established that he no longer trusted God

to do it, which is a decision that has affected the human race ever after. Since we were made with an awareness of the future, we have an innate desire to make sure our future needs are cared for. In this process, however, we replace our trust in God with trust in other things.

As long as man gets what he *thinks* he needs, he won't worry. However, whenever this confidence is shaken, man responds with worry and anxiety. Insecurity describes this lack of confidence in our ability to gain what we think we need. Consider two people, both of whom lost their jobs and don't have much food or money. One person worries because of his inability to buy food to eat. The other person, however, doesn't worry. She figures that somehow it will work out. Both have a need, but the one who lacks confidence will be the one who worries.

4. Man Rescued by Jesus Christ

The ability to trust God to satisfy our needs returns when we become God's children through belief in Jesus Christ.⁵ The words 'believe in', 'put confidence in' and 'put trust in' are a few translations of the same original Greek word (*pisteuo*). Many scriptural promises affirm God's care for us.

If God is able and willing to care for our eternal souls, then we can trust Him to care for our temporal needs too. "He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?" (Romans 8:32).

5. Man Again Strays

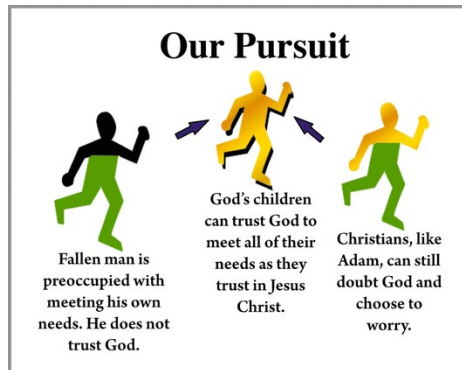
However, like Adam, Christians can be distracted with temptations that whisper words like, "God can't help me" or "I'm missing out

⁵ This does not mean that the unbeliever will always worry; only that the believer no longer needs to worry.

on something.” Worry then, for the Christian, is the expression of doubt, a lack faith and trust in God to care and fulfill his needs. When we don’t trust God, we will find ourselves trusting other things to fulfill our needs. If care is not taken, this can become idolatry.

Which stage are you in right now?

Based on what we’ve learned, we acknowledge that worry is not simply a mental health or body chemistry problem. Anxiety is connected to the way we poorly relate to and trust our Creator God. Anxiety affects our bodies and our minds, but its roots are spiritual in nature, so our solution must involve an evaluation on the way we trust, or do not trust, God.



If you look closely at the ‘Our Pursuit’ diagram, you will notice two arrows that summarize the two purposes of this book.

- Left arrow: Bring those who do not know God to know Him through Jesus Christ and gain His offered peace.
- Right arrow: Bring every believer to experience the perfect, powerful and persisting peace of God; this is God’s purpose for us.

Our peace should be of such quality that we can trust God our Father to care for **all** of our needs, whatever they may be. I know we aren't there yet, but this is where we're going, step-by-step, across the bridge on our journey to God's peace.

Let's look at how this works in our lives.

Defining our Problem

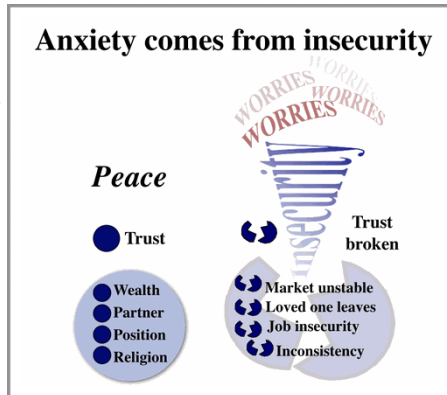
Anxiety comes from a lack of confidence in the things we have trusted to provide for our essential needs.

When we don't trust God to fulfill our needs, we attempt to fill the hole created by displaced trust, with people or things. When these things that we have relied upon reveal some form of instability, we become insecure and stressed; we're not sure how our needs will be met.

Insecurity occurs when we begin to discover that the things that we have trusted in

are no longer trustworthy. As a result, we are confused and unsure of the future.

The deepest needs in our lives are often hidden away in our hearts, shielded from the light of day. They are acquired early on and we grow accustomed to their presence, so they gradually become harder to notice.



Insecurity, like an earthquake, sends shock waves of worry deep down into our hearts and lives.

In the absence of trust in God, there are many ways man comes to expect the fulfillment of his needs. Sometimes it is family or the government, and other times it is a bank account or trust fund. This habit of misplaced trust is often unconsciously learned as a young person.

A boy will learn that he never needs to worry except when heavy rains comes. When the storm approaches, his parents begin to panic, clueless as to what might happen, and as a result, the boy adopts the same anxious response to storms.

Man might trust his accumulated wealth, other people, position, religion, and a host of other things that satisfies what he perceives to be his greatest needs. When the promise of help is no longer viable, then his trust wavers, and he desperately looks for other solutions.

For example, many people committed suicide during the Great Depression because they lost their fortune. The reason for their suicide was because they had lost the thing in which their confidence was placed: wealth. They knew of no other way to deal with the future except to avoid it.

People are going to face problems because God promises to shake anything that man puts his confidence in. In the end, God says in Hebrews 12:26-27 that He the Lord “will shake not only the earth, but also the heaven.”

If our confidence is in our invested wealth, we will discover that we are preoccupied with preserving that invested wealth. We will pay close attention to its welfare not just out of interest and

greed, but also because of the role it plays in our emotional security. When the market prices begin to quiver, worry floods into the hearts of many.

People in more economically advanced countries, especially need to keep a healthy perspective. In a majority of cases, the problem is not that we fear there will be no food on the table or that we will be robbed on our way home, but the worry that what we trust in is threatened. Some people place their hopes in the stock market investments, while others lean on their connections with others. Still others rely on their jobs, religion, political parties or titles. When what we trust in begins to totter, then we worry.

Tolerance for anxiety will destroy our lives. It shows that our hearts are attached to this perishing world rather than our Father's kingdom. The challenge is to live beyond a preoccupation of ourselves and trust our needs into the hands of our loving Heavenly Father.

Let's look at what causes lack of peace.

A Different Perspective

How we view things really make a huge difference!

Our city has been reconstructing a number of main roads, bridges, and tunnels. As you go by the construction, it's hard to appreciate the work being done to repair the roads. Only after the construction is complete can drivers really enjoy the hard work that has been poured into the roads. In the process, though, it's easy to find ourselves complaining about the horrendous traffic and endless detour routes. But is a crummy road better than a smooth road? No, it is better to get it fixed.

For example, they discovered a structural weakness in one highway that travels along the edge of a 70-foot cliff. In certain places the road extends over the cliff. Is it better to block off the road, spend huge amounts of money and inconvenience thousands of drivers so the road can be properly repaired, or is it better to keep using the road? They could lower the speed limit and put up warning signs, “*Travel at your own risk.*”

Most people would agree that they would rather put up with the cost and temporary inconvenience, rather than face the possibility of disaster.

And how will they fix the road? Undoubtedly, they’ll take down the parts without proper support and buttress the structure with new supports. After this, they will rebuild the road on top of the foundational structures. Similarly, God does the same with our lives.

The world has put its trust in the things that will fail. The word ‘reliable’ can only be applied to the things that endure. Our worries in this world reveal the shaky foundations of the things we place our trust in.

Don’t you think it’s time to work with God and let Him take down the unreliable pillars you have been trusting in? Listen to God’s perspective:

*And the world is passing away, and also its lusts;
but the one who does the will of God abides forever (1 John 2:17).*

*For He has brought low those who dwell on high, the unassailable
city; He lays it low,
He lays it low to the ground, He casts it to the dust (Isaiah
26:5-6).*

*And they heal the brokenness of the daughter of My people superficially, Saying, 'Peace, peace,'
But there is no peace (Jeremiah 8:11).*

We know there's a cost to serious road repair. The same is true with the restoration of our hearts. We know what we need to do, but will we make the sacrifice of what is necessary? That is the key question.

We normally avoid thinking about worry. We don't want to admit to fearing defeat. We avoid it like the plague. But destruction of false hope is good if it happens before our death. All of the things that we trust, apart from God, will one day fail us. If they fail now, we still have time to rebuild on a foundation that does not perish.

Rebuilding the right way

Only the destruction of false hope will allow us to analyze our situation honestly and rebuild successfully. However, we need to be careful. There are two options, and it's easy to choose the wrong solution.

- We might latch onto another unreliable hope, which promises great hope.
- We'll put our trust in our Lord's care for us.

When God speaks of destruction, all the things we trust in will eventually become liabilities rather than assets. It is helpful for us to start examining our hearts now, while we have the chance. What are the things that we put our trust in? The wise King David examined his heart, and here's what he said:

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
(Psalms 139:24).

Only when we recognize our brokenness can we see our idols. The God of peace, however, patiently welcomes us to restore our trust in Him, a trust that we were originally designed to have.

Providing a Solution

To gain the security that we were designed to have, we need to trust in the One who is all powerful, the One who genuinely cares for us.

The Creator God of the universe is the only one who has the power to set us free from our worry infested lives. Only He can help us set the foundation that we need in order to live a worry-free life.

1. God is powerful

Then Job answered the LORD, and said, “I know that Thou canst do all things, And that no purpose of Thine can be thwarted” (Job 40:1-2).

God is able. He can do what He wishes; all power is His. Some would say that His power is a shared power, but this is not true. The Lord clearly leads us to understand that He does what He wishes. He might delegate power, but that’s a different issue. He is all powerful.

2. God is in control

And to Him was given dominion, Glory and a kingdom,
That all the peoples, nations, and men of every language Might serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion Which will not pass away; And His kingdom is one which will not be destroyed (Daniel 7:14).

God is not only all-powerful, but He is also in full control of things. He has authority (Mark 9:1) over all things, including evil. Sickness and death are enclosed in His purpose; He exercises His will on earth from heaven.

3. The God of peace

And the God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus be with you (Romans 16:20).

God is powerful and fully able to do what He wants; His ultimate purpose is to bring eternal peace and harmony. It is possible, perhaps, that He would allow perpetual opposition, but He is a God of peace.

4. God cares for you

Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time, casting all your anxiety upon Him, because He cares for you (1 Peter 5:6-7).

“God ... cares for you.” What a wonderful statement! This is a promise that ensures us that God will take care of us. The only requirement is that we genuinely be His children, because only then will these promises be true for us.

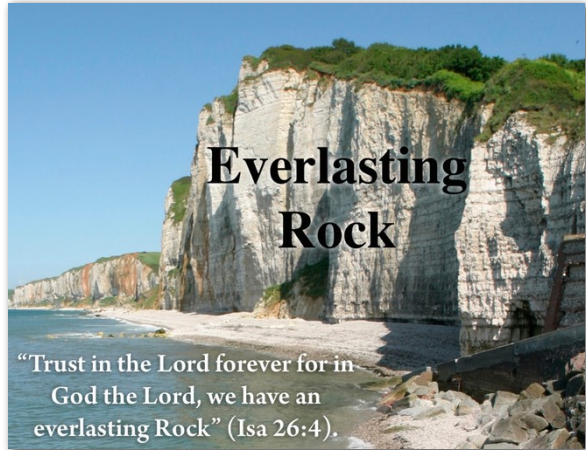
Let’s take a better look at God’s reliability.

True Security

Genuine security is based on two principles: constancy and protection.

“Trust in the Lord forever for in God the Lord, we have an everlasting Rock” (Isaiah 26:4).

Notice how we are called to put our trust in God; He even gives us reasons to trust Him.



Do you see the word ‘for’ above in the verse? The two reasons are summarized in the phrase “everlasting Rock.”

Constancy

The word ‘everlasting’ is defined in the ideas of unchanging, permanent, unyielding, uncompromising, and eternal continuance.

If our guard is let down for a moment, security has become meaningless. Something is only as strong as its weakest point. The Center for Disease in Atlanta failed on a critical day in the anthrax investigation because old wires caused a fire. God, however, is everlasting. He doesn’t change in time because He is not bound by time. Reliability can be applied only to those things that will endure the testing.

Protection

When we think of a rock, the description that comes to mind is one of firmness, solidarity. It's not something that can be challenged; it's a foundation. In this case we are not speaking of a real rock, but rather we're using it as an illustration to explain how the Lord acts in our lives. "For in God the Lord, we have an everlasting Rock" (Isaiah 26:4).

With the increase of affordable security options for homeowners, many people live in secure homes. Their hearts, however, cannot be protected by these systems; their hearts are vulnerable to issues that plague their lives and families. Every time their problems show up, their false sense of peace is rattled. Worry can, and will, penetrate big bank accounts, nice houses, loaded freezers, high-end cars, and influential positions.

Only in the Lord do we have true security. True security cannot be shaken by any amount of trauma in life. It's solid. God's promise is to protect all of His people in the New Covenant, a seal by Christ's blood on an eternal covenant. Our belief in Christ's death for our sins on the cross is significant, because from that point on, we are God's dear children.

The steadfast of mind Thou wilt keep in perfect peace,
because he trusts in Thee. Trust in the LORD forever,
for in GOD the LORD, we have an everlasting Rock
(Isaiah 26:3-4).

What are we going to do when we hear that the terrorists now have nuclear weapons with intentions to use them? The bombs that were originally designed to protect us, can now be used against us!

Let me share a story that illustrates the peace God can give to the person who depends on Him.

A story

A father took his daughter to church one Sunday, and on the way stopped to get gas. A man asked for help to get his car jump-started down the road. The man agreed, but not too far down the road the man pulled out a gun. He demanded all the father's money and threatened to shoot if the demand wasn't met. The father gave him what he thought was all his money, but the gunman saw a bill sticking out of the Gideon Bible in the car. The gunman screamed out demanding all the money. The father, realizing the evil, started praying aloud:

“Father in heaven, hear my cry and deliver me from this present evil....”

As he prayed, he lost all of his concern and worry, and turned the car around. The gunman was stunned and demanded to know what he was doing. The driver explained that he was no longer taking orders from him. The robber threatened to pull the trigger, but the father quoted scripture, “Greater is he that is in me than he that is in the world.” The father's Jesus is stronger than the gun.

The man started to pull the trigger, but the father simply pulled the car to the side of the road and shared Jesus with him. When they got back to the station, the driver asks for all the money back, and the gunman, with tears in his eyes, left with a revolver in one hand and a Bible in another.

We are not recommending the above response in every situation, but it does illustrate the power of trust. Once the father trusted God, He could then be sensitive to what God wanted him to do.

A security system only works if you are within its perimeter! Can you be sure you are within the perimeter of God's security?

Let's go over the two steps that it takes to find peace.

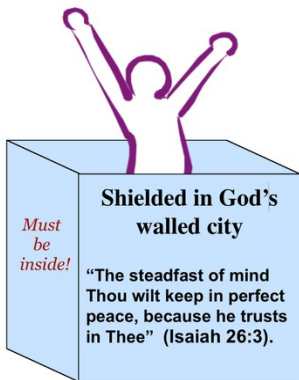
Gaining Genuine Peace

Peace doesn't come by destroying the things that we trust in for security; perfect peace comes when we trust in God.

There are two steps that will lead us to the peace of God: renunciation and trust.

1. Renounce

The first step is to renounce the things that you once trusted, so go ahead and name them one by one. The things of earth will ultimately fail and disappoint you. Earlier we mentioned that to leave our worries behind means that we need to give up our earthly securities. Needless to say, these things are difficult to give up.



Our lives are built around keeping the things we value the most. If we don't give them up, however, they will eventually fail us, and we will have lost the chance to rebuild our foundation.

2. Trust

All of us can worry; we have this capability because we are made with the ability to think of the future and be aware of our needs, and we worry because we don't trust God to fulfill those needs. Despite His incredible power and love, we still struggle to trust Him. Has He not shown Himself so faithful? Instead, we again and

again choose to believe that our unreliable sources will meet our needs.

You will find that the scriptures constantly refer to God giving peace to the righteous. The righteous are those who have put their trust in God. We know this because they have chosen to obey God in what He tells them.

Summary

Man is not very capable when it comes to breaking down and rebuilding the foundation of his life. He loves the security of what he has, so why should he disturb anything? It isn't safe to ignore the problems that come as a result of our worrying. Each reappearance of worry can serve as an announcement that pushes us to pause our lives and let God rebuild them before it is too late.

Seek His help. Only He can help you after you realize that the only way to build your life on a strong foundation is to break down your established, unstable foundation, take down what is there, and then build something so much more beautiful and enduring. Let God speak to you about your poor foundation, and let Him show you how worry springs from that poor foundation. Finally, ask Him to rebuild your life. We are blessed that God is eager to help us.

Before going on into chapter three, let's review what we have learned so far.

Chapter 2: Touching Our Lives

Upon the completion of this chapter, you should understand where your worry comes from. With the problem of Adam's misplaced trust, we find that our path to get rid of anxiety is to put our trust back in God. Let's focus on the key points from this chapter that will enable us to do that very thing.

Principles

Which principles were strongly impressed on you? Circle them.

- Animals don't worry; only humans can worry because they are time conscious of time and are self-aware.
- Worry affects a person's physical, emotional, and spiritual life; yet worry is a spiritual problem.
- God designed man to live without worry.
- Adam blundered when he thought he could care for his needs better than God; we still make the same mistake.
- Worldly peace depends on whether the things man trusts in remain secure.
- Insecurity results from seeing the things we trust in fail to provide for us.
- All the things we trust, except God, will ultimately fail us.
- When the things that we trust in are taken away, we are humbled and are able to open ourselves to other solutions.
- God has provided a solution to overcoming worry through Jesus Christ. Through Christ's suffering and resurrection, God has shown His power and love to mankind. God is willing to care for man. We need to put our trust in only Him.

Application

What clear decisions, plans, or confessions do you need to make?

- Are you open for God to take down your poor foundation and build a big and better one?
- Do you need peace with God as an unbeliever, or the peace of God as a believer?
- What have you personally put your trust in other than the Lord?
- What are the things that you need to renounce?

Testimonies

“I never thought of my life as something that needed to be deconstructed. Now, I realize that a lot of bad habits and thoughts have to be torn down before I can build up a good foundation. It takes time; it is not immediate. The way that my worries pop up, because of what is going on around me, ruin so many days. I can’t solve them on my own. I am asking God to lead me across this bridge; I have asked Him to remove what needs to be removed. I need God to be my Helper during this time.”

“I am so excited to learn about the history of worry. I never knew how it began. I now know man was not designed for worry. This of course includes me. I am looking forward to learning how to get rid of these worries.”

OVERCOMING ANXIETY
Finding Peace, Discovering God

RECOGNIZING RESPONSIBILITY

Chapter #3

I remember visiting a computer software demonstration seminar a good number of years back. One business was displaying what their recently upgraded computer software could do. As with most demonstrations, they made a wonderful presentation so that by the end the participant is convinced that their product will make them more productive; the consumer is convinced that his problems can be solved with the software. The problem is that he doesn't have the product! He needs to obtain the item before he can be productive again.

In chapters one and two, we've explored why humans worry, but knowing that doesn't enable us to overcome worry, does it? We need to go deeper. How? By allowing the truth of God to touch our hearts. We don't need to buy any software (It's free!), but we do need to allow truth to affect our lives. The truth must penetrate our minds before it will be able to help us.

This chapter will enable you to take a big step toward eliminating worries and gaining God's peace. Without God's peace, you cannot be worry free.

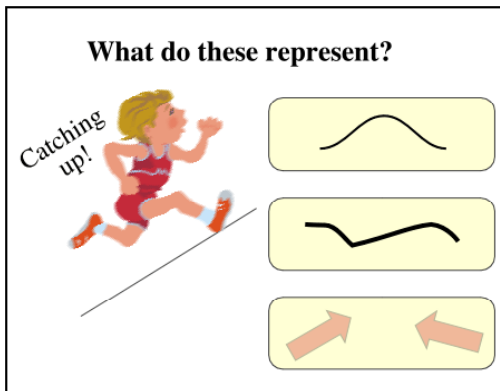
Let's pray before continuing.

Dear Father, we tend to be shallow people. We accept the superficial, the casual, and tend not to run for excellence and completeness. Help us not only to know the truths that set us free, but indeed let them live in our lives to such a degree that we are set free. We want nothing less than what your Word promises to give us. Break through our stubbornness, our blindness and yes, even our worries, so that we might come to your great and glorious peace. In Christ's Name, Amen.

If you abide in My word,
then you are truly disciples of Mine; and
you shall know the truth, and
the truth shall make you free.

Catching Up

Let's do a bit of review.



The three illustrations in the box above each stand for some significant teaching we have learned.

1. The Inverted Curve stands for the bridge or the journey God wants to take us on. Most of us have hopefully already taken one or two steps over that bridge.

2. The Valley stands for the five historical stages of worry. Each of us fit into one of the last three categories:

- Self-dependent (not a Christian)
- Not worrying (at the top like we should be)
- Trusting ourselves rather than the Lord (Christian)

3. The Two Arrows represent the two main goals of this book.

First, we are trying to bring people to trust in God through Jesus Christ. He is the Prince of Peace. Adam misplaced our natural trust in God, but Jesus restored it so that we can have peace with God.

Second, we want Christians to obtain what is rightfully theirs. They have been deceived into thinking they cannot get rid of their worry. This is not true; they are designed to walk in the peace of God.

Throughout each chapter, I will continue to provide a few questions to remind us and review what we have learned.

Step one, that is, chapter one, shows us how God gives us hope to overcome all our worries. Step two describes the reasons humans might worry. Now, let's carefully look at the third step we will take over the Bridge of Hope.

Recognizing Responsibility

With two feet on the Bridge of Hope, we are on the way to overcoming our anxieties!

Remember, the first couple steps have most to do with understanding anxiety and learning how to use the tools to combat it.

When we uncover various struggles in our lives, we need to deal with them. We can't just read through the chapters and think all will be well. Each problem will force us to make a decision on what to do.

At first, the bridge will take us on an upward journey. Like a hike up a mountain path, the struggle is only half the battle; big problems need to be dealt with early on before we can enjoy the easier down-hill journey.

A marathon runner will only wear what he has to. By making wise decisions about his racing outfit, he can be sure that his clothing doesn't hinder him from running to his best ability. In a similar way, we need to make decisions quickly and effectively. Don't put them off. You might even ask God now for wisdom to see what needs to be done in order to make those decisions as you walk over this bridge. Don't wait until the end. In the end, you want to focus on positive things, like sharing with others how God is working in your life.

The last chapter described why people like you and I worry. Worry is always linked with the insecurity in our hearts. We don't worry when we think we can take care of ourselves, but when our situation turns out to be too much for our own capabilities, we worry.

We need to be honest with ourselves in discerning how our personal decisions connect with our worries. We often think that

our worries stem from our circumstances rather than our own choices. The psalmist honestly wrote, “When **my** anxious thoughts multiply within me, Thy consolations delight my soul” (Psalm 94:19) .

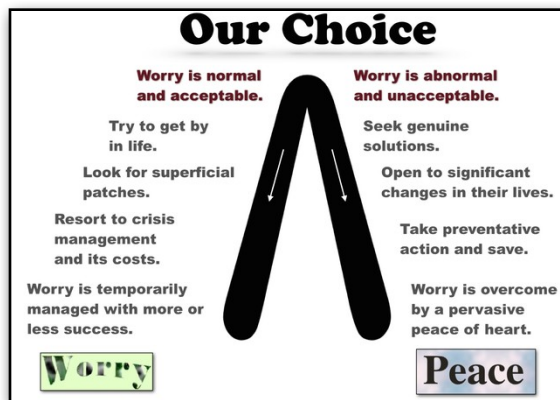
The word ‘my’ represents a confession; He is troubled by anxious thoughts. Thoughts belong to an individual. Here we find the very important principle of accountability: he acknowledged his thoughts and took responsibility for them. He could have simply allowed them to swirl in his head without acknowledging that they were his.

Are we honest in dealing with our anxious thoughts? Can we be honest enough to admit that we are worried or do we instead pretend that we have full control over our circumstances?

Let’s look at how becoming accountable for our worries leads us to a breakthrough in combating them.

Our Choice

Worry or peace is a life choice.



The assumptions and decisions we make determine whether we end up with worry or peace. The outcome rests on our prior assumptions.

Note the two prior assumptions at the top of the list in the illustration and how they lead in two very different directions: worry and peace. The choice of peace is the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

In both cases, it all starts with the temptation to worry. This is normal in any culture, in any time. The thought, for example, that something might not work out as planned happened to each of us, which causes us to become concerned about the possible negative outcomes.

Worry is normal and acceptable

In case one (left side of the diagram), the person sees worry as normal and acceptable. People rarely think about their acceptance of anxiety as ‘just part of life’. Having put up with its presence, they continue to live out their lives in the company of worry.

The person following this road tries to get by in life. He does what he can. Sometimes this means he borrows money, cheats or lies. Sometimes it means that he will work extra long hours. In any case, he works hard at finding a solution to the problem. He looks for patches or solutions to his problem, but in most cases they are temporary, they don’t really work in the long run.

For example, let’s say a man hears that his company is going to lay people off, and so he works long hours so that he won’t lose his job. Worry, however, has driven him to this decision. He didn’t evaluate things with a clear mind, and he is blind to the way he decided to manage this crisis.

There were problems at home, and his wife had been sending warning signals, but he was preoccupied with his work situation and thus could not recognize or address the problems. His marriage was on the rocks; his children were acting up at home.

Working extra hard couldn't change his work circumstances, he had only hoped it would. In the meantime, his heart was filled with worry and his family suffered because of it.

Worry is abnormal and unacceptable

A person on the path is faced with the same situation, but he doesn't believe that worry is acceptable. Instead, he desires God's peace. So how does this person handle the same situation differently? He, likewise, thinks about possible actions that he can take to solve the problem. But in this case, he chooses not to worry.

Maybe in the second person's case, he has heard news about possibly having a serious disease. He thanks God for this opportunity to trust Him. He researches possible changes in diet and other natural solutions available. He gets several opinions from different doctors. From the outside, it would appear that he is taking the same steps that the other man did.

The difference here, however, is that worry is not driving him. Wisdom is. When he comes home from work, he enjoys his family. He is unburdened and is thus able to serve in his church. He does not feel debilitated, but retains a cheerful spirit. He does what he can and trusts God to take care of the variables. He determines not to make compromises, such as lying to his boss.

Meanwhile, he carries on with life as normally as possible, considering the extra appointments and medical costs. His mind isn't filled with worry, but peace. Others, including his children, learn how to trust God even in troubled times.

Assumptions determine results

Each assumption entertains different life choices that become like a long, but determined, path. The outcome is obvious. Change your assumption, and you will change where you end up.

Many are not aware that there is a choice; ignorance is a basic problem. Most people, even many Christians, believe that worries are a normal part of life. When we make these assertions, however, we are no longer holding ourselves responsible. We pass the blame onto some other object, person, or gene.

Responsibility assumes that we have a will. We are humans made in God's image, and we are accountable for our choices because we are responsible to our Maker for how we live.

Many would suggest that humans are but dumb animals and that they should just follow their 'instincts.' This approach, however, belittles man's ability to make responsible decisions. He believes (and wants) to do what he feels like. He is boxed into his base desires. If he feels irritable because he is worried, then he treats people according to his feelings.

Our basic assumptions are what we believe deep down. Sometimes, during these difficult times, we find out what we really believe by our attitudes and how we treat others. We might say we believe in the peace of God, but our actions would show that we don't have it after all. We have revealed a flaw in our belief in God; it shows that we do not really believe that He can or will help us.

Perhaps we are more familiar with the one who just tolerates worry. Let's see how it works out with the one who seeks to leave his worries and find God's peace.

Seeking God's Peace

When we accept the fact that our worry is unacceptable before God (because He tells us not to worry) and man (because we treat others badly during periods of anxiety), we accept that we can't properly handle life on our own. It's okay to take a sensible course of action, but we also need to readily testify that we can't control things. This openness about our vulnerability allows us the freedom to seek God's help in problematic situations.

This sense of responsibility (and opportunity) to have peace spurs us on in the right direction in seeking God's help. However, we need to be in agreement with God about the fact that worry is unacceptable and that peace is only obtainable by His grace. These assertions are based on the truth revealed in His Word, and are consistent with His design for us and the way He has promised to aid His children in every part of life.

Recently, I was getting ready to train Christian leaders overseas. My flight out was planned for the next Monday, but all of a sudden, the country changed their visa policy: they no longer offered visas at the airport. Their website stated that it took 6 business days to process a visa. I didn't have time to get my visa ahead of time! All the training sessions were lined up and planned, and some participators had already started their long journeys to the training location.

Because of my assumption that peace was possible through God's grace and intervening hand, I decided to do two things. First, I prayed and entrusted my plans (and the plans of those overseas) into His hands. Second, I did what I could. I called the government office, got a haircut to take a picture to apply for an entry visa, etc.

Would you believe that God intervened and moved the government visa office to be willing to process the visa in only one business day? Well, He did! What a wonderful testimony to the peace of God in very trying times! I received my visa on Friday and was off to the training trip as planned. I was even able to use this example to encourage the brothers in this semi-closed country.

We would be wise to remember that the above ‘Our Choice’ illustration is not meant to describe our life as if this scenario can happen only once. Assumptions and decisions are made everyday. Our decisions either reinforce or counter previous ones. Repetition is the key to training, for good or bad. We hope to explain the reason for this in another chapter.

Now, let’s take a personal inventory of the areas in our lives that we need to be accountable for so that we can overcome our personal worries.

Personal Inventory

We need to face three problems if we are going to overcome our worries.

Unbelief, excuses, and distraction are three problems in our lives that originate from our hearts and don’t allow us to deal with real problems. In order to correct these deep-rooted problems, we need to make drastic, life-changing decisions.

As humans, avoiding change is something of a game. More often than not, we won’t catch ourselves deliberating over life’s decisions. If we want to overcome worries, we must pay close attention to how we think during times of worry because this is where the battle is.

When I was a boy, my dad would take my brother and me hiking up into the New Hampshire White Mountains. The trail to reach the mountain was beautiful and easy to hike. As the path progressed, we would notice a change: sweat was dripping from our face, and layers of clothing would gradually come off. We realized that we'd hit the real mountain; we were exerting ourselves as we slowly ascended the mountain.

You will feel resistance as we continue. Satan wants to maintain control of you, and he will try to distract you, or get you to dismiss what is being stated here as being irrelevant. I encourage you to stick with us. We need to make personal decisions that will have an impact on how we live. Remember, we are crossing the bridge to God's peace. He is with us, and He will strengthen us.

Let's look closer at the three reasons many people aren't able to overcome worries.

1. Unbelief

- Are you serious about what you believe?
- Do you take Jesus' words seriously?

Unbelief is seen whenever we are not willing to follow the directions God has given us.

2. Excuses

- Are you really desirous for God's peace?
- Do you defend my anxiety?

Excuses are the way we avoid personal responsibility for what God wants me to do.

3. Distraction

- Are you too busy?
- Do you depend on other things for security?

Distraction is what happens when we do not prioritize what is important and essential.

Like a car designed to run with gas, so we were made to run by the Spirit of God. We have used ineffective synthetics in our tanks, which have caused disastrous side effects on our lives. In the end, it will break down our whole system.

Pause for a moment. Quietly tell God that you need Him to go on, that you can't make it by yourself. Now, let's look at a popular first reason people do not believe.

Unbelief

During the Sermon on the Mount Jesus said three times, “Do not be anxious.”

For this reason I say to you, do not be anxious for your life... (Matthew 6:25).

Do not be anxious then, saying, “What shall we eat?” or “What shall we drink?” or “With what shall we clothe ourselves?” (Matthew 6:31).

Therefore do not be anxious for tomorrow; for tomorrow will care for itself. [Each] day has enough trouble of its own (Matthew 6:34).

When we understand the impact of Jesus' words, we are humbled. We suddenly remember the many times we have gone against His command not to worry. The issue is not whether Jesus stated it or not, but on responding to His words.

We have tolerated the existence of worry in our lives. We worry about what people think about us, or we're stressed about reaching the quota our boss has set. We are anxious about a report from the doctor.

Jesus' command brings the fight with anxiety back into the ring. All of a sudden, we are responsible for dealing with our anxiety decisively. We can't change our circumstances, but we can change how we respond to what happens around us.

Disbelief in God's word will always hold us back from obtaining God's perfect design. Some people think God uses His commands to keep the best things of life from us. God's commands, however, lead us to the perfect peace that He has promised. Trust (belief) and obedience come hand-in-hand.

The command not to be anxious will elicit one of two responses:

Either we will ignore or obey Jesus' words.

If we ignore Jesus' words, we might respond by saying to ourselves that Jesus didn't really mean what He said. This isn't something we say aloud, but how often do we think it? Our ability to pass off these commands as irrelevant is an indication of our rebellion against God's word.

To help you get a clearer picture of the unbelief associated with worry, here is what a person might say if he doesn't confess his sin of worry.

"Jesus, I know what you said, but I am different. I tried, but somehow You made a miscalculation regarding my life. I am going to keep worrying because your commands don't apply to my life."

This quasi confession is totally inadequate to appropriately deal with the worry. Can you see how this person made allowance for his anxiety? Although he might not think it ideal, he makes room for the stress in his life, and he can't change until he knows he's done wrong.

If, on the other hand, we humble our hearts and admit that we have disobeyed Him, then a time of repentance comes. We seek Him for grace to help us obey.

Acknowledgment of our worries must be followed up with a clear confession to the Lord of how we've been anxious. Once we recognize our anxiety, we will see how we've neglected other responsibilities because of worry. We should confess these sins as well. This is the spirit of repentance that we are looking for. Admitting that you worry and following up with confession is a great way to institute change.

Some suggest that it takes a lot of time to stop worrying. This happens, however, either because you are not properly handling the worries or because your hearts are not willing to change. Fortunately, worry can be dealt with in a fairly short time. No need to wait for weeks and month. God wants to heal us now.

The place of prayer

Start with admitting that you've failed to obey Him. Instead of saying that you can't help it, confess how you never took Jesus' command seriously. In this process, you are admitting your weakness of unbelief rather than excusing yourself from Jesus' command. Here is a prayer you might offer to God:

Dear Father in Heaven, I have failed you again. All my life I thought worry was just part of life. I see now how clearly Jesus has told me not to worry. I know the scriptures but was somehow blind to them. I am so sorry for treating your word so shabbily. Please forgive me. I seek your grace to be changed. I cannot cross the bridge on my own. Please help me somehow to stop worrying. In Christ's Name I pray, Amen.

But wait a minute!

I know some of you will say, “I can’t help but worry!” You are wondering about what’ll happen after you confess your worry. Will anything be different? Do not be excessively concerned about this. As you cross the bridge, we will show you the steps.

Let’s look at how we use excuses to stay in our worry.

Excuses

Smoke’s danger comes from the lack of visibility it creates.

A smokescreen covers up a situation to the point that we can’t really see what’s happening. As long as we can produce enough smoke from our excuses, we will hide ourselves in the sphere of irresponsibility.

Before we can perceive the real complications of our situation, we must clear away the excuses that act like a smokescreen. Until we stop making excuses for ourselves, we won’t be able to leave our anxieties behind.

Excuses blame everyone but ourselves. Why? We are too prideful to admit that our problems are due to our unbelief along with our bad decisions and actions. Instead of facing up to who we really are and God’s solutions, we make excuses.

Here are three common excuses that people use when they try to avoid dealing with their anxieties. Are they true about you?

My circumstances are difficult.

When we blame our difficult circumstances for our anxiety, we only engender a frustrated heart. We say in our heart:

- If I had more money,...
- If I had better health...

- If I had that degree...

The list doesn't end here! The number of things to worry about is limitless, and it doesn't matter the situation we find ourselves in, because in the end we'll find ourselves back in a pit of worry. Excuses distort our vision. Instead we should say,

“Lord, I'm sorry. I've failed You by worrying. I haven't trusted you in this area of my life.”

Later in this chapter, we will look at how Jesus, free from worry, handled a stressful situation.

My background is different.

Some of us are accustomed to using our personal and social situations as an excuse for our behavior. This can include our height, race, culture, traditions, sex, etc. Studies have proven that our childhood situation strongly influences our adult lives and the Bible even mentions this pattern in the Ten Commandments (Deuteronomy 5:16).

Unfortunately, we use this excuse to produce the “I can't help it” attitude rather than the “God forgive me and help me” prayer. By saying, “We can't help it,” we are saying that we've refused the responsibility we have to find a real solution. If this attitude isn't addressed, we will take our worries to the grave.

In the above two cases, we are destined for a life of despair and depression unless we turn our focus to something other than our circumstances. This is an impossible feat on our own, but remember that all things are possible with God!

The third excuse, that worries can be helpful, is perhaps the most subtle and popular excuse!

Isn't Worry Really Helpful?

One of the most deceptive and disabling excuses is the false belief that worry is helpful. However, when we take a close look at the terms we use, we will find that we confuse worry and concern. Worry by definition is extreme concern. Real worry is never helpful! Let's examine the blurred line between worry and concern.

• Worry distracts us.	• Concern focuses us.
• Worry disables planning.	• Concern helps us plan.
• Worry blurs our vision.	• Concern clarifies our purpose.
• Worry causes us to give up.	• Concern perseveres.
• Worry exaggerates.	• Concern will pinpoint problems.
• Worry focuses on self.	• Concern cares for others.

Worry is a preoccupation with one's own needs.

Anxiety doesn't motivate us to take care of our concerns; it only leads to confusion. Worry keeps our eyes off the Lord, who, in any other circumstance, can strengthen us. Worry blinds us to the needs of the people around us, and causes us to zone in on our own issues.

Society has accepted the deadly 'I must care for myself before I care for you' philosophy. It's like a tombstone that covers our lives. Concern, however, is the kind of love that distinguished Christ and His disciples from the general populace. They had gone beyond the point of focusing on their own problems for the sole purpose of helping others with theirs! You have a choice to make: worry or love?

Summary on Excuses

Excuses remove us from true healing because they hide the wound. They perpetuate a trash-filled hole in your soul by saying worry is

tolerable. We insist on hiding the deadly disease that paralyzes us from genuine concern. Worry permanently chases time and love away. **Can you agree that worry always does you no good?**

Three kinds of excuses were discussed:

- My circumstances are difficult.
- My background is different.
- Worries are sometimes helpful.

Each excuse keeps us from facing our worry and allowing God's abundant peace into our souls.

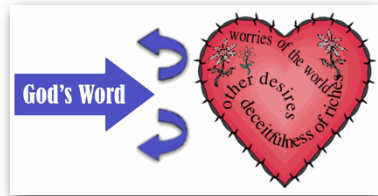
Moving On

Unbelief was the first way we avoid dealing with our worries. Excuses is the second. Let's discuss the third thing we employ to avoid dealing with our worries.

