

Handling Anxiety.

. We read in Philippians 4 verse 6, “Do not be anxious about anything”. Anxiety can cripple your spiritual vitality. It hinders your walk with God. Anxiety takes your focus off God and onto something else. Someone once said, “Stress and worry break us down. They are the unseen source of our headaches, backaches, heartaches and bellyaches⁸they give us knotted stomachs, sleepless nights, high blood pressure, low morale. They cause indigestion, irritation, chest pain and muscle strain!” Clearly anxiety isn’t good for you! So how can you handle it?

The Bible gives us the answer. First, develop a life of prayer. We read in verse 6, “but in everything by prayer”. You can only pray to God when you know him. You can only know him in Jesus Christ. Approach to God the Father is through Jesus Christ. Jesus said in John chapter 14 verse 6, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me”. Prayer is a reverent address to God. It takes the form of petition, which is the humble cry of the supplicant for God to meet a need that is keenly felt. The antidote for anxiety is to pour out your heart to God. The well-known composer Haydn was with some friends discussing how they each restored their mental energies when they were tired after long and difficult studies. One said that he drank a bottle of wine. Another said that he would lose himself in the company of friends. Haydn said, “My practice is to retire to my study and engage in prayer. Nothing exerted a happier and efficacious influence on my heart and mind than the power of prayer”.

The second way to handle anxiety is to define your need in prayer. Philippians 4 verse 6 says, “present your requests to God”. No matter what your problem is you can talk to God about it. Tell him how you feel. Tell him what’s bothering you. Unburden your heart to him. We read in 1 Peter chapter 5 verse 7, “Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you”. David said in Psalm 55 verse 22, “Cast your cares on the Lord and he will sustain you; he will never let the righteous fall”. You might think God isn’t concerned about a problem you have. In verse 6 we are told “In everything⁸.make your requests know to God”. He’s concerned about

everything that's a concern to you. Two men were talking and one said, "I'm in debt with credit cards, I've lost my job, my car, but I'm not worried about it". His friend replied, "Not worried about it, I would be!". "No, I have a professional worrier. He does all the worrying for me so I don't have to think about it". "Fantastic", the friend said, "How much does this professional worrier charge for his services?". "£70,000 pounds a year", he replied. His friend asked, "Where are you going to get that sort of money?". "I don't know—that's his worry!!". In a sense you have a professional "worrier" for you in Jesus Christ. One who takes your cares anxieties and worries and carries them for you. J.B. Phillips translates 1 Peter 5 verse 7 like this, "You can throw the whole weight of your anxieties upon him for you are his personal care".

The next way to handle anxiety is to determine its cause. Philippians 4 verse 7 says, "And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus". Notice the reference to "Hearts and Minds". Anxiety is caused by fears concerning the world, the flesh, the devil, and all the pressures of daily living. They take over the heart and mind. They distract your thoughts so that your mind becomes preoccupied with worry about them. Our heart becomes agitated and overcome with dread. Determine what it is that's causing you so much anxiety and then bring it to God in prayer. God will stabilise your emotions. Jesus said in John chapter 14 verse 27, "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you, do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid". God will also calm the mind. It's in the mind where we allow anxious thoughts to master us and spoil our walk with God. Anxiety is evidence that you're walking by sight and not by faith. George Muller once said, "The beginning of anxiety is the end of faith, and the beginning of true faith is the end of anxiety". So what lies behind your anxiety? If there's sin there confess it and forsake it. If you are anxious because of your own foolish mistake then put things right. If lack of faith lies behind it, then trust God afresh with your cares and worries. In verse 7 God promises to, "Guard your hearts and minds". The word guard here translates a Greek word that carries the idea of a garrison of soldiers surrounding a King for his safety. In the midst of your storm God will surround you heart and mind with his peace. Having left the care with him you will know calmness of spirit and composure of mind. You will sense his presence enabling you to face your trials with him. The missionary Hudson Taylor was well

known as a man of energy, patience and spiritual stature. He was calm and confident. What was the secret? Someone who knew him said this, "He drew from the bank of heaven everything for his daily income nothing ruffled his spirit. The serenity of the Lord Jesus Christ concerning any matter at any moment this was his ideal possession⁸he knew there was a peace passing all understanding and that he could not do without it".

The fourth way to handle anxiety is to discipline your thoughts. Philippians 4 verse 8 says "Whatever is true..noble..right..pure..lovely..admirable..excellent..praiseworthy..think about such things". Fill your mind with thoughts that encourage faith and godly living. How you think determines what you will be. Rid your mind of anxious thoughts. We read in Proverbs 23 verse 7, "as a man thinks within himself, so he is".

The final way to handle anxiety is to direct praise to God. Philippians 4 verse 6 reminds us to present our requests in prayer, "with thanksgiving". The proof that you've really left your burden with the Lord is that you'll praise him for what he is going to do for you. Someone said that, "The evidence of a peaceful heart is a praising life". Thanksgiving will be within your praying for past answers to prayer and for present blessings. It will be at the end of your prayer for anticipated divine action. A girl was near to suicide. She talked about it to a Christian friend. Her friend said, "Go home and read the book of Psalms". As she did she saw how often the psalmist rejoiced and praised God even in difficulties. She met her friend and said, "I now set aside one day in the week when I do nothing but thank God, and already I feel well again".

Don't be crippled by anxiety. Just a little talk with Jesus makes it right.