



VILLAGE BIBLE CHURCH SUGAR GROVE CAMPUS

Attacking Anxiety: God's Cure for Our Cares

God's Hope for the Hurting

Matthew 6:25–34

Tim Badal | June 20, 2021

We're in a series we've titled "Help!" This summer we'll be looking at different topics that we, as followers of Jesus Christ, need help with. Your preaching team spent a lot of time thinking through which struggles to address. In week one we talked about the need to be humble in order to receive help from God. Then last week Pastor Steve did a phenomenal job with addressing the issue of addictions in our lives and how to find freedom from them in Christ Jesus.

Today we're going to focus on the issue of anxiety. At every point in this series, we want to address the struggle we're dealing with, then we want to turn to God. We want to say to Him, "Before we go to counselors or medication or other graces You've given us, we want to go to Your Word. We want to ask, 'What is causing us this pain and turmoil, then what does Your Word have to say about it? What can You do to help me in my hour of need?'"

If there was ever an issue that we need God to help us with in this day, it surely would be the matter of anxiety. Let's face it, we live in anxious times with lots of anxious people. It's a big issue. In fact, if you look at any study or survey, you will learn that 23%—one in four—of Americans say they deal with anxiety in a debilitating and daily way.

Women are 60% more likely to suffer with anxiety; Especially from puberty until about 50 years of age, it seems that anxiety is most significant. In fact, it's twice as big for ladies as it is for men. We'll talk about more about this later.

There are all kinds of maladies that accompany anxiety. It affects our hearts, breathing and blood pressure. We have fear and sadness. We can become preoccupied with negativity and dread. All of these things impact our lives and it's not getting better. In fact, anxiety has quadrupled since the beginning of the COVID pandemic. It was at 11% for people, but now in just one year's time, it has risen to 41.1% of Americans.

We have a problem and we need God's help to address this issue. Kind of like when the Israelites were being taunted by the giant Goliath, we also find ourselves being taunted and mocked by this giant we call anxiety. So we need to ask the Lord for help. For those with anxious hearts, God has an antidote to attack anxiety in our lives. We'll find this in Matthew 6:25-34. It might be easy for us to say, "Well, back in Jesus' day, those were more simple times. They didn't have the pressures we face. They didn't have social media that's causing all kinds of issues and anxiety for our teenagers today. Jesus didn't have to worry about Instagram or TikTok or Snapchat."

Yet, in the middle of one of the most well-known sermons—the longest recorded sermon we have in the Bible—Jesus addressed the issue of anxiety and how we as His followers can find victory over it. So let's look at Matthew 6, beginning in verse 25:

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. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? ²⁶Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet



your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? ²⁷ And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life? ²⁸ And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, ²⁹ yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. ³⁰ But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? ³¹ Therefore do not be anxious, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' ³² For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. ³³ But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.

³⁴ "Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.

How do we attack anxiety? It requires us to take three specific steps.

Step #1: Identify your foe.

In the Badal household, one of our favorite pastimes is to watch the Rocky movies. As boys, we love to watch the storyline of Rocky Balboa fighting various fighters. If you've watched these, you know there's something deeper than just boxing going on. In each movie, Rocky has to deal with a new opponent, each of whom have different strengths and abilities, but all of them want to defeat him. He comes to a point where he realizes that each opponent has the ability to win the fight against him, so Rocky's job is to figure out how to defend himself against them. The whole second half of each movie has a different training site, using a different approach to the fight from any of the previous fights.

As Christians, when it comes to anxiety, we need to look across the ring and size up our opponent. We then need to ask, "What is this thing that's making me anxious? How does it use its weapons against me? What can I do to defend myself against it?" So let's identify our foe.

Webster defines anxiety this way: "Anxiety is the intense, excessive and persistent worry and fear about actual or potential situations." You may be afraid of something that is real. Maybe there's a deadline at work. Maybe there's a difficult relationship situation that really exists. Anxiety can result from these. But let's face it, we can make up all kinds of scenarios that aren't real but about which we can become very anxious. We may be wondering about what someone thinks about us or what someone is saying about us behind our backs. We don't know if they're thinking or saying these things, but we're concerned about it. Anxiety is the fear of both actual and potential things.

The Bible defines anxiety a little differently. Anxiety in the Bible means "to take thought of" or "to consider." The Bible recognizes that we need to decide between two things. The anxious heart is vacillating between two possibilities. Regarding this vacillation, the Bible specifically points out a couple things. First, we cannot serve two masters (Matthew 6:24). We're going to hate the one and love the other. Second, when we vacillate, James 1:5-8 tells us we're double-minded people who are unstable in all our ways. When there's a situation in our lives that caused us concern and even angst, so we need to figure out a way to resolve it.