Inattention

The third major problem that makes us irresponsibly deal with our anxieties is inattention or distraction.

Inattention means that we are too preoccupied with other matters to deal with our worries. We are blinded by busyness. We need to make room for God's word in our hearts if we want to be able to accept it.



Jesus said that there are three things that can and will choke out the effectiveness of the Word of God: worry of the world, deceitfulness of riches, and desire for other things.

And others are the ones on whom seed was sown among the thorns; these are the ones who have heard the word, and the worries of the world, and the deceit-

fulness of riches, and the desires for other things enter in and choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful (Mark 4:18-19).

One of the things that inhibits the effectiveness of God's word is worry, but all three are closely tied together. Riches promise a worry-free world, but Jesus said that riches will bring more worry! What about the desire for other things?

How many times have you worried about something you didn't have because it promised to make your life more happy, stress-free, etc.

When I was in university, there was a simple calculator that promised better grades and brought a competitive edge to the class. You could take either a slide ruler or calculator to an exam, but only a few students could afford the most basic calculator back then. One could worry about those with the advantage of a calculator.

Or how many times have you thought, 'If only I were more attractive, I'd be able to find a husband (or wife)'? Or 'If I had a nicer car, I could find some good friends'. The desire for things sets us up for worry.¹

The Power of God's word

Some suggest that God's word is not powerful enough to penetrate our problems, but they're wrong.

¹ Buddhism has its whole philosophy centered around the problem of desires. Their solution is to say desires are sinful because all material things are evil. Christianity affirms the goodness of material things but places the problem on the fact that man has become reliant on things rather than God. In other words, in this high tech world mankind has worked God out of a position. But in fact, our worries reveal that we desperately need God. Things don't deliver the promise of peace and love that is so much needed in our modern world.

Right now God's word is breaking down walls. Remember that we need to make room for God's peace if we want to receive it. Repentance is the key in creating this room. We know the process now, so the question we need to ask ourselves is whether we really want God's peace or are we just looking for a quick fix?

We gain God's peace when we gain God. His Word enters our soul and we are changed by His presence in our hearts. God is laying out the requirements for His peace. The problem goes back to the kind of people we are. We were designed to be worry free. Adam was content and at peace with his life circumstances because of his trust in God.

We have discussed three things that make God's word ineffective: worries of the world, deceitfulness of riches, and desire for other things. I believe God wants us to give Him full control in these three areas. The Lord promises that the Word of God will powerfully touch our lives with amazing results if we make room for our lives to grow!

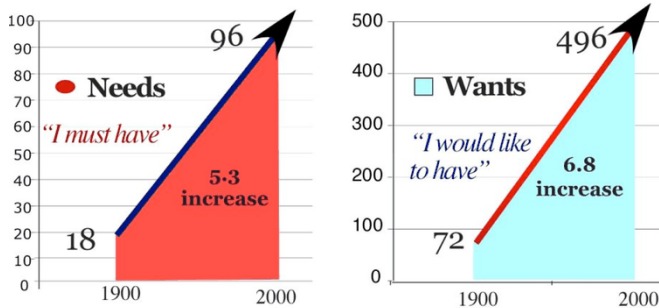
- What worries of the world trouble your heart? War? Economic problems?
- Do you believe that if you had more money your life would be less stressful and happier?
- Do you think that having certain things would make life better?

Let's take a closer look at the difference between our needs and our wants.

Needs vs. Wants

The ‘worries of this world’ have infiltrated our lives.

Needs vs. Wants



Miller said, “At the beginning of this century, the average American had 72 wants and considered 18 of them important. By the end of the century, the average American had 496 wants and considered 96 of them as genuine necessities for happiness.”²

The above chart, using the above figures, shows that our basic wants and needs have increased tremendously in just 100 years. (I doubt anyone would disagree!) The things we might worry about have gone far beyond the mere food, drink, and clothing that Jesus spoke about.

The number of our perceived needs and wants are directly correlated to the number of worries in the world. Notice how the simple line graph above so clearly reflects this trend in worry.

Today, our worries most often happen over our wants rather than our needs; our worry betrays our wayward and worldly hearts. Jesus goes a step forward. He addresses our tendency to worry over

² Hebert Miller’s Herb Miller’s Nuggets: Volume 31, http://www.godslove.org/resources/pdfs/herb_miller.pdf, p.5.

our most basic needs and says that it's sinful to worry even about them.

I would venture to say that, if the most basic supplies of life were taken away, we would quickly realize that our faith is not as strong as we thought. Even though we don't need to struggle with something on a daily basis, that doesn't mean the problem isn't there.

Jesus' command to store things up in heaven is the soundest advice we can get. We gain three things when we take Jesus' advice.

- We prove that we live for the eternal.
- A deep peace comes to our hearts.
- We have assured a greater profit than otherwise.

When we invest one talent, we shall gain one city. Check out the parable (Luke 19:17) and see for yourself!

We need to look at some solutions to these difficult problems.

Finding Genuine Solutions

Is worry simply a chemical problem? A mental health problem?

Many people nowadays are convinced that anxiety is primarily a physical issue having to do with their body chemistry. When they think about solutions, they often believe they need to take various drugs to offset the effects anxiety has on their lives. Medicine doesn't deal with the root of anxiety, though, and it certainly keeps people away from finding a real cure for it.

When we believe worry comes from the outside, we no longer hold ourselves accountable for our worries. We would rather tolerate them than confront them.

Listen to these popular claims. Each places most, if not all, of the blame for worry outside of ourselves. “Worry is something that happens to me” or “I can’t do anything about it.”

These excuses suit our pride because it lets us off the hook. We are no longer responsible. We are not at fault. Drugs cover up our inability to handle anxiety³ and they keep us from finding God’s peace.

Anxiety disorders are primarily a spiritual issue. Unless we are convinced of this, we won’t be able to deal with the worry in our lives. Jesus commanded us to stop worrying. He is calling us back to face our responsibilities. Here are three areas we need to focus on in order to overcome our anxiety.

1. In our heart

The heart is the source of our affections. Insecurities are born and rooted in the heart and are called idols because they demand servitude and attention that should only be given to God.

Love Him with all the heart and all the understanding and with all the strength, and love one one’s neighbor as himself, is much more than all burnt offerings and sacrifices (Mark 12:33).

2. In our Spirit

The spirit is where we communicate with God. Anxiety occurs because of the lack of peace. However, anxiety disorders are often seen as anything but a spiritual condition. Fortunately, restoration of our trust in God is possible by God’s grace, and enables us to gain God’s peace.

³ It should be noted we are not suggesting that anyone stop taking their drugs. Your bodies have become used to them. As your worry disappears, there will no longer be a need for such drugs. This can be discussed with your physician.

For to us God revealed them through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God. For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the spirit of the man, which is in him? Even so the thoughts of God no one knows except the Spirit of God. 12 Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things freely given to us by God, which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words. 14 But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised. 15 But he who is spiritual appraises all things, yet he himself is appraised by no man (1 Corinthians 2:10-15).

3. In Our Mind (Romans 12:2)

The mind is the control center for our thoughts. The evil one tries to gain control of our thought process by tempting us and distorting facts.

Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect (Romans 12:2).

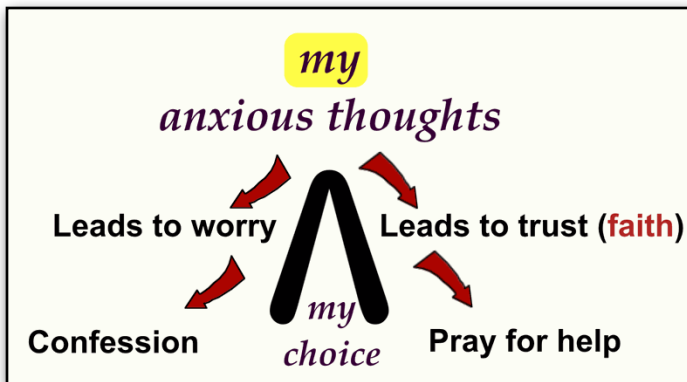
Our bodies reflect our inner struggles. We are not saying there is no chemical imbalance. Instead, we are saying that the chemical (i.e. physical) problems originate from our worries, not vice-versa. Genuine solutions must eliminate the root of worry, not cover it up. We are saddened that so many people's minds do not function normally under medication. This in part keeps them from seeking Jesus for real solutions.

In chapter two we saw that man is a spiritual being and anxiety has its root in spiritual problems. Later we will spend more time explaining how the mind is locked into the problem of worry. Our solutions, to be effective, need to simultaneously target all three areas.

Let's summarize this chapter by pointing out some practical steps.

Getting Practical

The psalmist called his anxious thoughts '**my anxious thoughts**.' He took responsibility for his thoughts rather than following their lead.



Facing our problems becomes one of the first major steps toward getting rid of anxious thoughts. If we cannot do this, then we will not get rid of our worries. We have a choice on how to handle our anxious thoughts.

Anxious thoughts are not worry in and of themselves. How we handle our anxious thoughts is crucial to properly dealing with them. We will either respond with worry or trust. Trust will defeat the anxious thoughts every time! By trusting, we believe the Lord

will care for our needs. In contrast, by worrying we allow our anxious thoughts to plague our hearts and minds.

Making the step

Have you accepted the truth that your worry is sinful and that it reveals that you have not been trusting in your Heavenly Father? Have you confessed this attitude of self-reliance and your sin of anxiety to the Lord? Perhaps you've used excuses to avoid dealing with your worry:

“My circumstances are different.”

“My background is different.”

“Worry can be helpful.”

Now is the time to be honest. By acknowledging our reliance on the Lord, we are rejecting our dependence upon ourselves. “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted” (Matthew 5:3-4). Humbling precedes healing; repentance comes before restoration.

Jesus commanded us to stop worrying. Why? He wants us to share in the fruit of trust and faith. Hope grows as we understand how to deal with our problems. Despair comes when we do not see a way to change things. By pointing out the way our decisions have brought us where we are today, we are also highlighting the way out. We have a choice; we can choose to do things differently.

By going on over the bridge we want to start dumping each worry that we find over the railing.

Assignment

List all of the things you worry about. In doing this exercise, you might discover related issues that you hadn't realized were there. As

you notice them, confess and ask for forgiveness until you have gone through all your known worries.

Let's look at how Jesus handled a situation that was wrought with circumstances that would typically produce worry.

Fishing for Funds

Unless we confront the worries that we meet up with in our daily lives, our confidence will remain unproven.

Confidence to face bigger worries comes from our experiences dealing with smaller worrisome situations. Jesus showed us how He trusted God for His needs and desires. We need to learn from Him. For example, what if you owed some taxes and the collector came for a visit, demanding that you hand over the money? What would you do? Would you worry?

The problem might be compounded by the fact that you don't have the money. Would you worry? Would you deceive the tax collector? Let's look over the sequence of events step by step.

- Jesus needed to pay a tax.
- Jesus was not expecting a pay check (He had no regular income).
- Jesus did not have any savings for the tax.
- The tax collector asked Peter, Jesus' disciple, for both Jesus and his own personal tax.
- Jesus was busy doing what God wanted Him to do.
- Jesus had confidence that His Father would take care of this need.
- Jesus sent Peter, a former fisherman, to get the tax money from a fish's mouth.

- The fish was caught and the needed money was found in its mouth.
- The tax was paid.

A pressing need - needed it now

A real need - just didn't have it

A monetary need - wanted cash

Jesus knew His Father had the solution for a similar situation He found himself in. Jesus put His trust in His Father in Heaven for this and other similar problems.

We all learn an important lesson on how we needn't worry when we have a bill that needs to be paid, even if we don't have the money.

Jesus trusted God that, by His sovereign design, a fish in the sea would have swallowed what He owed in taxes. He also believed that Peter would catch that one fish at the right moment. Clearly, it was a miracle. It proves God's love for His children. As God worked back then, so He continues to work even in this modern world with its credit cards and ATM machines.

A friend of mine had faced some big drains on his savings. He was telling me that, when he was single, it was easy to be low in cash; he would simply cut back. But now, with a wife and a couple of children, he found that it was a different and more difficult matter. He needed faith for the whole family.

What about you? Do you believe God is able to help you when you are financially strapped with unpaid bills? How do you apply Jesus' example to a situation like that?

Some might miss this practical lesson because they assume Jesus used super human powers to produce a miracle whenever He needed. The opposite is true. Jesus limited himself so that He could share in the nature of man (see Philippians 2:3-11).

Jesus restrained Himself from using His divine powers. He only did what His Father in heaven told Him to do. He lived a perfect life of dependence upon His Father and wasn't self-reliant. Jesus serves as a perfect example of what kind of life we ought to live.

Jesus took responsibility for His need. Jesus stated that He really didn't need to pay the Roman tax at all. However, He paid it to give us an example for how we can trust God to take care of our needs as long as we are busy doing what God wants us to do. In this case, God even used what we consider a miracle to provide for His need.

**We hope your journey is a lot easier
now that you have seriously faced up to
your worries and confessed them.**

In the next chapter, we will discover how to avoid worrying in the first place by detecting anxious thoughts as they go through our minds. But first, let's review some basic principles from this chapter. We cannot overcome worry without deepening the foundation of our faith.

Chapter 3: Touching Our Lives

Recognizing our responsibility not to worry and to put our trust in God is important. Fortunately, as Jesus has perfectly illustrated, God is willing to work with us to cleanse us from our self-reliance and lead us back to trusting Him for all our needs.

Principles

What principles were strongly impressed on you? Circle the ones that are most significant.

- Worry or peace is a life choice.
- Worry is a result of assumptions and decisions.
- Taking personal responsibility for my worry is one major means in eliminating them.
- Confession of my sins to Jesus Christ takes cares of the guilt incurred through anxiety.
- I worry about things I both need and don't need.
- Excuses for my worries strip away my ability to effectively deal with them.
- Worry is primarily a heart/spiritual issue.
- It's a sin to be anxious.
- I never need to worry due to my circumstances.
- Worry never helps us solve our problems.
- Humility precedes healing; repentance before restoration.
- I can choose to either be preoccupied with myself or others (love).

Application

What clear decisions, plans, or confessions do I need to make because of how God has spoken to me through this chapter?

- Am I going to choose peace or worry? What steps do I need to take to get there?
- List my worries and then pray through each one, confessing them to the Lord.

Testimonies

What one or two special lessons, stories, illustrations, warnings, etc. can you share with others it might encourage their faith?

- I am going to use the concerns vs. worry chart to show others that worry is always not helpful.
- I will tell at least two other people how Jesus got His tax money!

OVERCOMING ANXIETY
Finding Peace, Discovering God

DISCOVERING PATTERNS OF ANXIETY

Chapter #4

Some people like puzzles and fun. They like to buy books that have puzzles to figure out. In this chapter we will explore how discovering certain patterns will give us a whole new understanding of anxiety and how it works. As we explore these patterns of anxiety, we will be able to keep ourselves from falling into worry.

Take notes of what you are learning as you go along. Make most of the study questions in the back of this book along with all the exercises suggested. Combined with the special insights from God's word, you will, by His grace, overcome all your anxieties. Let's pray (it is suggested that you pray aloud).

Dear Father, how often we have fallen when we could have stood firm by your grace. Lord, please let us be wiser in the way we live. Let us be more alert to the ways of the evil one. We need you to give light now. Shine your truth into our hearts that all the evil one's

plans might be exposed and overcome by your great and glorious truth. In Christ's Name, Amen.

Our Choice

Our choices lead to different results.

Worry does not come or leave by accident. Worry comes through the decisions we make. Once we grasp this truth, we can then understand that other decisions can, and will, lead us to peace.

If we want to stop worrying, we need to change the way we approach life and decision-making. By God's grace, we can find forgiveness in Christ, change our assumptions, and begin to make the right decisions that will lead to God's peace. As we progress through the remaining chapters, we will discuss what these decisions are.

Our choices have consequences. When we understand the interrelationship between choices and consequences, we can begin to accept responsibility for the trouble that we find ourselves in, such as coming home late due to avoid disappointing one's boss, and being yelled at upon arrival at home. The following confession is an example of someone whose perspective has been righted: "It's my **fault** that I worry." "It is because of **my** poor decisions that I am anxious."

As you start to understand the role we have in worsening our worry, you might be surprised. We see the mess we've made of our lives, and we begin to feel that there is no way out, that we can't change. God, however, is always there to help us.

A Web of Worries

To be honest, many of us feel caught in a web of worries.

The problems that we face in our lives is much like an inescapable spider's web. We don't know how to cut ourselves loose. We doubt an escape even exists. When we try to get rid of one worry, two more take its place and we find ourselves more tangled than before.



Like a victim, we are caught, waiting to be swallowed alive by our problems. The truth is obvious: it is always easier to get into a web than out of one! The prevalence of this situation is illustrated in what one brother shared with me, having been caught in a web of worries:

“Unfortunately we live in a cauldron of worry in this world, and I have succumbed to that malady as well. I don’t think there is a way anyone can escape it, even if one believes in Christ.”

This is the way our brother felt. Trapped. Ensnared. Tangled. He couldn’t free himself, and didn’t believe that he ever could. Perhaps you can identify with one or more of the following thoughts:

- What can I do when I feel overwhelmed by anxiety?
- How can I control these anxious thoughts?
- Why can’t I think clearly when I am worried?
- Why can’t I shake these worries?

Imagine a huge cauldron. All our worries, fears, anxiety, and stress are thrown into it. The churning inside that pot well describes anxious people and the turmoil in their hearts and minds!

In many cases, people will distance themselves from other people who could help, rather than reveal their worries and difficult circumstances. Our goal, however, is not to remove people from our circumstances. More often than not, nothing can be done to change our situation. The things that cause us to worry will probably surround us for a long time.

There is a second lesson to learn from the web illustration: a spider can walk on the web without getting stuck. That's right. The web that represents fear, stress, and worry is still there, but a spider is able to walk around on it without getting caught. This is the sort of freedom that God promises to each of His children: we do not need to be ensnared by worries even though the circumstances that produce them are real.

Can you say a short prayer to the Lord, right where you are sitting?

Dear Lord, I am surrounded by things that trouble my soul, I am stuck. I can't get out on my own. I need your help to free me and to walk on the web of worries without getting entangled. Please help me. In Christ' Name, Amen.

I wouldn't be an international speaker if I was not convinced of the power that God provides for His people to live a worry-free life. There are no instant improvements to our circumstances, but there are solutions to the way we respond to things, and they come as we make changes in our lives.

In the same way as the roots of a tree are always deeper than we expect, our anxiety has laid a well-protected foundational net-

work that is more difficult to reach and expose than we anticipate. In the next chapter, we will identify how to detect these well-hidden roots. Be careful! You may not like what you see.

Depending on how long this worry web has been wrapping around our hearts and minds, our handling of worry must be a bit more discerning. What we might think is the dominant worry might not be the worst of it. As we move along through this book, we will, step-by-step journey over the bridge to God's peace. The closer we get to the other side, the more we will find ourselves experiencing God's peace, and the more displaced we will be from our anxiety.

Let's look at how we are going to do this.

Crossing the Bridge

So far we have discussed the things over which we are crossing. There is a reason we are on a bridge rather than walking

along the ground: we can't get rid of the testing circumstances in our lives, but we can, by God's grace, make our way over them, in the same way that a spider safely navigates his web.

In this chapter we want to take one more step across the bridge of hope. We'll learn the important difference between anxiety and anxious thoughts. Think about this verse:

When my anxious thoughts multiply within me, Thy consolations delight my soul (Psalms 94:19).

Without understanding the difference between anxious thoughts and anxiety, we will never be able to escape the snare of anxiety. Our ultimate hope is to bring you to the point where you



*"When my **anxious** thoughts multiply within me, Thy consolations delight my soul."*

can detect and prevent worrisome thoughts from dominating your life.

The problems we face are often very complex. They seem to lack a solution. Jesus knew that God could help each person that trusted in Him. In the Gospels we don't see Jesus wondering whether God could help someone whether they had or didn't have complex problems.

At the same time, Jesus knew the source of all problems – the Father of lies. However, through His death, He defeated the evil one by His death and resurrection. The Spirit takes the light of God's word, shines it on the lies lodged in our minds, and leads us onto the straight and narrow path.

Let's take a closer look at the nature of anxious thoughts.

Anxious Thoughts

Scripture helps us come to our senses partly because it deals with real people, in real time, facing real problems.

Real people are finding help through God's word. There are no easy outs, but there are real solutions. In the case of Psalm 94:19, we find a wise king who's noticed a storm of anxious thoughts swirling in his mind. The verse we quoted earlier is translated from the Hebrew. "When my anxious thoughts multiply within me, Thy consolations delight my soul" (Psalms 94:19).

It literally says, "*In the multitude of my disquieting thoughts that are deep within me...*" The word for "anxious thoughts" is thought to come from the image of the branches of a tree that go in different directions. This illustrates the confusion and restlessness that often accompany such thoughts.

Many have anxious thoughts, but few are able to detect them early enough to be effectively dealt with.

When David noticed that the number of his worried thoughts had bounced off the chart, he realized that he would not be able to handle this situation on his own. Let's look at how we can, like him, detect these thoughts early on.

Patterns Repeated

It seems that the writer of this psalm has encountered this “anxious thoughts” experience before.

He said, “When my anxious thoughts multiply within me.” The ‘when’ speaks of a pattern. A history. This has happened before.

The writer was very aware of what he was thinking. The more aware we are of the thoughts in our minds, the more we can begin to observe their patterns. We can actually begin to understand what happens inside us by paying attention to what we think.

Let's look number patterns for a moment. In order to find the answer, one has to figure out the pattern. Can any of you detect what the next number will be in the first row?

1, 4, 9, 16, _____

What about the second row?

0, 3, 8, 15, _____

The pattern in the second row is more difficult to discover. One has to rely on the similarity of the two rows to be able to figure out the second sequence. The first row simply squares the number. For example, the third number is multiplied by itself: 3×3 . The fifth number, then is also multiplied by itself: $5 \times 5 = 25$

The second row is difficult until we look at the first row. From the first row we find that the number below is always one number less than the one above. So the number is multiplied by itself and then one is subtracted from it. So the answer is 24.

You might wonder, “What does this have to do with anxious thoughts?” Some might even exclaim, “You’re giving me anxious thoughts!” The number of thoughts partially comprises the problem, but it can also provide clues that point to the problem, which can, in turn, lead to a practical solution. The number of anxious thoughts, then, can help us observe the patterns that go through our anxious minds, what we are thinking and why.

Do you pay attention to what you are thinking throughout the day? Many temptations can be stopped at the entrance to our minds if we can detect and then dismiss them before they cause any real trouble.

How can we be more aware of what we are thinking? Using the discipline of self-reflection, we need to train ourselves to be aware of what is happening inside our minds. A spiritual journal is a good place to share the reflections of our inner thoughts. For example, we can reflect on relationships, or what made a day good or bad. Writing thoughts down help us discover what we are worrying about.

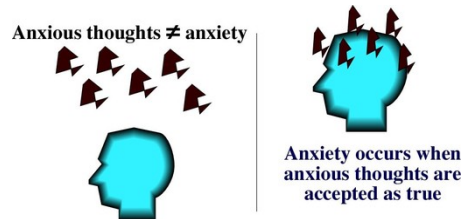
What did David discover? He discovered that the danger of anxiety in our lives grows when the *thought* becomes *thoughts*, that is, when many anxious thoughts (in the plural) appear like a summer thunderstorm.

Can you make a commitment to journal your thoughts for at least a month? Let’s explore how anxious thoughts turn into anxiety.

Troublesome Invasions

Anxious thoughts are not the same as worrisome thoughts. However, all anxious thoughts lead to worry if they are not effectively dealt with.

Anxious thoughts are temptations. They are seeds of doubt. Once accepted, they become sin. Anxious thoughts themselves are not sinful; they become sinful when we allow them to plant themselves in our hearts.



Keep in mind that that our hearts are fed by our minds. Unless we immediately deal with anxious thoughts, they will invade our minds and end up directing our thoughts. The more anxious thoughts grow in our hearts, the more we become vulnerable to their destructive work.

Fortunately, our thoughts are not the same as our actions. They influence our decisions, but we have the ability to reject the thoughts and their associated decisions. This is because we are made in God's image. We have control over our mind, thoughts, and actions. Later, we will see how this allowed the psalmist to find freedom from his anxious thoughts.

If we only had one worry that occasionally troubled us, it wouldn't even be considered "worry". Worry builds a bad reputation by returning again and again to haunt us. We tend to lessen our resistance to incoming anxious thoughts and compromise to their demands. Instead, we need to examine each thought and destroy it with the truth. How anxious thoughts break through the

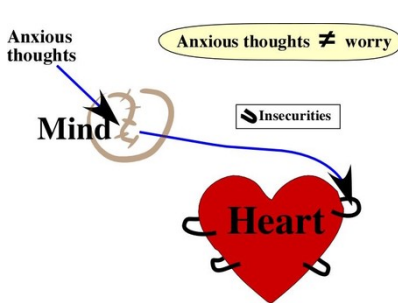
armor of our minds will later be discussed. At this point, however, we are simply trying to understand how worry troubles our souls.

When does an anxious thought become sinful?

Snagged

Anxious thoughts are easier to deal with than an anxious heart.

Anxious thoughts become worry when they become our heart's concern. Anxious thoughts hunt for insecurities in our hearts to latch onto. When they find insecurity, they hook themselves into



our hearts. Like parasites, they attach themselves to our heart, stealing our energy in order to grow themselves. The Scriptures warn us: "Watch over your heart with all diligence, For from it flow the springs of life" (Proverbs 4:23).

Anxious thoughts can come from an outside suggestion or from the turmoil that is already in our hearts. In any case, the only real reason anxious thoughts become worry is because of some perceived need of our hearts. This allows our insecurities to form a loop, which is how worrisome thoughts attach themselves to us.

There are many potentially troublesome thoughts that don't at all bother us. They might bother other people, but we aren't concerned. We will only worry about the things that somehow affect our lives. For example, the fisherman at sea is not concerned with the amount of rainfall. The farmer may become concerned over a flood or lack of rain, but the fisherman would remain unfazed.

Anxious thoughts seek the insecurities or places of perceived need in our lives to hook into. If we are nearing death, we won't get anxious about there being no available partners to marry. Instead, we might worry about leaving our spouse behind, what happens after death, etc.

Let's look at another example, a common worry of the world: a person fears he does not have a sufficiently impressive resume.

Possible worry: He might not get a job.

The insecurity: He needs a job to get money to care for his family.

The anxious thought(s) is a temptation that might spring to life when we see someone else's resume. The temptation might verbalize itself in our mind like, "Oh, look at that other resume. (I don't have anything like that! He will get a good job, and I will get nothing."

The temptation is begging the person to accept that line of thinking as his own. Satan wants us to agree and say, "I don't have anything like that." The suggested 'you' now wants to become 'I' or 'my'.

We can reject such thoughts, but at this point we are just learning to identify them, as well as the insecurities that they hook into. In this case we might say that we worry about not having a job, but we should look deeper. Note the reason you want a job. It is because you need money to live on. If you had plenty of money, then you would not worry about the job, at least not for this reason. The real insecurity is not trusting God to take care of your needs. If you knew, beyond the shadow of a doubt, that God would provide for your needs, then the insecurity would not be present.

In reference to chapter two, we read how a man's worry began when he doubted God's care for him. An insecurity can occur in any area of a person's life that they feel responsible for. When we think our needs are being fulfilled, we won't worry because we're comfortable with our situation. At any point, however, when we perceive that those needs are not being fulfilled, we begin to worry.

Christian growth is best represented by the process of going through each area of our life, detecting what we think we can take care of ourselves, and responding by giving to the Lord the responsibility to care for our needs. For example, the man in our resume example could have rejected his anxious thoughts the moment he spotted the two other resumes. He could have chosen to turn his thoughts to the Lord and said,

"God, I have done my best. I will trust in your care for me. You know my financial needs. Please help me find a good job so that I can please You. In Jesus Name I pray, Amen."

He may realize that he needs to spruce up his resume, but even still, he can trust God with the results. Remember, **if we find ourselves worrying about something, we can know there is a need in our heart that is being threatened.** We are not trusting God to take care of that need.

No worry is too trivial to deal with. By cleaning out our worries, we have the room and purpose to easily catch ourselves before we even start to worry. That is our goal.

There are two basic principles that must be accepted before we can properly handle worries.

- 1) Worries are connected to our heart or life insecurities.
- 2) Our minds serve as guards to the thoughts that control our feelings.

Some people wonder what the biblical support for a relationship between our hearts and our desires is. We can see an example of this relationship in the passage below from James 1:13-15.

Let no one say when he is tempted, “I am being tempted by God”; for God cannot be tempted by evil, and He Himself does not tempt anyone. But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust. Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death.

We have avoided biblical language in this seminar because it does not effectively communicate at times. However, for the sake of clarity, allow me to define some terms for those who are not familiar with Biblical terminology.

‘Flesh’ (old nature) creates insecurities

- Insecurity are our concerns that try to fill those potentially unmet needs and therefore steer our decisions. We must have what we feel is essential.
- The flesh, man’s selfish nature, confidently affirms its needs by an increased amount of attention.
- In most cases, every person has at least one or two vulnerable areas, where the evil one can easily breakthrough and cause worry.

‘Lust’ - Arms of the flesh

- Lust seeks fulfillment even though it goes against God’s way.

‘Temptation’ - anxious thoughts

- Anxious thoughts are one kind of temptation where the evil one is luring us to focus on our potentially unmet need. Temptation is not sin but leads to sin. Temptations must be dealt with or they will systematically form a dan-

gerous pattern of thoughts (i.e. addictions, panic attacks) which can seriously harm a person.

Let's go on and see how this whole process works.

Influenced

If our worries were the end of the problem, they would not be so difficult to handle.

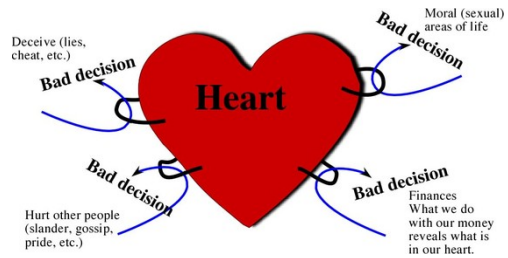
However, worry, by nature, agitates our souls until we alleviate the concern they stir up and we overthink.

The decisions we make on our own in an effort to solve our worry are always bad. In the end, they increase pain and anxiety. They lead us on a downward path that eventually leads to more worry and more bad decisions.

You might wonder why this happens. Every time we feel the responsibility or burden to take care of a certain need in our lives, we have, at the same time, excluded God from that area of our lives. We *are* responsible for our lives, but we need to remember that, ultimately, God is the One who we need to depend on to fulfill our needs, whether they be groceries or peace of heart.

When we don't trust Him for the help, care, strength, and provision we need, we'll sense a strong urge to care for these problems on our own. Because of our doubt and unbelief in God's faithfulness, our decisions will be not consistent with God's will or Word. For example, many people lie because they are anxious about what would happen if they said the truth. By lying, they are using their own solution to, for example, get that job. They might lie about their experience so that the potential employer will think better of him. He is not relying on God. Instead, he relies on his own "clever" lies. God is not happy with lies.

Lies will eventually lead a person into a complicated web of problems. This will be exacerbated by the person's constant worry as to whether his lie will be found out!



The alternative is to trust our Heavenly Father's judgment and wisdom. If we went by the teaching of the scriptures, even if we don't fully understand or agree with them, we would be well-protected. For example, by principle, we shouldn't lie or deceive other people. "Laying aside falsehood, speak truth" (Ephesians 4:25).

The effect of bad decisions are not always seen right away, but they do pile up. Eventually, the person finds himself devastated because of the overwhelming number of worries. The only good decision is "*casting all your anxiety upon Him because He cares for you*" (1 Peter 5:7).

If a person is worried about finding a life partner, he or she might make a bad decision (i.e. compromise) on what to do when confronted with improper advances. Or perhaps, in a different circumstance, she might spend more than she has in order to improve her shape.

A guy might be worried about not having a girlfriend; He is getting old or perhaps he feels he is missing out on some fun. He wrongly concludes that he doesn't party enough. He starts drinking and socializing with the wrong group. He gets a girlfriend but commits sexual sins.

Reflect on the things you worry about and consider the questions below:

- Have you responded to these worrisome thoughts by making bad decisions to eliminate the exposed troubles?
- Did you go against God's word to solve your problems?
- Did you deceive?
- Were you selfish?

Right thoughts lead to good decisions that protect and help us. Bad thoughts, like worries, lead us to wrong decisions with evil consequences. It is a matter of trust in God or worry. We will only have two choices here. We might hope there would be many in between, but there are not. Our choices and decisions are based on whether we are going to trust in ourselves or in God.

Worry > Self-care > bad decisions

Trust > God-care > good decisions

Have you ever found yourself in a situation that required you to choose between two bad decisions? Things go from bad to worse when we allow worries to influence our decisions. We try to solve these things on our own, but the more we attempt to solve them, the more problems pile up.

Worry, like fear, is aggressive by nature. It will occupy whatever room is available. We need to reject the claim of worry on our heart and thoughts.

You might even be in this situation today. Three passages from the Word of God will be listed below. Listen attentively to the scriptures; read them several times if needed. Maybe even go ahead and memorize them!

Thus God has said, “Why do you transgress the commandments of the LORD and do not prosper? Because you have forsaken the LORD, He has also forsaken you” (2 Chronicles 24:20).

Let him not trust in emptiness, deceiving himself; For emptiness will be his reward (Job 15:31).

Put your trust in the LORD your God, and you will be established. Put your trust in His prophets and succeed (2 Chronicles 20:20).

An arrogant man stirs up strife, but he who trusts in the LORD will prosper (Proverbs 28:25).

Making excuses for our circumstances and decisions is easy, but there are no acceptable ones. We will take a look at the darkest and most unfair incident that ever happened. Someone once questioned whether or not Jesus was anxious when He faced that night at Gethsemane. Did He worry or not? There are two subtle thoughts here:

First, we wonder if all worry is wrong. If Jesus worried, then certainly not all worry is wrong. Second, since we have so often failed at the most rigorous testing, we want to see if and how Jesus withstood such a powerful onslaught of testing.

On Temptation's Mount

Jesus is our model for living. We are to be like Christ.

In Philippians 2 we read that Christ released His right to use His divine powers so that He could live as a man.

Fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God (Hebrews 12:2).

The point here is that Jesus drew on the same resources that are available to us today. As God's children, Christ's Spirit can live through our frail lives.

Many anxious thoughts crossed Jesus' mind at different points in His ministry. Mark records,

And He took with Him Peter and James and John, and began to **be very distressed and troubled**. And He said to them, "My soul is deeply grieved to the point of death; remain here and keep watch" (Mark 14:33-34).

Clearly we see Jesus beginning to be distressed and troubled. He states, "My soul is deeply grieved." There is no doubt that Jesus, the 'Man of Sorrows,' walked down a difficult path.

He was despised and forsaken of men, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief... (Isaiah 53:3).

One might think Jesus was worrying when His sweat was like drops of blood, but He wasn't. Emotional turmoil engulfed His soul; He was deeply grieved and distressed. However, He chose to trust God rather than to go by what He felt was best. Worry would have chosen a path that served His fears.

Jesus didn't flinch when He chose to follow God's will. He sweated over the unpleasant task, but in the end submitted by saying, "Let your will be done." Unlike the first Adam who followed the trail of the Tempter's words, Jesus chose to trust God even though the path would lead into the valley.

Each Gospel closes by recording how Jesus endured the phony trials, the mocking, beatings, and finally, death on the cross. If He was worried, He surely would have chosen the 'easier' path. Let's look at five confirmations that show He didn't worry during this dark hour in His life.

1. Clarity, not confusion

Father, if Thou art willing, remove this cup from Me (Luke 22:42).

The mark of worry is confusion. Jesus was clear about what was happening and what steps He needed to take.

2. Troubled, but not despairing

He took with Him Peter and James and John, and began to be very distressed and troubled. And He said to them, "My soul is deeply grieved to the point of death; remain here and keep watch (Mark 14:33-34).

We cannot deny the fact that Jesus experienced great emotional upheaval. He was troubled. Worry, however, takes root when we allow our trouble to cause us to give up and make decisions contrary to God's will.

3. Prayer, not worry (Mark 14:35)

He went a little beyond them, and fell to the ground, and began to pray that if it were possible, the hour might pass Him by (Mark 14:35).

When we worry, we cannot pray. When we pray, we cannot worry. Jesus knew He needed this time of prayer and followed through. Even if His disciples fell asleep, He persisted in prayer.

4. Obedience, not disobedience

Father, if Thou art willing, remove this cup from Me; yet not My will, but Thine be done (Luke 22:42).

One test to see if Jesus was worried is to see if He disobeyed God. Quite the opposite, we find Him fully committing Himself to God's will: "Not my will, but Thine be done." Obedience confirms the absence of worry.

5. Others-oriented, not self-oriented

*And said to them, "Why are you sleeping?
Rise and pray that you may not enter into temptation" (Luke
22:46).*

When people worry, they become more selfish. They attend to their own needs without thinking of the needs of others. Jesus kept encouraging the disciples to stand with Him in prayer. He patiently loved them despite their failure.

Life Applications

Sometimes we can be overwhelmed in our soul, but this does not mean we have failed to trust God. Often the tempter wants to convince us that the temptation and the sin is the same. By convincing us of this, he then suggests we already sinned and that it's too late.

Instead of caving to temptation, we are to be like Jesus, who withstood terrible temptation. Understanding difficult circumstances requires us to rely on God the Father for strength and provision. The way we respond during temptation makes every bit of difference. Jesus took the path of His Father's will. We don't have to worry. We can pray and choose to trust God despite the possible consequences.

Jesus can identify with us when we face severe bouts of anxious thoughts. He will work with us and deliver us. During such times, our emotions and feelings surge to new heights, our limited choices will not be appealing, and anxious thoughts will be placed before our minds, seemingly providing us the only way out.

Instead, we need to seek what our Father in heaven desires; we need to pray and cast ourselves on Him in obedience. This submission will please our Father in heaven, and it will allow us to work through our problems under the will of Him.

Summary

Those who worry a lot tend to believe that anxious thoughts and anxiety are the same thing. If we see them as the same thing, then we have no way of eliminating them. We believe anxious thoughts are a part of our lives. We first need to learn to identify them, second, to reject them, and lastly, to accept God's way as our own.

