

# Moments *for* You

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Theme: Worry/Anxiety



## IS ANXIETY A SIN?

A family had put their Grandma on her first plane flight, but she hadn't been very confident about the experience of leaving the ground on this contraption. When they met her at the airport on her return, one of the family members kidded her by asking, "Well, did the plane hold you up okay?" She grudgingly replied, "Well, yes," and then quickly added, "But I never did put my full weight down on it!"

Many Christians are like that Grandma. The truth is, they're being sustained completely by God, but they're afraid to put their full weight down on Him. As a result, they're plagued by anxiety and aren't able to enjoy the flight.

Few of us are strangers to anxiety. It creeps in over big and little things, gnawing away at our insides. Arthur Roche graphically described anxiety as "a thin stream of fear trickling through the mind. If encouraged, it cuts a channel into which all other thoughts are drained."

We often feel anxious about our finances, our health, or our children. Sometimes we can't identify any specific reason for our anxiety, but it's there, nagging away at our insides. If we don't learn to deal with it properly, it can cause all sorts of health problems, which in turn feed our anxiety!

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus made it clear that anxiety stems from a lack of faith and from a wrong focus on the things of this world instead of on the kingdom of God (Matthew 6:25-34). If we excuse our anxieties by saying, "Well, it's only human," or, "Anybody would feel anxious in

this situation," we will not overcome it because we are not confronting the root cause of it, namely, our sin of not believing God and of not seeking first His kingdom and righteousness.

To those who follow Him, Jesus promised, "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid" (John 14:27). If a non-Christian sees you as a believer weighed down with anxiety and care, he isn't going to be asking how he can have what you have! Anxiety and joy are mutually exclusive. So for the sake of our testimony of Jesus Christ, it is imperative that we learn to experience the peace of God, especially in the face of trials.

There are many people who come to Christ because they are anxious and they want the peace He offers. But if they do not confront the fact that they are living to please themselves rather than God, they will simply settle into a self-centered life where they "use God" for their own peace and comfort. Jesus said, "Whoever will save his life shall lose it; but whoever shall lose his life for My sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it" (Mark 8:35). The peace Christ offers is the by-product of enthroning Christ as Lord and living for His kingdom.

Christians should care deeply about people and their problems and should work hard to resolve problems. As members of the same body, we are to have mutual concern for one another (1 Corinthians 12:25). Paul mentions the concern that he bears daily for all the churches (2 Corinthians 11:28). He tells the Philippian

that Timothy is genuinely concerned for their welfare (Philippians 2:20). In each of these verses, the word *concern* is the same as the Greek word for *anxious*, but clearly it is not sinful anxiety but proper concern.

But proper concern turns to sinful anxiety when we lack faith in God's role as the Sovereign Lord and provider—when we put self at the center instead of God's kingdom and righteousness. So the first step in dealing with anxiety is to examine whether it is due to lack of faith or to a wrong focus on self. Confess the sin to God and yield to Him. —Steven J. Cole

*Anxiety is the natural result when our hopes are centered in anything short of God and His will for us.*  
—Billy Graham

## ANXIOUS FOR SALVATION

*“What must I do to be saved?” (Acts 16:30).*

What an awful condition it is to be unsaved! But many people are really ignorant of the terrible danger they are in. They do not perceive the brittle thread by which their lives are suspended—they are not aware that they live on the very threshold of eternity. They do not realize that they are distant from God, rebellious against God, guilty before God. Therefore they are not anxious for salvation.

With regard to the Philippian jailer in Acts 16, we know little about his life. It is very likely that he had heard something of Paul's ways, but all that he heard and saw of the servants of the Lord Jesus was insufficient to awaken his mind and his conscience. Therefore, other means must be used to alarm his unresponsive soul.

In the darkness and stillness of the night, “suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations

of the prison were shaken ... and every one's bands were loosed” (Acts 16:26). When the jailer saw the prison doors open, supposing the prisoners had all fled, he drew his sword and would have killed himself. “Paul cried with a loud voice, saying, Do thyself no harm: for we are all here.”

