

A Closer Look at Anxiety

Philippians 4:4-9; I Peter 5:6-7

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According to the *Journal of Clinical Psychiatry*, 40 million Americans now struggle with anxiety.

See Philippians 4:4-9

Where would you begin in helping someone with anxiety?

I. Help Your Counselee to Take a Closer Look at What They're Actually Worried About

Give it a definition and parameters. Ask them to take some time to get quiet and consider:

What's *really* bothering you? What have you been *saying* to yourself? What have you been *thinking* and *rehearsing* over and over? Put it down on paper.

A great prayer to get them to pray is:

Psa. 139:23 "Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts"

"Scripture never trivializes the things we worry about. It just says you have greater reason to take them to someone who can help, rather than worrying about them. In other words, you have good reason to worry... but *better reasons* not to worry. So, don't get caught in the 'spin cycle' (like a washing machine going round and round) – twisting, turning, driving, churning."

~ Taken from lecture notes at BCTC, Faith Church, Lafayette, IN, 2004

The first step to breaking out of that "Spin Cycle of Worry" is to sit down and make a list of the specific things you're worried about. Name them, define them, and bring them out into the light and onto paper!

II. Help Your Counselee to Take a Closer Look at Who and Where Their God Is

You may be familiar with Phil. 4 as a place to get help in fighting worry. Most people start with v. 6: "Be anxious for nothing..." But God plants a "Grace Bomb" here at the end of v. 5: "The Lord is near."

To fight worry, you have to fight the lies that keep worry alive. This lie of being orphaned, abandoned, and left on your own is one of the biggest!

Verses 4-9 are not just filled with a few tricks or techniques that you can slip on your life. These verses are God-centered.

v. 4 Rejoice *in the Lord* always...

v. 5 The *Lord is near*

v. 6 Let your requests be *made known to God*

v. 7 And the peace *of God*... will guard your hearts and minds *through Christ Jesus*

v. 9 And the *God of peace* will be with you

This passage is radically God-centered because anxiety always tries to isolate us and to push us into a godless echo chamber of our own thoughts.

The issue of control is a critical component of the whole worry problem!

“Central to worry is the illusion that we can control things. ‘If only I could get my retirement right, I could control the future.’ ‘If I could get my diet and medicine right, I wouldn’t get cancer.’ ‘If I could figure out the right childrearing technique, I could guarantee how my kids turn out.’ Worry assumes the possibility of control over the uncontrollable. The illusion of control lurks inside your anxiety. Anxiety and control are two sides of one coin. When we can’t control something, we worry about it.”

~ *Worry*, David Powlison, p. 12

III. Show Your Counselee How to Talk to God about #1 in Light of #2

In other words, you start praying, but pray in the right way.

Philippians 4:6-7 “Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; ⁷ and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.”

You start praying to God about what you’re worried about, but you do it in light of who He is and where He is.

Prayer should be giving something to God. Give Him praise as you remember who He is and where He is in your life. Then give Him the problem and leave it there!

IV. Show Your Counselee the Sin Beneath the Sin of Anxiety – Pride

What is it that keeps us holding onto our cares instead of giving them over to Him?

I Peter 5:6-7 “Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time, ⁷ casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you.”

Freedom from your anxiety starts by repenting of your pride!

Peter is reminding us that the presence of anxiety is related to the absence of humility. It’s only as you stop trying to be God that you can start being a child of God who’s willing to cast all your cares on Him as your father!

V. Show Your Counselee that an Actual Transaction Has to Be Made

Greek word for “cast” in verse 7 is a word that means to hurl or to use energetic force in tossing something away from you and onto something else.

Often, our counselees are guilty of holding onto their anxieties because they think it allows them to control the outcome, but it just weighs them down and crushes them.

It's like picking up a backpack and starting to fill it with the things you think you need to hold onto. The more you worry about it, the worry straps get tighter and tighter until you're struggling to breathe and handle everyday responsibilities.

It's only as you choose to humble yourself that you can trust Him enough to finally and fully cast your cares on Him.

VI. Show Your Counselee Where to “Park” Their Mind

The anxious mind parks in a lie. The trusting mind parks itself in the truth.

Philippians 4:8 *The Message* “Summing it all up, friends, I’d say you’ll do best by filling your minds and meditating on things true, noble, reputable, authentic, compelling, gracious—the best, not the worst; the beautiful, not the ugly; things to praise, not things to curse.”

That word “meditate” is the Greek word “logizomai” that was an accounting or mathematical term that meant to calculate something or to factor it in by establishing a solid column of facts that represent this side of the ledger.

When you're caught up in worry, you are only taking into account the problem. So, Paul says, you draw a line down the middle of the page and you start listing specific things for which you can be grateful and for which you can praise God, where you see something good in the midst of all the mess.