

Are You Worried Sick? Jesus Has the Answer for Anxiety

Americans are stressed out. The problem was bad enough before the pandemic, but statistics skyrocketed during and after that crisis. Today, more than 42 million people in this country suffer from an anxiety disorder, according to Mental Health America, and we spend more than \$18 billion annually on medications for anxiety and depression.

Why are people so frazzled? Our world is on edge. There are wars, bitter political divisions, inflation, rising crime and many other triggers that can cause us to abuse alcohol, lose sleep or have panic attacks. Even many Christians struggle with crippling anxiety.

My mother went through the Great Depression as a child in the 1930s, and she watched how the financial crash affected her parents. When she became an adult, she married my father and enjoyed a blessed life—including a comfortable home and money in the bank. But because of the trauma caused by a financial crash, she feared not having enough even though her fears contradicted her reality. Her fears affected me, too. I've struggled to trust God with finances, but the Lord has helped me to trust Him.

The good news is that Jesus has a solution for anxiety. I'm not saying there's never a need for medicine, or that you shouldn't see a counselor. Trained medical professionals have great tools that can help us. But if you or someone you love suffers from chronic anxiety, it's always a good idea to address the spiritual roots of the problem. Here are some simple steps to take:

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1. Avoid negative thoughts as much as possible. You may need to limit your intake of news and social media. Listening to 30 minutes of crime reports, political rants or conspiracy theories will likely increase your blood pressure or give you insomnia. Negativity fuels fear. This is why Philippians 4:8 (NASB 1977) tells us: "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." What you watch and listen to affects your soul.

2. Identify the lies you've believed. Many people are controlled by irrational fears, such as "My brother had cancer so I'm going to get cancer, too," "I'll never find a spouse because I'm unlovable," "God isn't pleased with me," "I'll never have enough money" or "People think I'm repulsive." If an obsessive fear haunts you, discuss this with a friend, mentor or counselor and ask for prayer.

3. Confront Satan's lies with God's Word. After your worries are exposed, get ruthless with the devil. Don't tolerate these thoughts. Ephesian 6 calls us to spiritual warfare, which involves putting on our spiritual armor and using our spiritual weapons. James 4:7b says, "Resist the devil and he will flee from you." This isn't just a one-time confrontation. Every time you start thinking about a fear or worry, fight back and say, "Satan, you're a liar!" Then quote a Bible verse that promises victory over your situation.

4. Develop the habit of a daily quiet time. Life can be overwhelming. Even Jesus had to regularly find a peaceful place to pray when He was on this earth. The world has never been noisier than it is today, and you won't be mentally and emotionally healthy if you don't regularly unplug from busyness. Make prayer and Scripture reading a discipline, and

learn to calm your soul.

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5. Make sure you're caring for yourself physically. It's difficult to find mental peace if you struggle with poor diet, alcohol addiction, obesity or lack of exercise. You'll find it harder to sleep well, focus your thoughts and maintain a healthy self-image if you ignore basic rules of physical health. You'll see positive changes in your mental state if you get serious about fitness.

6. Saturate your mind with God's promises. Isaiah 26:3 (NKJV) says, "You will keep *him* in perfect peace, *Whose* mind is stayed *on You*, because he trusts in You." How do you keep your mind "stayed" on the Lord? The word in Hebrew means, "to lean on or to rest upon." Turn your thoughts to Jesus every moment. Memorize Scriptures or keep them on your phone or in a journal. Confess what God says about you—out loud—and use His words to counteract your anxieties.

You can start with this simple prayer: "Jesus, You are the Prince of Peace. I ask You to deliver me from fear. Set me free from every anxious thought. Your Word is true, and Satan is a liar. Your peace, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard my heart and mind. Amen."

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