



Be Anxious For Nothing



NO MATTER WHERE WE LIVE, there is beauty to be found. We may have to search for it, but it is there. God has made everything beautiful in its time, Ecclesiastes 3:11 tells us. The whisper of the wind, the voice of a friend, birdsong in the morning—He has made beautiful things. The heavens declare His glory, the Psalmist says, and the sky shouts His handiwork (Ps. 19:1). What is more beautiful than the blue of the summer sky, or the night sky, black as velvet and sprinkled with ten thousand twinkling stars? And what about His order? There is beauty there as well, the beauty of His faithfulness and our trust, the myriad of things that happen just because He says so. The sun rises and sets, the rain comes, people fall in love.

Wherever we reside, we live in a world filled with the majesty and wonder of the God who created it all; an ordered world with times and seasons that remind us every day that He is alive and well and caring for His universe. Why then, do you suppose, are we living in

what is being called the Age of Anxiety? Our children are some of the most anxious in history, and recent studies done by the University of Alberta in Canada indicate that 50% of millennials suffer from anxiety and depression. With Gen Z, it jumps to 75%, and globally from the UK to Australia, Latin America to Japan—the statistics remain pretty consistent. And in most of those countries, 20% to 30% of those in the general public have the same issues.

GOD OR ME?

Most of us who are over 40 had parents or grandparents who lived through World War II and some during the Great Depression. They were raised to be strong people who knew how to “stand on their own two feet” and weather the most difficult of situations. And they raised us to be the same. They expected us to be independent folk, a definition of which calls for us to be self-governing, not requiring help or relying on others. At 18, we were expected to get out there and fend for ourselves, to work hard and be successful. Lack of that independent spirit was looked upon as weakness. To be dependent meant to be influenced by or subject to others. If we weren’t self-reliant, that meant we had to rely on others, and offspring who couldn’t “stand on their own two feet” were an embarrassment.



This world view created a great dilemma for many of us as we became believers. Independence was so inculcated that the concept of surrendering our all to the Lord and living in total dependence on Him seemed almost impossible. That internal struggle created the perfect atmosphere for a vicious circle of worry: “I know I can’t do it. But I think I should do it. I think He can do it. I know I should let Him. But...” Although the Bible clearly tells us that worry cannot add a single hour to our lives (Matt. 6:27), we continued to struggle without recognizing that our worry was the offspring of unbelief. If I insisted that I could do whatever it was, I was intimating that God couldn’t. If I will do this meant God wouldn’t. If I was responsible for it then God wasn’t. If I was the one who knew how it should be done, then God didn’t. After all, weren’t we taught if you want something done right, you should do it yourself?

As much as worry is the offspring of unbelief, worry’s offspring is anxiety. Anxiety is that uneasy feeling of uncertainty or agitation that can quickly snowball into an all-encompassing dread and fear. And the Bible speaks of it often. King David confesses to anxiety a number of times, stating in Psalm 94:19 that his anxiety is “*great within*” (NIV) him. In Psalm 139:23, he prays, “*Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts*” (NIV). But in every instance, his confession is followed by surrender.

WHY WORRY?

Anxiety and depression are plagues on today’s society. For those over forty, it is often fueled by an inability to surrender to the Lord, to truly trust Him, to depend on Him. But perhaps today’s teens and young adults are at the opposite end of that spectrum. Experts believe that many parents today have not given their children the foundations they need to be self-reliant or live independent lives. Perhaps both sides of that coin have resulted in the same issues—and there is only one answer for both.

In Matthew 13:1–23, Jesus (Yeshua) tells the story of four different seeds representing four kinds of people in His Kingdom. Person number three is portrayed by seed that was choked out by the “*cares of this world.*” This poor guy worried himself right out of the Kingdom of God! His preoccupation with the worries of the world kept God’s word from becoming firmly implanted in his heart and life. The more he focused on the world around him, worrying constantly, the more anxious he became. The more his heart filled with anxiety, the less room there was for the life-giving words

of the Lord. Obviously, this is not a matter to be taken lightly. How much happier he would have been had he taken to heart the apostle's words in 1 Peter 5:7, "*Cast all your anxiety on Him, because He cares about you*" (NASB)—or any of the other nearly 400 times the Bible admonishes us not to fear, worry or be anxious. One of the loveliest of those admonitions is found in Matthew 6:25–34.

"Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? Which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature? So why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; and yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Now if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will He not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first the



kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.”

When Jesus spoke those words, the nation of Israel was under Roman domination. Life was very difficult. Religious liberty was limited and crucifixions were rampant. There was plenty to worry about. But with these beautiful words, Jesus encouraged His followers to surrender all of their anxieties.

He began with life itself. Why do you worry about your life? Life is so much more than food or clothing! Your life is a beautiful, miraculous thing, meant to be enjoyed in relationship with the God who loves you. And it is not really yours. Like everything else, it is a gift. You didn't create it, and you can't sustain it. He gave it to you, not for you to squander on fear and worry, but to appreciate and enjoy, walking with Him in joyful surrender.

Then Jesus spoke of our value. It is estimated that there are over 11,000 species of birds on the earth today. God created every one of them and He cares for them faithfully. How much more will He care for you, who are not just a beautiful, feathered creature, but one who bears His image? In the *Torah* (Gen.–Deut.), the Israelites were forbidden from making a “graven” image. Unlike their pagan neighbors, they were not to create a likeness of deity. Why? Because He had already created it: mankind. His likeness was not to be of lifeless stone, but a living, breathing image capable of joy and love, laughter, kindness, passion and trust. You are that image, chosen to carry His likeness to a world in desperate need of His love. Trust that nothing is more precious to Him than your life, and heed Psalm 55:22: *“Cast your cares on the LORD and He will sustain you; He will never let the righteous be shaken”* (NIV).

WHEN WE WORRY

There are lots of reasons to refrain from worry. The experts say it takes a lot of energy. It even burns calories, although I don't think it is the best weight loss plan! But it does wreak havoc on our health. Doctors tell us worry is suspected of causing a myriad of health conditions, including heart disease, cancer, ulcers, stress disorders and mental illness.

But more importantly, it ignores God's constant demonstrations of faithfulness. He is caring for us relentlessly, and what He has



done, He will continue to do. Our Matthew 6 passage spoke of flowers, and nowhere on earth is there a better place to appreciate that example than in Israel. During the spring months, the country is ablaze with color as the land is covered with beautiful flowers in all shapes and sizes, flowers that bloom every year, predictably as the sunrise, because He cares for them. Every blossom, every petal shouts, “Don’t worry! He cares for us. Surely He will care for you.”

THE ANTIDOTE TO WORRY

It is true that we live in a world of profound beauty. But it is also true that we, like ancient Israel, have plenty to worry about—if we so choose. The better choice is trust. Of course, everyone lives by some kind of trust, even the atheist. We trust that we will be able to take our next breath, if we hit the switch the light will come on, if we push the button the car will start, if we put one foot in front of the other we will walk. So the question is not whether we will trust or not, but rather in whom. Will we focus on the world around us, letting its cares drag us down into worry and anxiety? Or will we see in the world around us the faithfulness of God? Will we stop trying to do it ourselves and then worrying because we can’t? The antidote to the world’s anxiety is trust in the God of the universe and in His sovereignty. Not a single one of those birds, or a petal from one of those flowers falls to the ground without His awareness. He is not surprised by the wars and rumors of wars that proliferate the news or the economic uncertainty that wracks the nations. He knows your every need and desire. He sees you and He hears you. Surrendering to Him, depending on Him is not a sign of weakness. It is the only true strength.

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Scripture is taken from the New King James Version, unless otherwise noted.

TERMINOLOGY:

Many of our readers are seasoned supporters of Israel while others are just beginning to understand the importance of standing with God’s chosen nation; some prefer the use of Hebrew names and terms, while others are comfortable with more traditional Christian terminology. Because we want to show respect to all of our readers while providing an enjoyable educational experience, we are making every effort to use both terms whenever possible. The following are some of the most common examples:

- Jesus (Yeshua)
- *Tanakh* (Old Testament or OT)—*Tanakh* is an acronym used in Judaism which stands for *Torah*, *Neviim* or Prophets and *Ketuvim* or Writings.
- Writings of the Apostles (New Testament or NT)
- *Torah* (Gen.–Deut.)

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