The jailer's conscience was awakened. The earthquake might have ended his life and sent him to give account of himself to God. He now realizes that he is an unsaved man, and that if he were to die, he must go where hope and mercy can never come. He is assured that Paul and Silas have the peace and joy to which he is a stranger. He springs at once into the inner prison and cries out, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?”

He was anxious for salvation—not religious ceremonies, but salvation. What must I do to be *saved*? The reply was, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.” This was the gospel that Paul and Silas preached, and it was an echo of their Master's voice. When Jesus was asked, “What shall we do, that we might work the works of God? Jesus answered ... This is the work of God, that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent” (John 6:28-29).

The jailer thought, like many others, that salvation is received by *works* (“what must I *do*?”). But Paul and Silas presented the Lord Jesus Christ to him as the object of *faith*. His finished work, and God's acceptance of it, is the ground of salvation and the warrant for perfect peace. “Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” (Romans 5:1).

“God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8). Faith reads the lessons of re-

deeming love in the death of the Son of God upon the cross, and rests in His finished work. —H. H. Snell

## PRAY ABOUT IT

*“Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:6-7).*

### THE SIN OF WORRY

Did you ever find yourself worrying? Do you know that Scripture calls worry a sin? When you realized that you were worrying, did you go to God and confess it as a sin? Worry is just as much a sin as adultery, or murder, or theft. Yet how often we as believers treat it lightly when we find our stomachs tied in knots because we have worried ourselves into a nervous frenzy.

The apostle Paul was just as much concerned about the sin of worry as he was about any other sin that pursues God’s children. He began his instruction on the subject with a command: “Be careful for nothing.” The word translated “be careful” has in it the idea of an anxious, distressing care. It is the kind of worry that puts a crease in our brows. It is the kind of care that makes us irritable and hard to get along with. The command is given, “Do not under any circumstance worry about anything.”

### THE SOLUTION TO WORRY

After the apostle gives us the command, he shows us the solution. “But [instead of worry] in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.” Making our requests known to God is the same as committing them to the Lord or letting our burden roll off our shoulders

into the hands of God. The solution to worry is trust. Faith believes God is capable of bearing what we cannot, and counts Him faithful to bear it if we give Him the opportunity.

When Paul exhorts the child of God to use prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, he is bringing several ideas together. The word translated “prayer” has to do with presenting our desires or wishes to God, with a conscious dependence upon Him to fulfill His responsibility toward us.

Paul next says that we should offer “supplication.” Supplication concerns a specific request for special needs. Paul is saying that to be relieved of worry we ought to move in our praying from the general to the specific. How often we pray, “God, bless me today. Bless my loved ones,” and that is as specific as we ever get. The antidote to worry is to recognize a specific need, put yourself in a place of dependence upon God, and expect Him to do something about that very thing.

Paul also says that we should offer “thanksgiving.” Thanksgiving looks back to previous answers to prayer and demonstrations of God’s goodness, giving thanks because He has worked in similar situations before. Confidence for the future is based on what God has done in the past.

### GOD’S SUBSTITUTE TO WORRY

And now we have a promise: “And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds.” It is not natural, it is not understandable that a child of God can live with the peace of God in his heart in the midst of today’s many problems. But it is true. The apostle gives the promise that, when we cast everything that would cause us concern into the hands of God, the

peace of God shall stand guard duty over our hearts and minds.

What the apostle is describing here is not so much delivering the mind *after* it has become obsessed with worry. Rather, he is promising that the mind will be *kept* from worry, because that which normally would cause concern is immediately transferred to the shoulder of One who is able to bear it for us.

We can live without worry, and without fear, and without anxiety, and without nervous exhaustion, and without frustration—but not without God’s help. We must let our worries roll off on God, and He will deliver us from worry.

—From *The Joy of Living* by Dwight J. Pentecost.