Up and over the bridge we go! In chapter four we learned to discern how worries come into our lives. In chapter five we will learn how to handle anxious thoughts!

Let's review some of the major principles and applications that we've learned.

Chapter 4: Touching Our Lives

Principles:

What principles were strongly impressed on you? Circle the ones that are most significant.

- Anxious thoughts are not sin in themselves.
- Anxious thoughts become anxiety if not properly and promptly dealt with.
- Anxious thoughts, like evil spirits, are looking for a home in our hearts.
- My heart becomes the home for these anxious thoughts when they attach themselves to one of my insecurities.
- Patterns can be observed by tracking our worried thoughts.
- A spiritual journal is a good way to discover what I am thinking of in my inner man.
- Our minds are the gateways to our hearts.
- Decisions made to alleviate our worry are always bad in the end.
- We can be overwhelmed in our soul, but this does not mean we have failed to trust God.
- Unlike the first Adam, Jesus always chose to trust God. We can also choose to obey, by God's grace.

Application

What clear decisions, plans, or confessions do you need to make because of what God spoke to you during this chapter?

- I need to keep a spiritual journal for at least 30 days. I want to track all my worries. I need to write down both my anxious thoughts and my actual worries. I want to observe them so that I can develop my discernment abilities.

- When I worried about _____, I made some bad decisions that went counter to God's will. I disobeyed the Lord and need His forgiveness. (Fill in the blank.)
- I need to set better prayer habits. Usually, when troubled by a worry, I do not pray. I need to pray even if my emotions seem to have been shaken. We need to pray as Jesus said, "Pray and enter not temptation."

Testimonies

What are one or two lessons, stories, illustrations, warnings, etc. can I share with others that might encourage their faith?

WASHING MACHINE

Some trials are very difficult, while others are more typical. These normal trials are 'worries of life.' They are common; everyone has something happening in their life that they can easily identify as common worry. My wife and I faced a problem with our washing machine.

Our washing machine broke. With eight children, this was a crisis. Being tight on money, I started to try to fix the problem. I went so far as taking the machine apart, realizing too late that it would probably be so difficult that I would not be able to fix it or if so, the parts would be very expensive.

Meanwhile my wife and I were praying for help from the Lord. We were asking Him for a washing machine. We didn't know if we should spend the last of our money (literally) on a washer. In the end, we decided to buy a washer at a discount store. But we didn't have peace. We called a friend to borrow a dolly in order to return the washing machine. When that friend discovered that our

washing machine had broken down, he offered us his. So we joyfully prepared to return the washer that was still in our van.

We noticed that we had everything but the receipt. We looked everywhere for it. Here we had the offer of free washer and could return the old one, but couldn't find the receipt. We decided to ask the Lord for help and trust Him. Not too long afterward, my wife was yelling, "Miracle. It's a miracle." Evidently, one of our sons heard us looking for it and managed to find it down behind the back of our sofa leaning against the wall!

The friend's washer was coming, but it would take a few days because he was out of town. So I decided to take the old one apart and see if I could sell the good parts. As I reviewed the directions on the web again, I discovered that the problem might be minor. I was incredulous when I found myself able to remove that part, and observe that the broken piece could be easily bought and replaced.

I took our receipt, returned the washer, bought the \$8.00 piece and assembled it before our friend returned home. We no longer needed his washer after all!

There were many stages where we could have worried. Not having much money, terrible timing, getting clean clothes (the three clothes piles were huge), how to fix a washer, finding the receipt. Whether the washer could be returned; all of these were anxious thoughts that could have turned into a full-fledged storm of anxiety.

Each case became one small part of a whole series of testings on whether we would take our anxious thoughts and worry or deliberately trust the Lord. We chose to obey the Lord and trust Him. We now have a testimony to share with others about His trustworthiness!

OVERCOMING ANXIETY
Finding Peace, Discovering God

COPING WITH WORRIES

Chapter #5

Realizing that only God can help us when anxious thoughts strike.

Did you just find a lump in an unusual spot? Did you hear that you might lose your job? Or do you have some fear that is keeping you up at night? Chapter five provides the ammunition you'll need to fight overpowering thoughts.

After we've learned the three steps to overcoming anxious thoughts, we will practically apply them to both strong feelings and financial burdens. First, let's pray:

Dear Father, the question is not whether I have anxious thoughts, it is how can I control them. You know how my worries tend to control me. I know this doesn't please you. Will you please forgive me where I have listened to my worries instead of You? Lord, I want to have a godly testimony even in stressful times. I need you to teach me how to respond to my emotions and

feelings. Only You can help me, and on You I call for help. In Christ's Name, Amen.

As we go on, let's go over a quick summary of the main ideas we have learned so far. The reason we review them is to develop the discernment needed to overcome anxiety.

Summary

A Christian can begin to overcome worry by simply practicing the main points in the first four chapters. See if you can remember them!

Developing Hope: Chapter #1



A hill is shaped like the Bridge of Hope. You have recognized your worries and have taken the first steps on the path that leads to gaining the peace of God. God is your hope and wisdom.

Understanding Worries: Chapter #2



This jagged line reminds us of the history of man and his worry. When the line is high, he is trusting God. When it is low, he is looking to himself to solve his problems.

Deciding Choices: Chapter #3



The inverted "V" stands for the way we respond to our anxious thoughts. Either we tolerate them and worry (left side) or humble ourselves and trust God to find His peace (right side).

Discerning Patterns: Chapter #4

0,3,8,15, ?

Because we have so many anxious thoughts, it is easy to learn about them from the repetition. Certain patterns will emerge as we write about our experiences in our ‘worry’ journals. This begins the training process needed in order to detect our anxious thoughts before they actually turn into worry.

Let’s turn to what we will focus on in this chapter.

Crossing the Bridge

The fifth step in our journey takes us half way over the bridge!

We will examine what happens when anxious thoughts start multiplying within us. Solutions can only come with understanding.

We should note here that the Psalmist admits to his problem of anxious thoughts. “When my anxious thoughts multiply within me” (Psalm 94:19).

Though a very spiritual man, he was not impervious to the multiplication of anxious thoughts. No matter what our position or experience, we need to learn to effectively deal with anxious thoughts or they will turn into worry.

Anxious thoughts tend to swirl through our minds, picking up momentum as they collide with other anxious thoughts. Is there a way to reject these anxious thoughts? Yes. We will begin to discuss this later in this chapter.

But first, let’s see how this multiplication principle works.

Multiplication Hurts

As we look at the Psalmist's words, we will note the word 'multiply.'

Multiplication is different from addition. In addition, a person can keep careful control over his numbers; he notices them and evaluates them one by one. However, in multiplication, it becomes much more difficult, if not impossible, to keep track of each number. The same principle carries over when it comes to worry; when our anxious thoughts multiply within our minds and hearts, it becomes just about impossible to keep track of them. We can become overwhelmed very easily.

We might dismiss the most exaggerated worries, but others will penetrate our mind and enter our hearts. Once they have entered our minds, they'll linger until they are accepted as our own thought.

These thoughts are accepted as valid because of their presence.

Did you ever feel something was true even though you found out later that it wasn't? Maybe it was a rumor about a person. The more you think about it, the more you are convinced it is true. You might go on and think about the implications of someone's whisper and come to believe that your thoughts are true. It is only later that you might discover that the rumor was not true at all!

I remember one time when I felt a lump on my back. Naturally, I wondered what it was, and the more I thought about it, the more my anxious thoughts compounded on the original one. I began to regularly feel the lump. It seemed to be growing quickly! Was it the end of my life? (This was another worry.) I even had an-

other pastor accompany me to the hospital in case it was something serious. In the end, I was told that the lump was only a fatty deposit that could be cut away quickly!

That one thought about my lump began to multiply into many. Soon, my mind was preoccupied with the lump rather than the other things I was doing.

When we have more confidence in the accuracy of our thoughts than we should (i.e. pride), this multiplication is exacerbated. Anxious thoughts demand a response of some sort. Worry, by nature, provokes us to question what we originally believed. Before I started worrying about the lump, I was calmly carrying out my work. At some point, worry entered my mind and I accepted the offered doubts as true. As a result, I became frantic. The more we try to brush these worries to the side, the more they dominate our minds.

These anxious thoughts can be very dangerous!

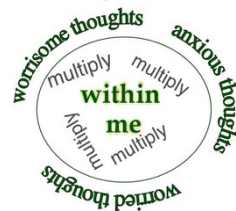
Peril Within

The more we internalize anxious thoughts, the more they bother us and inflict problems.

It is often our pride that makes things worse. We assure ourselves that we can deal with our worry on our own. That is a colossal mistake!

Two resources that can be helpful to you in the process of identifying anxious thoughts are both friends and a spiritual journal. Friends will help you sort out your problems by being a sounding board for your thoughts and feelings. We often find ourselves relieved when we are

When my anxious thoughts multiply within me, Thy consolations delight my soul.



Anxiety occurs when we perceive that we are not able to cope with our surrounding circumstances.

able to talk to a friend about what's on our mind. A spiritual journal is also helpful in identification of anxious thoughts because it allows us to keep track of what we're thinking. Are you keeping a spiritual journal? Keeping one is an important Christian spiritual discipline because it gives us a place to trace the path of our thoughts, where we can reflect when the thoughts have passed.

Danger increases when a person who has accumulated a number of worries keeps his thoughts to himself. As long as our anxious thoughts are wandering through our minds, we'll have a difficult time gaining an objective perspective. This can include reading similar reports on a computer.

Solitude leaves room for anxious thoughts to whirl in your mind without being interrupted by thorough examination. This can bring you to a very vulnerable stage where you are unable to judge your circumstances well. Objectivity is lost. In the above personal example about my fatty tissue, I became overly concerned about my life, and as a result I lost the balance of objectivity in my perspective.

Some people openly acknowledge their struggle with confused thoughts. Usually, they think something is wrong and that they need to see a psychiatrist. This is one of the extreme solutions that we end up with.

What we really need is a friend, a relative, a pastor, etc. to help us look objectively about an issue. In other words, we just need to talk to someone who cares for us and see what is going on in our minds. Psalm 1 cautions us against getting advice that is not biblically based. It's better to ask a trusted friend for help than to ask a stranger that we don't know, regardless of the number of degrees he or she might have.

Anxiety occurs when we perceive that we are not able to contend with our surrounding difficulties.

Let's look at the pressure that this Psalmist felt.

Under Pressure

Let's observe the 3 difficulties the psalmist faced in Psalm 94.

Just before the Psalmist spoke about his anxious thoughts, he identified the problems that he encountered.

¹⁶ Who will stand up for me against evildoers? Who will take his stand for me against those who do wickedness? ¹⁷ If the LORD had not been my help, My soul would soon have dwelt in the abode of silence. ¹⁸ If I should say, "My foot has slipped," Your lovingkindness, O LORD, will hold me up. ¹⁹ When my anxious thoughts multiply within me, Your consolations delight my soul (Psalm 94:16-19).

- Evil people were openly seeking his harm (Psalm 94:16).
- No one seemed willing stand up for him. He was alone in a dark, unfriendly world (Psalm 94:16).
- The evildoers were seeking his life. He says, "My soul would soon have dwelt in the abode of silence" (Psalm 94:17).

The Psalmist had no control over these life-threatening situations. Worse, there didn't seem to be any solution. His enemies were watching his every move so that they could pounce on him at his most vulnerable point. This situation seems to have been going on for a while, so he certainly had plenty to worry about. We can understand why he experienced anxious thoughts.

Many people demand explanations from God. They ask, "Why God?" or say, "That's unfair!" Others might get bitter;

“Does the world have to be so evil?” These people will never find peace unless they take care of the anxious thoughts that they’ve allowed to negatively affect their trust in God.

The Psalmist, however, didn’t respond by demanding that God give him answers to his problems. Instead, he found peace and assurance through his trust in God. In Psalm 94:17 he revealed his vulnerability in the statement, “If the Lord had not been my help.”

He admitted his stressful situation and humbled himself, recognizing that God was the only real solution. He realized that the deadly anxiety ‘missiles’ could be neutralized only by acknowledging the truth about himself, his situation, and God. He was being persecuted. He was desperate and unable to help himself. God, however, was His strength. He turned to God in a very desperate situation.

- What is your situation like?
- Will you join the psalmist in seeking peace?

An exercise

Read through Psalm 94 in its entirety. Identify and color code each of the following occurrences:

- 1) Stressful circumstances (green)
- 2) Psalmist’s reflections on God’s truths (red)
- 3) Promises of God (blue)

Let’s now look at how people handle anxious thoughts.

Renewing Our Minds

How do we properly handle the thoughts that lure us into worry?

The transformation of our lives originates in the renewal of our minds. We must evaluate the thoughts coming at us; it's important to guard our minds from the destructive power of anxiety because without a renewed mind, we will never be able to evaluate accurately.

Listen to the scriptures,

And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the **renewing of your mind**, that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect (Romans 12:2).

We should reject any meditative therapy that tells us to 'stop' thinking, whether it be some TM mantra, yoga, or a drug-induced dullness of mind. They strip the mind of its key function.

Many anxiety therapies work by distracting a person's mind from his worries. This helps to some degree because the person is no longer worrying about their worries! These 'therapies' attempt to manage the worries rather than get to the root and solve them.

Remember that God's gift to us is our ability to think objectively, always aligning itself with the truth. The mind is the gateway to our heart: whoever possesses the mind, possesses the heart. The solution is to get our mind to think about our real problems rather than to avoid thinking about the problem. If worry is not solved, a person will always live in fear of the return of that worry. This is the reason people are afraid to step away from their anxiety drugs.



I worry a lot. How can I stop? I don't want to worry anymore.

The original worry is still lingering behind the scenes even though it is not presently pestering them.

My heart is so sad to meet up with individuals who have given up living normal lives. They are afraid of their failures and are scared that there is no real cure. This situation is so different from the promises that Jesus gives us. The Lord wants to heal us. He knows our real problem goes deeper. He wants us to experience the power of His Word and the care He has for us. As we begin to see His power to help us, we can testify to His greatness.

Without the transformed minds, our minds will be dominated by the world. We will seek the world's ways of handling our troubled minds. This transformation spoken of in Romans 12:1-2 comes by the "renewing of your mind."

The solution is to modify the way we approach worrisome thoughts that arise from difficult situations. We cannot change the circumstances, but we can take control of how we think about them.

When anxious thoughts arise, you should, at that point, take the warning and deal with them before they take control of your heart. Once they have penetrated your heart, it is much more difficult, though not impossible, to regain control of your mind.

Let's see how renewal of the mind works.

Penetrating My Heart

Remember how the psalmist spoke about his anxious thoughts multiplying inside him?

The multiplication of anxious thoughts is a strategy that mimics a war tactic: an enemy will simultaneously send numerous missiles at a ship even though it only needs one successful hit to sink the boat.

The ship can defend itself against a certain number of missiles, but there is a limit to how many it can track, avoid, and destroy. Our minds work in a similar way: we only can handle so much before we feel overwhelmed and hopeless.



A missile that has penetrated the defense line causes great damage. The more ground we allow anxious thoughts to occupy, the higher the likelihood of those anxious thoughts penetrating our minds.

But how does this happen? When the number of anxious thoughts increase, we begin to lose our ability to evaluate the truthfulness of each incoming claim. The more anxiety we retain in our minds, the more confused we become. We don't have the time or capability to deal with and extinguish each flaming missile. Our perception of reality is no longer very accurate. When we no longer have a sufficient ability to evaluate the truth of each of the worrisome thoughts that invade our minds, we begin to accept them as truth.

When we feel overwhelmed and no longer able to fight the anxious thoughts, we relax our defense system. The anxious thoughts penetrate our defense lines. This is the point where an anxious thought turns into a deadly worry, crossing from temptation into sin.

The psalmist did not deny the existence of his many anxious thoughts: they multiplied and threatened to penetrate his peace of mind. He couldn't activate his defenses quickly enough to counter the attacks on his peace.

One would think that he would have lost the fight, but he knew the secret line of defense. What is this secret line of defense?

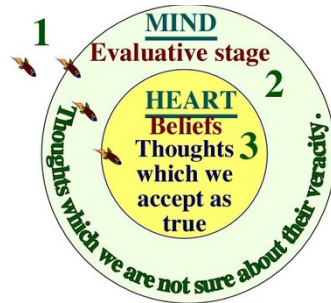
Observing the Pattern

How do we reject worry?

There are three places where anxious thoughts might be found. While they remain in area one and two (see diagram below), they are still called ‘anxious thoughts’, but once they have entered area three, they have turned into anxiety. Let’s look more closely at each of these three areas.

• Step 1: Outside our mind (irrelevant)

These anxious thoughts are of no concern to your life because they are irrelevant. They can’t get near you. What might worry one person often does not worry another. One person might worry about being alone, another about tests.



Anxious thoughts trouble us to the degree that they are relevant to our lives. For instance, the elderly man has no concern over whether he will be drafted or not. The family that lives in Illinois is not concerned about shark attacks simply because they do not live near the beach. There is no need to worry. These worries, however, may be relevant to other people.

Temptations surround us, but we are successfully fighting off many of them without knowing it. We should never feel as though we cannot control our thoughts because we can and do.

• Step 2: Inside our mind (relevant)

The thoughts that we consider relevant are the only ones that will enter the sphere of our minds. Once the anxious thought enters our minds, we need to evaluate it.

The more relevant the concern is to our lives, the more carefully our minds will need to analyze it. This evaluative process mostly goes on without us realizing it, which is why most of us become worried easily. We are not often conscious of the stage in which anxious thoughts first enter our minds.

Our success or failure in evaluating anxious thoughts depends on the degree to which our minds are renewed by the truth of God's word. Usually, worry will combine some truth with a lie. This combination makes it hard to judge the veracity of each thought. It's not easy. Our tendency is to get confused and put off the decision on what to do with the thought. When decisions are put off, the more likely it is that a false thought will be accepted as a trustworthy thought. Let's look at an example.

♦ Worried about how others think of you

A mother sees her child misbehaving. She is tempted to scold him to get him to behave. But an anxious thought arises in her: others might see her scolding her child and think she is a bad mother. She is tempted to ignore her child's situation to show that she is in control of the situation.

The anxious thought uses her pride and fear of her peers' opinions to disguise itself. The anxious thought is luring her to respond according to her own strength and wisdom. She may, in such a case, correct her child later by inappropriately scolding the child. Because she is primarily concerned with being accepted by others, her treatment of her child will most likely be inconsistent. The

child's misbehavior, of course, is a problem, but a greater concern has risen regarding how others perceive her.

In an ideal situation, she would identify her fleshly desire to look well among her peers, humble her heart and entrust herself to the Lord in a quiet prayer, and then appropriately deal with her child (maybe later in private). If she responded this way, she would be responding with God's truth, remembering that she doesn't need to be concerned with what people think, and instead she wants to do what is right and appropriate. She would then follow this up by evaluating the problem. Perhaps, after quieting her heart, she may consider whether the child might be sick or is extra tired.

In any case, the anxious thought about the need to keep the child in line because of her need for self-acceptance should be rejected. She ought not respond to protect her reputation among others, but before God. By choosing God's patience she can love her child.

This mother became worried about something that was very important to her – how she was perceived by her peers. Another mother might not be concerned by this temptation at all. People are different; situations will differ from person to person.

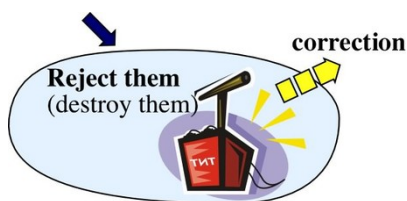
Humility is needed in order to catch what God is saying. Meditating on the scriptures develops sensitivity to God. This is what the renewal of the mind is.

A “worry” journal helps us discern anxious thoughts as they come into our minds before they turn into worry. Our worst worries are repeat situations. Catch them on paper so that you can objectively see what you are thinking. We need to observe how the evil one penetrates our defenses.

• Step 3: Inside our heart (influential)

Once an anxious thought enters our mind and becomes our own, we will respond to it as if it were true. This is the purpose of worry (i.e. the purpose of the evil one who wants us to worry). Anxiety influences us and induces us to make wrong decisions. The lie deceives us, making us think it is true, and motivates us to do something wrong. This explains why anxious people do or say unreasonable things at times.

If the mother mentioned in the previous example believes that others might look down on her and that she might lose the key to acceptance of others, then she will respond wrongfully. The child will feel the brunt of this anxiety.



As another example, an employee lies to his boss to gain approval. We need to go back one or two steps to understand this. In this case, he was worried that, if the boss found out about him losing a contract, he might get demoted or face other consequences.

The lie was based on a worry about what might happen. He didn't trust God, and instead, allowed the anxious thought to become worry and cause him to lie to his boss. The worry stage can often be detected by wrong decisions. The man should have humbled his heart and trusted God in the face of losing the contract. Trusting in God would also lead him to a series of decisions: speak the truth, apologize, and seek advice.

In the end, the perception of our circumstances might be very contrary to the facts. Depression can easily set in because we are overwhelmed and have lost hope for a solution.

Taking Control of Your Mind

What would you do if, while driving and stopped at a stop light, a man from the sidewalk came up and claimed, “Hey, this is my car. Get out!” You would probably immediately rebut his claims and begin to reason with him, proving to him why it is, in fact, your car.

- You bought it (**history**)
- Your name is on the title (**evidence**)
- You have been driving it (**experience**)

You probably wouldn’t get out and say, “Well, you’re right. Maybe this is your car. Here are the keys.”

You know the truth. The truth (facts) affirm the proper response and action. You have no need to reason with yourself; it’s easy enough to ignore his allegations and drive away.

The same is true when dealing with anxious thoughts. Though the thoughts are in our minds, we must not accept their presence to justify their accuracy. The anxious thought is identifying itself as a force to be reckoned with, and as a result we ought to simply accept it as true and accommodate it by taking certain actions to calm our worries. Giving into the falsity of anxious thoughts is like giving the keys to the one claiming the car is yours.

Earlier we mentioned the importance of keeping our minds sharp and alert. Hopefully, you now see why. We need to take full control of our mind so that we can allow only what is true and good to make a home there. Renewing the mind happens by taking the truth in the Word of God each day and going over the facts of your situation. This is how we ward off the attacks made on our minds, even when the evil one is bombarding us with doubt.

This is what the songwriter did in Psalm 94. Let’s summarize three points.

Overwhelmed

How do we reject anxious thoughts?

Because temptations are built on lies, they are, by nature, false. Only truth can set us free.

Jesus therefore was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, “If you abide in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine; and you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free (John 8:31-32).



We can reject anxious thoughts (temptations) by rejecting falsehood and deliberately accepting the truth. The disciples renewed their minds with the Word of God. In order to counter and overcome temptations, we need to train ourselves to do three things: declare the truth of God, acknowledge our weakness, and uncover the truth of our situation.

1. Declare the truth of God

God’s greatness and power is not dependent upon our feelings. God is loving even when we don’t feel His love. He is present even when we don’t sense His nearness. This is the truth. Truth is a constant that doesn’t change to suit our feelings. God doesn’t change; He is our wise Creator and has made promises that we can always depend on. If I’m a Christian, then God is my Father, and He will take care of me and my problems.

No matter the problems we face, it’s tremendously important to remind ourselves of the relevant truths of God. If we say them aloud, all the better. We see the psalmist doing this again and again. Jesus modeled a declaration of truths for us in the Lord’s

prayer. We all need to learn to declare the attributes and works of God!

Every morning, state seven truths of God. Use this exercise to remind yourself of his supremacy. You will begin to incorporate this practice while praying, and it will enable you to identify relevant truths that help in the fight against anxious thoughts.

2. Admit the truth of our weaknesses

Our weaknesses are always present. We are dependent on food, air, water, and many other things. When we state the truth about our lives, we must face our inadequacies. Pointing out our weaknesses may seem like an easy thing to do, but when it comes to actually highlighting our weaknesses, it becomes a lot more difficult.

We tend to think we can handle worries. We got through them before. This is a bad approach because it is not true; we can't handle it on our own. When we begin to state the truth about ourselves and our circumstances, we are pitting ourselves in a fight against our pride and selfish nature, which will, in turn, keep us from relying on God. He will use our difficult circumstances to expose weak areas in our lives so that we can trust Him even more.

Confession of our weaknesses does not mean that we've done everything wrong. In fact, quite the opposite is true. We just need to be aware of what we have and haven't done. I'm not asking you to deny the great things God has done through you; they are true too. However, instead of boasting in ourselves, remember to state them in light of God's grace. Notice how Paul does this:

For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus (Philippians 1:6).

The earlier we learn to confess the truth about our weak spots before God, the easier it will become to be humbled and to draw on God's wonderful love and strength.

3. Detect the truth of our situation

Discovering the truth about our situation is usually the most difficult task in eradicating worry. Confusion results from a dark mist, an untruth hiding itself in the truth. Truths, typically, are accepted into our minds, but untruths, if their real nature is known, are rejected and put aside. False thoughts must hide to protect their self-interests.

Perception of our individual situations are not always accurate. This is the reason why the subject "Finding God's Will" has been so popular over the years. Although this is a topic in itself, let us briefly discuss three ways to look at potential paths.

• A God-initiated plan

God started it. He will help me through this situation. He promised to provide for all my needs.

One fine example is life itself. God gave us life and has promised to care for our needs (Matthew 6:33). Another is our spiritual life. God has promised to give us everything that we need to live as a valiant and faithful Christian.

His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence (2 Peter 1:2-3).

• A Self-initiated plan

I started it. I need to repent before help will come. An example of this is going into debt.

Joe liked the new, flashy car with all the special features. Now he is stuck with high monthly payments. This worked out okay when Joe's job was stable, but now he is overwhelmed by worry because he might lose his job – and probably his car!

Joe needs to repent of his covetousness. This does not mean that he needs to give up the car, but because he has humbled himself, he is able to trust God in case he does lose everything.

• **A combination of God and self**

One of Satan's clever tactics include mixing both truth and falsehood together. For example, we might open our Bibles to seek God but end up worrisomely preoccupied over an interview scheduled later that day. We wonder if we should change the facts to better present ourselves to the interviewer. God might have said, "Speak the truth", but we could choose to listen to the evil one by slightly altering our plan.

When trouble occurs, we get confused and usually blame God for our trouble. We need to scrutinize our circumstances to see if our personal decisions have twisted God's original design. In Matthew 4, the evil one twisted the scriptures and asked Jesus to throw himself from the temple. If Jesus had taken Satan's suggestion, Jesus would have stepped beyond the promise of God. Jesus would have tested God instead of trusting Him. Jesus quoted the truth and stuck to it rather than to Satan's temptation.

Sally was led to go to Chicago for a new job. She made new friends at work, and was settling well. One night, her friends from work invited her to go with them for dinner at a lounge. She didn't feel completely comfortable going but went anyway. After two months, she felt further from God than she ever had in her life.

In this particular example, Sally went to Chicago for a good reason, but concern over making new friends led her to compromise on some of her values, thus placing her in dangerous waters. Sally was led to go to Chicago for a new job. After two months, however, she felt as though God had forsaken her. Everything seemed to go wrong. In this situation, Sally was right to go to Chicago for that job but wrong in trying to make new friends in an unbiblical way.

Her problem was not going to Chicago, but other things that happened when in Chicago. She needed to come back to the Lord by identifying and confessing her wrongs, rejecting them and choosing God's way. She needed to place the need of friendship into God's hands. If she could not identify why God had 'left' her or her fear of not having friends, then she would not easily be able to resolve her troubled heart.

Conclusion

Never be afraid of truth. Embrace the truth and facts as they are. Accept them. Follow them. Truth helps us gain God's perspective, which will help us in the long run. Without truth, we would be bound to operate by our feelings, pride, and situation.

Let's see how closely people's minds are connected to their emotions.

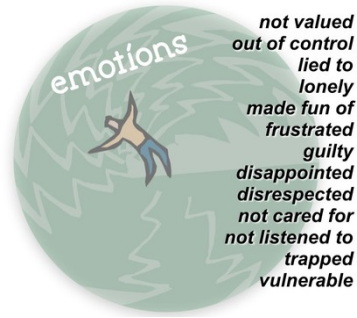
Mind and Emotions

When anxious thoughts start swirling around our minds, we begin to get very confused.

How do we respond to strong feelings and emotions? Let's discuss this topic by asking five questions.

(1) What are feelings and emotions?

Feelings are companions to our souls. They are designed to amplify the state of our inner lives. “I feel great!” “I feel alone.” These are feelings that many of us, at times, can identify with. Many of us are afraid of our feelings because they reveal many things that we don’t want to know about ourselves. “No one loves me.” “I hate myself.” We should note that the popular meaning for the word ‘feeling’ stretches quite broadly for some, ranging from lustful desires to feelings of compassion.



(2) How do you use feelings?

Feelings are good tools to explore our inner beings, but can also be dangerous when relied upon to make decisions. Some people justify living by their feelings because it is their real selves. They believe they are obligated to live by their feelings in order to be true to themselves. This is very dangerous because feelings that are not evaluated by reality, common sense, and God’s truth will easily lead us into poor decisions.

Although feelings reveal real insights into our inner spirits, they are not to be so closely identified with our person as many would try to convince us.

(3) How is the mind different from feelings?

The mind was designed to lead, and feelings were designed to follow. The mind can objectively examine circumstances by accepting outside data. Feelings can only express inward reflections.

Feelings are subjective while the mind, if properly managed, is objective. The mind, for instance, can accept thoughts foreign to its nature and then be affected by them. Many people would be shocked to hear that an American ended up fighting as a Taliban soldier in Afghanistan. Whatever controls a person's thoughts, controls his life.

People in our generation are expected to allow their feelings to shape their minds. One will often hear people say, "I feel..." We need to rein control on our feelings and stop letting them control our lives. God has given us a mind so that we can overcome our feelings, which will often lead us onto unstable paths.

The renewing of the mind means that we allow God's perspective to shape how we live. The mind, therefore, when used properly, can aid a person struggling with his feelings. When you find yourself in troubled straits, you can, by God's, grace submit yourself to God's will.

4) How is the mind viewed today?

Many people think of the mind as merely a means to gain a better job, make money, and serve one's own pleasures. Truth and logic have been stripped from reason, thus the mind's objectivity is lessened.

Man, at times, lives more like an animal controlled by its instinct rather than a man made in God's image. The 'modern' man doesn't trust the mind and has a tendency to believe that the greatest pleasure comes from experience. By crippling the mind and stripping logic and truth from it, their mind is silenced.

This darkened mind must be renewed by the washing of the Word of God. We don't need to respond with our feelings; we can

choose to live according to God's word by trusting in God, His person, and power.

Conclusion

The old illustration of a train still holds true: faith serves as the engine, fact as the cars, and emotions as the caboose. The emotions are expression vehicles. Renewed minds lead to transformed lives.

We don't need to try to feel better. We read God's word to find out what better is, and in response, we decide to do better. In other words, we must purpose to have the truth serve as a guide for our lives. As we begin to think and act properly, our emotions will eventually follow.

Let's see how these ideas are expressed in the life of an influential king.

Trusting God's Plan

We are often overwhelmed with any given situation because we've taken on a task that God has not called us to take on.

Jesus could have done many things, but He limited himself and chose to do only His Father's will. Let's look at three steps to how David handled "too difficult" situations from Psalm 131:

¹ (A Song of Ascents, of David.)

O LORD, my heart is not proud, nor my eyes haughty;
Nor do I involve myself in great matters,
Or in things too difficult for me.

² Surely I have composed and quieted my soul;
Like a weaned child rests against his mother,
My soul is like a weaned child within me.

³ O Israel, hope in the LORD

From this time forth and forever (Psalms 131:1-3).

Step 1) Declare the truth of God

God is Lord and is to be obeyed (1). David uses the phrase ‘O LORD.’ Literally, it means Yahweh, the covenant God who set before His people laws by which they would gain His blessing.

He is worthy to be trusted (2). “Like a weaned child rests against his mother.” In verse 2 he alludes to the sense of peace that comes from trusting in the Lord.

The Lord can be hoped in (3). David exhorts others to “*hope in the LORD.*” God is trustworthy, not only for our lives, but for others too.

Step 2) Admit the truth of our weaknesses

Even during our “up times”, we are still vulnerable. King David was not afraid to admit his weaknesses. When experiencing His peace, we are like a fed baby who sleeps in his mother’s arms (2). David didn’t depend on his own strength, but rather, he leaned on the Lord. However, there are several incidents in David’s life where he chose to go his own way. In each of these cases, innocent lives were taken. David fought long periods of depression because of his errors.

Big Plans!

David was both king and general. He was certainly involved in big plans. The difference was that God asked him to join Him in His works. What were some of these big events?

- Kill Goliath and fight off the Philistines
- Serve as King of Israel

Big Plans!

David was both king and general and was certainly involved in big plans. The difference was that God asked him to join Him in His works. What are some of David’s big projects?

- Complete and ready big building plans (temple)
- Eliminate enemies
- Purify worship

One difference between God and us is that we worry about our lives and jobs. God can easily get His work done without people. However, He chooses to involve us, even when we depend on what we can see and have on hand. Why not set your heart on getting His work done and learn to trust Him?

Step 3) Detect the truth of our situation

We need to keep a clear idea of the difference between God's idea of plans and our ideas.

God-initiated plans

God 'volunteered' David. He did not involve himself in his own great plans, "Nor do I involve myself in great matters" (1). God promised to care for the plans He had initiated so that David could learn to trust Him.

Self-initiated plans

When we form our own plans, God usually isn't an integral part in making them. David went with his own ideas, such as taking a census or fornicating with Bathsheba, and ended up paying dearly for those choices.

The best way to test our situation is to go back to the beginning of our plans and detect how the whole thing began. When man thinks he has to care for all the needs connected to the idea, then there is no doubt that sin has entered in. Man has trusted his own ideas over God and has only himself to bear the guilt and blame, such as in David's case. At some point, God will break our plans apart, we will feel overwhelmed and by God's grace seek Him again. God has a better way. Let's ask the following questions.

- “How did I get involved in this?”
- “Did God call me to do this project or did I juggle things around to get myself involved?”
- “Is my heart proud? Do I have a hard time listening to the warnings of my family and friends?”
- “Did I follow God’s instructions? David violated God’s law when he moved the ark.”
- “Do I have I peace in my soul? Am I quietly trusting God to work things out?”

Let’s see how this works when we are facing financial problems.

Financial Burdens

Let’s ask ourselves two questions.

- Am I in this situation because I made a decision that counters God’s principles?
- Am I in this situation so that God may be glorified through my trust in Him?

There have been numerous times when things were not going well with my family, financially speaking. At one point, household items started to break down, and I don’t mean just one or two, but about six or seven items. Time to fix them was one problem, but money was the bigger issue at that point.

The first step I took was to check my life for any sin. Sometimes God chastises us for things we are doing wrong so that we can get back on track. I couldn’t find any sin that could be the problem.



Meanwhile the car, appliances, small items, etc. were breaking. Anxious thoughts began to mount up. "What am I going to do about this?" "Can I fix that?" "How much is a new one?"

Realistically, I couldn't do anything about what was happening. Not only were things breaking, but we had bills

piling up.

All of this was happening while I was giving a seminar on overcoming anxiety. Some of the truths I was teaching were fresh in my mind. I decided to thank the Lord for all the things breaking down. The Lord says, "*In everything give thanks.*" So during our family evening devotions, I started going through the long list of broken objects, giving thanks for them breaking down and not having money to repair them. When I got half way through that list, the children started giggling and laughing. How odd it was to give thanks to God for broken things! They were all eyes after this, hopeful to see what God would do.

I didn't have any solutions, but instead I focused on our weaknesses. That is what was true. Once I humbled myself, I could then turn my eyes to God's faithfulness; I gained peace of heart. Not long afterwards, we started to see everything get fixed or replaced in one way or another.

Overcoming worry depends not only on early detection of our anxious thoughts, but also on their careful elimination. By now we should see that these anxious thoughts swirling about our minds are what we call temptation. They are not sin but will lead us into sin and worry if we are not careful.

Through the regular renewing of our mind with the truth of God's word and careful examination of our lives and situations, we can, by God's grace, ward off a great multitude of anxious thoughts just as the Psalmist did.

Chapter five has shown us the important place meditation on God's word has in a Christian's life. The next chapter shows how to use God's word to find God's peace. Let's look over the principles and applications learned during this chapter before moving on to chapter six.

Chapter 5: Touching Our Lives

Principles

What principles were strongly impressed on you as you read? Circle the ones that are most significant.

- It's not normal to be suddenly aware of the anxious thoughts swirling through our minds; we are instead aware of our anxiety and difficult situation.
- In order to eliminate these thoughts, we need to evaluate each one in light of the truth.
- Unresolved anxious thoughts will pile up and overwhelm our ability to rightly discern matters.
- The reason some temptations are so difficult to resolve is because truth is mixed in with error.
- Renewing our minds requires us to shape our minds by meditating on God's word.
- A renewed mind is needed to effectively fight off worry by making truth prominent in our minds.
- Stating truths about God, ourselves, and our situations effectively eliminates anxious thoughts.
- Listening to our feelings in these cases is only valuable in that they allow us to see how weak we are.
- Even great men of God must be able to humble themselves before God and admit their vulnerability.
- When we focus on doing what God wants, in God's way, we will have extra faith in God's promises.

Applications

What clear decisions, plans, or confessions do you need to make because of how God spoke to you during this chapter?

- Did you do the assignment on Psalm 94? By training ourselves to read God's word, we can stop demanding explanations from God. The psalmist had what he felt like was an innumerable number of problems. But, he became aware of them. He was honest about his vulnerability; he couldn't do anything about it other than trust God. He triumphed by trusting in God's ability and desire to help him.
- We become unstable when we allow anxious thoughts to invade our lives. We rarely authoritatively deal with these thoughts by God's truth. Since instability produces lack of confidence, the evil one works hard to cause God's people to worry so that they are discouraged from active ministry. Do you tend to give up when things get tough? How do you respond when overwhelmed?

Testimony

I used to tremble at the thought of public speaking. I stuttered even in my university speech class! God has brought me a long way since then. Two fears caused my lack of confidence: I feared that people would think critically of me, and I had no confidence in what I would say. I overcame many of my problems by focusing on God's purpose for that speech or lesson rather than thinking about what people thought of me. I slowly learned that the only thing that mattered was what God thought of me. God not only helped me focus, but He also helped me in my speaking abilities. I wish I had gone through these three steps sooner!

