

# St Peter's Barge Women's Breakfast 27.4.2024

## Anxiety: As Christians, how can we find peace?

### What is Anxiety?

(Google's dictionary) a feeling of worry, nervousness, or unease about something with an uncertain outcome.

(Cambridge dictionary online) an uncomfortable feeling of nervousness or worry about something that is happening or might happen in the future.

**FEAR** that **something is going to go wrong** in the future.

**FEAR** that **I won't be able to cope** with what happens in the future.

Wishing I could **control** the future.

An over-developed **sense of responsibility** for the future.

→ Now and again or mood music of our lives.

### A "state" of anxiety may include:

- a mind that buzzes around,
- a low (or high!) -level feeling that things are not ok
- a sick feeling in the pit of our stomach
- having trouble switching off
- constantly running from one thing to the next
- constantly flustered
- struggling to sleep at nights
- habitual checking of our phone.
- other.....

### What sorts of behaviours do people exhibit in response to anxieties?

- 1) Controlling
- 2) Demanding
- 3) Procrastination
- 4) Paralysis
- 5) Other....

→ These work for a time, but are ultimately counter-productive.

**Think on your own:**

**Think about an anxiety you have, or have had.**

**What can you see of “fear of the future” in it?**

**What kinds of behaviour(s) have you exhibited in response to that anxiety? (Try to be honest!)**

**So how can we bring in some good news from the Lord to help us with our anxious hearts?**

**Key Scriptures we know:**

1 Peter 5:7 “Cast all your anxieties on Him, because He cares for you.” So we can think about how God cares for us. That will help!

Philippians 4:6,7 “Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”

Matthew 6:25 “Therefore, I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on.”

**We may think:**

“HOW do I not be anxious about my life?”

“HOW do I cast all my anxieties on Him?”

“WHY does that peace of God not seem to come into my heart when I pray about my anxieties?”

“Isn’t it only natural to feel anxious about some things?!”

**Two things to help:**

Key biblical truths for our anxious hearts

Tackling anxiety in the moment

## Key biblical truths for our hearts

### Psalm 27

#### Of David.

<sup>1</sup>The Lord is my light and my salvation;  
whom shall I fear?

The Lord is the stronghold of my life;  
of whom shall I be afraid?

<sup>2</sup>When evildoers assail me  
to eat up my flesh,  
my adversaries and foes,  
it is they who stumble and fall.

<sup>3</sup>Though an army encamp against me,  
my heart shall not fear;  
though war arise against me,  
yet I will be confident.

<sup>4</sup>One thing have I asked of the Lord,  
that will I seek after:  
that I may dwell in the house of the Lord  
all the days of my life,  
to gaze upon the beauty of the Lord  
and to enquire in his temple.

<sup>5</sup>For he will hide me in his shelter  
in the day of trouble;  
he will conceal me under the cover of his tent;  
he will lift me high upon a rock.

<sup>6</sup>And now my head shall be lifted up  
above my enemies all round me,  
and I will offer in his tent  
sacrifices with shouts of joy;

I will sing and make melody to the Lord.

<sup>7</sup>Hear, O Lord, when I cry aloud;  
be gracious to me and answer me!

<sup>8</sup>You have said, "Seek my face."  
My heart says to you,  
"Your face, Lord, do I seek."

<sup>9</sup>Hide not your face from me.  
Turn not your servant away in anger,  
O you who have been my help.  
Cast me not off; forsake me not,  
O God of my salvation!

<sup>10</sup>For my father and my mother have forsaken  
me,  
but the Lord will take me in.

<sup>11</sup>Teach me your way, O Lord,  
and lead me on a level path  
because of my enemies.

<sup>12</sup>Give me not up to the will of my adversaries;  
for false witnesses have risen against me,  
and they breathe out violence.

<sup>13</sup>I believe that I shall look upon the goodness  
of the Lord  
in the land of the living!

<sup>14</sup>Wait for the Lord;  
be strong, and let your heart take courage;  
wait for the Lord!

**1)God is for me, so I can live confidently (v1-3)**

**2)God is with me, so I can cope with whatever comes (v4-9)**

**3)My future is safe in God's hands (v5, 10, 13)**

Reflection questions:

1)What do you think your most fundamental view of God is? Can you see in your heart elements of fearing He is against you?

2)Do you fear God leaving you? Why do you think that is?

3) How does it help you to know your future is safe in God's hands?

**Coffee Break**

## **Tackling anxiety in the moment**

Keep in mind, we are WHOLE people – mind, body, spirit. These “parts” of us impact each other.