I've found some anecdotes about what people think about anxiety.

- Vance Havner said, "Anxiety and worry are like being in a rocking chair. It gives you something to do, but it gets you nowhere."
- Corrie ten Boom, who had much to be anxious about as a victim of Nazi persecution in World War II, said this. "Anxiety is like an old man carrying a load of feathers, thinking they are lead."

We can see the distinction here between the potential and the actual. Some of us are struggling with anxiety that feels like a big fog in our lives. We can't seem to shake it. Before we go any farther, let me give you some distinctions. When we talk about anxiety, we need to be sure we're talking about the same thing. There are four types of anxieties.

Natural anxiety

Imagine that a bear just came into the lobby and is headed into the sanctuary. It knocks down the glass doors and roars as it enters this room—and it's seven feet tall! When you look at that bear, you're going to feel real anxiety. This anxiety will produce one of two responses. Either flight—you'll run for your life—or fight. I want you to know you're at a church where your pastor would protect you against this bear. I said that in the previous service, and someone pointed out, "Well, you're as big as that bear." That hurt my feelings.

Seriously, this is natural anxiety. When a troubling situation comes, God has created us to have an “overdrive” response that says, “I need to either fight, or I need to run for my life.” That’s not what Jesus is talking about in our text today.

Anxiety that is the consequence of sinful behavior

Let’s say you’ve broken the law, but you haven’t been caught yet. Every time you’re out and about and you see a police officer, this sense of anxiety rises up. “Are they going to catch me?” That’s the sense you have when you’re doing 15 miles per hour over the speed limit and you pass a police officer. What do you do? You look in the rearview mirror, thinking, “Is he coming to get me?” That’s a natural consequence of sinful behavior.

This is also the husband or wife who has been cheating on their spouse, so now they’re filled with anxiety because they’re concerned the spouse will find out. That sense of anxiety is intended to move us to confession, repentance and restoration. This is not what Jesus is talking about.

Anxiety that is a sinful response to God’s providential care in our lives

We know God says He’s going to fight for us. We know God says He’s going to care for us and provide for us. We know these to be true, but we live as though they’re not. Anxiety takes the promises and truths of God and makes them out to be lies. We’re essentially saying, “I know You said this in Your Word, God, but I’m going to live as if it’s not true. I’m going to live my way.” This is the anxiety Jesus is speaking about. He’s saying, “Don’t do this.”

Anxiety that results from a physiological disorder

There’s one more form of anxiety which is produced because of a physiological issue. Someone can be disoriented and debilitated by panic and persistent anxious thoughts. It keeps them from being able to continue with even the most mundane activities in life.

One of the reasons why many believe women struggle with anxiety more than men is just basic physiology. They are smaller people, so they have fears and concerns that men don’t deal with. For example, I had a conversation with Amanda once when we were walking through a dark parking lot late at night. I could sense that she was afraid, so I asked, “Are you worried about something?” She said, “No, I’m with you.” I then asked, “Do you worry about things like this when I’m not around?” She said, “All the time.” Now, I have never walked across a store parking lot, no matter what time of night, and worried about getting safely to my car. But my wife does because she’s worried about people my size. That’s why she married a guy my size. She married me to scare the other ones away. But that’s an example of a physiological difference between men and women.

Now, these are anxieties for which you need to get help, especially if they’re impacting your daily life. You may need to seek counsel. You may need to be put on medication to help. I want to be clear on this—medication is a God-given grace. Counseling is a God-given grace. However too often we move to medicine before we go to the Scriptures. I want to be the prescriber of God’s truth. I’m not here to say that medication is bad. But I would rather that you first make sure you are living according to God’s prescription before you go to doctors.

So depending on where you find yourself regarding anxiety, you may interpret what I’m saying in the wrong way. With these distinctions and disclaimers in mind, let’s talk about some things.

Anxiety is not contemplating the future.

First, anxiety doesn’t rule out contemplating the future. There are eight New Testament verse that say, “*Do not be anxious...*” Some older versions of the Bible translate them as “Give no thought for tomorrow...” When someone reads that in their Bible, they might think that means they should not plan, but that just isn’t right. That’s a bad translation.

Instead, it means we are to plan. The whole story of salvation and redemption is a plan that is being lived out and worked out by God Himself. In just the right time, God sent His Son to be born of a woman under the law, that He might redeem those under the law (Galatians 4:4). We know God is a planning God. It is good for us to plan. In fact, the Bible tells us in the book of James that we are to invite God into our planning.

Anxiety is not being concerned.