OVERCOMING ANXIETY
Finding Peace, Discovering God

DESTROYING THE ROOTS OF ANXIETY

Chapter #6

People have tried long and hard to get rid of their worry, but they haven't been very successful. In the end, they give up hope of eliminating worry from their lives and resort to living with it. We hear them say, "I guess it's the way I am." Many of us seem to have accepted the fact that we are the kind of people that worry and are forever going to be that way.

We do worry, but we don't have to! What keeps us from solving the problem? This chapter will reveal the hidden power behind worry and stress that makes them so difficult to get rid of. We will illustrate this insidious struggle by using a well-known battle scene, the battle of Jericho.

As we go through this chapter, you will see many prayers. The reason is simple: the battles we encounter are primarily spiritual battles. We need the Lord to help us get a clear mind in order to overcome temptation. By the end of this book, we hope you will

have become comfortable with saying your own prayers! In the meantime, here is an example prayer:

Dear Father, my problems stem from my unbelief. I don't believe. Jesus believed and everything was possible, but because of my doubts, I drop my sword and shield when the enemy confronts me. Lord, now is the time to restore the battle mentality back into my life. Now is the time for you to be strong in the midst of my life. Cleanse my sins and eradicate my unbelief. Give me faith in you and your truth and help me to be strong by your might. In Christ's name I pray, Amen.

Do you remember the three ways to fight anxious thoughts?

Being attacked!

The best way to deal with anxiety is to notice when you start to have worried thoughts.

If we don't respond properly to anxious thoughts, then we will have to spend much more time eliminating them.

One time at the tail-end of a visit to my mother-in-law's, my family came down with a virus of some sort. We had to get back home, but we were desperately sick. It was a battle to just get home. My mind was flooded with a handful of thoughts that generated worries:

- Would God help me get certain preparations done?
- Would I be able to get home safely?
- My wife, the chief vacation organizer, was very sick. She remarked, "I've never felt so bad."
- My oldest daughter was feeling bad. My oldest son was slowly coming out of his long string of sick days.
- Our two-month old was seriously sick.

- The two-year old felt so bad that he kept crying and whining.
- How were we going to make a 12 hour car trip with persistent crying in the car? It felt impossible.

We cried out to God for help to safely bring our eight children home with some sense of calm.

We saw a day full of miracles.

- Linda only had five hours of sleep but after a big fever sweat, she was feeling much better.
- The two-month-old was manageable (since my wife was better).
- Our two-year old slept in the car.

Could I have worried? Yes! Instead, I recognized that the situation was in God's hand. I would've gone crazy if God hadn't helped me. I would have been very impatient and distracted as I drove. Or, I might have stayed back out of worry, rather than go in faith. Instead of worrying, I faced these vicious anxious thoughts and asked God to help me in this desperate situation. I sensed God wanted me home, but we had this huge set of obstacles that seemed impossible to overcome.

Through the whole process, I realized I had to consciously fight worry or it would kill me. Listed below are a few of the steps I went through to dismantle each worry.

• Declare the truth of God

No matter how I felt, God lovingly cares for me. My family and I had to focus on God's help and His faithfulness toward us. Truly, we couldn't get out of bed without his mercy.

- **Admit the truth of our weaknesses**

I had to admit that I was unable to care for my situation. It helped, I suppose, that we were so desperate. We didn't have any problem seeing our weakness! We hardly had enough faith to decide to leave at four a.m. as usual for our 12 hour trip. Was I crazy for still wanting to go?

- **Detect the truth of our situation**

God wanted to help me. I knew this because of the scriptures, but because of my circumstances, I needed to continually evaluate what the Lord wanted. I asked and prayed about the questions going through my head.

We needed to get back, but could we? We were going to be sick that day anyway. We might as well be sick in the car. But they were desperately sick; wouldn't traveling make it worse? What if a child become critically ill while we were on a highway in the middle of nowhere? It would be impossible to stay in a hotel. If I delayed the trip, I might get sick and end up troubling our host for a few more days.

In the end, God worked out a great miracle in giving us a wonderful trip home. I didn't worry; I had great peace in my heart. I worked through the steps and saw how they worked to eliminate my anxiety. I had only to be bold in declaring the truth (i.e. God would take care of us) and stepping out in faith (i.e. Okay, since you will take care of us, we will go).

Crossing the Bridge

The following two questions highlight two significant challenges.

- What are the two steps to overcoming worry?

- Why is it so difficult to stop worrying once you've started?

Many people can describe the problems that anxiety brings, but how many can tell us the about the process of eliminating them? We have truth from God's word that will help us understand the way worry can be overcome.

The last couple chapters focused on dealing with anxious thoughts. Anxious thoughts are temptations that must be rejected. They attempt to control our thoughts and penetrate our hearts, and we need to reject them before they get a hold of us. This is one of the areas in our lives where we need to master our thoughts.

Sometimes, though, worries have already taken root in our hearts. People say, "It is the way I am." These worries have penetrated our hearts and found a home there so that we no longer consider them strangers and, as a result, we become constant worriers. We need to appropriately deal with our worried hearts. It is time we learn to evict these invaders from our lives.

People have tried long and hard to get rid of anxieties without any success, thus they have **given up any hope of eliminating them**. If our understanding of our anxiety is superficial or wrong, we will never be able to rid ourselves of the worries that have incorporated themselves into our hearts over the years. In this chapter, we're going to give you the tools you need in order to eliminate the worry that has settled in your life, the same worry that might ruin your marriage, health, and other relationships.

Part of the problem is that we don't look at the problem correctly.

What is More Important?

Consider: is the body or the engine more important to the function of a car?

The answer to this question is easy. The engine is much more important. Without an engine, the car can only sit there in disuse. I have ridden in dilapidated cars where I could see through the body of the car itself, but it still got me safely to where I was going.

Without asking this question, however, we would probably go by sight and make judgments of the car based on its appearance. Have you ever heard someone exclaim, “Wow, look at that cool car!”?

We have the same problem when trying to understand our worries. We look at the immediately visible problem and focus on what we worry about. “I’m afraid of what might happen.” “I might lose my job!” These potential problems are not the real problems that need to be dealt with. They might be current problems, but in the end, they aren’t what matters in the end.

We might lose a job. We might miss the bus. We might even lose our significant other. We worry about these things, but they aren’t the root of the problem. They act as though they’re the real problem, but in posing as the problem, they only hide the real problem.

For example, if you tell someone that you are worried about something, they will instantly bring up a number of solutions. We appreciate their willingness to help us out, but rarely do they offer any help in truly overcoming worry. This is because worry is a heart issue. A worried person won’t hear the logic of helpful suggestions.

We want to pay attention to the actual worry because, like the body of a car, they are what we see. It is what we use to find the root of the worry. Just observing the worry will not solve the problems. If we want to overcome worries, we need to see what gives them operating power. We need to take a look at their engine.

Many Christians think that worry is part of their lives. They may have tried to get rid of anxiety in the past because of its oppressive nature, but after a series of failures, they learned to live with it. What these Christians don't realize is that problems of anxiety reveal a deeper heart problem that can, and, if left alone, will get worse. What scripture passage speaks of this truth?

Battle at Jericho

Throughout the scriptures we find that God fights battles differently than man.

Let's review the story of Joshua and the fall of Jericho found in Joshua 6.

Now Jericho was tightly shut because of the sons of Is-

Battle at Jericho

✧ **No experience**

✧ **No power**

✧ **No retreat**

rael; no one went out and no one came in. And the LORD said to Joshua, "See, I have given Jericho into your hand, with its king and the valiant warriors. And you shall march around the city, all the

men of war circling the city once. You shall do so for six days. Also seven priests shall carry seven trumpets of rams' horns before the ark; then on the seventh day you shall march around the city seven times, and the priests shall blow the trumpets (Joshua 6:1-4).

The Israelites simultaneously faced at least three significant problems, any of which could lead to defeat, and therefore all qualify as those things which can give rise to worry and fear.

- **No experience**

The Israelites had fought wars, but never against such cities. Cities were livable fortresses, and Jericho had great defenses while the Israelites had nothing.

- **No retreat**

The Israelite armies had nowhere to run. They could easily be discouraged by defeat. They had the Jordan river blocking any retreat. Even worse, their families, though on the other side of the Jordan, could be preyed upon by the enemy at any time.

- **No ability**

They had developed no plans to attack these cities. They had no weapons to demolish the 46-foot-high wall! On top of the 12-15 feet high retaining wall was, the archaeologists discovered, a 6-foot-thick mud brick wall at about 20-26 feet high. The Israelites then faced a wall roughly 46 feet above the ground level.

God gave the land and the city to them, but there seemed to be a problem convincing the enemy of that! God took them first to this city because it was humanly impossible to conquer Jericho!

Learning how to trust God for impossible situations was the first strategic tactic to winning such battles. Be God-reliant, not self-reliant. We often feel overwhelmed because we cannot do it on our own; we need the Lord's help. Some special technique, medication, or sheer will power will not work. The only way is through dependence upon our Helper. The Apostle Paul reminds us:

For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare are not

of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses (2 Corinthians 10:3-4).

We are only human and our devices are limited to what humans can do, but we use divine or God-empowered forces to tackle such fortresses. Worry has us focus on those things we cannot manage and so verses like this are very helpful in the fight to overcome our worries. Let's look more closely how this practically worked out.

Successful Battle Plans

2 Corinthians 10:3-4 speaks of the first battle tactic: stop trusting ourselves and our own methods.

Only when we've stopped trusting ourselves, can we go on and take on the second strategy in overcoming our enemy. This is highlighted in the next verses.



We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ, and we are ready to punish all disobedience, whenever your obedience is complete (2 Corinthians 10:5-6).

As seen in verses 5 and 6, there are two stages in the fight. Both these parts play a crucial role in securing victory because of

the devices that the enemy uses to ensnare us and the nature of our problems.

1. Destroying: Exposing the Lies

We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God... (2 Corinthians 10:5a).

We must destroy the things that counter the knowledge of God by exposing the lies of the enemy. In our former example, God had no problem to overcoming this city. Joshua and the Israelites, however, did not have this confidence God did. They were being intimidated by those towering walls, “You can’t beat us!” The insight and confidence that we need comes from understanding God, His purposes and promises. We do this by comparing the truth of the gospel to the lies of the enemy. This comparison exposes the true nature of the lies.

2. Capture: Affirming Truths

And we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ (2 Corinthians 10:5b).

We must make every thought subject to the teaching of Christ. Back in 1981, The Ladies Home Journal asked, “In whom do you trust?” The responses were interesting:

- Walter Cronkite got 40% of the vote
- Pope John Paul 26%
- Billy Graham 6%
- God 3%

I wonder what the results would be today! We see from scripture that the battle is in what you believe! The words ‘belief’ and ‘trust’ are used interchangeably in the Bible. No wonder so many people face problems in life! They don’t really trust God, nor do

they meditate on and read the Bible. This is where we see the importance of faith come in. We are not talking of belief in some empty religion, but of a genuine trust in the living God.

Paul speaks of actively engaging in the thoughts of our minds. If we do nothing, we will not be freed.

The Battlefield

We are unable to overcome worry because we are fighting the wrong enemy.

2 Corinthians 10:3-4 says we are fighting the wrong battle with the wrong weapons. Many Christians are an easy knock out because they don't understand how the battle works. Later, we will examine what empowers our worries. For now, however, let's look at three specific principles and applications that we've drawn from 2 Corinthians 10:3-4.

Principle 1: Our Confusion

“For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh.” (2 Corinthians 10:3)

Our spiritual issues usually hide behind our personal problems. Our confusion is heightened by our ignorance. We do not understand how the spiritual world impacts our personal problems. We tend to bring a swimsuit, blanket, and sunscreen lotion to the battlefield!

Application: We have been blinded to the seriousness of the sins in our lives. Because we underestimate the evil one's part in this, we don't take the spiritual battle seriously.

Principle 2: Our Helplessness

*“For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh.”
(2 Corinthians 10:4a)*

Our helplessness comes from the use of tactics and weapons that are unsuitable when dealing with our spiritual problems. Worry increases when we fail to root out anxiety.

Application: We have failed because we have trusted in our own methods and wisdom. Down below are some of the failed tactics we use.

Principle 3: Our Resources

*“But divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses.”
(2 Corinthians 10:4b)*

Weapons of divine origin are designed to destroy these fortresses. Our resources are God-made weapons that can take down the greatest fortresses around us. This is one of the things that Jesus showed us during His time on earth.

Application: We need to look to God to help us overcome our problems using His strategies and tactics.

Tactics and Weapons that Fail

Perseverance:	I will try harder next time.
Outside help:	I will hire a psychiatrist.
Cleverness:	I will avoid getting into the same situation.
Physical intervention:	I will take some medicine/drugs.
Tell someone:	I will find someone to be accountable to.
Get the latest:	I will attend a program or seminar.
Self Help:	I will buy this self-help book

Let’s look at how God can win in impossible situations.

No Neutral Ground

If 2 Corinthians 10:3-5 accurately describes the battle scene, there is no neutral ground!

There is no way to avoid the effects of war from either side. Nobody can just watch and not be affected!

When a person is no longer consciously fighting, it shows that he's given into deception. If the light (i.e. the truth) is not shining, what happens to that area? It becomes dark. If we sit on the sidelines, we'll play into the evil one's hand. Jesus said of the Jewish leaders, "You are of your father..." This means that they share their father's nature. Like father, like son. Read these following verses carefully:

You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He ... does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature; for he is a liar, and the father of lies (John 8:44).

From the very beginning, the evil one used lies to ensnare people and bring them to his side. The world is full of these lies. The lies persuade us to do things that don't please God. This is true to the point that we can unequivocally state that whenever our thoughts and activities come short of God's standards, we can be sure that we have listened and followed the lies of the evil one.

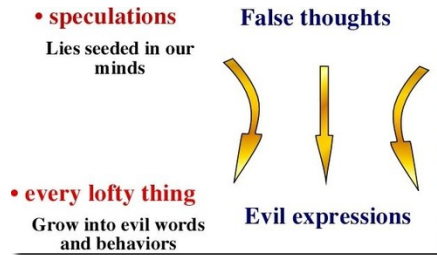
Spiritual disciplines like praying, Bible reading, meditation, fasting, and attending church, etc. all enable us to keep ourselves fixed on truth. Without them, we are susceptible to Satan's lies even if we are God's children.

Let's clearly examine this first truth that was introduced above, *Destroying: Exposing the Lies*.

Understanding Lies

A general pattern is becoming visible: false thoughts breed evil expressions.

If the evil one manages to plant evil thoughts in our minds, then we'll do evil. But rest assured, the next chapter will show how the opposite is also true. True thoughts bring forth pleasant expressions such as the peace of God.



Satan has two purposes for lies, depending on who it is:

- For unbelievers - to keep them from believing
- For believers - increase darkness to keep ineffective

Satan uses lies and falsehood to get his way because he has no inherent authority. He steals authority by deceit; he tricks people like you and I. Once you are a believer, he has no real authority over you anymore, but he tries to make you think he retains it.

Of course, if we give him authority over a certain aspect of our lives, then he can and will take that authority. If you give him your bathroom to stay in, he will stay there. If you give him your bedroom to hang around in, he will stick around. Through half-truths the evil one will convince you that you ought to give him more room. He will expand his territory once he has a foothold in your heart.

Once you start worrying about one thing, it's easy to continue worrying about other things. Soon, your life may feel very uncertain and even fearful. How many keys to your heart have you given him?

Lies are like seeds. Once planted in our mind, they grow and express themselves through evil behavior. From the darkened mind come all sorts of devious words and other evil expressions, including attitudes, poems, magazines, movies, behavior, etc. that are not according to God's truth. Speculations (lies seeded in our minds) lead to every lofty thing (evil words and behavior). False thoughts generate evil expressions. Ephesians 4:17-19 is one of the many scriptural passages that verify the pattern that the evil one uses.

Ephesians 4:17-18 identify the lies in the mind:

- “in the futility of their mind”
- “being darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God”

Ephesians 4:19 identifies increased evil behavior:

- “having become callous”
- “have given themselves over to sensuality, for the practice of every kind of impurity with greediness”

Once your mind is controlled by lies and its associated pride, it produces evil expressions. In order to prevent yourself from falling into this evil ‘think-do’ pattern, you need to recognize what ‘rooms’ or ‘keys’ you have given the devil so that you can take them back! The evil one uses truth, but his ultimate purpose is to communicate lies. An excellent example of this is when he tempted Jesus in the wilderness. Jesus answered Satan's temptations with the scriptures and exposed the lies for what they were.

For example, Satan truthfully stated, “He will give His angels charge concerning you” (Matthew 4:6), which is a quote from the Old Testament. But Jesus exposes the deceptive use of this verse by quoting another Old Testament verse, “You shall not tempt the

Lord your God” (Matthew 4:7). Satan was trying to use the truth to foster wrong thoughts and activity. The scriptures play an important role in uncovering half-truths!

At the heart of a lie is rebellion. It is Satan’s deceptive means to counter one who is stronger than himself. The lie can only gain its power when it gains your allegiance. By proposing a way of doing or thinking of something apart from the instruction of God, you’ll need to leave God to listen to the lie. Eve did this, and Adam followed suit. We all, no doubt, have done this.

A lie, at its heart, is essentially saying there is wisdom or truth (i.e. propaganda, philosophy, religion) apart from God. Once this is accepted, of course, we do what that supposed wisdom or thought suggests. Along with these thoughts come attitudes, beliefs, and every other thing that stands against the knowledge of God.

At that point, the battle consists of destroying these arguments and abolishing any sense of obligation to them. The Lord wants to demolish these rebellious strongholds in our lives that have made us ineffective disciples and disobedient children. The reason our churches are so weak is because these evil thought-patterns have been adopted by believers.

Anxious people are easily lured away from God and convinced to depend on false promises. They are desperately looking for solutions but are unable to discern whether or not the promised means can deliver. These false promises deceive us, not only by promising what they cannot do, but also by never really planning to bring help in the first place.

Embracing these lies will always cause devastating effects. Our conviction of God’s almighty, holy, faithful, and utterly good nature may be lessened. This is the reason there is nothing more dangerous than an arrogant lie. If cleverly presented, you may

never question it. Once accepted as a positive solution, a person is likely to give their devoted attention in observing this mindset.

If you are interested, do a study on lies, deception, truth, and falsehood in the Bible. Do a simple search on these words or ones similar to them. You will be astonished at what you will find! Let's consider how to expose these lies?

Exposing Lies

Whoever controls your mind controls you.

The power of the educational system and the place of entertainment in our modern society are greatly underestimated. The whole advertising world has generated huge growth in media and internet. They are specialists in planting seeds of falsehood. People who want to control others carefully sow seeds in the minds of millions so that many start believing and adopting the sought after behavior.

A wise person will be able to see how thoughts, beliefs, and actions are related to each other. Discernment is a careful analysis of what a wise person hears and sees.

**Influence what a person believes and
you will control his person.**

Jesus had perfect discernment. In the two examples below we can see how Jesus associated the words of Peter with their sources.

1. Satan's whisper => Unbelief => Wrong action/words

He was stating the matter plainly. And Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him. But turning around and seeing His disciples, He rebuked Peter, and said, "Get behind Me, **Satan**; for you are not setting your mind on God's interests, but man's" (Mark 8:32-33).

In this first example, we see that Jesus described unbelief and bad advice as the result of Satan's whisper. Satan snuck this thought into Peter's mind, and in turn, Peter showed what he was thinking through his spoken words.

2. **Godly revelations => Belief => Right action/words**

Simon Peter answered and said, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." And Jesus answered and said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, **but My Father** who is in heaven" (Matthew 16:16-17).

In this second example, we find the opposite true. In this verse, Jesus affirms Peter Simon for his words. They showed that God had been speaking to Peter. Peter learned these things from God, and through his words revealed that he was learning from God. We need to be careful; if Peter could be easily deceived, so could we.

Principles

Our words and actions reveal what we believe. By examining our words and actions, we can go back and, with practice and the help of the Holy Spirit, detect our false beliefs. We can more easily find out what we believe through our actions than through our words.

Eve believed what the serpent told her even though it went against what God had told her. We know that she doubted God because of the way she took the forbidden fruit and ate it. Our actions speak volumes. They speak more than our words. Let's get more specific.

Worry reveals that something has gone wrong in our belief about God. If I worry, then I know I've believed something false about God and my circumstances. We have, at some point, ingested a set of lies. Maybe some of these lies have been in our lives undetected for many years. If you spot anxiety in your life, you can be

sure you are missing out on seeing how God is caring for you. When you don't trust Him, you can't have His peace.

If you worry, you need to re-examine what you really believe and pinpoint the falsehood that brought you to that point of worry. If you can influence what a person believes, you have control over that person. This is Satan's trick, but God provides a solution.

Take a moment

Write down any wrong actions or anxieties that you observe in your life. Recognize that you need God to deal with them. At this point in the battle, don't be excessively concerned with how exactly to deal with your worry and anxious thoughts. Instead, simply express to God your desire to get rid of them altogether. Make this confession a habit.

Destroying Lies

When you contrast lies with the truth, you're essentially shining the light of truth onto the darkness of the sin.

The light of the truth effectively reveals the true nature of damaging lies. Confidence in such lies will diminish when people see how deceived they are. We make these contrasts by bringing God's truth to three sides of the deception: the source, the belief, and obedience.

1) Source

First, discern whether the advice is from the Spirit of truth or the spirit of deception (1 John 4:6). Trace the origin of your conviction; did you hear a suggestion, read a book, listen to a friend, etc.?

2) Belief

We need to regularly evaluate what we believe. What we claim to believe is often very different from what we really believe. Genuine

repentance can only happen when we see the contradiction between that which God wants us to do and the wrong that we have pursued instead.

3) Obedience

Are our attitudes, thoughts, and words pleasing to God? If we are humble enough to accept the rebuke of a brother, we would be protected from a good deal of danger. However, we often insist on following our own ideas without accepting and incorporating the truths taught in scripture.

In order to discover the lies in our lives, we need to evaluate these three aspects of our actions. My hope is that you'll be able to replace them with the truth of God and His word. Let's look at a specific example that illustrates how to work this out.

Finding a Partner: The Wrong Way

I've provided an illustration of two different ways to handle an anxious thought.

-----	-----	-----
1)	2)	3)
Discern	Check	Test
Source	Belief	Obedience
-----	-----	-----

Perhaps a friend remarks, half in jest about finding a spouse, says, "You've waited on God for how many years?" Initially, you may laugh, but in the end, the comment sparked an anxious thought. If you were married or committed to someone, this comment probably wouldn't bother you, but because you are thirty and single, it's something that you find yourself wrestling with.

It's important that you quickly uncover the root of your anxious thoughts. The worry at hand is whether you'll find a spouse or

not. You might be getting older and find that your prospects are limited. The remark hints to you that God doesn't really care whether you find that special someone, and thus is not involved in your life. This statement might also intimidate because it makes you feel like a fool for being what your friend thinks is passive.

Reaction #1

When we feel like fools we tend to react rather than keep our focus on God's faithfulness. In the case above, the remark suggests that God is not involved and does not care. However, when you look in the scriptures, it very clearly states that He does care. The source of the remark was not God.

If you are alert to the thoughts going through your mind, it's easier to catch yourself at the point where trust in God begins to diminish, and trust in your own ideas and methods grows.

In this case, you may be worried about whether you'd made the right decision in 'waiting on the Lord' for the right man or woman. When panic sets in, a person can go to extensive lengths to not look like a fool. In such cases, a person is more likely to adopt unbiblical habits. This is where it gets tricky.

When you are willing to make new choices, it means your belief is already unstable and begin compromising on things that wouldn't have been acceptable before.

An ungodly perspective changes the way you look at a situation: that non-Christian guy that showed interest during class now becomes an option. It's not a big deal, right? After all, in defense of conscience, he can be brought to church and can be potentially won to Christ. Dating a non-Christian is disobedience to God's word, but because of a new mindset, you may be willing to 'work'

to find a mate rather than ‘wait’ for God. Isn’t that what God expects of her? She is being faithful, right?

A Workout?

You may have a friend who is a member at an exercise club. There are plenty of singles around there! You may still try to take initiative. There is nothing inherently wrong with an exercise club, right? But if you are looking for a mate, is this the place to go?

What kind of partner are you looking for? If you look in an exercise club, you are, more than likely, going to find someone who focuses a lot of attention on their body. It’s like telling God, “I want a really sexy guy who adores his body,” or “I want a woman who raises my sexual interests.” (This is not always true; it depends on your motive of going there.) If we could honestly assess the situation, we might be shocked at what has now become an option.

Reaction #2

The other way to react would be to recognize the temptation to become self-sufficient. When you hear the statement, “You waited on God for how many years?” you may see the temptation to distrust God. Instead, you can take out the sword of truth and reply:

“Actually, you are right. I’ve been trusting God for a long time. I am going to continue to trust Him!” (You affirm your trust rather than doubt its wisdom.)

“Yeah, sometimes I feel lonely, but I know God has prepared the right person at the right time.” (You admit your weakness, but state the truth of your trust in God.)

“I’ll wait on Him. The Lord says that He loves me.” (You begin to defend your belief in God with truths about God’s love.)

“This is what I see as I look back on my life: I remember how the Lord has protected me from some guys/girls that would have made horrible husbands/wives.” (You state more truth from your experiences.)

“I don’t trust myself; I need God to arrange this part of my life.” (You identify the crux of this issue. You need God to help you rather than abandon your trust in the Lord as your friend suggested.)

Can you see how the truth of God is being stated in the midst of temptation? How powerful! The doubting friend will realize that truth will expose her lack of faith. There were a number of areas in which the truth was affirmed.

- The right focus; you trusted God
- The right timing; God doesn’t make mistakes even if it is longer than you would choose.
- The right person; not any person, but the right one with a love for God.
- The right perspective; remembers how faithful God has been in the past.
- The right protection; God has been protecting you over these years.

The right belief engenders faith statements like those above. They are powerful truths. When we speak them, the Spirit consoles us and builds up our faith. As we personalize them (for example, using ‘I’), God will use the same statements to encourage those around us to have a stronger faith.

Examining our Actions

Our last chance to hold back from entering into worry is to examine our actions. When we worry, we will make bad decisions. It’s

these decisions and their associated actions that we need to examine in order to protect ourselves.

The Lord's rules are given to protect us, even during times of confusion, when it is hard to think clearly. When we go by His commands, we are so much better off! But we still often find ourselves tempted to bypass our reason—what we know is best—and take a dangerous shortcut by way of our feelings. We will not end up in the best place.

Be careful. At this point, the evil one can bring other doubts into our minds. He wants us to question whether God's rules are the best. It's at these times that we might be tempted to adopt these kinds of thoughts:

- “God's ways are old-fashioned.”
- “People who don't follow God's word are having more fun than I am.”
- “What's the sense in obeying? I'll only sin again anyway.”

The list goes on. Each of these thoughts foster a spirit of disobedience. The evil one knows that extra temptations are necessary because we guard both the mind and conscience. He has to draw our focus to our doubts to have us fall for the worry. Temptations often attack in groups.

Objective viewpoints are so helpful. Check with a parent or godly friend on whether what you are doing or thinking is consistent with God's word. Openness is a great virtue. Secrecy is dangerous because all bad business is conducted in the dark, away from the truth and light of Christ.

Ask good questions. A brother may ask, “What do you think about this relationship?” It's a good question, but try to open the door wider by asking something like, “I really want to follow the

Lord, so does this thought or action show any compromise with God's word?" Asking questions makes it easier for a brother or sister to openly share their thoughts.

Lies are destroyed when you apply God's truths to each thought, belief, action, word, and attitude that you have. If you resist this type of self-examination, it shows that you are trying to hide something (even though that hiding might easily be subconscious). Our hearts should find this kind of self-examination liberating because a life of integrity exposes the lies of the enemy by regularly embracing the truth. Some lies, however, are not easy to uncover. Let's discuss these.

Anxieties and Lies

Shortly, we'll discuss how to destroy these lies and use an illustration on the need for self-acceptance. But first, let's understand how lies work.

There are two levels in the operation of lies. Both levels are forms of deceit and, as such, counter God's truth. One level builds upon the other, much like a tree, whose trunk and branches are dependent upon its root system.

The "root lie" is hidden deep down in the heart. The "branch lie" is more superficial and more easily detected. Worries will always return unless the hidden root lie is effectively dealt with.

Two Levels of Lies

The Root Lie: The root lie is directly linked to a person's insecurity or lack of fulfillment in life.

The Branch Lie: A branch lie is built on the root lie by trying to fulfill our perceived needs.

*The more desperate we are to fulfill a need,
the more susceptible we are to listening to false promises.*

The lie is a false statement that we have or are in the process of adopting. Because we desire to have our needs fulfilled, or find comfort to cover an insecurity, we believe the false promises that the lie provides. We may even adopt a false philosophy and reject the Lord. There are two ways a person will try to gain acceptance apart from God.

Biblical truth: God uses friends to enrich our lives.

- Situation #1: I worry about feeling lonely, so I want to have a solid group of friends.

The problem we encounter here is loneliness, and the most plausible solution we can come up with is to gather a group of friends. How we get them may not be important to us, but God thinks otherwise.

- **Key observation:** Those with cool cars have many friends. (What one focuses on often reflects one's own values.)
- Conclusions:
 - ♦ I need a great looking car.
 - ♦ Fancy cars cost much money so I need to get more money.
 - ♦ I'll work extra hard or maybe get another job to get the money.

The person who believes that having people near him will solve his life problems will be disappointed. He sees that those who have cool cars have many friends and becomes convinced that he needs a stylish car in order to attract friends. Fancy cars are expensive, however, so he sets his mind to figure out a way to make more money so that he can buy that fancy sports car. He decides that his best option is to take on another job or two in order to earn that

money. Because he is working so hard, however, he discovers that he begins to lose the friends he already has.

The root lie assumes that having people around him will bring satisfactory relationships. The truth, though, is that people will fail us. We need to deepen our relationship with God so that we can stop focusing on what we think we need and begin to be the person that God can use.

The other conclusions listed are also not true, though on the surface, they may seem to make sense. The man used in the example may think he found a solution that will cure his worry, but his insecurity is causing him to evaluate his situation inaccurately. We could try to address how hard he is working, ignoring church, and other basic responsibilities, but he wouldn't listen. He is bound to what he subconsciously perceives as his greatest need: friends.

Worry will always return unless the hidden root lie is effectively dealt with.

Biblical truth will expose the root lie, and in the process, other false assumptions will be revealed. In this case, it's crucial to address his calling to love others rather than his desire to be popular. He has chosen a worldly interpretation of life, and as a believer, he needs to stop worrying about finding more friends and instead focus on being a friend. Instead of working two jobs, he should dedicate part of his time to care practically for others.

Biblical truth: True companionship comes from caring for others.

- Situation #2: I worry about feeling lonely (problem) so I want to look beautiful and have many friends (goal).
- **Key observation:** Those who are beautiful have a lot of friends. I want to have a lot of friends.

- Conclusions:

- ♦ I want to look beautiful.
- ♦ Read magazine
- ♦ Get teeth reworked
- ♦ Diet
- ♦ Expensive hair work
- ♦ Tattoos in cool or revealing places

The specific goals for this person are the same as in our previous example. Her solution, however, takes a completely different approach. She notices that beautiful people tend to have more friends than your average looker. This woman decides to spend a lot of money and time to improve her looks. She becomes so desperate to try to look better that she ends up going into debt and experiences failing health because she is trying to fulfill false promise: those who are beautiful have a lot of friends. It doesn't work out very well for her; she ends up sick and broke.

Friends do play an important part in our lives and health. But in this case, she became preoccupied over finding these friends. She did not trust God to be able to help her on the social level. When her friends did not appear, she worried even more, not knowing "What will happen to me."

She needs to find God and experience His understanding and acceptance. He will satisfy the need for intimacy in companionship. She is worried about being disliked and unpopular. In her desperate attempts to solve the problem on her own, she only makes the situation worse for herself.

She feels worse than ever. But the truth is that God loves her. He designed her and values His relationship with her. Instead of trying to become someone she is not, she can be thankful for how

God has made her and shaped her present circumstances even if there are no close friends at the moment. The greatest personal needs that we have should come from our personal friendship with God, by knowing and being loved by God. By knowing God better, we can be transformed into Christ's image. If not, we will seek more than a spouse, child, or colleague can supply.

A discussion of biblical friendship

Since we brought up the topic of friendship, let me provide a biblical perspective of friendship. For a friendship to flourish, we need to put the needs of others before our own. Self-centeredness is in opposition to the spirit of love, which challenges us to put the needs of others above ourselves. Making friends is important, but not so important that we do something that wouldn't please the Lord.

As we go through the storms of life, we need to realize that God wants to use them to bring us closer to Himself. God *wants* to cultivate a deep friendship with us. If, during these difficult times, we avoid spending more time with the Lord, then we'll miss our opportunity to deepen the relationship we have with God. The Lord won't force us closer to Himself; He wants us to choose to be closer to Him.

Lies are destroyed when we're honest with ourselves and seek the truth. As we do this, we will be more attentive to what the Lord wants. A lie, on the other hand, will bring us to lean on our own solutions, as evidenced in the above examples. Lies led him in opposition to God's solutions.

We have used several examples to illustrate how to destroy lies. This is the first important part of overcoming anxiety. Let's see how the second step fits in.

Capturing: Exposing the Lies

We need to spend time on how we capture every thought to Christ's obedience.

Remember how 2 Corinthians 10:5 gave us two main points? So far in this chapter, we've studied and applied part 1 in detail.

Part 1: *We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and*

Part 2: *We are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ, (2 Corinthians 10:5).*

Now it is time to discuss part 2. We can detect lies perhaps, but unless we take every thought captive to what pleases our Lord, then we will miserably fail to destroy those lies. By “taking every thought captive” we mean that we need to notice what thoughts are going through our minds, discern whether they are from God or not, and rightly handle them.

Repent and Believe

The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel (Mark 1:15).

Repentance and belief are two areas of need. They are similar but with different foci. The way we destroy lies is to bring relevant truth beside our false beliefs. When we do this, we can see the false belief for what it really is, and, in humility, confess our sin of seeking our own solutions. They were bad decisions from the beginning, and they never truly satisfied. In the end, we will find ourselves broken.

Repentance requires admission of our attempts to solve our heart concerns through the sin of self-reliance. When we depend

on our own resources to care for needs that God has claimed to care for on His own, we sin.

We don't want to create an empty spot; we want to clear the existing spots of foul deception and fill them with truth. This is where belief plays an important role; we need to assert the truth. This can be illustrated by using an example of two countries fighting each other. Tensions mount until one side is victorious and the other side is compromised; the government is destroyed. Capturing our thoughts means that we need to totally transform our thoughts by meditating on God's word.

Can we admit that we have been disobedient to God by worrying? Jesus said, "Stop worrying." He knows we have pursued our own solutions, which happens because we are subconsciously trying to resolve our belief in a root lie. Instead of trying our own solutions, we need to expose this 'root lie' and depend on God for the tools to take care of it. Repentance and trust in God will lead us on the right path. We need His guidance and strength. We need a great faith. Let's see how we can effectively affirm the truth.

Affirming the Truth

In order for us to pursue the truth of God, we must be intent on having God's word dominate our minds.

The battle takes the form of thoughts that will ultimately shape our minds. Jesus' command to 'make disciples' targets the need to re-shape our minds and lives around God's truth in Christ.

Meditation on the Word of God is crucial to keeping our mind on the Lord. This is the same reason we are to "pray without ceasing." As we keep our minds fixed on the Lord and His purposes, there is less of a chance that we'll listen to the thoughts that call us away from trusting the Lord.

Importance of Mind Control (Romans 8:6)



For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace (Romans 8:6).

The battle takes form in the thoughts that shape our minds. Jesus' command to 'make disciples' targets the need to reshape our minds and lives around God's truth in Christ.

If our minds are left to themselves, they will always default to the flesh, our natural tendency to focus on ourselves. However, as God's children, with His Word fresh in our hearts, minds, and wills, the Spirit enables us to live bold lives of faith. This is the reason that the discipline of Bible reading, memorization, and especially meditation, are so important for a healthy Christian life.

Taking every thought captive

On the affirmative side, every thought that we think must be subject to Christ. It must be in accord with the truth of God's word. Jesus Christ summarized His ministry by clinging to the Word of God. Jesus' teaching lays a pattern for us that describes obedient living. All His teachings point us into obedience toward God.

Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish, but to fulfill. For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass away from the Law, until all is accomplished (Matthew 5:17-18).

Paul states in Philippians 4:8 that our mind is only to dwell on the good, pure, and right.

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, let your mind dwell on these things (Philippians 4:8).

All lies are founded on distrust of God and His Word. They always direct us to do things our own way, rather than the way God instructs. This is the reason the advice to “think the opposite of what you’re thinking now, to discover the process” actually works out on most occasions.

In chapter six, we identified the crucial role that renewing the mind with the truth of God plays in keeping anxious thoughts from becoming worry! The next chapter will help us by apply these and other truths to the worries already settled in our hearts.

Chapter 6: Touching Our Lives

Principles

What principles were strongly impressed on you? Circle the ones that are most significant.

- Relying on our own resources is the problem, not the solution.
- The battle is held in a spiritual field that we can't see; this is why many fail.
- Behind our personal problems lie invisible spiritual issues.
- Our own tactics and weapons are unable to correct our personal problems.
- Special weapons of divine origin are designed to destroy these fortresses (strongholds).
- God brings us into difficult circumstances so that we can see how His weapons work.
- The two principles for overcoming worry are: destroying lies and meditating on truth.
- Lies are like seeds that always lead to disobedience.
- There is no neutral ground. Do nothing, and you will be controlled by lies.
- We must take truth and let it, like a seed, grow in order to produce godly lives.
- Discernment enables us to connect thoughts, beliefs, and actions.
- If you can influence what a person believes, you have control over them.
- Meditation upon God's word is an excellent spiritual discipline that allows control of one's own mind.

Application

What clear decisions, plans, or confessions do you need to make because of how God spoke to you during this chapter?

- Wrong thoughts lead to wrong words, attitudes, and actions. Take a moment and write down anything that you need to straighten out with God.
- We need to be humble enough to accept the rebuke of a brother. If we let our pride get in the way of correction, we put ourselves in the path of danger.
- I need to take decisive action in bringing God's word to my mind and will.

Testimonies

What one or two special lessons, stories, illustrations, warnings, etc. can I share with others that might encourage their faith?

God completely revolutionized my life when I began meditating on His Word. The first and most important effect took place when I was in my first year studying engineering at university. A Christian group I attended taught me the importance of reading my Bible every day. Each day, I would study it and apply it to my life with prayer and application. I was convinced I was called to be a missionary before the semester had even concluded, even though I didn't understand much about church, having been brought up in a church which no longer believed in Jesus as the Son of God!

