

Overcoming Anxiety – Part 3

“Humble yourselves, therefore, under God’s mighty hand that He may lift you up in due time. Cast all your anxiety on Him for He cares for you.” (1 Peter 5:6-7)

In a very practical sense, how can we live a vital life of faith that realizes this promise of “casting all our anxiety on Him”?

First, clarify what is beyond our control. When we struggle with deep concerns, we must clarify what is within our control and what is beyond our control. Anxiety takes a grip on our lives when we become preoccupied with the things, people, and circumstances, which are beyond our control. For example, some people who sit and watch hours of news coverage, much of which is negative, can often times become unduly anxious or deeply despondent. One of the reasons for their negative feelings is that they are mentally preoccupied with those situations, which they cannot control, or influence.

Secondly, consider what our responsibility in a given situation is and do what we are able to do. As we deal with painful realities, simply ask, “What can I do, and what am I not able to control?” Focus the thoughts and energies of our lives on what we are able to do.

Thirdly, claim God’s promises. *“No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; He will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, He will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.” (1 Cor. 10:13)*

For example, if I were to lose my job, this could cause me deep anxiety. A loss this great not only affects my sense of self-worth, but my family will deeply suffer without my income. So, losing my job comes with many difficult consequences for me and those I love. For you as well, a job loss could cause debilitating anxiety and despondency because of the effects on you, as well as your family. So as Christians, how should we respond in this sort of circumstance?

In this example, I must answer the question of what is my responsibility and what is beyond my control? Of course, you may say, “Your responsibility is to find a job.” I would gently argue with this. If it was my responsibility, that which I am able within my own power to accomplish, I would already have a job. My responsibility is not to find a job, but to do everything in my power to search for a new job. It sounds like a matter of semantics, but spiritually it is the difference between trust and self-reliance or deep concern and soul-gripping anxiety. It is the difference between searching and finding. What I must do is be faithful to searching. What I cannot control is the timing of finding that next job. It is God who controls the timing, the situation, and the particular job that He will provide. Being faithful to God’s promise is to not take upon myself what is out of my control, but to firmly place in God’s mighty hands what is completely in His control. This kind of trust clings to the promises of God for those who struggle financially. *“And my God will meet all your needs according to His glorious riches in Christ Jesus.” (Phil. 4:19)*

So, my practical suggestion for handling life’s anxious moments is to:

- (1) Clarify what is beyond my control and allow those things to rest with God;**
- (2) Consider what I am able to do and do it faithfully and to the best of my ability;**
- (3) Claim the promises of Scripture.**

“And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work.” (2 Cor. 9:8)

Rightly discerning our place before God releases our burdens and allows us to live the life, which He intends for us to live. We pray for that day when all our anxiety will be gone and we will stand in His loving presence.

Great Peace in the Lord,

Eddie