

You Can Overcome Anxiety's Grip

Do you have anxiety, stress or fears? Do you struggle with panic attacks or know anyone who does?

Dr. Michelle Bengtson is a board-certified clinical neuropsychologist, which is a neurologist, psychologist and psychiatrist all wrapped into one person. She is the person you would seek out with a question of any potential brain inefficiency. Bengtson sees patients who struggle with ADHD, learning disabilities, head injuries, stroke and those trying to figure out if someone is struggling from depression or dementia.

She wrote "Breaking Anxiety's Grip," and what makes her an expert in the subject is that she not only seen it from the professional side, but she has also walked through the valley of anxiety and found freedom from it.

She grew up in a family that was filled with anxiety. Bengtson's anxiety looked like crying on her way to work every day, feeling as if she had a boulder in her stomach and being unsure if she were even capable of handling the day. One day, she got to the point where she turned to the Lord and said, "This is not from You. There has to be a better way. Show me."

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She says, "I think a lot of people don't realize that they struggle with anxiety, which can be anything from thinking, I'm just worried about ____ or I'm just thinking about ____."

For Bengtson, anxiety showed up the most when she started thinking, "What if?" It could be the mildest thing, from "What if I'm not on time?" to "What if I lose a loved one?" Anxiety runs the gamut. People don't think they deal with anxiety because they look at the catastrophic and think, "I don't deal with that." Anxiety, worry and fear happen anytime we're not putting our trust in God.

There are a lot of different contributors to anxiety, and it's not possible to fully identify the cause in any person's life. Things that happen to us can cause anxiety, and if there is a history of anxiety, especially with parents or grandparents, statistically there is a greater likelihood that someone may experience anxiety. But there also are environmental factors, modeling and well-intentioned parents who overcaution children ("Don't touch that; you'll get hurt."), which can fuel anxiety when the child doesn't understand where their parents are coming from.

We also have the enemy of our soul trying to cause anxiety. We cannot underestimate the impact of the enemy. Scripture says, "For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind," (1 Tim. 1:7, NKJV). There is a spirit of fear, and the enemy would love to get us entangled in worry, fear and anxiety so we focus more on our circumstances than on God.

Bengtson doesn't think we give enough emphasis to the importance of spiritual warfare. When you encounter spiritual warfare, you do not need to give in to worry, fear and anxiety; you can rest in God's peace. Even though you might be taken by surprise, realize that your circumstance did not take God by surprise. You can put your trust in Him.

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When you feel fear or anxiety creeping in, Bengtson says, "Pay attention to the voice you are listening to. Are you listening to the voice of the enemy, are you rehashing prior experiences that brought about fear and anxiety or are you listening to the voice of the Holy Spirit, who has come to remind us of all truth? God is faithful. If you have gotten through every difficult circumstance in your life, that is God's faithfulness."

The what-if questions can overwhelm you. Look at Adam and Eve in the garden. After they had eaten the fruit, they probably said, "What if God sees us in our nakedness?"—as if God already hadn't created them naked and unashamed. "That's how the enemy works," Bengtson says. "The enemy tempts us to get into worry, fear and anxiety, and then he shames us for it. He doesn't play fair."

God wants to break the worry, fear and anxiety trap that plagues us. God gives us power, His perfect love and a sound mind, which are our three crucial weapons. When you receive Christ, His power comes upon you, and He tells you that you can do even greater things than He—it's not in our own strength or power. It's the power of the Holy Spirit. There is power just calling on the name of Jesus, just saying, "Jesus, help me." There is power in praying with the expectation that He will answer. We are perfectly loved, not because of what we do, but because of whose we are.

You can learn tools to cope with the crushing emotional burden of anxiety and reclaim God's peace as a way of life so you can break anxiety's grip. Worry, fear and anxiety are not our portion; God's peace is.

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Marilyn Hickey founded Marilyn Hickey Ministries more than 45 years ago with God's vision to cover the earth with the Word.

Marilyn co-hosts a daily television program, "Today with Marilyn & Sarah," reaching a potential viewing audience of over 2 billion households worldwide. Marilyn communicates deep biblical truths in a way that is understandable and practical for everyday life.

Sarah Bowling *is on a mission to connect everyone with the heart of God while loving those who are overlooked, excluded and ignored. Led by Holy Spirit and anchored in the Word, Sarah seeks to inspire all to know the unconditional and transformational love of God in our daily lives. A Bible teacher, author, international speaker and global humanitarian, Sarah also co-hosts a daily television program, "Today with Marilyn & Sarah."*

Isabell Bowling's *passion is to help people have a transformative experience with the power of God. She brings a fresh anointing of the presence and fire of God wherever she goes. Her faith and ministry was shaped by observation and prayer, watching the Lord work in and through her grandmother, Marilyn Hickey, and her mom, Sarah Bowling. After graduating from Oral Roberts University in 2023, Isabell joined the Marilyn & Sarah Ministries team, where she stepped into a powerful teaching ministry with her family.*