OVERCOMING ANXIETY
Finding Peace, Discovering God

FINDING THE PEACE OF GOD

Chapter #7

Foiling Temptation's Goal

Most people can only dream of peace because they have never experienced it, and never expect to. Anxiety, stress, and fear are companions of the peace-less.

In this chapter we will not only explain how temptation affects us, but we also illustrate how God's amazing promises can counter temptation. These lessons can be easily applied to life because of their practicality. Before we look at the promises that God has made to us, let's pray:

Dear Father in Heaven, sometimes I get so discouraged that I want to give up. I don't know how I ended up where I am. Oh, Lord, bring me out of this darkness. Let your power break through the walls that temptation has set about me. Reveal to me through this chapter the

ways temptation tries to ensnare me. Help me stand firm in your Truth. In Christ's Name, Amen.

Do you remember the two steps to overcome worry?

Finding the Peace of God

Crossing the Bridge

In the last chapter, we learned that most of the fight with worries goes on in the mind. There are two points in this battle with worry that we need to remember: destroying and capturing. These two words act as the pillars upon which the Bridge of Hope is built.

1) DESTROY: Delivery from temptation

Thoughts with insinuations that suggest God and His ways are not the best must be identified and rejected. Secularism can be defined as a group of thoughts that go to the length to suggest that God is non-existent in our universe. The truth is, God and Satan are very real. False teachings such as secularism must be rejected if we're going to find the peace of God. If we've accepted these false thoughts, we need to repent and find forgiveness through Christ.

2) CAPTURE: Discovering God's peace

The second pillar represents the foundation of capturing. We want to hold truth firmly. The confidence we had in the truth, and in many cases have lost over time, must be recaptured. This is what we call the process of sanctification. Paul says we live our lives by faith. This is illustrated with the word 'believe.'

We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ (2 Corinthians 10:5).

Today, we'll learn how to gain that peace.

Three Enemies of Peace

Anxiety, stress, and fear are three enemies to peace. Peace is the presence of God and the absence of troubled hearts.

We can expect to come into situations with circumstances that we'd prefer to avoid; it's good to remember, however, that these less-than-desirable events in our lives are often unavoidable.



Instead, God has promised to be with us during these stressful times. God cares about us and desires to help us along in our struggles. He is all-powerful.

If anxiety, stress, and fear are not effectively dealt with by living godly lives, physical diseases may begin to exacerbate our situation. We were obviously not made to contend with such problems on our own.

Each of these three states admits to some form of immobility. Scripture calls people who have given themselves over to these maladies of anxiety,

stress, and fear as captives or slaves. Once the trio is tolerated, they will dominate a

person's life to whatever degree they are allowed. They're abnormal, not because of difficult decisions, but because we haven't trusted God to help us. The apostle Paul wrote that these strongholds must be taken down before God's peace can be found.

Let's try to understand these three enemies better.

Anxious	Stressful	Fearful
<u>Distracted</u>	<u>Defeated</u>	<u>Alarmed</u>
Constantly figuring out solutions	Frustrated over no resolve	Worrying about my security

Definition of Anxiety (Anxious) – Divided

Anxiety is a state of trouble over matters that we feel we cannot find a solution to.

An anxious spirit is constantly troubled by its attempts to resolve possible future situations. This brings a state of perplexity, confusion, and irresponsibility upon a person.

The biblical Greek word for anxiety is derived from *meridzo*, which means to split or to be divided. Anxious hearts and minds are so busy focusing on things they can't resolve that they can't handle the things they can resolve! A person is so busy figuring out solutions that he or she loses peace of heart. They become unable to focus.

Definition of Stress (Stressful) – Deadlock

Stress is a state of silent frustration over situations that we feel we can do nothing about.

A stressful spirit is plagued by silent frustration over persistent, unresolved issues. Stress is a constant, gnawing tension that takes away the joy of living. Stress is similar to worry, the difference being that it focuses on present situations rather than future decisions.

A person loses peace of heart because of the frustration of no possible resolution. He becomes gradually defeated and feels worn out after trying his best to fix the problem.

Definition of Fear (Fearful) – Seizure

Fear is a state of alarm over something that we feel might bring us harm.

A fearful spirit is characterized by the alarm expressed over a threatening situation. The alarm is raised because some basic need that is related to our personal root motivators is not fulfilled.

Fear develops when we become alarmed over a specific issue. Fear is also similar to worry, but the difference here is that its focus is on the consequences of not resolving a problem to your own satisfaction. A person can be alarmed with their security, and as a result, will lose their peace of heart and mind.

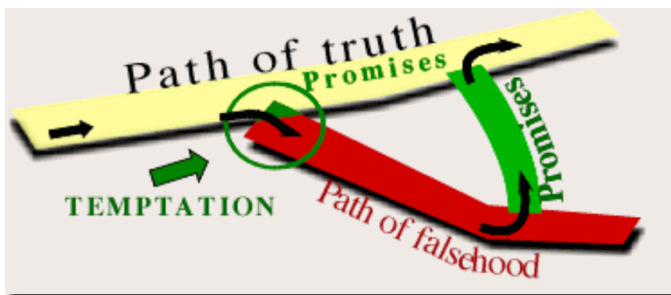
Let's say that an average person worries about two hours a day, while those with a disorder (generalized anxiety disorder, GAD) will worry for almost 40 hours a week. For this reason, fear is considered a sort of advanced form of anxiety that negatively influences everyday life. The connection between fear and anxiety can be seen in the following verse:

Of whom were you worried and fearful, when you lied,
and did not remember Me, nor give Me a thought? Was
I not silent even for a long time so you do not fear Me?
(Isaiah 57:11).

Let's see how temptation is tied up with these robbers of peace.

Understanding Temptation's Trick

Temptations always takes us down a road that leads to devastating consequences.



- **Deception always uses lies.**
- **Disappointment always gives false promises.**
- **Damage always lead to harm.**

Temptation intrudes into our lives by seeking to provide an alternate path in life. The choice to take that alternate path will always lead us astray. In the illustration above, the alternate path is depicted by the path of falsehood (red), a divide that goes away from the right path, the path of truth (yellow). The temptation is represented by the intersection point where falsehood touches the right path.

Every temptation is based on a lie; temptation always presents an alternate choice that departs from the commands of God. Temptation attracts us by asserting that its alternative is the way to go. It never is!

The best thing to do is to keep walking on the right path. Don't listen to the lies that try to sidetrack you. Let's look at how lies produce anxiety, stress, and fear.

Anxiety lies

An 'anxiety lie' promises that, if you trust what it says, your worries will be over. However, these are false promises. Once the temporary, false hope passes, a stronger anxiety will take its place and attempt to reproduce our dependence on false hope.

Stress lies

A 'stress lie' says that by being stressed out, you are unable to do anything about your situation. However, you don't need to resign yourself to the pressure of stress because God's truth has the power to render stress incapable of touching you. The Lord has established ways for His children to confront the battles they face and come out the victor.

Fear lies

The ‘fear lie’ makes you believe that fear is the best and only response to the terrifying circumstances surrounding you. By submitting to fear, you are agreeing with its lie, which says that your fearful attitude is the better course to take over God’s preventive measures.

Temptation acts like a bait and hook; underneath the appealing bait lies a hook that ensnares and hurts us.

We get anxious when we listen to lies not only because the false promises don’t play out as we hoped they would, leaving us in worse condition than before, but also because additional guilt is laid on our hearts because our belief in God’s love for us is depleted. We were designed to rest securely in the protection of God, but the further we stray from God, the less peace and security we have. As we begin to examine our lives and the people that we surround ourselves with, our experiences will verify these points. What can we do to prevent ourselves from being caught in temptation?

Preventive Measures**Avoid Temptation**

We only have a brief window of opportunity to avoid temptation. God has clearly outlined the way to avoid temptation in His word.

Let’s look at the three things we can use to avoid the claws of temptation.

1. Catch it! Be aware of your thoughts

We need to train ourselves to be conscious of what we are thinking. Probe beyond your feelings. This can be done by the consistent, faithful study of God’s word, journaling, and prayer. Accountability

groups can also help if you have the opportunity to get involved in one.

The first major step in building our discernment is to pray part of the Lord's prayer, "keep us from temptation." If we don't sincerely pray this each day, then it's like we're telling God that we can handle Satan's temptations on our own. Prayer is an admittance of our dependence on God; we may not be thinking consciously that we can do it all on our own, but in the absence of humbling ourselves before God in prayer, we leave a hole in our lives.

If you're too busy for God's word and prayer, you'll end up spending your time worrying! There's no other option.

2. Discern it! Analyze the thought

Once we're aware of what we're thinking, we then need to see what the Scripture says about the matter our minds are occupied with. This may seem like an easy next step, but it's not as easy as it sounds because we may find that we've not been as well-grounded in Scripture and its practical applications as we thought we were.

For example, some people believe they don't need to forgive *every* person who has offended them. However, Scripture commands forgiveness for everyone, without exception, even enemies. We aren't doing God a service by refusing to forgive our enemies. It is a good practice to regularly refresh your mind with God's word so that you can more easily detect temptation's false promises.

3. Decide it! Make the right decision

As a third step, we need to follow up discernment with rejection of the falsehood and affirmation of the truth. The longer we wait, the more the thought will pull at our feelings and thus increase confu-

sion. This process is so well verified that we could make a prediction: delay and fall.

One of the biggest reasons for delay is the fear of failure. We don't like to look at our vulnerabilities. But still, this is the path we need to take: acknowledge your difficult situation and confused feelings, but continue to affirm that you will only do what is pleasing to God. Here is a sample prayer.

Dear Lord, I know this big bill is coming up, but I don't have the money to pay for it. I feel panicked. (This part tells the true story, but one must persist by broadcasting the truth of God's word.) I need you to help me. I am desperate. Please help me pay this electricity bill. I don't know how You'll do it, but You promised to care for my needs. I will trust You, God. Show Your power and love in my life. Thank you for caring for me, in Christ's Name I pray, Amen.

But what do you do if you already have fallen into temptation?

Recovering From Worry

If we are going to recover from a fall into temptation, we need the promises of God's word to support us.

If you don't know the promises in God's word, then how can you expect to be restored? We might hear a sermon and be comforted by the truths, but why not dig into God's word yourself? Get to know His promises!

If we have fallen into temptation, it makes a lot of sense to use the truth in the promises of God to build a ladder out of the pit we've fallen into. Our confidence in God's word will make the difference between a slow or fast recovery. The promises of God instill

hope and confidence in us, and give us access to God's truth, which keeps us on the straight and narrow and protects us from temptation and falling away.

Below are two examples of how you could fall into temptation by a lie and how you can be rescued by the promise of God.

Example #1: "I can't help but worry about this recurring problem in my life."

• **The lie:**

The Lord can't give me peace in this situation. (The truth is that God can help any believer in any situation.)

• **Result of the lie:**

Worry. The lie is allowed to dominate my mind. I lose control to worry; I make bad decisions in an effort to counter the worry.

• **The promise:**

*Those who trust in the LORD are as Mount Zion,
which cannot be moved, but abides forever (Psalm 125:1).*

God says that if I trust in Him, I will be unmovable like a mountain! The strength of the lie is broken by the truth about the security of trusting in God. Where before I had lost confidence, now I am reminded that He will help me.

• **Result of Promise**

I gain peace about a situation by praying through God's promises.

- Affirm your sonship by Christ's blood.
- State that you will trust Him to guide you.
- Repent for lack of belief and ask forgiveness.
- Confess specific areas of disobedience.
- Accept His forgiveness. Put aside accusation.

- Declare that you are now going to follow the Lord.

What worry troubles your heart? Ask God for a promise from His Word. Read His Word and seek out that promise. Cash in on the promise and rejoice in God's care for you!

Let's see why God's word can make such a remarkable difference in our personal lives.

Focusing on God's word

Think about how your perspective of life would change if you had God's mind!

Jesus modeled this for us. Jesus limited His knowledge so that He could live fully as a man. When He prayed and meditated on God's word, His Father revealed everything that was important for Him to know in a particular situation. The same is true for us!

• God's word can make a difference

Again and again we find that true comfort and help comes from God's word. You can find books in the library, pages on the web, articles in newspapers and journals, but none of them can compare to God's word. Why is this?

• Encountering God's word

God's word is what it says it is: the voice of God. God's mind is communicated to us when we put His word into our lives. You can probably share some experiences when you were experiencing difficult times, God actually brought help through the words of the scriptures.

These encounters with God gives His people encouragement and guidance as they pursue the life He's called them to. God met them in difficult times, and He will meet us too if we follow His example. Here are some quotes highlighting such times:

*When my anxious thoughts multiply within me,
Thy consolations delight my soul (Psalm 94:19).*

We can find comfort in the fact that peace has entered the writer's heart to the point that his anxious thoughts no longer trouble him. In fact, we find that he was actually delighting in God's comfort!

*My soul languishes for Thy salvation;
I wait for Thy word (Psalm 118:81).*

We find a similar situation when this man of God is being troubled by his oppressors. In verse 81, he is longing for deliverance. He has no hope but in God's word. God and His Word has become his focus.

*I long for Thy salvation, O LORD,
And Thy law is my delight (Psalm 119:74).*

We might wonder whether he has found any real profit in this desperate scheme of trusting God's word. Later on, however, in verse 174 we find him delighting in God's word. Again, we find he has joy in God's word that goes beyond difficult situations.

Where can you find true comfort and help? Only in God's word will you find God Himself. Listen to the Psalmist's confidence in God's word in Psalm 119:49, 50, and 151.

*Remember the word to Thy servant,
In which Thou hast made me hope.*

*This is my comfort in my affliction,
That Thy word has revived me.*

*Thou art near, O LORD,
And all Thy commandments are truth.*

What is “meditation” in context of God’s word?

Meditating on God’s Promises

You probably have been in a place where you tried to read the Bible when you were worried.

You read a little here and there, but then closed the Bible. You got nothing out of it. You know God’s word is there to help and encourage you in your walk with God, but you don’t know how to get His word from the book and into your heart.

Unfortunately, this is a common problem, so we need to learn to overcome. If you give in to worry, you will have no peace. The solution is in the Word of God, which is available, waiting to be discovered. However, the problem arises when it comes to discovering how one can get the Word of God incorporated into one’s mind. Let’s go over a few principles, and then I will give you a prayer example. In the next chapter I will show you why this works, but for now let’s focus on meditation as a principle.

Meditating on God’s word during times of crisis

A fruitful Christian life happens through the faithful meditation of God’s word. We see proof of this in the verses in Joshua 1:7-8, “You shall meditate on it day and night.” Meditation enables God’s perspective to become our perspective. As we meditate on God’s word day and night, we are more able to discern His will and keep away from temptation.

If we neglect biblical meditation and let our guard down, temptations will intrude our minds, catch our attention, make us aware of some perceived needs and suggest some improper solu-

tion. If we sin, then we will need to deal with our heart to correct the improper ways we dealt with that perceived need.

This can only be done if you are convinced of the power of God's word. Many Christians nominally believe in God's word, but lack conviction of its true power. If you aren't aware of how He's spoken to you in the past, then it's unlikely that you will be able to trust His Word in the present. This is why it's critical to seek, every day, the riches in God's word. The only thing that will motivate you to dig into God's word at this point is faith from the past. Your feelings will speak violently against it. We need faith to believe God's word. Without faith, we cannot come to God.¹

We desperately need a heart desiring to know and obey God. Once we are convinced that God is able to speak to us, we need to commit to continue to know and obey Him. If you haven't been obeying Him, then something's wrong. There needs to be a willingness to humble oneself and do what God wants. A meditative heart expects change; it is ready for God to speak.

Summary

If your faith and heart are prepared, then you can tackle any problem in the world, including worry. Meditation is the implanting of God's word into your own soul. His Word becomes your word; His life becomes your life.

Meditative Praying

I am going to be very practical here because you rarely hear anyone speak on meditation. But Christians have used this method for ages. Allow me to go over each step.

¹ "And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him" (Hebrews 11:6).

- **Basic understanding**

We must mention before we start that only God's children can truly pray. Those who are not in God's family cannot call God "Abba". A godly lifestyle is always important in prayer, but if one humbles him or herself, and turns back from his sin, then God gives special grace, revealing our sin, but also the light of the cross where we can find full forgiveness – thanks be to God!

- **Find an appropriate passage**

Some Bible verses are more appropriate to help us than others in times of need. We are not limiting what God can use; I personally have found it astonishing how God has, at various times, used verses that I would normally consider to be unimportant.

Finding an appropriate passage might sound difficult but it isn't. God will help you. I often start off by reflecting on whether there is any book or place in the Bible I should open to. If so, I open there. If not, I usually turn to the Psalms. Then I read until something grabs my attention. In this case, I will use Psalm 5:3. You could also refer to a book of God's promises or start your own list.

- **Settle on a passage**

Don't hop around; find a verse or section and stick with it. Don't be concerned whether it is short or long, or that you don't understand all of it.

- **Major points**

Identify the major points in the selected Bible passage. In Psalm 5:3 for example, I found two different major thoughts and put a line between them.

1) In the morning, O LORD, Thou wilt hear my voice.

The assurance that God will hear my voice.

2) In the morning I will order my prayer to Thee and eagerly watch.

Two things God expects of me: (1) I will pray and (2) I will eagerly watch.

- **Personalize your context**

Think a moment about where you are at this moment in life (i.e. this morning). Are you facing problems, in need of guidance, full of joy, etc.? Our circumstances don't matter as much as our honest assessment of where we are. In the example below, I use the specific setting of a prayer in the morning of a day that promises to be very stressful.

- **Start praying**

Although looking up definitions of specific words can help; start praying. We need to 'meditatively pray'. Meditation takes what you already know and merges it with the Word of God. We can become better students of God's word, but take your spiritual life a step at a time; don't try to do everything at once.

- **A sample prayer for an upcoming stressful day.**

There are many elements to this prayer on Psalm 5:3. Instead of outlining them right now, read the sample meditative prayer and then we will make some observations.

Dear Lord, as I come to you this morning, I want to thank you for hearing my prayer. I come to you because you are important to me. In fact, I can't do without you. The Psalmist prayed in the morning, and you heard his voice. I am now coming to you this morning. I don't know what he was facing on the morning that he wrote that psalm, but I sure know what I am facing and I

don't like it. I frankly would rather not go to work today. Every time I think about the stress at work—you know, the infighting, the petty jealousies, the swearing—I just can't stand it. But I know that is why I am here before you this morning. This is why my prayers are coming before you.

You are LORD. You are not just a lord that dominates over me, but in a much more special way the LORD Jehovah who greatly cares for me. I don't have to say anything this morning, and you will still know all about my life. You have committed to be with me. When I cry out to you, you will help me. This is why the psalmist raised his voice. This is why I am raising my voice to you right now. You will hear my voice. You will bring deliverance today! You will somehow give me all those things I so desperately need in my heart. Forgive me for doubting you. Forgive me that I so quickly forget about your love and power.

Because you hear me, I will bring my prayer. It is not like those people who pray to some idol. No. You are living. Their prayers are in vain. But my prayer that I bring to you right now will actually change my day. I look forward to how you will be working. True, you are always a bit mysterious. I don't know how you will help me out today, but I will be looking to you. How I love you! Your ways are so precious and good. I delight in you O LORD. I will be keeping my eye on you and your works wherever I go. When on my bus, walking to work, at my desk and coming home, you will be with me. I treasure your companionship. Be with me.

So LORD, help me to live like Jesus today. Strip away these anxious thoughts as I delight in your word and ways. Keep me from temptation. Deliver me from evil.

Provide all those things I need so that I can accomplish what you want me to do each day. Thank you for being with me this day. You are greater than my worries. You will give grace. I appreciate that. In Christ's name I pray, Amen.

Comments on the prayer above.

• **Honest**

He was very honest and open with God about his troubles and about God's goodness.

• **Convinced**

He was convinced of God's word. If he prayed, God would hear and help him.

• **Focused**

He would repeatedly return to the Psalm 5:3 scripture passage that was in his mind, weaving in and out, as the Spirit led.

• **Practical**

He was outright practical. He talked about that morning just as the psalmist talked about his morning.

• **Humble**

He was humble. He was honest about mistakes as well as truly repentant for his sins.

• **Expectant**

He was expecting answered prayers. This is especially mentioned in this Psalm, but it should always be part of our prayers.

• **Observations**

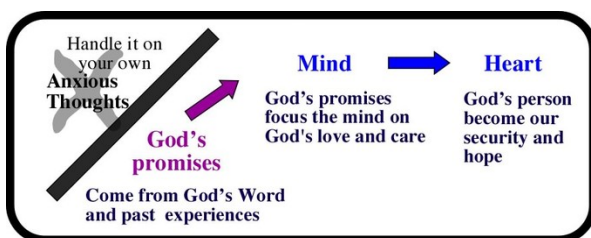
We actually see that the Word became his own word. I agree certain cautions need to be in place lest we say foolish things, but

when one is humble and contrite before the Lord recognizing his own needs in life, we are not so easily tempted. The word of God bursts through any closed doors and gives us God's perspective on life. Often the prayers lead in places and to depths that we cannot plan. That is fine. Let the Holy Spirit lead you.

Let's see why these kind of prayers can help us.

Controlling our Thoughts

Meditation overcomes worries because of one simple principle.



A human mind can only think upon one matter at a time. When our mind is on our worries and how we are going to care for things, then we will worry. But when we start thinking on God's words, the old thoughts and false promises must be put away. The Word of God becomes our new focus, our new hope and aspiration. We can see how our minds are linked up to either the self-centered nature or the Spirit of God through this passage.

For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace (Romans 8:6).

When we open our hearts to God's promises, they become the focus of our mind and begin to affect our heart. New faith comes as the Holy Spirit takes the promise and applies it to our

situation. Where we once were controlled by worry, now God's precious word controls our minds and lives.

Do you feel like getting bitter when God chastises you?

What promise is there for you?

Blessed is the man whom Thou dost chasten, O LORD,
And dost teach out of Thy law; That Thou mayest
grant him relief from the days of adversity, Until a pit is
dug for the wicked (Psalm 94:12-13).

We can only think about one matter at a time. By deliberately changing what we think upon, we set our hearts on God's provisions and His peace flows into our lives much like a tide that slowly gets higher.

Let's see what God says about His promises.

His Person, His Powers, His Ways

When God's thoughts become our thoughts, we have the peace of God.

Peace will be temporary unless we have resolved the deep root worry that we have been trying to satisfy. For God's comfort to become ours, we need to persistently focus on His person, power and ways. Our thoughts need to be like His thoughts. We need to make life changes to meet God in this way.

Notice how this following passage emphasizes the place of the knowledge of Him. As we know Him and His Word, we begin to experience His divine power.

Seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence. For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, in order that by them

you might **become partakers of the divine nature**, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust (2 Peter 1:3-4).

Although we may be perplexed by any given situation, the Lord is not at all troubled. Since He is our sovereign Lord, we know He oversees our circumstances. Because He cares for us, we trust Him to use the situation to bring about a greater good that otherwise would be possible. We need faith to understand Him and to embrace His will. For this, our minds need to dwell upon His person and Word. Only then can our vision become clearly focused not on worries but on His ways and truths.

His person. His power. His ways.

What life changes is He asking you to make that you might know more of Him?

Now we will look more carefully on how to gain His peace.

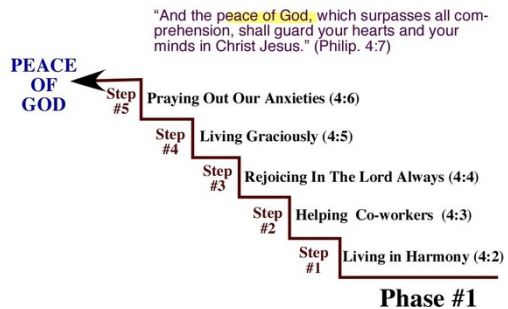
Stepping up into God's Peace

If you want a shoddy type of peace, look for a solution that sounds easy.

If you want God's satisfying peace, however, prepare to make changes and to be changed. Our troubles

are not solved by a superficial peace. Superficial peace is phony peace. Because of this, God's way of creating this genuine peace is unlike the way we normally look for peace.

Let's note the seven steps to find this peace. Paul presents them in two phases. In phase 1 Paul uses five necessary qualities to



have the peace of God actually begin to guard our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

Phase I: Philippians 4:4-7

• Step 1: Living in harmony (Philippians 4:2)

I urge Euodia and ... Syntyche to live in harmony in the Lord.

Observation: Two women had a lot to do with the origin of church meeting places.

Good relationships are vital. We normally do not think relationships are that important—especially with certain people. However, peace comes from love. The way we relate to a person reflects a lot on how we relate with God. However, it is important to recognize that our peace of heart is not derived from these relationships.

Peace can never be thought of as an individualistic possession. Our peace should never be thought of apart from our relationships with others. What relationships does God want to work on with you right now?

• Step 2: Helping godly co-workers (Philippians 4:3)

I ask you also to help these women who have shared my struggle in the cause of the gospel, together with Clement also, and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life.

Observation: We might have differences, but we are still expected to support God's work rather than to criticize it.

Give proper respect and assistance to those doing God's work. The leaders are to lead God's people into God's work, not to do it on their own.

How can we have peace when we are not actively participating in God's Gospel program? The Gospel was made to be shared with others. Fight apathy. Make a list of leaders that God expects you to support personally.

- **Step 3: Rejoicing in the Lord always (Philippians 4:4)**

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice!

Observation: His children are not to focus on how they are treated but on how the Lord has loved them!

Our greatest joy is not in things or circumstances but in the grand person of Jesus Christ. By focusing on His eternal kingdom and holy values, we will understand that our greatest service to Him is to cherish and trust Him.

Come out from under the burdens of your wants and needs and focus on our Lord's grace. Be thankful and rejoice in Him. Each time you feel critical of something going on, get by yourself and start rejoicing in the Lord till the feelings disappear.

- **Step 4: Living graciously (Philippians 4:5)**

Let your forbearing spirit be known to all men. The Lord is near.

We normally equate peace with getting everything we want. But the Lord challenges the notion of 'our rights'. Instead of focusing on getting what we want, we need to focus on giving love and patience to the very people who threaten our chance of getting what we want.

Do you focus on your demands or on being patient and kind with the disagreeable people around you? Can you trust God to take revenge? Give those you have difficulty with to the Lord.

- **Step 5: Entrust our worries to the Lord (Philippians 4:6)**

Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.

We are first challenged to stop worrying, and second charged to entrust these worries into God's gracious care.

Worrying is sin that has to be dealt with. Only then can we turn temptation into prayer!

Pick out one or two circumstances that you tend to worry about. Apply this verse now by (1) stop worrying about it and (2) letting the Lord know about your needs and trusting Him to care for you.

All five steps are essential in bringing a long lasting peace. Each area focuses on a particular aspect of our relationship with people, situations, or things. As long as we handle these things wrongly, we cannot have peace. But if we do seek God's grace as outlined in these passages, a wonderful peace is assured us. This is described in the next verse.

Let's see how this peace of God is described.

The Peace of God

God continues to show us how to gain His peace.

Verse seven shows us what happens when we obey the Lord by straightening relationships, getting rid of critical spirits, focusing on the Lord's love rather than on the things we want or expect. When we put away worry and entrust God with our cares, we find God's presence. He has always been there, of course, but He is there with

His peace. As long as we refuse to deal with these issues, though, we will not experience His peace. Listen to these precious words from Philippians 4:7.

*And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension,
shall guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*

God's peace throws the temptations coming our way to the side like water off the back of a duck. The word 'guard' is a military term that expresses God's peace as a detachment of soldiers standing guard over a city to protect it from attack. The heart and mind refers to the entire inner being of the Christian: his emotions, affections, thoughts, and choices.

Phase 1 has us work on relationships and attitudes. Verse seven is like a subtotal for this section: Peace of God shall guard your hearts. We see that the peace of God is so protective that we wonder why we are not worrying like everyone else. God's peace surpasses all imagination; it exceeds all that human wisdom can plan. Isn't this what you want? I am sure it is.

Phase 1 seems comprehensive, but something is missing.

Let's see what Phase 2 is.

Abiding in the God of Peace

The apostle realizes that the peace of God is good, but admits that it's not our final goal.

We need to go deeper. Our goal needs to be in God's presence. We need to abide in the God of peace.

These verses confirm what we have been trying to point out during our study on meditation. Meditation on God's person, purpose, and ways brings us to where we need to be. As long as we are focusing on the truth, we cannot believe a lie. We again see the renewed mind of Christ described. A renewed mind brings stronger faith.

Let's now continue with Phase 2 from verses 8-9. This will bring us all the way up to the God of peace, up two more steps.

Phase 2: Philippians 4:8-9

• Step 6: Focus on the truth (Philippians 4:8)

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, let your mind dwell on these things.

Here Paul shifts into a high gear; the mind is wholly captivated by the good and beautiful. Although the Christian is told what to think upon, we should not think this to be legalistic or restrictive. In all actuality, this is the greatest liberation possible for our earthly minds.

Paul is not merely telling us what not to do, but what to positively think upon. By dwelling on what is good and true,² the nasty, ugly, worrisome, and similar things are simply not possible. We can only think upon one thing at a time. If we are tempted to be anxious over our friend's response, then we will no doubt repeatedly think about that which instigates worry, but if we consciously de-

² "Positive Thinking" differs from Paul's advice in that the apostle insists what one thinks upon is true, rather than imaginary, and pure, in contrast to focusing on a person's own desires, that which pleases God.

cide to think about good past times with our friend or how we need to wait upon the Lord for the matter, then the worry will diminish.

The command to “Let your mind dwell on these things” implies the ability to guide one’s mind upon what one will ponder. Become aware of what you are thinking. Practice changing what you are thinking. Learn how to ponder on good things. Memorize these verses. Accept the standards as guiding points for your life.

• **Step 7: Practice the truth (Philippians 4:9)**

The things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things; and the God of peace shall be with you.

The more clearly we see and understand God’s truth, the more we can apply these principles to our lives. The end purpose, though, is not peace of mind but having that peaceful mind which brings forth good works of love. We are to practice these things.

God has high standards and expectations for us all. He doesn’t list rules for getting peace. While peace of mind is important, it is incorporated longterm by being assured the God of peace being near us.

Paul is bringing the highest standards that he knows of to their lives. He lives what he preaches. This is discipleship. What are the good things you can imitate from the leaders around you?

Have you required yourself to imitate them or do you think it is unnecessary? Ask the Lord to help you be more aggressive in growing in Christ.

If we find the peace of God to be the subtotal, indeed the God of peace is the total. “And the God of Peace will be with you.” We are left with God! If before we could treasure the peace of God, so now let us all the more cherish God’s presence. Before Him, we

stand stripped of all our worries and doubts. He Himself is our confidence. We live in His comfort and protection.

Anyone in conformity with Him will experience His peace, but the opposite is true too. The wicked have no peace. They are like the rolling waves of the ocean soon to meet their doom.

Is genuine peace impossible? No. Is it worth it? Yes. These verses sum up our Christian call in this life. With these assurances, we can see that the worries, stresses and fears of this world are void of God's presence and peace. We dare not be tempted into thinking that things like worry are natural. They are, at best, ugly contortions of life. At worst, they are signs of death.

Summary

The theme expressed here is what we have been discussing all along. To the degree we cast our worries aside, we must accept the truths of God. We only can cast darkness aside if we bring in light. We have been crossing the Bridge of Hope, step by step, chapter by chapter. As we draw closer to the other side, we are not only drawing near to peace, but are also drawing near to God Himself. Finding peace is discovering God.

Chapter seven has explained not only the importance of meditation but also how it can be used to combat evil with good. Chapter eight will help us understand and handle extreme worry. Let's summarize the principles and lessons we have learned so far before we go on.

Chapter 7: Touching Our Lives

Principles

What principles were strongly impressed on you? Circle the ones that are most significant.

- God desires that we live in His peace.
- Three troublesome states: stress, anxiety and fear all steal inner peace.
- Anxiety causes division of focus and therefore causes one to do everything poorly.
- Temptations enter our lives in order to lead us astray.
- The studying of God's word, journaling and praying are three important practices. Christians without meditation on God's word will not be able to succeed in their lives.
- We can only think about one thing at a time. Why not think on the promises of God?
- We gain the peace of God by sanctifying (correcting) our lives.
- We know the God of peace by totally focusing on what He delights.

Application

What clear decisions, plans, or confessions do you need to make because of how God spoke to you during this chapter?

- Keep up my 'worry journal' so that I can train myself to discern temptation (anxious thoughts).
- I need to confess the many vile things that I let float through my mind.
- I do not rightly respect my co-workers in the Lord. I need to change this.

Testimony

What one or two special lessons, stories, illustrations, warnings, etc. can I share with others that might encourage their faith?

I remember going through several very tight financial crises. Being a faith ministry, my family and I literally needed to trust God for everyday living needs. We did not (and still do not) know when or how money would come in. At times we were so close to failing – unpaid bills, broken items, but God held us close to Him. Our mind was guarded by the peace of God. Although we were so close to collapse, He in His magnificent way, kept us from bankruptcy. If we took our minds off the Lord for more than a moment, then our minds would quickly unravel, allowing many worries to fill our hearts.

OVERCOMING ANXIETY
Finding Peace, Discovering God

HANDLING EXTREME ANXIETY

Chapter #8

Discovering and understanding the three levels of anxiety.

Worries often get out of hand. Nobody has a solution for stopping their reoccurrence. They might offer advice on how to make these ‘attacks’ less severe, but eliminating them permanently is impossible. How great would it be to get rid of them?

Chapter eight explains the mysterious roots of anxiety and then describes the three levels of anxiety. Panic attacks, the most extreme, form the third level. Accurate diagnosis leads to genuine solutions. An exciting historical story is told highlighting the way to regain and renew the faith we need to live above the reach of anxieties.

Let’s first pray.

Dear Father in Heaven, You have said that worry is not from You. I have failed in this area. I need You to free me from my worries. They have infected my life with doubts and unbelief. I now ask you to rule my life with your peace. Please teach me how to handle extreme anxiety with all of its assailing fears and worries that my faith and trust in You might grow and that I can fully rest myself in Your wondrous love. In Christ's Name I pray, Amen.

Here are five interesting facts about worry.

Worry Facts

Each fact provides insight into the nature of worry.



Fact #1: Not everyone wants to stop worrying!

Quite a few people feel that worry isn't that bad.

- Some don't want to **get better** because worrying is a way to get attention and feel important. This is called **self-pity** (see box below).
- Others, for various reasons, avoid thinking about their worry. Some are too prideful while others are afraid how others might reject them if others got to see them with all their weaknesses.

- Others, of course, have simply never heard of how God helps people out of worries! This is what we are trying to do through these chapters.

Danger of Self-pity

Many times we say we want to be healed of our problems such as worry, but all we really want is someone else to bathe us with their attention. We want to lie down in a pool of self-pity.

We sometimes worry so much that others catch our terrible plague of unbelief. Sometimes it gets very bad. We lose friends because they don't know what to do. We blame God for not understanding.

Those who live in their self-pity have not faced severe enough consequences to make them willing to face reality. They prefer blaming others and God for their problems rather than becoming responsible for them. Once responsible they would have to confess and repent from their sins.

Self-pity is disguised worry with an emphasis on the past while fear is worry with an emphasis on the future. Like the enemies of Israel long ago, the problems will get worse until you have nothing else. When you are desperate, then you might cry out to the Lord for help.

Fact #2: Worrying always ruins a person's life!

There is no such thing as 'good' worry. The evil one knows that as long as people worry, they will be ineffective in what they do.

• Worry strips away our faith.

Christians are saved by faith, but they also grow and serve by faith. If they worry about their lives, they are no longer living by faith. This affects their fellowship with the Lord and with those around them. The opposite of trust is doubt. The biblical opposite to worry is prayer, for prayer is the action of entrusting God with our

needs (Philippians 4:6-7). Of course, we can pray and not believe, but this is not genuine prayer. Our worries reveal our unbelief.

• **Worry takes away our love.**

Worrying shows that we are preoccupied with our own lives and success, leaving us incapable of showing agape love. The evil one cannot force you to be ineffective, but he can get you to volunteer yourself as a handicapped Christian. Nothing is more sour than a Christian without love!

Fact #3: The roots of worry stem from the inside, not from the outside!

Most people believe that outside pressures cause us to worry. Our life circumstances, to be honest, do give us occasion for worry, but they do not produce worry. Stressful situations only reveal the problems of our heart. They do not make them.

Fact #4: Most ‘cures’ for worry only cover up the real problems!

The world’s treatment of worry only manages worry. It does not bring true healing. Jesus healed people. The same God is here today with us.

Fact #5: God’s grace always can overcome worry!

Great confidence can be found in our Creator God who promises to restore us. God designed us to trust in Him. Anxiety is ‘unnatural’ while peace is natural. God sent Christ to restore our faith and confidence in His love.

I hope that these five facts about worry have not only generated some hope in God, but that they have also lead to many other questions. We want to address some of those potential questions by addressing what is perhaps the most difficult worry question:

“What are anxiety attacks?” We need to see God’s perspective of these issues before we can begin to discover how He helps us.

Understanding Anxiety Attacks

• Notice some of the characteristics of anxiety attacks.

Some of us are not familiar with anxiety attacks. We might not have even heard of them, much less know what they are. However, if we can learn how to deal with the most extreme cases, we can help those in great distress and increase all our confidence in the love and power of God. If God can help people with the most extreme anxiety cases, then surely He can help you.

Extreme worries are those that begin to affect a person’s regular routine of life such as one’s sleep, eating, and other activities. Some individuals who are extremely worried about being in large groups, for example, avoid going to parties or meetings. This worry not only induces physical problems like ulcers, upset stomachs, insomnia, headaches, fast breathing, etc., but also confusion, pressure, lack of ability to discern between what is real and what is false.

Like a nightmare, one might begin to respond to unreal images as though they are real. You might be telling these people the truth, but they do cannot accept it. They have been so preoccupied with their supposed troubles that they lose their sense of objectivity.

At some point these worries step over into the realm of fear. In simpler words, they **worry over worry**. It might be appropriate to mention here that books on extreme anxiety admit that it is hard to discover whether physical problems affect the emotional problems or vice versa. However, Jesus considers physi-

cal, emotional, and spiritual problems as signs or symptoms that point to a more foundational issue.

• **Their Causes**

What are the causes of these anxiety attacks?