Anxiety doesn't rule out being concerned. It's good for us to be concerned. Fathers, today is your day. The reason we celebrate Father's Day is because you have much to be concerned about. You have to be concerned about your wife and your family. You have concerns regarding providing for them. All of these are good things. This means that you care about the people around you and you're concerned for their wellbeing.

However, concern can quickly become anxiety. You can be so worried about your job that you fly off the handle when something doesn't go right, or you can't sleep or eat because of your job. When this sort of anxiety comes, it's no longer simply being concerned. Jesus shows us the proper balance. On the cross, when He was about to die, He showed concerned for His mother. He looked down from the cross and said to her, "Behold your son," and to John, "Behold your mother." He was telling John to take care of His mother. It wasn't that He was anxious; He simply knew He would soon no longer be around.

Anxiety involves being conflicted.

Are you going to believe what God says or are you going to believe the way you view your circumstances? Are you vacillating between believing God or doubting His promises?

Anxiety involves being consumed.

Did you know that the root of the word "anxiety" in Latin literally means to choke or to be strangled? For many here, that can be what you're feeling when you're dealing with the issues in your life. Your anxieties are choking out your ability to live life with joy. In fact, in the Bible we read something about worry and anxiety 22 times, but never does it cast them in a positive light. Why? Because God loves us so much He doesn't want us to live in that state.

Step #2: Meet it face to face.

Now, we've talked about the physical, mental and emotional issues that can accompany anxiety. We also need to realize that anxiety affects us spiritually when we meet it face to face. Let's consider what anxiety does to us, based on what we see in our text.

Anxiety causes us to be unfaithful to our focus.

Jesus tells us to not be anxious because it makes us unfaithful to our focus. Jesus doesn't mince words. Look at verse 25, "Do not be anxious about your life..." It's not a suggestion; it's a command. Whenever God commands us to do something, it means we can do it. God never commands His people to do something outside their purview or strength. The command we're dealing with here is the command to not be anxious. But why? Notice the word at the beginning of verse 25: *"Therefore..."* We have to ask, "What is it there for?" Look back at verse 24. *"No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money."*

Therefore, in light of that, He commands us, *"...do not be anxious..."* Jesus is saying that just as we can vacillate between money being our god or God being our god, we can vacillate between anxiety or letting God be supreme in our lives. Some of us are living as if the problem we're anxious about is bigger than God Himself.

Jesus is telling us, "I don't want you to be anxious about your life." The word "life" is the most general, all-encompassing word for life. God doesn't want us to be anxious about anything. He doesn't want us to be anxious about our work, play, kids, spouse, the past or the future. It is all-encompassing.

What anxiety keeps us from is what we read in verse 33, *"...the kingdom of God..."* Anxiety will keep us from doing what God wants us to do. Anxiety takes our eyes off God and puts them on our problems.

Anxiety causes us to be ungrateful to our Father.

Jesus continues by giving us three examples. First, He talks about the birds. He says in verse 26, *"Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them."*

He continues in verse 27 to say essentially, "Don't worry about the future. You can't add a single hour to it by worrying." Then He goes on to talk about the fields in verses 28-30:

Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith?

Notice how many times in this passage Jesus mentions the Father. Anxiety tells God we're not buying what He says. We will believe our concerns are bigger than He is. This is where worship music can be incredibly helpful. This morning we sang a song that tells us about our Father: "Our God is a lion. He's the Lion of Judah. He's roaring with power. He's fighting our battles." That's your Father in heaven, brothers and sisters. This God Who is so powerful and strong has everything under His control. In fact, every knee will one day bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus is Lord. This is the Father Who is our Heavenly Father and He will fight our battles.

So anxiety comes and starts talking to you. You start buying what it says. Brothers and sisters, remember that the God Whom we serve is the God Who says, "*No weapon formed against you shall prosper*" (Isaiah 54:17 NKJV). He says we are "*more than conquerors*" in Christ Jesus and nothing "*can separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus*" (Romans 8:37).

When we begin to believe this, notice what happens. God starts getting bigger and bigger and bigger. As God gets bigger, your anxiety gets smaller and smaller and smaller. Who can stop the Lord Almighty? Who can stop the Lord Almighty? We sang it three times. Who can stop the Lord Almighty?

No anxiety, no concern, no care can stop our Lord Almighty, for our God is a lion. He's the Lion of Judah. Before we go and talk to our doctor, we have a Heavenly Father Who says, "I love you. I care for you. I'll protect you. I sent My Son to die for you. I'm sanctifying you. I'm guaranteeing your eternal salvation. You have hope in me." Don't focus on the problems of life. Start focusing on your Heavenly Father. When we allow anxiety to come, we become ungrateful to that Heavenly Father, thinking, "God, You can't handle this. You can't deal with this."