Body:

John 4:6

Mark 4

Mind:

Romans 12:2 “be transformed by the renewal of your mind.”

2 Corinthians 10:5 “We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ.”

### **So the moment comes, and we are feeling anxious. What do we do?**

Think of having a toolbox and trying different tools.

These first two are always where to start:

**Pray** to cast our anxieties on the Lord, as we’re told to do in Scripture.

**Remember a key Bible verse.**

### **But what if I still feel anxious after prayer and the Bible?**

Remember mind/body/spirit!

#### **-Distraction**

Put on a podcast?

Put on some music and dance around the kitchen?

Go for a walk? With some calming music playing in your ears (the music that was playing at the start is my “calm down” playlist!)

Go for a run?

Read your child a story?

Relaxation exercises?

Meet a friend for lunch?

Other...

→Find out what works for you!

### **-Spot unhelpful thinking patterns**

Bring thoughts in line with the truth.

Sheet of common unhelpful thinking habits

### **-What advice would you give someone else?**

### **-Two common lies anxious people believe**

- 1) Fretting is productive and is the same as careful planning. This is not true.
  
- 2) I'm anxious because I care. This is not the reason we are anxious.

### **-Talk and pray with a friend**

-most useful if we're genuinely open to challenge.

### **A few final suggestions:**

**1)Try to learn to spot the signs of when you are getting into a “state” of anxiety.**

**2)Be careful of what you are filling your mind and heart with.**

Philippians 4:8,9 “Whatever is true, whatever is honourable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me – practise these things, and the God of peace will be with you.”

Are devices really helping you?

**3)Seek to cultivate a response of “calm curiosity” or “relaxed concern” rather than anxiety.**

#### **Reflection time**

How do you currently seek to cope in the moment of anxiety?

Which of the suggestions of what to do most connected with you?

Which unhelpful thinking patterns are you prone to?

**Recommended book and devotionals:**

“Living without fear” Kirsten Birkett

“Daily strength” – SGM Lifewords

“Complete Surrender” – devotional by Zia Wilder Muller

**Christian songs I find help me when anxious:**

He will hold me fast – Keith and Kristyn Getty










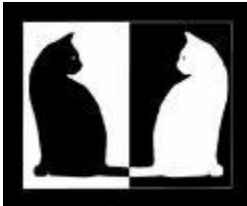

I will glory in my Redeemer – Sovereign Grace

A Christian’s daily prayer – Sovereign Grace

→What are your favourites?

## Unhelpful Thinking Habits

Over the years, we tend to get into unhelpful thinking habits such as those described below. We might favour some over others, and there might be some that seem far too familiar. Once you can identify your unhelpful thinking styles, you can start to notice them – they very often occur just before and during distressing situations. Once you can notice them, then that can help you to challenge or distance yourself from those thoughts, and see the situation in a different and more helpful way.

 <p><b>Mental Filter</b> When we notice only what the filter wants or allows us to notice, and we dismiss anything that doesn't 'fit'. Like looking through dark blinkers or 'gloomy specs', or only catching the negative stuff in our 'kitchen strainers' whilst anything more positive or realistic is dismissed</p>	 <p><b>Judgements</b> Making evaluations or judgements about events, ourselves, others, or the world, rather than describing what we actually see and have evidence for</p>
<p><b>Mind-Reading</b> Assuming we know what others are thinking (usually about us)</p> 	<p><b>Emotional Reasoning</b> I feel bad so it must be bad! I feel anxious, so I must be in danger</p> 
 <p><b>Prediction</b> Believing we know what's going to happen in the future</p>	 <p><b>Mountains and Molehills</b> Exaggerating the risk of danger, or the negatives. Minimising the odds of how things are most likely to turn out, or minimising positives</p>
<p><b>Compare and despair</b> Seeing only the good and positive aspects in others, and comparing ourselves negatively against them</p> 	<p><b>Catastrophising</b> Imagining and believing that the worst possible thing will happen</p> 
 <p><b>Critical self</b> Putting ourselves down, self-criticism, blaming ourselves for events or situations that are not (totally) our responsibility</p>	 <p><b>Black and white thinking</b> Believing that something or someone can be only good or bad, right or wrong, rather than anything in-between or 'shades of grey'</p>
<p><b>Shoulds and musts</b> Thinking or saying 'I should' (or shouldn't) and 'I must' puts pressure on ourselves, and sets up unrealistic expectations</p> 	<p><b>Memories</b> Current situations and events can trigger upsetting memories, leading us to believe that the danger is here and now, rather than in the past, causing us distress right now</p> 