The literature and knowledge on anxiety attacks has grown due to the web. These four causes of severe anxiety are repeatedly mentioned:

- Phobic (fear) sensitization
- Prolonged stress
- Anxious or obsessive patterns of thinking
- Poor breathing habits, whether rooted in anxiety or other causes

We can't help but notice the words phobic (fear), anxious, anxiety and stress. **They are not only speaking of physical causes but also soul causes that are derived from spiritual issues - fear (phobic) and anxiety.** Of course these soul problems affect the physical as we have already mentioned, but the root causes goes back to the soul and its condition.

• **Their Solutions**

What are the solutions to these anxiety attacks?

This is what we want to discuss more completely. First, let me remind you that doctors will try to deal with this issue as one of the body. They know its 'soul' symptoms (just mentioned) but have no solutions for this. People still seek out doctors to find relief and prescribed medications that lessen some of the symptoms. The root problem is not solved, however, and unfortunately, these drugs often cause secondary problems.

Second, remember that what is true for the greater or more extreme worries, will be true for dealing with little worries too.

Jesus said, “Do not worry.”

The apostle Paul said, “Do not be anxious in anything.” Our goal is not just to keep from having great bouts of anxiety that interfere with our lives and cannot be easily controlled by medication, but to eliminate all worries.

Let’s examine the level of our trust, which is closely related to the degree of our worries.

Trusting In God

How do we get rid of these worries and fears?

When a person runs into trouble, what is the first thing they do? They run to the person they trust. How unfortunate it is that people do not first run to God for help. They instead seek out every alternate path. God designed man to trust in the Creator for his needs. Before the fall of man,¹ this trust was natural, but because of the fall, it is not that way anymore. When man has difficulties, he lacks an innate trust that pushes him to go to God. True spirituality is having trust in God. Without this trust, fear and anxiety arise. There are three underlying causes for fear and anxiety:

Unbelief – Distrust – Doubt

They occur when we don’t exercise trust. We just don’t realize how closely our worries are tied to our unbelief, and how closely our unbelief is tied to our unwillingness and inability to trust God.

¹ Refer to chapter two, for fuller understanding.

How can we recover this trust?

There are two basic steps we need to take. The first is to repent from our unbelief. Repentance effectively deals with two problems. First, repentance rejects the pride supporting our rebellious hearts. Second, it brings forgiveness of our guilt from our disobedience. But how does repentance work so powerfully?

Repentance comes from the humble recognition that we have not kept His commandments. We defy the Sabbath, lust, lie, and deceive. We are bitter, steal, and backbite. If we believed God, we would fear Him and not disobey Him. Worry is a sign of sin. Persistent worry reveals the pride of our hearts.

As we acknowledge these things, we can humble our hearts, ask Jesus Christ to forgive our sins, and cleanse us from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:9). God will faithfully restore our relationship with Him, and from that restoration, deeper trust will develop. Is there a possibility that you need to acknowledge your lack of trust? Is there room for repentance in your heart?

If you have difficulty starting, simply start talking to the Lord about your worries and the ensuing situation. As these things come to mind, you will see your doubts and lack of trust, just start talking to them about the Lord.

• We need to develop a deeper trust in God.

Unbelief is quite common and so is the need to confess it. After we repent from this unbelief, room to trust God develops. We can start anew by building a strong relationship with God. When we are willing to face our unwillingness to trust Him, we are also stating to God that we are seeking a closer relationship with Him, one in which we trust Him so much that we no longer need to worry. We admit that we do not have the solutions. We are openly declaring

that we need Him. This is all that He wants, for us to listen and obey. He will, in His unique way, take us on a path of developing this trust.

There are three levels of trust. This following discussion will continue to help us properly understand why anxiety attacks occur. Each level shapes the amount of exposure to anxiety we will face.

- Trust in God
- Trust in self
- Trust in nothing

A Family Illustration

I will illustrate this process by relating to you what we do in our family to solve arguments. When our children have a quarrel with another, my wife and I have agreed on two things. First, we bring them to the point of recognizing their wrong. I do this by usually asking them if they have done anything wrong. Usually both of them have done something wrong. They do not, however, always admit it. In this case, I ask the other person whether they did anything wrong. I want to make sure what is stated is true. After we have found they did wrong, we then have them specify what they said or did wrong.

In this case, I ask the other person whether they did anything wrong. I want to make sure what is stated is true. After we have found they did wrong, we then have them specify what they themselves actually said or did wrong.

After the confession, the second thing we have them do is apologize for the wrong they have done. Once reconciled, they are no longer ‘enemies’, but are friends again.

In summary, there are three things that need to be done to renew the relationship: 1) admit our wrong, 2) full apology, and 3) restoration of relationship.

Application

Let's pray and humble our hearts right now for the wrong things we have done. Today we want to build a new trust in the Lord and love Him.

- Detect any worries in your life.
- Confess them as signs of unwillingness to trust God (for whatever reason).
- Ask Christ to forgive you of your sins.
- Say a prayer where you look forward to learn how to trust Him more!

Let's look at the first level of trust.

Fulfilled and Secure

The first level describes the person who trusts in God.

Those who trust in God are secure, peaceful, confident, and fulfilled. We start at the highest level of trust because it is where we want to be. It is not where any of us start off, but it is a goal to keep in our sights.

God delights in helping His children reach this point, and He is unimaginably patient with us in the process. The problem is not whether God is able or willing to help us. God is both powerful and ready to help all of His children in their times of need. Read these verses aloud.

And He (the LORD) shall be the stability of your times,
a wealth of salvation, wisdom, and knowledge; the fear
of the LORD is his treasure (Isaiah 33:6).

He will dwell on the heights; his refuge will be the impregnable rock; his bread will be given him; his water will be sure (Isaiah 33:16).

Man was made to trust and rely on God. When man rebelled, however, he began to rely on his ability to use the things that **God** provided when He made the world. But does he recognize God? Does man thank God? No. What happens when God makes it so that man cannot get what he thinks he needs? He worries and panics.

When we do not see a ready resource for our needs, we begin to display our lack of trust in God by frantically looking for a solution. Usually, God is the last solution rather than the first.

One of God's chief purposes on earth is to restore us to a life of trust and focus on Him, and He accomplished this possibility by sending Jesus Christ to die and rise for believers. **How does this help us?** Jesus came as the second Adam. The first Adam failed the test, but the second Adam (Jesus) passed the test and inherited all.

God helps us through Jesus

God helps restore our trust in Him through Jesus in several ways.

• God is approachable

When we acknowledge how we have not trusted God but ourselves, we see our guilt and need for forgiveness. God is holy and cannot just overlook our sins. So He sent Jesus to die on the cross to suffer the judgment that was ours. By believing on Christ we find complete forgiveness and newness of relationship.

- **A new heart of faith is given to us**

God mysteriously comes to live inside us with a new spiritual nature from which a new trust in God develops. One of the first signs of that new faith is our belief in Christ. Our trust in God is restored.

- **A growing trust (faith)**

Because Jesus died we can trust Him for everything we need in life (Romans 8:32). When we see our guilt, we can also see how God graciously cared for us through Christ's death on the cross. When we stumble over our needs in life, we can again go to our Heavenly Father and look for how He will care for us. We cannot conclude from this that we should not work for a living; rather, as we work and discover our lack of resources, we ought to trust the Lord to help us in any particular need.

Once you notice the pattern, you can see the process of how your trust in Him develops.

- **The result of a growing faith (trust)**

When our faith grows, we more quickly boast of how the Lord has helped us. We are no longer prideful over our accomplishments; instead, we can delight in how He has helped us overcome so many problems so that we could reach significant goals. We are glad for His work in our lives.

As part of God's family, the Lord will care for our needs. We can see this kind of faith strongly displayed in the life of Jesus in the Gospels. Jesus lived to care for others, always trusting God for His needs. This kind of trust enabled Christ to live in freedom, untouched by the worries of everyday life. Read the two passages below aloud:

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, shall guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus (Philippians 4:6-7).

And my God shall supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus (Philippians 4:19).

Faith in God's person and promises will allow a person to see beyond circumstances. This is the faith and trust that God wants to develop in all of His children. Acquiring faith is a process, and we need to learn more about the two basic levels of trust in order to understand its true importance.

The following section is a description of the second level of trust.

Threatened but Confident

This second group of people seeks fulfillment for their needs in everything but God.

They trust in their own resources. As long as everything goes smoothly, this group is very confident and upbeat about life. Their confidence is dependent on how they perceive things are going on around them. Transition times are difficult because they need to find new resources for their needs. Their tranquility depends on their confidence in finding solutions during these times.

What is so dangerous about this stage is that it is survivable, at least for a while.

At some point they will eventually fail to find resources for the problems that they encounter. "And the world is passing away,

and also its lusts...” (1 John 2:17). Terrorist incidents, spreading diseases, and natural disasters occurring around the world all remind us of how slippery our grasp is when it comes to controlling our surroundings.

The thing that makes this stage so dangerous is that it is survivable... at least for a time. People can usually endure small worries and their consequences. Pills are taken. Divorce is endured. New relationships are sought.

In the end people put up with these inconveniences and call it ‘life,’ but they don’t change. They refuse to humble themselves and admit that they are messing up their lives. So their situation persists with only slight corrections that are made to continue to survive.

Many Christians live their lives this way. They never see the glory of God in their lives. Then again, many who say they are Christians do not really believe God, though they say they do. Their worry proves that they do not trust God, no matter how many church services they attend. This does not mean that they do not have saving faith, but it is quite possible they only know about God rather than know Him.

When you get down to the very basics of life, you will find that man either uses or misuses the things that God has made. All of God’s gifts are good, but man has not always rightly used them well. (Perhaps worse, they do not acknowledge God’s good gifts.)

For example, some people try to feel better by indulging in food rather than being satisfied with food’s special tastes, textures, and scents.

Another example might be when man uses his computer to gamble. Where did all the materials come from to make that computer? From God. What about your body's material substances? From God. Where did your soul (your invisible parts) come from? From God. Our bodies are good, but they are often used to do things that do not please Him.

People use God's creation all the time, and yet strangely they are not able to trust God. They say they trust in science but do not realize that it is God who has made the world so reliable! Their trust is in their perceived abilities. Their possessions have made it possible for them to eliminate God from daily life. This spirit of self-sufficiency thrives on pride, and their unwillingness to obey the Lord blocks out His love and power.

If human beings could just acknowledge the gigantic role that God's plays in life, then they would take a major step forward to establish a trust that would eliminate worries. How? They would begin to see how God is able to take care of frequent, difficult situations.

We could go much further if we submitted our wills to Him and acknowledged His purpose and provision for our lives. This begins to bring all the loose pieces of the puzzle together. Much time can be used to discuss the more common problems of anxiety, but here we will move on and discover how those with extreme anxiety differ from these 'mild' cases who exist in the second level of trust. These extreme cases are people in the third level of trust.

Let's see what this third level is all about.

Lacking Confidence

The difference between the common worrier and extreme worrier is that the common worrier is still able to find some kind of solution for their difficult situation.

They still have some hope in themselves or others that the situation can and will be dealt with.



The extreme worrier is worrying about their worries. They not only lack a solution but they also believe that there is none. These worriers have lost their confidence in being able to handle difficult situations. They are so preoccupied with what they perceive to be an impossible situation that they begin to believe the worse thing will occur. When worry accepts these threats as possible, then fear will rise. Stages of paralysis occur when one no longer believes there is hope. In other words, they have lost trust.

The loss of objectivity makes these situations seriously dangerous because anything could happen. It is true that sometimes drugs can be used to calm down panicky people. One can reason with them too, but rarely will it do them any good in the long run. It is like telling a thirsty person to get a drink from falling rain.

This group of people is very insecure and unstable. They cannot stay on this third level for too long. They have three options:

- Give into **despair**, which leads to suicide.
- Give into **deceit**. They have to delude themselves, through medicine or other methods to lessen the symptoms.

- Turn to **God** for help. God is so willing to help people that come to **Him**.

Notice in the following verses how the scriptures describe those with no sure hope.

As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves, and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming... (Ephesians 4:14).

The spirit of a man can endure his sickness, but a broken spirit who can bear? (Proverbs 18:14).

If we could understand that all worry stems from our lack of trust in God, we could send those who are experiencing bouts of extreme worry to pastors instead of counselors. Only Jesus can help them find healing in their souls. Instead they run back and forth between medical wards. Sadly, even though serious side effects of these powerful drugs are clearly articulated, they are used anyway. People are desperate.

We must insist on dealing with the causes not just the symptoms. If we don't address the root problem, a person's situation will get worse and worse, so much so that the symptoms threaten a person's insanity or even lifestyle. We want these people to trust God and find His great peace.

Any time a person loses confidence and trust, he becomes very unstable. Most anxious people still have confidence that there is a solution. True, they are perplexed over how to solve it. They waste valuable sleep, money, or work time thinking through solutions, but they still have confidence. It's only when they get to the point of no solution, do they get panicky.

Complicating this problem is a person's fear of admitting their inability to handle something. Admitting our

inability to handle a problem is a difficult step for those steeped in a modern mindset, which insinuates that we should have an answer for everything.

What do you do if you don't know that there is anyone who can help you? Many people fall hard in this stage and as a result are rushed by ambulances into medical wards. Their fear of no available or easy solution paralyzes them into near fatal patterns of avoidance and inaction. How I wish that they'd have confidence in God's love and care for them!

Hope is precious. When a person seeks to overcome anxiety again and again, he begins to lose hope and believe that there is no real solution. He enters a state of mind where he cannot handle certain things. As serious crises occur in our nation, whether it be a shooting, tornado, or alarming economic news, many people quickly go from level two to level three; from the stage of worldly worriers who think they can handle things to the stage where they have no hope and cannot go on.

Once they enter level three, these people no longer have a way to work out their problems. They give up. This is why so many people committed suicide after the Great Depression. Their hopes were based on what they could handle. When the market shook, they worried and became nervous; when it collapsed, their hope and misplaced trust disappeared. They knew of no other way to manage.

In the case of anxiety attacks, worry and fear will surge inside people's minds. They doubt what most people take for granted. When these basic trusts no longer are there, then panic sets in. Let me provide three examples.

Fear of Breathing

We all take air for granted. But what would happen, if we started to question its availability or even our ability to breathe it? Air would still exist regardless, but if we doubt this fact and do not trust its availability, then panic would ensue. Our lives depend on it, but if we doubt it's constant availability, we will panic. If air (i.e. oxygen) ceased to exist, we would have no solution.

Fear of People

We take friends and parties for granted. We were designed to be in community. But what if we started to question what might go wrong when we were with people? Worry and fear would swell up inside us, paralyzing us. As a result, we would avoid people, and people, seeing our erratic behavior, would do all they could to avoid us. We would end up avoiding social settings.

Fear of Flying

We are, perhaps, more familiar with the common worry of flying. Many people still refuse to fly due to some past scary event or phobia. Others, however, wonder why anyone would have trouble flying. They just jump on a plane and fly across the continent.

Fear and worry about what might happen begin to occupy their minds. They just refuse to fly. The airlines have suffered a huge financial loss because of the fear of flying due to terrorists. They laid off tens of thousands of workers. Now governments around the world are spending millions of taxpayers' dollars to preserve the security of the passengers. How do they do it? By making people perceive everything is safe (even though it is not).

Remember worry comes from the perception of insecurity, not the reality of it, though sometimes it is one and the same.

Special dangers for Level 3:

Level three is a very unstable level. The following three circumstances make them especially dangerous.

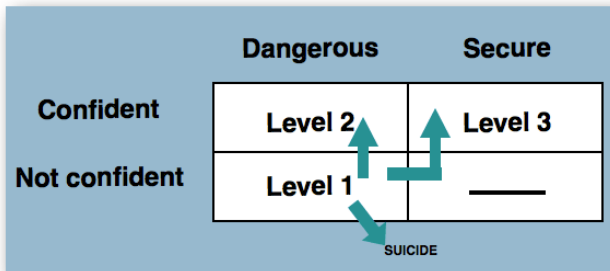
- **Loss of objectivity** - People cannot discern what is true or not. They are very vulnerable because their mind is confused.
- **Physical harm** - Emotional upheaval causes physical troubles. Sleeplessness makes people unable to handle their circumstances very well.
- **Social isolation** - Those who suffer from extreme worry tend to be alone. They live on the fringe of society..

Let’s use some diagrams to compare these three levels so that we can better understand each.

Levels of Trust: Summary

Summary of the Three Levels

These three levels of trust have everything to do with anxiety. Note that each of the three levels monitor both the degree of trust in God as well as in oneself.



In the chart above we show that those who do not trust in God (levels 1 and 2) live in a very precarious situation. Level two has confidence but it is a false confidence; at any time, the ability to care for one's needs can, and eventually will, disappear. The danger is out of sight only for the moment. We each should live at level 3 where we trust God to care for us to be able to do His good will.

Level 1	Level 2	Level 3
Do not trust God	Do not trust God	Trust God
Do not trust self	Trust self	Do not trust self

The presence of trust or confidence, no matter its sources, eliminates worry and anxiety. The opposite is true too. The less confidence we have in our ability to deal with situations, the greater our worry. By trusting in one's self, level 2, we mean that we have confidence that we can handle problems on our own using our own resources. When we are overwhelmed and desperate, we are most likely to go to others for advice.

Only the third level is secure because they know God's hand is upon anyone who resides there. As our Father, the Lord takes care of us. Remember, not everyone who says they trust in God actually trust Him. **The Christian who puts his trust in a retirement fund, a good job or possessions is at level two rather than level three.**

Do not undermine the importance of sharing the gospel with people in distressful times. We never know how far they are from danger. They are desperate, and the Lord can really help them.

We have been sharing with you how God wants you and I to go to Him for His help. This is how He designed us. But He also allows us at times to go to the end of our own resources so that we will voluntarily seek and find Him.

Summary

Trust is normal, but when our trust deteriorates, worry and anxiety increase. As long as we put our trust in things, our worries will increase at unexpected times. We must trust the One who chips away at our false security so that we could find His eternal peace in Christ. The trust that relies on God, level 3, is the one which brings the surpassing peace of God.

We will now look at a specific illustration to help us understand this model of trust.

Developing Trust

God uses illustrations to help us understand truths.

One ancient Middle East war story shows the necessity of trusting in the LORD for help. Israel was sandwiched between two empires, Assyria and Egypt. Assyria threatened the tiny country of Israel and, to God's great grief, Israel turned to Egypt for help rather than Himself.

Woe to those who go down
to Egypt for help, And rely
 on horses, And **trust in**
chariots because they
are many, And in horse-
 men because they are very
 strong, But they do not look
 to the Holy One of Israel,

nor seek the LORD! ² Yet He also is wise and will bring disaster, And does not retract His words, But will arise against the house of evildoers, And against the help of the workers of iniquity. ³ Now the Egyptians are men, and not God, And their horses are flesh and not spirit; So the LORD will stretch out His hand, And he who

THE TEST OF RELIANCE



helps will stumble And **he who is helped will fall**,
And all of them will come to an end together (Isaiah
31:1-3).

Why did God's people keep turning away from Him? Why didn't they return to Him in their vulnerability?

This illustration might go back a number of millennia, but it is typical of the problems and temptations we face in daily life. Once we find something to protect our deep needs (securities), we develop a form of confidence and peace. We become very protective of this peace.

Even when God is prompting us to turn to Him for protection and provision of that need, we tend to resist Him. After you read the verses from Isaiah 31, note the six important teachings from this passage below:

- **We face problems in life that we need help with.**
(1) ... those who go down to Egypt for help,
- **Danger (woe) accompanies those who trust things other than God to help them.**
(1) Woe to those ...
- **We typically look for help in powerful things that have visible strength.**
(1) And rely on horses, And trust in chariots because they are many, And in horsemen because they are very strong,
- **God will cause those other things we trust in to fail us.**
*(2) Yet He also is wise and will bring disaster,
(3) Now the Egyptians are men, and not God, And their horses are flesh and not spirit;*
- **Those who rely on things other than Himself are called defectors.**
(6)... you have deeply defected, O sons of Israel.
- **God is calling His people back to Himself.**
(6) Return to Him from whom you have deeply defected...

The Israelites should have returned to Him. Why didn't they return to God? Isn't God more powerful, wiser, and more loving than Egypt?

There are four things the Israelites got wrong:

- They thought their plan was better than God's.
- They believed Egypt could help them.
- They did not believe God could really help them.
- They refused to obey God. They were rebellious.

Are any of these things true with us? Do we use degrees, wealth, looks, position, reputation, cleverness, etc. to get what we need?

The failures of the huge mega-corporation, Enron, serves as one example of how man's trust in his possessions can fail. This company held onto all their people's retirement funds, but in an instant the funds were gone with the wind. While it once stood as one of the most celebrated companies of the world, it now resides in the dust of the courtrooms and in fading memory. Where are those people who trusted in it for security? Every big government scheme created to provide for our protection or security by retirement funds will encounter the same problems. (Do not conclude that I am saying these things are wrong, but only that we should not put our trust in them. Instead reason, "God might use these things to protect or help me.")

God wants us to identify our weaknesses and come to Him for help now. **We can do this best by discovering the things that we fear the most.** Fear alerts us to the vulnerable spots in our hearts that stand well guarded. Israel should have noted that they feared Assyria because of the threat it posed to their national

and personal welfare. They should have at that point humbly confessed their weakness and desperately cried out to God for help.

Detecting the Idolatry in Our Hearts

• Stage #1 Normal trust

Without a crisis in our lives, we cannot be sure who we really trust. Without a problem we do not think there is a problem. In fact we are not so sure if we trust ourself or God. Worry is not a problem! The Israelites couldn't easily see their idolatry before this crisis with the Assyrians. From the outside Israel looked like a good and faithful people.

• Stage #2 Fears arise

The crisis comes about when something that we consider valuable is threatened. Fears arise. How will we respond to these fears when we see no easy solution out? The Assyrians threatened the security of the Israelite's life and livelihood, and as a result, Israel became insecure and could no longer trust her own resources to preserve her stability.

• Stage #3 Response to Crisis

It is fine to discover our weaknesses. The problem is how we respond to them! Will we cast ourselves before God or find other solutions? The Israelites saw a great need for protection, which is fine, but the problem arose when they trusted in Egypt rather than God.

• Stage #4 Trust Revealed

When problems show up, they reveal what we really trust. You might trust in a certain person, philosophy, medicine, etc. because it promises to help you. You think more of its power rather than

God's power. The Israelites thought real protection came from military might. Because Egypt had military power, Israel compromised and made an alliance with her.

Crisis situations always reveal an accurate picture of our hearts, that is, who or what we trust when things go bad. They expose the idolatry of our hearts. In this case, the Israelites thought more of another country's chariots and horses than the Almighty God. This heart condition was not so easily seen before their crisis, though.

We can now see why God tests our hearts. He knows whether we trust Him, but He uses tests to reveal our idolatry so that we might repent. Unfortunately, it's easy to keep from trusting Him, so He needs to break down our trust in such things.

You shall remember all the way which the LORD your God has led you in the wilderness these forty years, that **He might humble you, testing you, to know what was in your heart**, whether you would keep His commandments or not (Deuteronomy 8:2).

In the next chapter we will look at God's promise to take care of all our needs, but before that, let us look at how this revelation of trust practically works out in our lives.

I'd like to share with you the preciousness of God's love.

Trust Comes from Love

The question is not whether God constantly loves His people, but "Why do people not trust God's unchanging love?"

What happens is this. Our doubt and unbelief shield God's wonderful love from us. God's love is present, but because of our doubts we do not see His love and choose not to trust Him. Think

of how differently we would respond to different situations if we really believed in the Lord's love! This is the reason for the former chapter. Our faith is not strong. We need to continually build up our faith through God's word.

I want to encourage each reader, whether panicky or not, to humble yourself and note your self-reliance and how pride might exist in your life. Can you sense how God wants to show His love to you, and how you have rejected it?



We need a new revelation of God's love to break down our hardness and pride. Listen to these words from God:

Therefore the LORD longs to be gracious to you, And therefore He waits on high to have compassion on you. For the LORD is a God of justice; How blessed are all those who long for Him (Isaiah 30:18).

Can you hear how much He longs to pour out His graciousness? How often it is that we hold Him and His love away. Only those who long for Him will gain those blessings. This is not the time to debate God's love. God is love.

- The issue is not whether God loves me.
- The issue is not whether God loves me only a little.
- The issue is not whether God loves me sometimes.
- The issue is not whether God loves me everywhere.

All the above statements are true for God's children. **The key issue is to trust God's constant love and repent from the doubt and fear that rejects it.** We might not feel His love. Do you know why? We keep it out. We worry it out. We fear it out.

Like umbrellas, our worry and fear keeps God's love from flooding our souls.

Part of the solution is admitting that we do not have a way of handling it. Modern education increases the difficulty to properly perceive our lives for it intimates that God is not there to help us – we must make it ourselves. This is the pride of life that the scriptures talk about it, the assumption that we can live, or largely live, without God in this world. We like to think we can handle life, but our shield of sin keeps God's love from warming our hearts.

As God melts the pride of our hearts with His love, He begins to show us how He wants to rebuild us. He has a plan, but we need to put our trust in it if it's going to work.

Many Christians have not experienced the love of God. For them it is a doctrine they believe. The scriptures say it is more than doctrine. God is love. When it comes down to it, they might think that His love was applied at the cross and stopped there. They think this work is an impersonal general love, a duty of God. They don't realize that God's love is real, powerful, unchanging, and directed to us personally, as God's children.

• **Maybe, Maybe Not**

Like anyone who drives on a regular basis, I am always hunting for the cheapest gas station. My daughter was going out, and happened to be near the cheapest gas station at the time, six cents cheaper than other places. I asked her to get gas for our car while she was out. I explained that it had the cheapest gas in the area, and besides, it was right across from her destination. She said that she didn't remember any gas station there, but I insisted that it was there.

Later, after she came home I asked how much I owed her and whether she found the station okay. Guess what she said? She said she didn't believe that there was a station there so she got gas at another station before she arrived at her destination - six cents higher than the one I mentioned!

This is an example how doubt steals the benefits of trusting God. We might not see it. We might not be convinced. We might not even like it! But if God promises us and directs us, then we better do what he directed us to do. Trusting in Him always leads to blessing even if it can't be seen right away. Action is dependent upon belief.

Therefore the LORD longs to be gracious to you, and therefore He waits on high to have compassion on you. For the LORD is a God of justice; How blessed are all those who long for Him (Isaiah 30:18).

Declaring Truth

We would like to close with a beautiful example from the life of Hezekiah. It stands as a radically different response compared to what we studied a few chapters earlier in Isaiah when they trusted in Egypt. When we humble ourselves before God, God will reveal a whole new view of our lives.



This applies to those caught in the frenzy of desperation, or to those who just want to set their lives on the right foundation. What are you trusting? Will events shake your life? What will you do?

King Hezekiah just received an official message from a foreign army that they had Israel surrounded and should surrender without any contention. This is how King Hezekiah's responded:

Then Hezekiah took the letter from the hand of the messengers and read it, and he went up to the house of the LORD and spread it out before the LORD (Isaiah 37:14).

We can learn of three important steps to take when a crisis hits.

• **Step 1: Declare the truths of God**

And Hezekiah prayed to the LORD saying, "O LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, who art enthroned above the cherubim, Thou art the God, Thou alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth. Thou hast made heaven and earth (Isaiah 37:15,16).

What truths are stated about God?

- Lord of many (hosts)
- God over his country (Israel)
- Lofty throne deserving all respect
- Confesses that only God deserves attention
- Only God made the earth and heaven

Always confess aloud the truths about God that have to do with your situation. If you doubt God's presence, declare the truths of God's omnipresence, His involvement with His people, His sending Christ to earth, His regular work in the life of His people. Use songs or prayer to state these truths. By stating them, you will be reminded of the truth and your doubts will be suppressed and even eliminated.

• Step 2: Detect the truth of the situation

Incline Thine ear, O LORD, and hear; open Thine eyes, O LORD, and see; and listen to all the words of Sennacherib, who sent them to reproach the living God. Truly, O LORD, the kings of Assyria have devastated all the countries and their lands, and have cast their gods into the fire, for they were not gods but the work of men's hands, wood and stone. So they have destroyed them (Isaiah 37:17-19).

What did Hezekiah say about his situation?

He asked God to:

- See his situation.
- Hear the evil king's reproach against the Lord.
- Note how the evil king devastated many countries.
- Observe the challenge the king has brought against the Living God of Israel. He boasts he can wipe You out too!

Take the truths of God and apply them to your own situation. Be practical. Be honest.

• Step 3: Admit the truth of our needs

And now, O LORD our God, deliver us from his hand that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that Thou alone, LORD, art God (Isaiah 37:20).

What did he say about his own needs?

- He wanted God to receive glory.
- He wanted the king's words made vain.
- He desired for Israel to see God's greatness.

Hezekiah couldn't do anything about all these threats but pray. He sought God so that he could understand what he needed to do. He was not self-reliant but God-reliant. God did it!

When Hezekiah was desperate, he spread that letter of trouble out before the Lord and prayed. He rejected temptation and casted his anxieties upon God.

We need to master these three steps. When we become alarmed, we need to go straight before the Lord and take these three steps of action. Identify what is causing the worries and go back to the basics.

• **The Power of Truth**

The truth of God can break through the wall we build from doubt and sin. This will happen as we gain His perspective of our situation, our needs, and of Himself. Through praise, whether in prayer or song, we declare the relevance of God's word to our lives. His thoughts gradually become our thoughts. Our faith increases. Confusion dissipates. We follow through with obedience.

At times, the point of crisis is very noticeable. You fail a course and begin to worry over the implications that that grade will have on your future. At other times, though, you may not easily see what instigates your worry. This is because of two reasons:

(1) Big worries often come from small issues.

(2) The trivial issue hits a deep down insecurity such as "I need to be accepted." In the next chapter we will explore some practical cases that illustrate these reasons.

Keep in mind that in all these cases, the treatment is the same. Some cases will require more investigative work to uncover the real problem. In essence, however, the steps toward healing are the same. We need to face our difficulties and honestly bring them before God. It works! **We are cutting away at the lack of trust upon which the worries and fears are built.**

We might try to avoid dealing with the problem, but it will come at us more fiercely next time. It is best to be responsible, admit our stubbornness, and confess our helplessness. Then we will see God in action.

Crazy Driving

There is a great difference between being a poor driver and a driver who takes his hands off the wheel while his foot is still on the gas pedal. The poor driver is like the typical person who doesn't know quite what is coming at him as he goes down the street. He does his best but sometimes he is distracted or the windshield is dirty. This is like the way we often handle our worries – poorly.

There are also the drivers who take their hands off the steering wheel. They give up on life. They hear Satan's voice say, "It is no use. Just give up. You can't do anything about it anyway."

These temptations have led not a few to be institutionalized. They just took their hands off their lives and let their situation go wherever they would. Please don't do this. You will end up dead or in one of the many unpleasant mental wards across the world. Instead remember the constant love of God. Speak to Him. Don't listen to those voices leading you into danger.

- **Help comes from taking responsibility for our lives.**

You might protest saying, "Didn't you say that Hezekiah couldn't do anything?" I said he couldn't do anything but pray. Sincere prayer to the Almighty Creator is the most important thing one can

do in such situations. Since worry is a trust issue, prayer becomes one key means to place our trust in the Lord.

Stating the truth about our circumstances is taking responsibility for our lives. We want to keep our hands on the steering wheel. You might think such action will lead into deeper depression, but the opposite is true. If we rightly use God's word, the truth leads us straight to the throne of God.

Remember God uses crisis times to bring us to Himself. This is what He has always wanted. Remember these are the times that God is calling you into a deeper relationship with Him. It just takes us a long time to come, doesn't it?

This chapter has hopefully helped you not only understand why people suffer from extreme worries, but also the three steps you can implement to overcome any kind of anxiety. These three steps will be worked out more fully and much more practically in the next chapter, so let's review the main principles and applications of this chapter before we move on.

Chapter 8: Touching Our Lives

Principles

What principles were strongly impressed on you? Circle the most significant ones.

- The cause of extreme anxiety essentially stems from the combination of anxiety with fear.
- Unbelief, doubt, and distrust keep us from trusting God and finding His peace.
- God has designed us to trust Him and experience His peace. This is Level 1.
- When we believe in Christ, our guilt is wiped away allowing us to approach God (Romans 5:1-2).
- The most dangerous thing about trusting our self is that we might never be tested until Judgment Day when we fail.
- The secular heart uses and trusts God's things without acknowledging any dependence upon God Himself.
- The extreme worrier loses complete confidence in some aspect of life.
- Trust and confidence are normal, but when trust deteriorates, worry and anxiety increase.
- People will not stay in positions of extreme worry for long. No one can easily accept hopelessness.
- When we trust in things beside God we are essentially saying they can provide better than God.
- People's sins of doubt, unbelief and fears shield out the love and graciousness of God.
- By declaring the truths of God we are allowing His thoughts to become our own thoughts.

Application

What clear decisions, plans, or confessions do you need to make because of what God spoke to you during this chapter?

- Assignment: Study the book of Numbers and see how their lack of trust brought a host of problems to their lives. Did they have reason to doubt God? What about your life?
- Do you have reason to doubt God's love and care for you in any area of your life? Have you given Him total control in every area of life? Why or why not?
- What level of trust do you live by? What areas do you need to go on in order to reach level #1? If God would help you out by testing you, how will you respond? What could He take away that would really make you feel helpless? What are the most vulnerable areas of your heart?
- List the three steps to deal with anxiety. Apply this to a circumstance in your life right now.

Testimonies

There were several big decisions I wondered if I should even get involved in. But as I kept firm to the decision He wanted me to make, I trusted Him and He wonderfully took care of all my needs. One example is from my call into ministry. I sensed God wanted to train me for ministry. Although my costs were well cared for in a university, I gave up all the scholarships to go to a school for ministerial training without scholarships and no family funding. It seemed crazy, but God provided for me all the way (including through lots of hard work!) Trust in God doesn't mean to do nothing but to do what He wants in the right spirit for His glory. In the steering wheel illustration, we still need to hold onto the steering wheel and take responsibility.

OVERCOMING ANXIETY
Finding Peace, Discovering God

STEPS TO OVERCOMING ANXIETY

Chapter #9

Mastering the three stage process to overcome worries.

These last two chapters are perhaps the most exciting. I hope that everything we have learned has been challenging and helpful to you. Here, however, we put everything together in three short steps. It is not magic. Remember, peace results from a series of right decisions. We believe that by being trained in this process, you will be able to tackle almost any anxiety that you or a friend might have. Nothing can be done without the preparation of the heart, but if God is working, then these steps will do the job of restoring someone.

Our hope has not only been to help you find God's peace in stressful times, but also that you have a testimony to share with others.

Christians often don't know how to talk to others about the Lord. The biggest reason is that they don't have a recent testimony on how He has been working in their lives. When you start talking to an anxious or stressed out person, ask them if you could share how the Lord has helped you with your anxiety. Then tell them what God did in your life.

Let's pray.

Dear Father in Heaven, it is easy to talk about change but hard to accomplish it. I need You to change me. I don't want to be the kind of person who has read this book and heard about how you were working in other people's lives but in the end did not work on my own life. Please God, let me be one who by your amazing grace live above the worries and stresses of the day. Give me a testimony and may others be amazed at your work. In Christ's Name I pray, Amen.

What has the thief named 'Worry' stolen from your life?

Anything Missing?

What would you do if someone came up to your house and just started taking things?

Normally, we would get upset and call the police. But there is one thief whom we have allowed into our lives again and again to take what he wants. We never knew we could stop him.

Worry is a robber and thief. The problem is that people allow him into their lives to keep stealing peace and security. They treat him just like a bully. They figure they can't do much about it so they just try to



Worry steals
away your love,
joy and faith.

avoid him. But bullies like a fight. They will keep taking things until the bullied fight back.

Some of you have lost quite a few important things like love, joy, and faith. Your energy is sapped, and you just don't have any faith left. You no longer can enjoy life.

No LOVE

Worried people focus on their own needs. They do not have energy to care about the needs of others.

No JOY

Worried people focus on finding solutions for potential problems. They are not able to enjoy the good things of life that God has provided.

No FAITH

Worried people focus on their doubts. They do not trust that the Lord's way is best or even possible. You just sit there and accept it. Already you should be doing something about it, but you just let him steal whatever he takes. And so he comes again, each time taking something more valuable.

The robber named 'Worry' may have demanded your sleep, so you reluctantly gave it to him. You hoped he would be satisfied with that. You didn't think it could be worse, but then he was back and started to take away your appetite. It was hard to get used to missing those nice meals, but you did. Again you hoped he wouldn't bother you anymore, but then he came for your health. You figured you could try different drugs or operations to keep you running.

This might sound ridiculous and far-fetched, but this is what is happening all the time. You or a friend might be in this situation right now. Far too many people have accepted this lousy tyrant into their lives.

You might not have known how to fight the bully before, but now you do. After reading these chapters, I hope you realize that you can stand up in God's strength and fight this enemy.

The Lord has declared in His Word that you can get your sleep, appetite, and health back. You can take back your love, joy, and faith. God gave them to you, and there is no reason to allow anxiety to have them anymore. If you let worry take one thing, it will take something else, and will keep taking until you say, "Stop!"

Please take a moment and think about what worry has stolen from your life. How has it caused you to be less the person than God has planned for you to be? Write down these things on your worksheets (found in the back). Today we are going to show you how to overcome worry in three precise steps.

Let's see what our approach should be.

Our Approach

The Lord's prayer ought to be used as a model in how to pray. Jesus warned us against just repeating the same prayer over and over. Instead, He desires that we personalize our prayers. There are three main purposes for this personalization of our prayers, which we see here: affirmation of truth, asking (i.e. requests), and assessment of our situation—the three As.

A1: Affirming the Truths of God

Our Father who art in heaven, Hallowed be Thy name. (Mat 6:9)

- Declare the truth of God in relation to ourselves.

God is our Father. He cares for us and we desire Him to show His holiness in our lives.

Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, On earth as it is in heaven.
(6:10)

- Affirm God's will and your desire for it to be done.

We want His kingdom to come. We ought not be concerned about our lives as much as His kingdom. We want things done His way rather than our way.

A2: Asking for Needs

Give us this day our daily bread. (6:11)

- Identify and ask for needs.

We all have daily needs like food and water. But we have more needs that are more personal. He knows. Mention them to Him.

And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.
(6:12)

- Restored relationships: Forgive and seek forgiveness.

We have personally offended God and others. Others have offended us. We must forgive and seek forgiveness wherever it is needed. Relationships must be restored.

