

THE BATTLE AGAINST ANXIOUS THOUGHTS

TALK
IT OVER

DATE: SUNDAY, 22ND OF AUGUST 2021 | WINNING THE WAR IN THE MIND SERIES: PART 2

PHILIPPIANS 4:6,7

Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

NOTES FOR LEADERS:

This Sunday, Steve will be tackling the question, "Should Christians be vaccinated or not?" Please [share the link](#) to our YouTube channel with anyone who may be interested in this topic.

START TALKING

1. Which part of Sunday's message was most impactful for you and why?
2. Did you have any worries as a kid that seem silly now? If so, what were they?

START THINKING

1. How often would you say you experience worry? What is your way of coping with anxious thoughts?
2. On Sunday, Dusty shared that if we can't change a situation, we should change our perspective. How do you think we can go about changing our perspective and seeing things from God's point of view? Do you have an example?
3. Read Philippians 4:6,7. What tools does the Bible give us to win the war against anxious thoughts?

START SHARING

1. Share about a time when you decided to trust God instead of worrying. What prompted that decision? What kind of impact did it have on you?
2. What's something you're worried about at this time? As a group, we would love to pray for you.

START PRAYING

Father, thank You for who You are. Thank You that no matter what struggles we're facing, we can trust You to be with us, support us, and work all things together for our good. Help us set aside our worries and fears and turn to You instead. In Jesus' name, amen.

START DOING

This week, set aside 10 minutes each day for focused prayer. At the end of the week, reflect on how your thought life has been affected.

SUMMARY

OF SUNDAY'S MESSAGE

On Sunday, we continued with our series, Winning the War in the Mind. Two weeks ago, Jax spoke about the battle of comparison. This week, Dusty tackled the battle of anxious thoughts - not medically diagnosed anxiety, but thoughts of worry. We all worry about something at some point in time.

We need to expect that at some point, we'll come under attack from the enemy. Steven Furtick very aptly said: "The birthmark of a believer is a bulls-eye". If we expect things to happen, we can be better prepared when we come under attack! In 2 Peter 5:6-9, we read: *Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time. Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you. **Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.** Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that the family of believers throughout the world is undergoing the same kind of sufferings.*

We shouldn't give undue credit to the enemy, but if the devil can get us to believe a lie, we can end up living in bondage for the rest of our lives. There is a war raging in our minds, and anxiety is one of the battles we'll face.

John Maxwell said: "Our thoughts control our emotions, our emotions control our actions. if you can change your thinking, you can change your life!" In Romans 12:2, Paul urges us to be transformed by the renewing of our minds.

When we are saved, we move from a worldly kingdom to a spiritual Kingdom under God's rulership. The worldly kingdom has a system of thoughts, and God's Kingdom has a very different system of thought. The worldly kingdom keeps us in bondage; God's Kingdom brings us freedom. In the worldly kingdom we never seem to have enough of anything, we always want to be in control... it's a self-centred kingdom! For us to be transformed, we need to learn how to think in God's Kingdom and not a worldly system!

If you look at the word ANX"ITY, the middle letter is "I"... and that's usually what worry is all about - it's usually something that's going on around us or affects us directly. God wants to shift our focus from a place "I" to on Him. Kingdom thinking shifts that and puts the focus on God, thus allowing us to not worry because it is no longer our problem.

A.J. Cronin, an author-physician, did a study on all his patients and found an interesting pattern on worrying - the general percentage of things we worry about were as follows:

- 40% things that never happen
- 30 % things in the past that can't be changed
- 12% health issues
- 10% general petty problems
- 8% real, legitimate troubles

Worrying has a real negative effect on our health - it's known to cause ulcers, heart disease, fatigue, headaches, muscle aches, the development of gastrointestinal disorders, etc.

So how do we win the battle against anxious thoughts?

Jesus speaks directly into this in Matthew 6:25-34: *"Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body,*

what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes? Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life?

"And why do you worry about clothes? See how the flowers of the field grow. They do not labour or spin. Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendour was dressed like one of these. If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith? So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

1. Seek God's heart, not His hand

History is a beautiful teacher... The Israelites kept seeking the hand of God and not His heart. When they had a slavery problem, God delivered them. When they faced the Red Sea problem, God parted the sea so they could walk through it. When they had a food problem, God provided manna from heaven. When they had a thirst problem, God provided water from a rock... and yet they still worried and doubted! In every situation, they sought the hand of God, which was meant to reveal the heart of God. He wanted His people to understand who He was, not just what He could do for them.

If we want to overcome anxious thoughts, we need to seek the heart of God, not just His hand. This means we need to seek a relationship with Him. When we seek His heart, it's daily; when we seek His hand, it's situational.

If we look at the life of Paul (a man who sought the heart of God), we see that even through all his persecution and times of trouble, he stills says to live is Christ and to die is gain. In times of hardship, he rejoiced - he lived free because his relationship with God gave him ultimate security.

In Matthew 6, Jesus teaches us that relationship with God is far more important than provision from Him: *For the pagans run after all these things, and **your heavenly Father knows that you need them.** But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. **Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself.** (vs 32-34)*

Our devotional life is not a check box to being in "right standing" with God; it is about building and growing the most important relationship in our lives. When we're in an intimate relationship with Him, it transforms us and renews us. It changes our perspective on life here on earth. Worry is like a 'loose cannon' on the inside of us. Victor Hugo, the author of Les Miserables, wrote a short story called "93." In the midst of this story, a ship at sea is caught in a terrible storm. The boat rocks to and fro, buffeted by the waves when suddenly the crew hears a terrible crashing sound below deck. They know what it is - a cannon they are carrying has broken loose and is smashing into the side of the ship. Two brave sailors, at the risk of their lives, manage to go below and fasten it again, for they know that the heavy cannon on the inside of their ship is more dangerous

to them than the storm raging on the outside of the vessel. So it is with people. Problems within are often much more destructive to us than the problems around us.

God can provide the things we need in life, but there are eternal things that we need a relationship with God to fulfil us internally.

2. If you can't change the situation, change your perspective.

Worry is a choice. That's why Jesus commands us, do not worry. Jesus teaches us in Matthew 6 to have a broader perspective by moving us away from focusing on ourselves to focusing on others and on Him... He teaches about giving to the needy (focus on others), prayer and fasting (focus on God), treasures in heaven (focus on our values). And then He lands it by saying, "therefore (for that reason) do not worry!"

So how do we change our perspective?

The answer lies in scripture: *Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. **Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.***

Finally, brothers and sisters, **whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.** Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you. Philippians 4:4-9.

*Therefore, holy brothers and sisters, who share in the heavenly calling, **fix your thoughts on Jesus, whom we acknowledge as our apostle and high priest.** Hebrews 3:1.*

These scriptures teach that we have control over what we think. And if we can control what we think, we can control how we feel and how we behave.

Two simple ways to win the battle against anxious thoughts?

- We fix our thoughts on Jesus. But we can't fix our thoughts on someone we don't know, so we need to have a relationship with God.
- Pray - which requires intimacy with Jesus.