Anxiety causes us to be unbelieving when it comes to our faith.

In addition to being ungrateful, anxiety causes us to be unbelieving when it comes to our faith. Look at verse 32: "*For the Gentiles...*"—other translations may say the pagans or unbelievers— *... "seek after all these things..."*

Let me tell you something. There is one group of people who should be anxious—unbelievers. If you're an unbeliever here today, meaning you've never given your life to Jesus Christ, you should be altogether anxious. You should be filled with worry and dread. Why? Because you're entirely on your own. You have made a decision that you're going to live life apart from God. God is willing to fight your battles for you and be your Savior, but you've said, "No, I've got this covered. I'm going to take care of it." You should be filled with dread, because you're on your own with your money, you're on your own with your marriage, you're on your own with your kids and you're on your own with your job. In fact, you're on your own with your future and you have a lot to worry about.

But the child of God has nothing to worry about. We have a Savior Who died for us, Who loves us and cares for us. You say, "You're just repeating yourself." Well, it's because sometimes anxiety needs the sledge hammer of God's truth to break through, so we can be reminded of how truly great we have it. We need to recognize that anxiety causes us to stop believing that God is there.

One commentator put it this way: "Anxious thoughts take the believer out of the realm of believing the truth of God and into the realm of the unbeliever, to believe God is a liar." We start believing like the pagans do. We start believing God isn't strong enough, that He isn't able to address everything that concerns us today. So in times of difficulty, you and I have to draw close to God or we will drown in our anxiety and worry.

Step #3: Use God's weapons to prevent failure.

That leads us to one final step. We need to use God's weapons to prevent failure. I'm not going to tell you just to stop worrying and not do anything about it. In this world we'll have worries and anxieties. That's not the issue. You're not sinful or messed up because you have worries and anxieties. They're a part of life. They are temptations both for the unbeliever and for the believer. ? What we're going to do about them is the question. We will worry, so what are we to do when we worry

This involves declaring a set of priorities.

Look at verse 33: *"But seek first the kingdom of God..."* God says the best way out of an anxious heart is to be busy doing something. Anxiety gets us sitting and simmering in all our worries. God says, "I want you to be busy. I want you to be seeking My Kingdom."

So why doesn't God just say, "Seek Me"? Why does He tell us to seek His Kingdom? Because He wants to emphasize to us that the situation belongs to Him. Our life and all its troubles are under His control. He wants us to look beyond our anxieties and worries, instead looking to the God Who is sovereign over them.

We need to start focusing on Him and His righteousness, His goodness. We don't want to focus in on our situation. That's what the devil wants us to do. He wants us to focus on our problems. God wants us to focus on the solution which is to follow and honor Him.

This involves developing a strategic program.

Our priority is to seek God and His Kingdom first. So what is the program we now need to develop? Verse 34 (NIV says, *"Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own."*

One commentary put it this way: "Anxiety causes us to dwell on things. Don't dwell on yesterday's mess; don't dwell on today's success; don't dwell on tomorrow's stress." But there's still worry, so what do we do after we've stopped dwelling and have focused on God and His Word?

We've got to go beyond what Jesus says here and go to the Apostle Paul in Philippians 4:6. Here are six words for you to remember: "Worry about nothing; pray about everything." If you still have anxiety after all this is done, God says in Philippians 4:6 (NIV), *"Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God."*

If you still have anxiety, God says, "All right. I love you. I want you to be close to Me. I want you to give Me your concerns, your anxieties." The Apostle Peter says, *"Casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you"* (1 Peter 5:7). We need to take whatever anxiety is still in our lives and throw it on to God in prayer.

So the first thing we should do, whenever an anxious thought comes up, is to go to God in prayer. "God, I'm scared. God, I'm worried. God, I'm anxious." Whatever it is—whether it involves work, money, family, the kids on social media or that you don't think you amount to anything—whatever you're anxious about, you need to give it to God.

When we give our anxious thoughts to God, Philippians 4:7 (NIV) tells us, *"And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."* Notice that Paul does not give us any caveats or disclaimers here. When we present our requests to God, the peace of God that transcends all understand will guard our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

What two areas does anxiety affect the most? It's our heart and our mind. God says, "Give Me those cares, then I will guard your heart and mind from the anxious things that are driving you to despair." Brothers and sisters, God loves you too much for you to live in your anxiety. Give it to Him. Run to Him and watch Him give you everything you need to find the peace, joy and hope He longs for you to have.