A3: Assessing our Situation

And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil.
(6:13a)

- Express your desire for His guidance and protection.

By simply asking we show we want protection and need His help. But at the same time we need to think about whether we really want this protection. We are forced to see whether we really want to stay away from temptation.

*[For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever.
Amen.] (6:10b)*

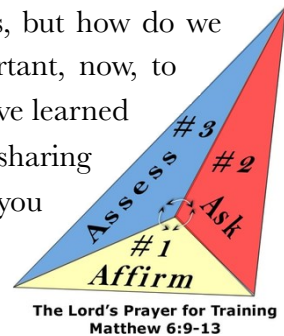
- Declare the truth of God in general. Praise the LORD!

The more we affirm the truth of God, the more the kingdom of darkness quivers. Be bold and state aloud what is true and good.

Personal prayers are usually sincere because they entwine our lives with God's will. When we pray this way, we are inevitably drawn to trust God more and more. We begin to see His truths and our souls are comforted. Prayer is the means by which we come closer to God.

The Process

We might understand why a person worries, but how do we actually get rid of our worries? It is important, now, to come and tie together the principles that we've learned so far. Just think, if a friend came up to you sharing about how worried they were, what would you say? What would you pray? This becomes a time for you to share your faith with them by helping them overcome their worries.



The three points from the Lord's prayer outline how we can pray.

1. Affirm God's Truths

Declare truth that is relevant to your situation. These truths begin to shape your thoughts. Even if you don't feel it, declare it. It is true.

For example, if you were afraid, you would declare the relevant truths of God that have to do with His omnipresence. He is

always near. Or, as I shared with one of my daughters when she was young, if she is concerned about her daddy and mommy being away, what is the truth she needs to be reminded of? The truth is that God is always present. In fact, we find that even when daddy and mommy are at home, it is still God who protects. We then could go over a few verses that speak of God's presence among His people.

***We confront our worries
with the truths of God!***

2. Asking for help

There are several kinds of requests in this prayer.

- Provision for our daily needs - food
- Forgiveness where we have not loved God and man perfectly.
- Protection from the evil one.

By asking God, we are showing ourselves to be dependent upon Him. This is the way we were designed to operate. How unfortunate that we usually let everything fall apart before we pray. Hopefully we can do better by learning dependence upon God even when we seem to have all we need.

3. Assessing Our Situation

Many of us forget that we are in a spiritual battle. We must refuse to think only about our physical needs because we need spiritual protection too. We should think about deliverance from possible future failures as well as past defeats. We want perfect deliverance.

We will go over these points in more detail in the next chapter, but I wanted to give you an overview here. There are three steps to overcome anxiety: affirming, asking, and assessing. Each

area can be expanded into its own parts but for simplicity we have broken it down and tied it to the Lord's prayer so that you can remember it.

Effective prayers

Please remember two important aspects of this kind of prayer.

1. Emphasis on truth

The truth of God is stated at the beginning of the Lord's Prayer as well as the end (vv. 9, 13). Whenever it is appropriate, mention these truths of God. If you feel caught, hindered, or troubled, start reading a Psalm aloud and then begin to state each truth aloud in your own words. This is a simple declaration of truth, which brings clarity to our confused minds and refreshment to our souls. Mentioning them at the end of a prayer will bring closure to our prayer through praise.

2. Personalize

A person's request and his assessment of his situation need to be connected. Wisdom is to gain God's perspective on our situation. We cannot, for example, just ask for forgiveness and that is all. A biblical principle reminds us that if you do not forgive, you will not be forgiven. We need to assess our own hearts. If we begin asking for forgiveness, our minds should be trained to immediately evaluate our hearts and find out if we have any grudges or bitterness against anyone. What we ask should lead to an assessment of our situation to make sure all is clear.

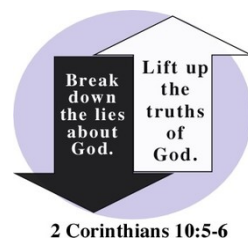
The same principle applies to us when we seek deliverance from evil. We need to go back and see whether we really want deliverance. You need to ask yourself if there is anything that you are doing to foster an evil attack. You need to be sensitive to the Lord, to see if He is prodding you to do anything in particular.

Affirm God's Truth

Every worry is rooted in a lie about God.

Every worry, fear, and all your stress is an attack on God's person and ways. When you speak relevant truths of God, the lies become apparent and lose their ability to deceive us.

We gain more freedom, willingness, and faith to confront our failure, and trust Him for our needs. We can observe our faith increase as we affirm His truths as mentioned below. Just remember this: By declaring the truths we break down the lies! Below are three steps in finding and affirming these truths.



1. Discover what truths are relevant to your worry.

Note what you are worrying about. Is it money, friends, fears, loneliness, grades? After you figure that out, try to see what you doubt about God. We usually question:

- God's willingness to care for us (His mercy)
- His ability to care for us (His power)
- His intention to help us (His love)

For example, if I fear getting sick, I can ask Him to keep me well, but in the end, like Job, I must give Him praise even if I do become sick for I am made for His purpose. If I need to suffer, then I will praise Him in my suffering.

2. Find relevant scripture passages that address those issues.

Pray and ask God to show you one or more passages that address the issues you are experiencing. A good place to start is your morning devotional scriptural passage, but don't be bound by it. Just

start reading—even haphazardly—through the Psalms. Read a whole Psalm or paragraph when doing this and be open to learn from passages that don't at first seem to speak to your situation. Often our mistake is our unwillingness to meditate on the passage and let God speak. We move on too quickly.

3. Proclaim these truths aloud.

Quiet reflection on truth is good, but if you wish to take advantage of their full power, speak them aloud in a sincere prayer to God. Writing is better than a quiet prayer; speaking aloud, however, is the most effective way. Why? The reason is twofold:

1) The truth lessens the demon's grasp on your thoughts, just as light casts away darkness. We cannot see this spiritual dimension, but every person is affected by it nonetheless.

2) As you begin to assert the truth, your confusion will gradually disappear and the issues will come into proper perspective. This then will allow you to boldly proclaim and commit yourself to the right way. Don't cut off your prayers too quickly because the Holy Spirit is in the process of illuminating you.

Rightly Handling the Word of God

In the Word of God we are able to more easily grasp His Word by observing if these words are:

- **Truths** about His person
- **Promises** about our situation
- **Principles** relevant to some decision
- **Warnings** to keep me from some behavior
- **Examples** to follow

By looking at this list, you'll more easily notice the different 'kinds' of words that might be relevant to your situation. For example, if you're discouraged, you need a promise. If tempted, then a warning.

Now let's look at four situations and apply the above process. After discovering the heart of the worry, find a relevant scripture passage. Parts three and four are both proclaiming the truths (in prayer) but the last part, the affirmation, is where you clearly affirm your obedience.

1. What about the security of my job?

Is God not committed to overseeing your job situation and providing for you as your Father?

And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose (Romans 8:28).

Proclaim truth aloud: Lord, I thank you that I can trust you with my job no matter what, whether I lose or keep it. Nothing can happen without your sovereign hand working through circumstances to accomplish a greater good. You want me to trust you for my family needs if I keep my job or not. Thank you for this special opportunity to trust you for my family needs.

Affirmation: You want me to put my worries aside. I trust my family's needs to you and continue to trust you whether I lose my job or not.

2. What about someone attacking me at night?

Is not God all powerful, able, and willing to watch over your footsteps?

³For behold, they have set an ambush for my life; Fierce men launch an attack against me, Not for my transgression nor for my sin, O

LORD, ... ⁹Because of his strength I will watch for Thee, For God is my stronghold. ¹⁰My God in His loving-kindness will meet me; God will let me look triumphantly upon my foes (Psalm 59:3, 9-10).

Proclaim truth aloud: Lord, it seems like violent men act in such unpredictable ways, but you are greater than they are. They might even set an ambush against me, but they are not stronger than You. You are my strength and stronghold, and I call upon You to protect and shield me. In the end, I will give thanks for your deliverance of me.

Affirmation: I will meditate on your love for me. You will watch over me. I will trust you with my life.

3. What about my fear of flying?

Is not God in control of every aircraft as well as your life?

He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High Will abide in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say to the LORD, "My refuge and my fortress, My God, in whom I trust!" (Psalm 91:1-2).

Proclaim truth aloud: Lord, I might be in an airplane high in the sky, but I know something much more comforting. I dwell in the shelter of the Most High. I abide in the shadow of the Almighty. You are My God. You are the One who ultimately cares for me whether the plane crashes or safely reaches my destination. I have entrusted my way to you and, I trust you will care for my life and situation. Thank you Lord!

Affirmation: Lord, I will take that flight that you want me to take. There is some risk but I will trust you for protection.

4. What about people making fun of me?

Is not God the wise One who designed you and keeps you living?

For Thou didst form my inward parts; Thou didst weave me in my mother's womb. I will give thanks to Thee, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Wonderful are Thy works, And my soul knows it very well. (Psalms 139:13,14)

Proclaim truths aloud: Lord, I know I should not be intimidated by those who make fun of me and look down on me. You are the One who has carefully formed me. Even before I was born, You were busy shaping my life. People might look down on me but I choose to thank you. You made me to display your glory. So I rightly give thanks to you and praise You for making me the way I am. I don't pretend to be great, but I do want to be faithful.

Affirmation: Lord, I have been avoiding those people but now I am ready to befriend them and even share your word with them. I am different but that difference is by your good design.

In no case are we talking about being purposely foolish. Sometimes our duty or task calls us to take a risk for the Lord's purpose, but when we are within His purpose, we can trust Him in any situation He leads us to.

One main reason we need to frequently meditate on the scriptures is to give us ample supply of truths that are relevant to our difficulties. There is a host of areas that might be cause for worry. For each one, there are truths to declare. Can you think of any scripture passages that deal with possessions, health, fame, lust, responsibilities, time, and even your life?

Let's see how Jesus brought truths into the minds of His troubled disciples.

God Cares For Me

Jesus teaches truth to build up our trust.

Trust and its companion hope are so important. Jesus taught the truth about God so that we could trust Him more.

Have you ever worried about not having enough money for living? How did you respond? In the following case, when Jesus notices the disciples' worries, He immediately gave them four truths of the word to both destroy the basis of their worries and build up their trust in God.

(1) Our souls are more important than our possessions. (Matthew 6:25)

Is not life more than food, and the body than clothing?

The integrity of our soul, the invisible part of our lives, is more important than the welfare of our bodies. What we have is not more important than our souls. Things are not more important than people. People are always more important than things. In order for us to maintain a proper perspective, we need to emphasize the welfare of our souls over our bodies. A well-attended body without a soul is a monster. Because God values the integrity of our inner soul, we should value it as well. (The body is not to be despised; yet the soul needs to be more highly esteemed.)

(2) God does care for our bodies (Matthew 6:26)

Look at the birds of the air, that they do not sow, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them.

Are you not worth much more than they?

Jesus obviously does not mean by His prior statement that the body is not important. God shows that He cares for animals that do not have a soul and cannot think for themselves. If this is the case,

surely He will care for the needs of those who are aware of their basic physical needs.

(3) Senselessness of worrying (Matthew 6:27)

And which of you by being anxious can add a single cubit to his life's span?

Accept the unchangeability of life. Worry can never solve the problem, especially if it has to do with one of the body's unchangeable qualities, like your height or foot size. When all your energy, time, and money is spent, did worry ever help? Absolutely not!

(4) God's design to care for our lives is astounding (Matthew 6:28-30)

And why are you anxious about clothing? Observe how the lilies of the field grow; they do not toil nor do they spin, yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory did not clothe himself like one of these. "But if God so arrays the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the furnace, will He not much more do so for you, O men of little faith?"

God's intention to care for our needs goes far beyond the bare basics. The flower is attractively made, but its beauty is not for itself. Our needs and the supply for those needs are designed to bring great glory to God and blessing to our lives. For example, when we gobble down food without appreciating the different flavors, textures, etc., we insult God. Design brings glory into our lives. In the end we will find that the design of His care is more intriguing than the provisions.

God knows about all of our needs. There is nothing that He can't provide. We just need to trust Him as He designed us to do in the first place. Let's now look at the second step in the process of overcoming anxieties.

Ask Help for Needs

We might not think prayer is more effective than some pill against worry, but it is. Prayer outclasses any other remedy because it eliminates anxiety.

2) Ask Help for Needs

God's revealing of His person and truths



True understanding of God and His ways



Seek God's help

First, it is in prayer that we affirm God's truths. There in His presence, He reveals His mighty person and will to us. This second step follows the first. We stand there humbled and in great need crying out to God.

Most people have heard of Jonah. He resisted prayer. Those on the ship in the stormy sea were doing more praying than stubborn Jonah! He is a picture of the worried Christian lacking the joy, love, and peace of the Lord in the world. He refused to cry out for help. He doesn't want to turn to God. In Jonah's case, he had a mistaken notion about God. He thought he could get away from obeying the Lord. The Lord delivered him into the belly of a great fish to humble him.

If you were Jonah, when would you have called out to God in prayer?

Before you spent your money on that ship going away from doing what God wanted? Or would you have started praying once the ship started rocking? Some perhaps would wait till they were sinking down in that cold sea to their final end. Not Jonah. Do you realize



"I called out of my distress to the LORD, And He answered me. I cried for help from the depth of Sheol; Thou didst hear my voice."

Jonah 2:2

that it took him three stinky and tortuous nights and days in the belly of some fish before he actually cried out to God? Some of us are stubborn. Why? We just don't want to change. Our chief delight is not in God but in expressing our own will.

Before every sincere confession, there is the revelation of God's person and truth. Isaiah saw his unclean tongue before the Holy God in Isaiah 6. The Apostle Paul's transformation was absolute and sure once he met God. Our lives are no different. I have seen God's word touch some of the most hardened people. They melted before Him. Just minutes before, nobody could have had the slightest hope that they would turn to the Lord.

The second step in the threefold process is to ask help for our needs. The problem with a lot of prayers is that they are superficial. It is only after affirming God's glorious truths that we are able to meet God and discern our real needs. The revelation of God's holy person and ways will lead His people to humble but powerful prayers. We can find specific Biblical advice that shows us how to handle our anxieties by going to Him in prayer. Here are two of them:

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, shall guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus (Philippians 4:6-7).

Casting all your anxiety upon Him, because He cares for you (1 Peter 5:7-8).

We know that Jonah finally cry out after three days and we see how he was delivered from a horrible situation. He was worried that God was going to keep him in that fish alive until he repented!

And he said, “I called out of my distress to the LORD,
And He answered me. I cried for help from the depth of
Sheol; Thou didst hear my voice”(Jonah 2:2).

When a person is sincere, he knows how desperately he needs the Lord. **Many prayers are in vain because the hearer does not believe he has any real need.** This is why we must not tolerate anxiety; it is a sin causing us to fall back. Or, if a person is convinced of his or her need, there remains a lack of confidence (faith) that God can do anything about it.

This change of heart must precede deliverance so that repentance and confession can first take place. “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9).

We must pray specifically about being released from every form of anxiety. If we don’t pray, we will not find help.¹

In a majority of cases, the roots of this sinful disease go beyond our present concerns down to a deeper heart concern. God will lead us there step by step, to reveal the deepest problems so that He can uproot the seeds of sin in your life. The humbling of our hearts and desires lead directly to the great change He will bring to our lives.

¹ Some people think it is not proper to ask things for oneself. They can become prideful about that. They think of it as some spiritual high. Instead, God’s word teaches us that we are disobeying Him! Jesus even asked for His daily needs. Our Father in heaven wants us to ask. We were designed to depend upon the Lord. We can give thanks after we have asked Him for help and found it (Deuteronomy 8:10), But we must first ask Him! There are several kinds of requests: provision, forgiveness and protection depending upon a person’s situation, but asking we must come, asking in faith (Hebrews 11:6).

Let's now look at the third step.

Assess Our Situation

This help might look different than we expected, and we might not even notice His help. For example, we might run into a crisis. If so, don't panic and question God, because it's more than likely that He is pointing out some of your basic problems. He is giving you an occasion to practice humility and obedience.



By studying our lives before God, we can discover what our anxieties are. We need to confess and repent of things that He brings before our mind. (Don't forget unbelief is sin.) Similarly, we need to put our trust in Him. This process can take a considerable period of time, depending on how serious you are about pursuing these matters. The good part is that you will find your heart greatly improved once you turn back to God. A person is usually worried about more things than he or she thinks, and oftentimes, a person will focus on only one issue. Once that is cleared up, he will see other areas needing to be dealt with.

Becoming more aware

When we examine the following four categories, we will become more aware of what is happening to our lives. Note how our emotions, minds, bodies, and wills (decisions) are all involved. These problems occur because worry is not natural. Our minds, emotions, bodies, and spirits are easily overwhelmed by persistent worries, stress, and fear. We were not designed to handle intense stress and anxiety.

Let's deal with them one by one.

- **Worried feelings**

Worried feelings include hurry, irritation, restlessness, lack of focus and confused emotions. The worrier is not acting by principle but by feeling. They are impulsive rather than evaluative.

- **Anxious thoughts**

Anxiety dominates the mind with thoughts like the following:

“I can't do it.”

“What am I going to do?”

“What if this or that happens?”

“I'll never be able to do it.”

“What will he or she think?”

Some of these are based on a lack of trust. Others are because of the fear of man. All are because we are handling things wrong.

- **Physical symptoms**

An unbelievable number of sicknesses and disease have their roots in unresolved anxiety. If you are facing such physical problems, check up on the web and see if there is any connection between your physical problem and worry.

- **Sinful acts**

Anxiety will either lead to repentance or wrong decisions. These wrong decisions are always sinful in that they go against the way God has paved before us. The anxious person might lie, steal, covet, be immoral, cheat, break the Sabbath, be appetite driven, etc. These sins drive the soul from God and a genuine solution.

*Anxieties are the fuel
which feed the fears
of the basic insecurities in life.*

Insecurities are the unfulfilled needs of our lives. Our lives become preoccupied with trying to meet those perceived needs.

So what do you do with these things?

What does your doctor tell you? Does he tell you why you have some of these diseases? More than often not. They see the consequences but not the root problems of the diseases for which they have no cure. Their medicine only deals with the consequences. Unfortunately, doctors often do not warn you of the many side effects. Alternative treatments often hide God's message from you. God offers a cure through the humbling of your heart and getting right with God.

This book is based on the premise that peace comes from a closer relationship with God. **Remember the bridge.** As you cross, you leave anxiety behind and draw closer to God's peace. When we trust God, we will not be anxious, worried, or fearful. We will not face these symptoms, which are God's reminder that all is not well.

Let us see how the whole process works together to overcome anxiety.

Going For It!

The root cause of all worry is that we do not trust God as we should for some perceived deep need of our hearts. We put our confidence in another plan. Our



worry demonstrates that our plan is not working. How do you discover your heart needs? Here are three simple points that will help you know your heart.

- **Hooked!**

When fishing, how do fishermen know there is a fish on the end of their line? They feel a tug, don't they? The symptoms that we have just gone over are like tugs on our line. When we see symptoms occurring in our lives, we should be able to realize that we are anxious people.

The symptoms, like tugs, will continue to bother us until we do something about them. Don't be like stubborn Jonah. Don't wait till other people are suffering because of your individual problems. Say, "I don't like experiencing this. I don't need to be this way! God has a better way." He does.

Hooked means that you sense something is wrong and you want to deal with it. Remember that a fish will keep pulling until it's out of the water. The problems will worsen until you solve them.

- **Pull it in!**

What do you do when you feel a tug on the line? You pull it in! You might first jerk the line to get the hook in the lip of the fish, but you pull the fish in.

When dealing with anxieties, many people are like someone who catches a fish on his line, ties his pole down, jumps into the water, and swims after the fish. Surely the fish will elude him. Anxieties are caused by not trusting God in one or more areas. Don't be confused. Go pull that fish in. You might ask, "Well, fishing I understand, but how do I pull a worry in?!"

We will eventually get down to our root insecurities by rejecting each secondary worry. When a worry appears, reject it as unfounded and put your trust in how God will guide/help/protect you.

Detection of the worry is the hooking of a fish. When you see the symptoms, start dealing with them immediately. Don't let them hang around. Confusion increases quickly when we do not quickly deal with worries and stress.

We reject it by three steps:

1. Acknowledge a lack of trust
2. Confess particular sin (i.e. doubts that God can help)
3. Adoption of God's way (Can't? Cry out for help)

Perhaps it is best seen like this. I have a neighbor named John who was telling me about a fish he caught once upon a time up in Lake Erie. They struggled with that one fish for 12 hours. It was a 4 foot channel catfish. The bigger the fish, the harder it is to pull it in and the longer it takes. Think of your deep-rooted insecurities as big fish.

Because you did not deal with it earlier on, it is not easy to pull in. It has grown and there are many other lies that first must be dealt with. The length of the line depends on how many secondary worries have to first be dealt with. The line consists of a lot of lies. It doesn't matter from this standpoint. Just deal with each lie (i.e. worry) as they appear. You do need to deal with all of them by God's truth.

Some people are scared because they cannot get rid of all of their worry at once. They may have spent years piling worry upon worry. It will not be so easy to eliminate them. But like my neighbor, by persistence he brought that 4-foot catfish in. There are usu-

ally more tears associated with this root worry, but it is dealt with in exactly the same way.

If you are just coming to know Christ as your personal Savior and Lord, you will need to see your whole life as a big lie. You need to come to the truth for forgiveness. Sin is sin. All our sins are dealt with in the same way. Once you detect a worry, you need to reject it, which is done by exposing the lie to the truth and ceasing to believe it.

• **Hit it over the head!**

When we identify insecurities, we need to write them down. They are usually very simple in nature but significantly affect on our lives. Have a good talk with the Lord about each one. Some needs are not real needs. Other needs are part of how God made us, only you may not have realized how God can fulfill them.

Talk to God as a friend. Ask Him to show you how He will fulfill that need in His way. Ask Him to give you a scripture or a picture in your mind to assure you of His love and comfort during this particularly insecure time. Keep a journal and be alert of the many ways He may answer your request to reveal your worry or how to resolve it.

God made you to trust Him because He wants to be your first love. He wants you to be excited about His place in your life. Why does it take us so long to come to the most basic part of life?!

Let's attack the core problem.

Attacking the Problem

God is fully trustworthy, but we have not fully trusted in Him.

We have believed a lie about Him and the way He cares for our needs. So we seek out other things to fulfill us. When these things fail us, we worry. The only way we will be able to overcome all worry is to fully trust in the Lord. The Psalms are helpful because we can trace the difficult training course that God took David through, leading him into trust. Here we see the way he learned of God's great faithfulness.

We cannot fully trust God if we trust in the things around us. In order to trust Him, we need to entrust our possessions and situations to the Lord. We need to seek the Lord's will first. As we do this, we will realize that the Lord is the only One who can really help us.

The simple step of bringing your specific needs before God is actually strategic. **Jesus states the truth of God to encourage us to trust in Him.** We will see this instructive "don't be anxious but trust" pattern three times in Matthew 6.

Do not be anxious (6:25-30)

God takes special care for you.

You can trust Him.

God is reliable.

Do not be anxious (6:31-33)

Since God cares for you, you can live greater and better lives when you focus on seeking His kingdom first and His righteousness.

All our needs will be cared for.

Do not be anxious for tomorrow (6:34)

God designed us to live one day at a time. You can plan, but you

should not worry. A procrastinator worries so much about tomorrow's tasks, that he does not get today's jobs done! God designed us to live one day at a time.

A special illustration

George Mueller chose to raise orphans to show how God could provide for those who sought Him in the then modern world. He intentionally opted out of telling people of their needs and left provision up to God. In the end, he regularly cared for more than 2,000 children, supported many overseas missionaries, etc. He testified that to those who seek the Lord first, everything they need will be given to them. Sometimes Mueller would be close to nothing for several weeks or even a month, but in the end God always showed Himself to be faithful.

But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added to you (Matthew 6:33).

Let's look at some practical examples on how this works out!

Finding Restoration

Relationships
Child's health
Losing my job
Research
Finances
Grades

Affirmation of God's truths is based on Matthew 6:33. We affirm God is sufficient for our every need when we first pursue His will.

My Finances

1) Affirm God's Truths

Lord, I affirm Your kingdom and righteousness as a priority in my life. I commit my finances to you. You care for them. I want to set everything just right.

2) Ask Help for Needs

Lord, please forgive me for mishandling my finances and to be always worrying. Help me get out of debt. Help me out of this terrible situation. I need you desperately.

3) Assess My Situation

Lord, I am worried about my finances. I know why things are so bad. It all started with the loan I got to buy a car. It put me too close on the edge. I couldn't give a tithe anymore. As I started focusing more and more on my needs, my worries have gotten worse. They have even started to affect my job performance. Now I have started worrying about my job.

My Health

1) Affirm God's Truths

Lord, I affirm Your kingdom and righteousness as a priority in my life. You are the God who promised to care for me through good and bad. I entrust my body, soul, and spirit completely to you.

2) Ask Help for Needs

Lord, please forgive me for not trusting you with my health. Please bring comfort and faith to my weak heart. Take care of me. Help me get back to you.

3) Assess My Situation

Lord, I started worrying about my health when I heard of an old classmate getting sick and losing all her friends. I am not her. Furthermore, I am your child. You often use sickness to bring your children closer to you. I have been cold in my heart. Perhaps this is part of what you are doing.

My Relationships

1) Affirm God's Truths

Lord, I affirm Your kingdom and righteousness as a priority in my life. I have been using women rather than caring for them as sisters.

2) Ask Help for Needs

Lord, you know my need for a wife. I entrust you, my Father, to care for this need. Please forgive me for caring for my needs more than the girl's needs. Also forgive me for pretending to be richer than I am. I am such a fake.

3) Assess My Situation

Lord, I am worried about finding a wife. I should be concerned with finding the right woman but I am so desperate that I have even dated non-Christians. My worries seemed to get a lot worse when my buddies started jeering at me during my last birthday party saying, "Are you ever going to find a wife." I guess it had a lot to do with my pride. I wanted to show them how good I was.

My Grades

1) Affirm God's Truths

Lord, I affirm Your kingdom and righteousness as a priority in my life. Right now I give my whole heart to you. Take it. Let not worry rule over me. Jesus, you are the overcomer. Show how your mighty

hand is at work in my life. My faithfulness to you is more important than good grades.

2) Ask Help for Needs

Lord, please forgive me by the blood of Christ for worrying about my grades. Help me do my best. You take care of what I get.

3) Assess My Situation

Lord, I am worried about my grades. My mom told me that my dad was concerned about my grades when I mentioned I wasn't doing so well this year. I don't know what my parents might do or say if I don't keep my grades up. When I started thinking about grades, I started doing worse! I couldn't focus on work or studying. I even was thinking of how I could fake my report card. I also have been skipping church just to study a bit more.

My Child's Health

1) Affirm God's Truths

Lord, I affirm Your kingdom and righteousness as a priority in my life. I am not the only one who knows of my child's high fever; you know too. I don't know if it will get worse or not. But what I do know is that you will take care of her. I choose to trust her to you. You take this little child in your arms.

2) Ask Help for Needs

Lord, please forgive me for not trusting you to care for this dear little one. I ask for your peace in my heart. To be honest I don't have much faith at this point, but it is there, and I want to trust you. Please help me to calmly serve my little child and not be pre-occupied with my worries.

3) Assess My Situation

Lord, I am worried about my child's health. Her fever is so high. My worries got worse when I remembered a sad story of a sick child. I'm so edgy. No peace. My mind can't rest. Things got even worse when I started thinking about what could happen if she got worse. I don't know how to help her.

My Job Security

1) Affirm God's Truths

Lord, I affirm Your kingdom and righteousness as a priority in my life. I know I might lose my job, but it can't happen unless you think it's best for me. Instead of worrying, I want to thank you because you have my career and my family's needs all in your hand.

2) Ask Help for Needs

Lord, please forgive me for worrying about how you will care for my needs. I entrust all my needs of a job to you. I ask for your special peace that would enable me to care for others who are in my same situation.

3) Assess My Situation

I am worried about losing my job. If I lose my job, I won't have money for rent and food. I fear I will be a failure. It all started when I heard rumors of a layoff. Maybe I will be one of them. I can't focus. I can't sleep well at night. I keep waking up.

My Research

1) Affirm God's Truths

Lord, I affirm Your kingdom and righteousness as a priority in my life. It is true that I might not be able to continue my present re-

search because of inconclusive data. I trust you. I want to discover your real world and not fake any data just to get by.

2) Ask Help for Needs

Lord, please forgive me for worrying about what you have already cared for. Please help me to do my best for your glory. I need your wisdom and peace so that I can be your witness here in my lab.

3) Assess My Situation

Lord, I am worried about my research. Things have not been going well at all. I started worrying when my professor told me I must start all over if I don't have results in two weeks.

Restoration of God's peace about these situations scatters doubt that God fully cares for me. The discovery of His real and constant love for me constantly grows as I put my worry aside.

Let's gain a glimpse of what God is doing in our lives.

Strike Down All Idols

There is no wiser step forward then to trust in the Trustworthy One and cast aside all those things that have or will fail you.

In closing, I want to remind you that we often think we are idol free. We think idol worship is something of the old days or out in the Far East.

Our worries, however, reveal the presence of idols. Because of our wealth and flourishing society, we think we can handle everything. We think we can live a God-free life. We ourselves are the new cast of idols. 1 John 5:21 says, "Little children, guard yourselves from idols."

God is going to knock every idol down. Some will go earlier than others, but they all will come down. Perhaps some of you can

sense things falling apart even now. Now is the time to humble yourself and put your full trust in the Living God. We are to lift up God's magnificent Name rather than quietly brag about our own abilities and resources.

Do not tremble and do not be afraid; Have I not long since announced it to you and declared it? And you are My witnesses. Is there any God besides Me, Or is there any other Rock? I know of none. Those who fashion a graven image are all of them futile, and their precious things are of no profit; even their own witnesses fail to see or know, so that they will be put to shame. (Isaiah 44:8-9).

Behold, all his companions will be put to shame, for the craftsmen themselves are mere men. Let them all assemble themselves, let them stand up, let them tremble, let them together be put to shame. The man shapes iron into a cutting tool, and does his work over the coals, fashioning it with hammers, and working it with his strong arm. He also gets hungry and his strength fails; he drinks no water and becomes weary. Another shapes wood,

Half of it he burns in the fire; over this half he eats meat as he roasts a roast, and is satisfied. He also warms himself and says, "Aha! I am warm, I have seen the fire." (Isaiah 44:11-13,16).

There is no wiser step forward then to trust in the Trustworthy One and cast aside all things that have or will fail you.

Chapter nine has gone over the 3-step process to eliminating all kinds of worries. Chapter ten is the last chapter. In it we will confront the last major area in overcoming worry that we must face if we are going to totally trust the Lord. Let's review the main principles and applications of this chapter before going on.

Chapter 9: Touching Our Lives

Principles

What principles were strongly impressed on you? Circle the most significant ones.

- Every worry is rooted in a lie about God.
- Prayer is time to bring God's word to shine on our lives as we bring our concerns before Him.
- Affirming God's truths is the way we declare God's truth which is relevant to our situation.
- A person's request and his assessment of his situation need to be connected.
- Jesus teaches truth to build up our trust.
 1. Our souls are more important than our possessions. (6:25)
 2. God really cares for our bodies (6:26)
 3. Worrying is senseless (6:27) I can trust God.
 4. God's design to care for our lives is simply awesome. (6:28-30)
- Unless we sincerely ask the Lord for help we will never be able to overcome our worries.
- Anxiety is the fuel that feed the our basic insecurities.
- The root cause of worry is that we do not trust God as we should for some perceived need of our hearts.
- When we seek the Lord's will first, God gives us assurance that He will care for our other needs.
- When we note worried symptoms, we need to immediately deal with the worry.
- Detect and reject refer to the way one exposes the truths of God to the different lies we have believed.
- Humanism is the idol of trusting in oneself.

Application

What have you allowed worry to steal from your life?

- Will I pray through each worry until I have found its root lie and defamation against God?
- Agree with God about his standards and how you have fallen. Honestly tell Him how you have doubted His care for you.

OVERCOMING ANXIETY
Finding Peace, Discovering God

BECOMING AN OVERCOMER

Chapter #10

Creating a testimony by overcoming difficult worries.

Behind many worries and fears is death. No one likes to admit this because they do not have any way of handling death and its fears. Death ushers in a lot of unknowns.

God knows that as long as we fear death, we cannot be free to live for Him. Powerful truths will be shared throughout this final chapter to inspire us to be one of God's overcomers. Real life stories of Christians facing death boldly illustrate the lesson's important principles.

Will you be an overcomer or will you be overcome? This is your decision. God has made the victory possible through Jesus Christ.

My goal for this book is to give you a way to realize your testimony so you can share with your friends. Remember to thank

God by telling other people how He has helped you overcome your own anxieties!

Let's pray.

Dear Father, we desire that a great passion to serve you and others would fill our lives. We want nothing, whether it be our possessions or our lives, to hinder us in the dedication of our lives to you and your kingdom. Let your kingdom come. Let your will be done on earth even as it is in heaven. Jesus Christ, you have overcome death and its fear. Now the grave stands before you like an open gate. Let your overcoming spirit rule our lives right into eternity so that we might give great praise and glory to your holy Name. In Christ's Name I pray, Amen.

Let's see what it takes to be an overcomer.

The Victory

What is it going to take to be an overcomer?

We have before us the symbol and prescription for victory.

• Symbol of victory



Let's make the Nike running shoes our symbol for victory. The name brand Nike actually comes from the Greek word *nikao*, which mean "to over-

come" or "gain victory." This is our symbol to overcome worry. It should remind us that we need to aggressively practice what we have been learning.

Without understanding our limitations and retraining our minds to think biblically, we will have no victory. In Ephesians 6:10, the apostle exhorts us, “Be strong in the Lord, and in the strength of His might.” Later in verse 13, he states, “Having done everything, to stand firm.” God can instill the strength we need for victory. Some of you will need to go back through the steps in previous chapters and be more thorough in your application of the powerful truths that have been shared. They have revolutionized my life and I am confident that they can change yours too, as you apply them.

Prescription of victory

Overcoming requires a triple prescription. It might not look like the list that you would normally think of, especially the first point, but that has been our starting point all along. Let me introduce you to these three aspects.

(1) God came to help the broken, weary, and anxious.

Jesus came to heal the sick; He came to bring peace to the anxious. This is our hope, and I know I wouldn’t be here if it was otherwise. We need to admit our failures, our needs, and our sins. Are they not all wrapped up together? Only those who are poor in spirit will be able to move forward. Each prescription is designed for those with a certain malady. The Gospel of Jesus Christ makes the anxious both peaceful and joyful.

(2) Trust in God not in what He made.

We must refuse to trust in the things He has made. He said that He is even going to melt the heavens and earth. Does it make sense to rely on things that are unreliable? Or will you decisively put your trust in the glory and power of the unchangeable One? Those that come to know and trust God will find this peace.

(3) Be persevering.

There are many runners who get inspired and then forgetful. They receive no applause. It is not the fast one but the one who continues to trust in God, regardless of the challenges, that will win the crown. An accurate translation of John 3:16 is “Whoever is believing in Him (Christ) should not perish but have eternal live.” We need a constant faith, not a rapid one.

This is the reason we need to retrain ourselves to constantly trust God in all things, not just for one or two big areas of needs. People can apply these principles to one or two major anxiety problems and find some immediate relief from their troubles, which is fine but is not good enough. Every fear needs to be eliminated. I challenge you to go all the way: be an overcomer. God’s perfect peace will come as we eliminate our worries.

Let’s see how one man used an overcoming spirit to conquer what worry and fear couldn’t.

An Overcoming Spirit (Numbers 13-14)

When the Israelites came out of Egypt, they had an opportunity to go straight into the Promised Land. They sent twelve spies to see what the land was like, and, upon their return, ten of the spies brought a bad report. They were anxious about their ability to conquer the land because the enemy with their walled cities was so great. This reluctance to go up into the land originated in their fear. A doubtful spirit infected the people, and God decided they were not ready to go.

Because of this, the Israelites wandered in the desert regions for a literal forty years until all but the two spies who returned with

good reports had died. Caleb was one of the two good spies. He had an overcoming spirit. How do we know?

In Numbers 13: 28-14:1 we read the spies' report. Note how Caleb told them that they "shall surely overcome it." This overcoming spirit was a persevering one. Even after forty years, Caleb was still going strong. Once they got to the land, we see Caleb coming before the leaders to make a request that would shock everyone.

Let's look at five different characteristics that define his overcoming spirit.

Caleb never forgot God's promise. He could easily or conveniently forgotten it after 45 years. No one would be thinking of taking down the headquarters of the Anakim in the fortress mountain city of Hebron. They had the whole land to go after.

1. Caleb individually requested Hebron when dividing the land (Joshua 14:12). Caleb had to go out of his way to get this place. (For full text read Joshua 14:6-14).

Now then, give me this hill country about which the LORD spoke on that day, for you heard on that day that Anakim were there, with great fortified cities; perhaps the LORD will be with me, and I shall drive them out as the LORD has spoken (Joshua 14:12).

2. Caleb wanted to go to the exact place that scared the spies (Joshua 14:12). Caleb was deliberately showing the Israelites that God was able.
3. Caleb was old, now 85 years. He didn't care about an easy retirement!
4. Caleb would have a big fight ahead of him. The Anakim still dominated the land. There was a great liability with this inheritance. It was not his yet. He could easily die trying to get it.

5. No easy battle. The Anakim were tall people (giants).

There also we saw the Nephilim (the sons of Anak are part of the Nephilim); and we became like grasshoppers in our own sight, and so we were in their sight (Numbers 13:33).

- ✦ Caleb lived by **faith** not by fear.
- ✦ He lived by **promises** not by sight.
- ✦ He lived for **victory** not for ease.
- ✦ Caleb lived by the **power of God**, not by his human strength.

The principle is that God will at times put us in circumstances that we are not able to handle. God wants to see where we place our trust. God's intention is to show His great power and produce in us a testimony of praise.

Let's look at some others who developed an overcoming spirit.

A change of heart, a change of life

We will not pretend that we are naturally bold and confident people; most of us are not.

The twelve disciples of Jesus were not the people one would naturally place one's confidence in either. They had everything but boldness.

- Scared • Worried • Run aways • Fear for life
- Possessive • Trusting self • Despondent

Would you hire these guys for your army? Would you want them to be your pastor? It sounds a little too much like ourselves, doesn't it? But no, these are Jesus' own 12 disciples. Our present condition does not need to determine our future situation. A change of life is possible.

Through the disciples, God changed the world. If you think you are locked in a special category of defeat and worry, think again. The disciples were just like you.

The difference in their lives before and after the cross is so startling that their story is often told as evidence that the Lord Jesus must have risen from the dead. At the cross all the disciples ran away in great fear, anxiety, and confusion. They had not prayed as Jesus asked them to. All sorts of worries and fears plagued them. When Jesus needed their support the most, they deserted Him. Peter's betrayal could be the reaction all of them.

After Pentecost the Holy Spirit came upon the disciples (Acts 1-2). They simply were not the same. They became just like Jesus, even in the midst of life-threatening persecution. They trusted in God. They found something that I believe we will find in this chapter. They were filled with the Spirit of God. They lived by faith rather than by sight. They were dead to themselves and alive to God's will.

God wants to fill each of His believers with this kind of Spirit. He wants to make the needed changes in our lives. We need to get rid of the anxiety and fears and replace them with confidence in God. What areas of life have you seen a change in? What areas still need changing? How has anxiety and fear kept you from fulfilling God's purpose in your life?

Let's learn about how to boldly face life's problems.

Facing Life's Problems

We face two kinds of life problems :

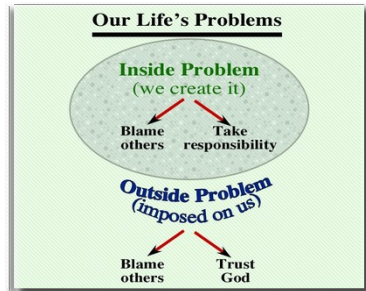
- Inside Problems are those which we create.
- Outside Problems are those that others create.

Inside Problems

The majority of the problems we face in life are because of our own doing. We have done something wrong. We create problems for ourselves by being anxious, lying, gossip, stealing, lazy, being selfish, etc.

These sinful actions create problems that demand a response:

either we will blame others or take responsibility for what we did wrong. A third supposed group is described by half accepting responsibility and half blaming others, but this is only a masked form of blame.



• An Example of Lying

Lying is always an inside problem. Lying about something produces anxiety due to our fear of getting caught. Do you realize that until you straighten out that lie, it will add to your regular anxiety in life? The stress will pile up. An honest assessment of our willingness to manipulate others for our benefit awaits us.

Our joy in life will be put on hold until we humble ourselves, come back to this issue, and take responsibility for it. The effect of our sins will haunt us until we face up to them. We give glory to God for having Jesus provide a place where our sins can be forgiven!

Outside Problems

Other problems that cause worry come from sources outside ourselves, those that don't necessarily have anything to do with what we have or have not done; a child being abused by a parent, uncle, or a bully, or strange disease, some accident, government or family

persecution. For example, how would you respond if you were fired at work because you were unwilling to compromise and lie when presenting a certain product to others?

Sometimes outside problems mix with inside problems. It is quite possible for us to wrongly respond to unjust situations and mix outside problems with inside problems. Although others have done wrong, our bitter and critical responses only amplify the wrong.

The scriptures regularly speak about righteous people suffering. Jeremiah suffered under the judgment of the hardened Israelites. The scriptures regularly speak about the righteous suffering. Jesus mentioned this issue.

Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when men cast insults at you, and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely, on account of Me. Rejoice, and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you (Matthew 5:10-12).

In this age of grace, God calls us to act in humility and grace, just like Jesus did. We need to let God take whatever revenge is necessary.

- **The testimony of how a mother handled a tragic situation.**

Sue Gregg was watching her child in front of her house when a reckless driver came by, hit, and killed her child. The mother was crushed in heart. But she determined to trust God even for this horrible accident. In the end she has was able to use the money gained from that accident to start a journey on teaching nutrition.

Today, her books on how to cook healthy meals are being used widely. The wisdom God gave her is bringing life to others.

Let's see why God sometimes brings these hardships into our lives.

A Father's Love

The question is not 'if' but 'when.' Even the most faithful Christians will go through distressing times. Notice that God's people are described as going through fires in the following verses, but God will be with them. They might have to walk through rivers, but God will be with them then too.

But now, thus says the LORD, your Creator, O Jacob, And He who formed you, O Israel, "Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name; you are Mine! 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..." (Isaiah 43:1-3).

Two unchangeable truths

Our faith in difficult times is based on two unchangeable truths:

1. God is our Father.
2. God is willing to help

Many people are trying to avoid pain, which is understandable, but unfortunately the unconscious life goal of many is to gain pleasure. They seek self-pleasure, not God. This goal of self-pleasure is a false god that will eventually lead them into a tragic

ending. Some, for example, will follow their lusts into immorality that is in opposition to God's principles of love.

God's people will go through trials of one sort or another. This is typical. Once this fact is accepted, they can go a long way in their faith. A Christian's joy comes not from the absence of affliction but from being in the presence of God. This is true even in the most distressing or challenging of times. "And lo, I am with you even to the end of the age" (Matthew 28:20).

A question that might come to mind is "Why does God allow suffering?" Let's see how God's answer to this question becomes a way to overcome deep-seated worries.

Love Conquers All Fears

We will encounter any variety of difficulty thrown at us: tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril, or sword. (See Romans 8:35, 38 for a bigger list!) But none of these can separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus.

But why would God allow such things to happen? God always wants something better for us, which is a principle we need to accept by faith.

The Principle:

God is sometimes able to accomplish a greater good in our lives through suffering. God's plans for our lives were designed before we were born and incorporates every small detail into its planning. We can fully trust Him, even when suffering is endured, that God will accomplish a greater good. "All things work together for good..." (Romans 8:28).

The Evidence:

God was willing to send His own Son to suffer and die an unjust death so that others and Himself would receive a greater glory.

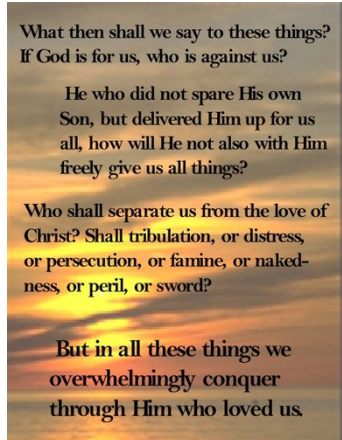
God worked out the very last detail to bring great glory to His Name. He does the same for us. You could think of it like this: whatever is good for His Son is good for His sons. “He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?” (Romans 8:32).

Below is just one of many stories that testify to God’s hand on the suffering of His precious people.

Exposed and Protected

Hawa Ahmed was a Moslem student in North Africa. One day, she read a Christian tract in her dormitory and decided to become a Christian. Her father was an Emir (Islamic ruler), so she expected to lose her inheritance because of her conversion. She was completely unprepared for what really happened: When she told her family that she had become a Christian and changed her name to Faith, her father exploded in rage.

Her father and brothers stripped her naked and bound her to a chair fixed to a metal plate with which they attempted to electrocute her. Faith asked them at least to lay a Bible in her lap. Her father responded “If you want to die together with your false religion, so be it.” One of her brothers added, “That will show that your religion is powerless.” Although they had bound her, she was



What is good for His
Son is good for His sons.

able to touch a corner of the Bible. She felt a strange peace, as though someone was standing beside her.

Her father and brothers pushed the plug into the socket - and nothing happened. They tried four times with various cables, but it was as though the electricity refused to flow. Finally, her father, angry and frustrated, hit her and screamed “You are no longer my daughter.”

Then he threw his daughter out into the street, naked. She ran through the streets, humiliated and in pain. Shaking and tearful, she ran to a friend. People looked at her, curious rather than shocked. Her friend let her in, clothed her and gave her shelter. The next day, her friend asked neighbors what they had thought when they had seen Faith running naked through the streets.

“What are you talking about?” they asked. “The girl had a wonderful white dress on. We asked ourselves why someone so beautifully clothed had to run through the streets.” God had hidden her nakedness from their eyes, clothing her in a beautiful white dress.

Today, Faith is a full-time evangelist with *Every Home for Christ*.¹ God’s plan for our lives goes beyond this age and includes all the trials that we face.

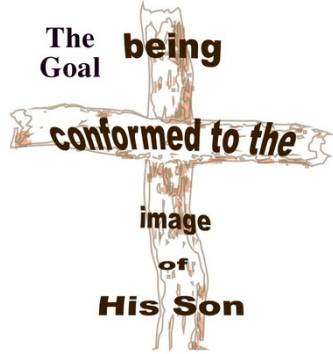
So why does God allow affliction?

¹ Source: Dick Eastman, *Every Home for Christ*

The Goal of Conformity

What is God trying to accomplish in our lives by suffering and even martyrdom?

Why does God allow His children to suffer, and even die as a martyr (Revelation 6:10)? What is true with the head, is true with the body. If God would call us to share in Christ's glory, does it not make sense that He would also call us to suffer with Him.



When we speak of martyrdom, we are speaking of a Christian losing his life because of the willingness to hold on to his (or her) faith. He does not want to die. Others kill him. They commit a horrible violence against him. There are many other difficult things that Christians might face in this world, but if we can accept martyrdom for some as part of God's plan, then we can accept God's plan to use any difficult circumstance in our lives.

• *God's timing*

God is in full control of life and death. We should not think that we are in charge. God defines the length of life. We are men, not God. At times people have done wrong things that lead to another's death, but it is rare. If so, we need to humbly confess our sins. Even here we can find forgiveness.

Today, we see relatives doing more than enough by prolonging the pain and problems of approaching death by false medical hopes. But at some point, we need to see life not as in the doctors' hands but in God's hands. God carefully watches over the lives of His people. We need to conclude that if, when the time comes, God

is not going to keep you alive, then He ultimately is calling you to move on. We are not to bring death on, but if it comes to where we cannot stop it in a kind and compassionate way, we need to stand aside.

The scripture says that death cannot separate His people from His love. This is what we need to focus on. Death itself cannot separate God's love from the Christian. "For I am convinced that neither death, nor life... shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 8:38).

We must confess any wrong. (Make sure it is a wrong. Identify what command you broke.) Accept Christ's forgiveness. But after that, remember that you need to go on and trust God's will in taking that person to the Lord. We must keep focusing on Romans 8:38 where even death cannot separate him or her from God's love (as God's child). They might be away from us but now they have a greater good. There is no reason to feel guilty. If anything, things are easier and better for them now.

• **How is this connected to anxiety?**

Remember it is the truth that exposes the needlessness of worry. In order to accept God's plan for our lives we embrace these truths. If we are in the least unconfident of God's purpose and motives for our lives, then we will worry, hold back our trust from Him, and put it in other things. His purpose for our lives is carefully exercised in His love. We can trust Him. We need not be anxious; we can be thankful that at times it includes these hardships.

Are we not moved when a person gives up his own body organs to save the life of another? Wherever martyrdom takes place, people have given up their whole lives and others have profited. The church has greatly increased in size and in devotion. Tertul-

lian, an ancient church leader, said that the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church.

So, I ask again, why does God allow affliction to happen? God was willing to allow His only Son to perform a sacrificial act that greatly benefitted others (us, His people). Would He not also welcome our willingness to suffer for the completion of His greater kingdom on earth?

Our conclusion from looking at the facts is that God allowed, and even called, His righteous and only begotten Son to die for sinners. Surely God would call His other children to suffer because He allowed His Son to suffer and die on the cross.

These are the facts. God allows His children to suffer. But God also created a greater glory that derives from every tragic scene. Let's see how we are to overcome the fear of death.

Overcoming the Fear of Death

How does one overcome the fear of death?

The truth of God's word leads us to overcome the fear of death! If someone wants to know a good reason to become a Christian, here it is. We will make four observations from Hebrews 2:14-15.

“Since then the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same, that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil; and might deliver those who through fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives” (Hebrews 2:14-15).



1. People were enslaved

Slavery through the fear of death is commonplace. People would do anything not to die! When a person has no heaven to go to, dying is the worse thing possible. This fear still rules most of the people on earth, even many Christians. One serves that which he fears.

Through fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives.

2. Devil's power

The devil prides himself in his power of death. He gained control of all of mankind through Adam's disobedience. Once Adam served Satan, he and his descendants all became his servants.

"Who had the power of death, that is, the devil."

3. Christ's delivery

God sent Christ in human form so that He could die and strip the devil of his power over death.

"He Himself likewise also partook of the same, that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death."

4. Our Freedom

When we believe in Christ, we no longer need to fear death because Christ died for us. We now have life eternal. God is now in control of your life on earth and is the one who decides when you'll go to be with Him.

"Might deliver those...."

Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead ... for which I suffer hardship even to imprisonment as a criminal; but the word of God is not imprisoned. For this reason I endure all things for the sake of those who are chosen, that they also may obtain the salvation

which is in Christ Jesus and with it eternal glory (2 Timothy 2:8-10).

Many Christians are still living under the fear of death. They are not set free by the truth that death no longer is in Satan's hands but their loving Father's hands.

Sometimes God allows His children to go through pain, suffering of different kinds, and even martyrdom so that they can share in the sufferings of Christ. It is like Jesus said, "I will build my church" by my cross and your cross. You might be asked to die for Christ.

How can I convince my heart?

Stepping Forward

"Nothing works for me."

I sometimes hear people say in one way or another, "I have tried everything to overcome anxiety but nothing works." We feel for these people. They feel trapped. They must be gently steered away from their worry towards God's peace.

The key to this kind of problem is your heart. The way to confirm this is to follow the following instructions. Remember, please, only a Christian or a person becoming a Christian can do this. A non-Christian basically asserts his way is best. Unlike a Christian, he cannot be genuinely freed from anxiety.

A good disciple of Jesus Christ is always prepared to face difficult circumstances. This is done in two ways:

1) Give your life to the Lord.

There are no such things as magical prayers. God is only interested in humble and sincere hearts open to the truth. God delights to

hear us cry out to Him for help. We have seen the vanity of trusting in ourselves or others.

Give absolute control of your life to the Lord through prayer. First, read Romans 12:1-2 aloud several times. After this, offer a sincere prayer, again aloud, that includes the three items below. Afterwards, mark down what you have done and when.

- Willingness to go where He sends
- Willingness to do what He wants
- Willingness to die when He chooses

This is a bold step that will strip you of your idols and will assert the Lord as your Lord. Make this step with Romans 8 in mind. Let me share with you something that happened to me.

Meeting the Surgeon

Each year in my life around the New Year, I have tried to think of what the Lord might want to work on in my life that year. That year's theme regularly became a powerful focal point for me through the year. But this year, I actually forget what that year's theme was. I know what He wanted for my life though. I was there in my study rededicating myself to the Lord when all of a sudden He was communing with me. I heard no audible voice, but I knew He was speaking.

He directed me to lay down on my back. When I looked up I saw someone (the Lord no doubt) dressed in a surgeon's garb. He stood holding his right hand out ready to receive something from me. I didn't understand this until I saw the scalpel in my hand. Then I understood. When I gave him the scalpel, I would be giving Him permission to do any kind of surgery that He wanted to do in

my life that year. Oh, what a struggle it was. I still remember it fresh in my even many years after the event.

He could ‘cut away’ anything in my life. One by one I thought of significant aspects of my life: my wife, my children, my job, my ministry, etc. I struggled much in my mind for I didn’t want to lose any of these things which were so valuable to me. But if I don’t give them to Him, then they were not safe. He is the One that gave me these things anyway. Finally, after many tears and a deep inner struggle, I lifted my hand and handed Him the scalpel. At the end of that somber meeting, I didn’t know what to expect. Anything could have happened, but interestingly, I don’t remember anything ‘bad’ happening that year. I could trust Him to care for all my concerns as my Loving Father.

2) Die daily

There is one thing the Lord likes to hear even more than the deeper one-time commitments. This is to regularly see you express your desire to be His. He loves to hear His people wholeheartedly give themselves to Him without any outside pressure. In a sense, this is like taking a risk—a risk of trust. But this is where Christian living really thrives! We can trust the Lord to care for everything that we might need. Basically, we refuse to worry. Instead put our trust in God’s control of our lives. This is His original design for our lives. Trust and faith destroys anxiety.

Each day we do this on our own through a special but sincere prayer. Above, we discussed how we might dedicate our whole lives to the Lord. But it is important to do the same each day because it reminds us of what we have already done. Paul the apostle said that he himself did this. He died daily (1 Corinthians 15:31). He died to his own interests and therefore could live for the Lord’s interests. There are two important parts to this.

- **Acknowledge and deny one's sin nature. (Refuse to serve it).**

Each day through prayer we recognize ourselves to be virtually dead to our old nature. We acknowledge its presence but deny its control over our lives. Our old lives have died with Christ on the cross.

- **Acknowledge and embrace the risen Lord's will for your life that day, no matter what might come.**

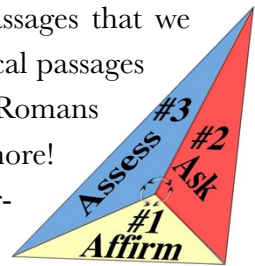
Now we live for Christ. We acknowledge Jesus as Lord and wholeheartedly commit ourselves to serving Him. That is, our old man (i.e. selfish nature) has died with Jesus on the cross. He no longer has the authority to control us unless we give it to him. If we give the authority to rule our lives to the Lord, then we can focus on the Lord's purpose. We can trust Him to care for what we need.

Let's look at one other example.

Praying power

Matthew 6 is just one of many wonderful passages that we can use as a guide to prayer. Many other biblical passages can more directly apply to your own situation. Romans 8:28-39 is one such passage. There are many more!

The truths needed for any situation are powerfully presented. Just by reading the passage aloud, you will be able to sense its power. Try it.



In times of tribulation, distress, famine, persecution, etc., we need to understand that God is in control. None of these circumstances can thwart our goal to serve God. God uses these difficulties to accomplish His great plan.

Let's work through a tough example where feelings and loneliness run high: the death of a loved one. Although no one likes to think about such an issue, most of us will, at some point, need to cope with this rough situation.

There are two main problems that regularly develop among those left behind that keep them from dealing with death. They either feel guilty (they didn't do enough), or they are worried about dealing with things alone. Let's focus on the latter, a person worries about being able to cope without the company or support of a departed dear one.

We will be doing this through a prayer. We vocalize these truths right to God from the perspective of the Romans 8 passage. (Please note we will follow our 'triple A' outline.)

Identify ones difficulty (The reason for praying).

"I really miss him. I have depended so much on him.

What am I going to do without him? I can't go on!"

#1 -Affirm God's truths.

"Dear Lord, You are the one who cares for me more deeply than any person can. You care for a flower; indeed You care for me. Before You were using my husband to care for me, now You will personally oversee my needs. It is true I do not know how to manage certain financial accounts, I don't like to deal with some situations that he could handle so well, but You promised to be with me. Nothing, even death, even the death of my husband, can separate me from Your love. You are there as always. As You have been with me, You will be with me in the future.

I might at times feel that you are so far away and don't care for me, but this is not true. If you sent Your only Son to die for me, then I can be sure of Your constant commitment to me. Thank

you. I need that so much. I always do but I recognize it ever so much right now. I know that I will be facing a lot of things that I have never faced. You will use these new circumstances to cause me to come closer to You. I will need to rely on You more. I will see Your faithfulness to me. And I will declare Your wonderful praise.”

#2 Ask help for needs.

“Lord, I want to ask you to help me. I feel so alone. I need your companionship. I feel so helpless. You need to be my strength. I feel so vulnerable. You need to be my protection. Come and assure my soul of your mighty work in my hands. Let me begin to look for Your special ways for caring for me. Perhaps it is through people who offer help; perhaps through giving me more wisdom and strength. In any case, you said that no matter what situation I face, Your love will be constant and assured. I have only one life and only so few days left myself. I want to see Your faithfulness. Let me live by faith in your promises rather than the figures in a bank account.”

#3 Assess our situation.

“If I am going to trust you, I need to accept the fact that my husband is now gone. There is the temptation to feel cheated or embittered against you. But Your love does not work this way. Your love for me is the same before and after. You are just changing the way that you will care for me. Lord, I want to trust You, even boldly trust You. I want my faith to grow.

I see now that this growth is what you want to do in my life before I go to be with you. I sometimes relied on my husband too much. Please forgive me. Yes, I need to pray more than I have been. Help me be faithful in developing our relationship together, O Lord. I will need Your help. I am desperate for your wisdom.

Each day Lord, let me take my concerns before You one by one. And let me see how You answer these prayers. Thank You so much for listening to me. I have so little to give but because of Your constant love, I have so much to live for and to live by. I am so sad but truly so happy. Keep me close. This is a tough time. In Christ's Name I pray, Amen."

Summary

The process of dealing with worries is basically the same. We let God's truth help us get a proper perspective of our situation. In this case, we looked at the truths in such a way that we were not able to question whether God would still love and care for us during difficult times. The conclusions that 'God has left me' or 'doesn't love me' simply are not true. The conclusion that 'things are going to be worse or impossible' is not true either. His love is constant. His power is great. Notice how our prayers rest on the special truths that are so clearly stated in the Romans 8 passage.

- God causes all things to work for good
- God is for us (His people)
- God did not spare His own Son
- Nothing can separate us from God's love

The truth builds up the confidence and faith of His children. We apply these biblical truths by faith even though our situation seems impossible. God is greater yet.

Different Bible passages highlight different truths. It is crucial that you bring His words into your soul before the trial actually occurs. To the degree they are in your heart and mind, they become your supply of ammunition against falsehood. The process to combat worries is the same for little and big worries and stresses of life.

We are to affirm God's truths, ask help for our needs and honestly assess our situation in light of His truths.

Earlier in this chapter we wrote how Sue Gregg, by God's grace, turned the horrible accident which killed her son, into a greater good. She used what God gave her through the situation to bring much blessing to the world. She trusted God to do something good through the situation. Instead of fretting she exercised faith in God's greater plan that incorporated all aspects of her life.

Let's take a look at how far we've come.

Bridge of Hope

Summary

We know that we are typically very anxious creatures. Every step we take away from the Lord makes room for more anxiety to enter our lives. When the Lord shakes the things that we are trusting, we become alert to ways that we need to further trust Him.



Part 1

Accepting our limited
control of circum-
stances

*When my anxious
thoughts multiply
within me,*

Part 2

Casting our hope
on the Controller of
circumstances

*Thy consolations
delight my soul.*

In order to find the peace of God, we need to come back to Him. There is no other way. We have crossed the bridge, step by step by first focusing on understanding and accepting our limited

situation. Anxieties and stress shows that we have not rightly handled our lives and thoughts. Worry occurs when we try to handle something on our own without the Lord. In these cases, selfishness dominates our decisions and squeezes out love.

We clearly have not trusted the Lord as we should have. We must come to terms with our limitations and natural sinful inclinations to take care of ourselves on our own. This humility enables us to actually cross the bridge to His peace and power.

The further we have crossed over the bridge, the more we actually have learned how to practically rely on the Lord. We now have crossed the bridge. We must ask ourselves two questions.

- What have we learned?
- What have we put into practice?

In the end we need to live by faith rather than by feeling, command rather than by desire. God has given us **everything we need to live just like Jesus**. He fully trusted God His Father to care for His needs, and so should we. This is our privilege as His children.

Yes, we need to be disciplined in our prayers, and we need to control what we think. But isn't this how God originally designed us to function? He has restored this to us through Christ Jesus. God has commanded His children not to worry, to put away fears and overcome stress. Instead He promises full peace, love, and joy to those who have dared to step this far over into His care. Can you see yourself taking these steps?

We are not promising peaceful circumstances, but rather the peace of God that passes understanding. We no longer are ultimately the one who has to care for our needs. We have restored this responsibility to the Lord. He is our faithful, loving, and powerful

Creator who can do far more for us than we could ever do on our own.

- What do we have to lose? Our worries.
- What do we have to win? The Lord's peace and power!

In chapter ten we have discovered that even when facing death, we still do not need to be anxious. If we do not need to be anxious in the worse circumstances of life, then we can face any tragic event that might come. A persevering spirit is a determined spirit. We are not dependent on our strength. Instead we acknowledge our weaknesses and go on in God's strength!

Let's review the main principles and applications of this chapter.

Chapter 10: Touching Our Lives

Principles

What principles were strongly impressed on you in this chapter? Circle them.

- The Lord has called us to be an overcomer.
- I shouldn't be too discouraged at difficult circumstances because the Lord specializes in helping His people in need.
- Perseverance is very important. I can't get along without it. Perseverance embraces spiritual disciplines.
- God at times will place me in circumstances that I am not able to handle so that I can grow in faith in Him.
- There are two kinds of problems: ones I cause and ones that happen.
- Every problem is under the control and careful watch of my Father.
- When I conceal my sin, I will not prosper. Blame often conceals sins.
- I should not ask 'if' trouble will come, but when. I need to be prepared.
- God's promise is to be with me through all the difficult times.
- Some of God's people will suffer more than others. God will give them extra grace.
- My confidence in God's goodness gives me faith that He is using suffering for my ultimate good.
- As the Father has asked Christ to suffer so He will ask His children to suffer.
- God is in full control even during great and intense persecution.
- Christ has rendered the devil's fear of death powerless.

- Dying daily is based on the rejection of the old nature and the acceptance of God's will.

Application

- How do you respond when you are placed in difficult spots? Do you complain and give up or do you trust the Lord for what you cannot do?
- Go through Hebrews 11 and list the difficulties these men and women of faith had to face. Then list the rewards that they were promised.

Becoming an Overcomer

- Pick an area that you are struggling with. Find a relevant Bible passage.
- Write out truths from the passage that have to do with your situation.
- Write out one or two applications from each truth that has to do with that problem.
- Pray a personalized prayer for this issue using all three steps.

As you begin to regularly do this, you can almost do steps two and three automatically and go right into prayer. Daily devotions is great practice grounds.

Testimonies

What one or two special lessons, stories, illustrations, warnings, etc. can I share with others that might encourage their faith?

George Mueller dearly loved his wife. After 30 years of marriage, she died. He chose to lead the funeral. He trusted God with

all his many needs left vacant by the passing of his wife. Note how he did not question God but affirmed His Lordship.

- He thanked God for giving her as his wife.
- He thanked the Lord for having her as his wife so long.
- He lastly thanked the Lord for taking her away just at that point.

This was not easy to so say but when one thinks about the ramifications, of course, it is true. Nothing could be better planned than the passing of his wife. God doesn't make mistakes.

OVERCOMING ANXIETY
Finding Peace, Discovering God

APPENDIX 1: STUDY QUESTIONS

Chapters #1-10

BRIDGE OF HOPE

Study Questions #1

- 1) Jesus is the best example of a life lived worry-free. (T / F)
- 2) List at least 3 ways the world's peace is different from God's peace.
 -
 -
 -
- 3) The Bridge of Hope takes us from _____ and leads us to _____.
- 4) Worries will get _____ if we don't resolve them.
- 5) Name two major parts of our life that worry negatively affects.
 -
 -
- 6) What are the two kinds of peace that God gives?
_____ and _____.
- 7) It is okay to feel vulnerable about your inability to perfectly deal with worries because _____.

UNDERSTANDING OUR WORRIES

Study Questions #2

- 1) By understanding your worry, you'll be able to understand our _____.
- 2) People have more needs than squirrels and flowers. Circle one: (T / F).
- 3) Man is made in God's image. List the two marks of humanity mentioned in this chapter that are missing from the following list:
 - Time aware (Hope)
 - _____
 - God aware (Faith)
 - _____
- 4) From question 3, write down the two traits that animals don't have that enable humans to worry. A combination of _____ and _____.
- 5) The historical line chart of man's worries is given below. Put an X at each of the 5 stages.



- 6) Fill in the title of the second and fifth stages below.
- (1) Man before the fall
 - (2) _____
 - (3) Man after the fall
 - (4) Man rescued by Jesus Christ
 - (5) _____
- 7) Anxiety comes from the lack of _____.
Another word for this is _____.
- 8) Genuine security is founded on the two principles of constancy and protection. Why is constancy important?
_____.
- 9) List two reasons you should put your trust, regarding all things, in God's hands:
- _____
 - _____
- 10) We will only have peace in God when we
_____.

RECOGNIZING OUR RESPONSIBILITIES

Study Questions #3

“When my anxious thoughts multiply within me, Thy consolations delight my soul” (Psalms 94:19).

- 1) Circle the word from Psalm 94:19 (above) that shows that the Psalmist is making himself accountable for his anxious thoughts.
- 2) List three assumptions or characteristics of those that worry:
 -
 -
 -
- 3) List three ways people avoid facing their worries? Which way do you tend to use? _____
- 4) Unbelief in God’s word will [never, sometimes, always] hold us back from obtaining God’s perfect design. (Circle the correct answer).

- 5) List the two major excuses to avoid accountability for their anxieties that are missing from the following list:

-
-
- Worries are helpful.

- 6) Some people don't think that God's Word can help them overcome their anxieties because they haven't made room for God's Word. They have worries of the

_____.

What can be done to make room for God's Word?

- 7) "At the beginning of this century, the average American had 72 wants and considered 18 of them important. By the end of the century, the Average American had _____ wants and considered _____ of them as genuine necessities for happiness." Fill in the two numbers.

- 8) If an anxious person has a chemical imbalance, it is because of physical problems. Circle (T / F).

- 9) Jesus is a good example to follow when we face difficult circumstances. Circle (T / F).

What verse(s) affirms this? _____ .

DISCOVERING PATTERNS OF ANXIETY

Study Questions #4

- 1) It is easier to get into a spider's web than out of one. This metaphor illustrates how we often feel caught in a web of worries and don't know how to get out. (T / F)
- 2) Without understanding the difference between _____ and _____, we will never be able to escape the snare of anxiety. (Fill in the blanks).
- 3) The key to protecting ourselves from worry is to detect our anxious thoughts _____ on.
- 4) The purpose of keeping an anxiety journal is to _____ us to observe our thinking (self-reflection).
- 5) Anxieties are temptations. (T / F)
- 6) Worries have to do more with the things I face in life rather than my heart problems. (T / F)
- 7) An insecurity is any area of your life that you feel _____ to care for.

8) The decisions that you make to solve your worries are _____ bad.

9) Fill in the middle items:

- Worry => _____ => bad decisions
- Trust => _____ => good decisions

10) Jesus overcame severe temptations by His divine power.
(T / F)

11) Fill in the blank for each of the five confirmations that show
Jesus did not worry on the night before He was killed.

- Jesus was clear-minded rather than _____.
- Jesus was _____ but didn't give up.
- Jesus _____ but didn't worry.
- Jesus obeyed rather than _____.
- Jesus cared for people rather than being _____.

COPING WITH WORRIES

Study Questions #5

- 1) When your mind fills up with anxious thoughts, what do you lose? _____
- 2) There are two problems that exasperate your problem when you try to quickly resolve your anxious thoughts. Internalizing thoughts and _____.
- 3) What kind of anxious thought does not trouble cause trouble: irrelevant, relevant, or influential? (Circle the correct answer).
- 4) When you demand explanations from God for something, your relationship with Him is healthy. (T / F)
- 5) Transformation in your life comes from the _____ of your mind.
- 6) You should reject any _____ therapy that tells you to ‘stop’ thinking, whether it be some TM hum, yoga meditation, or medication.

- 7) When you no longer have a sufficient ability to evaluate the truth about each worrisome thought that invades your mind, you will accept them as _____.
- 8) If someone comes by and claims that your car belongs to him, you (Choose one):
 1. Give him the keys
 2. Present him the historical, evidential, and experiential facts and drive off.
- 9) You can overcome anxious thoughts and worries by rejecting their _____ and deliberately accepting the _____.
- 10) The truth of _____ will enable you to affirm God's relevance and strengthen your faith.
- 11) The truth of _____ will enable you to crush pride and get an accurate perspective of your life.
- 12) The truth of _____ will enable you to discern between God's call and your self-initiative.
- 13) The purpose of _____ is/are not to lead you but to amplify the condition of your inner lives.

- 14) He who controls a person's thoughts, controls his life.
(T / F)
- 15) David's peace shown in Psalm 131 comes from being such a powerful and effective leader. (T / F)
- 16) In discerning the truth of your situation, it is always good to ask yourself whether you are going counter to any of God's principles. (T / F)

DESTROY AND OCCUPY

Study Questions #6

- 1) The car's body and engine illustrate how easy it is to think only of our superficial worries. (T / F)
- 2) Your helplessness comes from using _____ and _____ that are totally unsuitable in effectively dealing with your spiritual problems.
- 3) What are the first two of the three problems that God gave to the Israelites when attacking Jericho?
_____, _____, and the 46 foot high wall.
- 4) 2 Corinthians 10:5 lists two very important principles. Name them.
 1. _____: Expose the lies
 2. _____: Affirm the truths.
- 5) How does the passage of Ephesians 4:17-18 illustrates how seeds of doubt grow into evil words and behaviors.

- 6) Jesus shows us through two examples how Peter's words and actions are linked to what he believed. (T / F)

- 7) What are the three things that need to be tested by the truth to detect and destroy lies? _____, _____, and obedience.
- 8) Root level lies are different from branch level lies because they _____ to the insecurity of our lives.
- 9) _____ and _____ are parallel to chapter six's theme, "Destroy and Occupy."
- 10) The battle takes the form of feelings that influence our minds. (T / F)

FINDING THE PEACE OF GOD

Study Questions #7

- 1) What three enemies (states of heart) will steal away your peace? _____, _____, and _____
- 2) Anxiety differs from stress in that it is focused on inability to resolve present problems. (T / F)
- 3) The promises of God will help you recover from worry by instilling in you _____ and _____.
- 4) How can meditation on God's Word help you through difficult times?
- 5) Meditative _____ refers to the way of bringing God's word to your hearts even when troubled.
- 6) What principle allows you to take back control of your life?

- 7) If you want enduring peace, then you need to be _____ and make changes.

- 8) Name step two and four that will bring the peace of God into your heart and mind:
1. Living in harmony
 2. _____
 3. Rejoicing in the Lord
 4. _____
 5. Entrusting your worry to the Lord
- 9) Phase 1 calls you to work on _____ and attitudes.
- 10) The major goal is to obtain the peace of God. (T / F)

HANDLING EXTREME ANXIETY

Study Questions #8

- 1) Panic attacks occur when _____ combines with anxiety.
- 2) Our confidence or trust factor decreases when anxiety increases / decreases? Underline one.
- 3) What good things can come from worry? Why is this so?

- 4) The absence of _____ produces worries.
- 5) Jesus Christ can help you recover from the fall in two ways:
 1. God becomes approachable again because your _____ is cared for by faith in Christ's death.
 2. A new heart of faith is given to you, which enables you to _____ God for everything.
- 6) Many people avoid worry by trusting in their ability to provide for their basic needs by _____
(3 words).

- 7) For those facing extreme worry, you must not only deal with the symptoms but also the _____ .
- 8) The basic difference between the common worrier and the extreme worrier is that the extreme worrier has lost all _____ in their ability to handle the situation.
- 9) Crisis situations reveal your true _____.
God uses these times to expose the _____ of your heart so that you will _____ and return to Him.
- 10) The issue is not whether God loves you. He does. It's your _____ and _____ that keep this powerful love from your life. The only way you will be able to develop your trust (faith) in God is to come to experience more of His _____.
- 11) What are the three steps to overcome anxiety?
 1. Declare the truth of _____ .
 2. Detect the truth of your _____
 3. Admit the truth of your _____.
- 12) Declaring God's praise breaks through dull, confused, and anxious minds because they are gradually replacing _____ thoughts with _____ thoughts.

STEPS TO OVERCOMING ANXIETY

Study Questions #9

- 1) The thief 'Worry' steals love, joy, and _____
from everyone that lets him.
- 2) The three A's process for eliminating worry are:
 - _____
 - _____
 - _____
- 3) The proclamation of God's Word will enable you to better
assess your situation because _____ .
- 4) What are two reasons God does not answer prayers?
 1. _____
 2. _____
- 5) Name two of the many physical symptoms that are connected to anxiety:
 1. _____
 2. _____

- 6) The fishing line represents a lot of _____.
- 7) Since all worry is a lack of trust in God, eliminating worries is essentially the replacement of your doubts with a genuine trust in Him. (T / F)
- 8) Name one key way Jesus built up His disciples' level of trust in Matthew 6:25-34. _____
- 9) When you assess your situation (step 3), you need to be completely honest before the Lord so that you can hear His examination of your life. (T / F)
- 10) Why are idols so popular in this modern generation?
_____.

BECOMING AN OVERCOMER

Study Questions #10

- 1) What are two reasons discouraged and defeated people can become an overcomer?

1. _____

2. _____

- 2) Life is made up of two kinds of problems. What are they and how can you respond to them?

1. _____

2. _____

- 3) How does blaming others keep you from confessing your sin? List the first three:

1.

2.

3.

4. Blaming others keeps me from resolving the situation

- 4) The question is not whether Christians will suffer or not. Even the most _____ Christians will go through distressing times.

- 5) If God is loving and fully in control, why does He sometimes put you in very difficult situations? (several words)
-

- 6) How do you know that your loving God will sometimes ask you to suffer hardship? (several words)
-

- 7) We can make four important observations from Hebrews 2:14-15 that help us understand why Christians no longer need to fear death.

Since then the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself (Christ Jesus) likewise also partook of the same, that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil; and might deliver those who through fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives (Hebrews 2:14-15).

- a) People were _____ all their lives. (3 words)

- b) Who prided himself in his power of death?
-

- c) God sent Jesus in human form so he could, through _____, render him powerless.

- d) Christ came to _____ those who, through the fear of death, were subject to slavery all their lives.

- 8) You can step from fear to faith through two kinds of commitments. What are they?
1. Make a _____ commitment to serve only the Lord.
 2. Die _____
- 9) List the Triple A process you can use to overcome any kind of anxiety.
1. _____ God's truths
 2. _____ help for needs
 3. _____ our situation.
- 10) Before you apply this Triple A process in prayer, what do you need to do? I need to _____
_____ (three words).

APPENDIX 2: MORE ON THE AUTHOR

Paul J. Bucknell, an active author and international instructor, has written more than twenty books on pertinent Christian training topics. His books are written with the conviction that the more we build our lives on the truth of God's word, the stronger and more vibrant our faith and lives will be. During his international training seminars for pastors and other church leaders, Paul takes God's word and powerfully applies His truth to different aspects of Christian living. As founder of Biblical Foundations for Freedom, Paul provides printed and digital media along with video training courses and an ongoing website ministry. Paul with his wife Linda are still busy raising eight children and presently delight in having three grandchildren.

For more on Paul and Linda and the BFF ministry, check online at: www.foundationsforfreedom.net