*To act out the principle of turning prayers over to God, we took a paper bag, wrote “God” on it, and taped it up high on the back of our kitchen door. As I prayed, I would write down each concern on a piece of paper. Then those pieces of paper would go in the bag. The rule was that if you start worrying about a matter of prayer that you’ve turned over to God, you have to climb up on a chair and fish it out of the bag. I don’t want to admit how much time I spent sifting through those scraps of paper.*

—David Mackenzie

## FOCUS ON GOD

*“When he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me” (Matthew 14:30).*

In this passage, we find the disciples in a boat as Jesus walked toward them on the water. When Peter began to walk toward Jesus on the water, he was fine until his attention was drawn away from Jesus to the storm. Then

he became afraid and started to sink.

If Peter had kept his attention upon Christ (the source of his strength and the solution to his problem), he would have been all right. But when he focused upon the wind and the waves (the problem and the negative aspect of his circumstances), he became overwhelmed by the problem, even though he could have made it safely to Jesus.

Fear and worry are like that. We focus so hard on the problem that we take our eyes off the solution and thus create more difficulties for ourselves. We can be sustained in the midst of any difficulty by focusing our attention on the Lord and relying upon Him instead of upon ourselves: “Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is.... The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?” (Jeremiah 17:7,9).

Peter must have learned from his experience of walking on the water, because he later wrote: “Casting all your care upon Him; for He careth for you” (1 Peter 5:7). Cast means “to give up” or “to unload.” We are to unload on God our tendency to worry, so that when problems arise, we will not worry about them. We can cast our worry on God with confidence, because He cares for us. He knows our limits, and “a bruised reed shall He not break” (Isaiah 42:3).

Isaiah rejoiced to the Lord, “Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee” (Isaiah 26:3). Whatever you choose to think about will either produce or dismiss feelings of anxiety and worry. God has made the provision, but you must take the action. Center your thoughts on God, not on worry.

—Condensed from *Overcoming Fear and Worry* by Norman H. Wright.

## NOT MY WORRY

*“Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and He shall sustain thee” (Psalm 55:22).*

A man worried constantly about everything. Then one day his friends heard him whistling happily and looking noticeably relaxed. “What happened?” they asked him in astonishment.

He said, “I’m paying a man to do my worrying for me.” “How much do you pay him?” they asked. “Two thousand dollars a week,” he replied. “Wow! How can you afford that?” “I can’t,” he said, “but that’s his worry.”

While this humorous way to handle stress doesn’t work in real life, as God’s children we can turn our worries over to Someone who has everything perfectly under control even—especially—when we feel it is not.

The prophet Isaiah reminds us that God brings out the stars and calls them all by name (Isaiah 40:25-26). Because of His great power and mighty strength, not one of them is missing. And just as God knows the stars by name, He knows us individually and personally. We are each under His watchful care.

If we are inclined to worry, we can turn that worry over to the Lord. He is never too weary or too tired to pay attention to us. He has all wisdom and all power, and He loves to use it on our behalf. The Holy One who directs the stars has His loving arms around us.

—*Our Daily Bread*

***The mind cannot at the same time be full of God and full of fear.***

—*Max Lucado*

***The beginning of anxiety is the end of faith, and the beginning of true faith is the end of anxiety.***

—*George Mueller*

## ANXIETY’S ANTIDOTES

Some people find jigsaw puzzles relaxing, others find them maddening, but most of us follow a similar strategy for solving them. We complete the border first. Then we collect pieces with similar colors and patterns, gradually assembling them until the picture comes together. One thing we don’t do is throw away the box! Without the big picture of how the pieces relate to each another, solving the puzzle becomes incredibly more difficult.

But when it comes to reading the Bible, we sometimes focus on one piece—a single verse or passage—without considering the big picture. We take statements, promises, and commands out of their proper context, and then wonder why we’re confused or our lives aren’t coming together as we had expected.

In the New Testament, we find three very-familiar passages on the subject of worry. If you’ve read these Scriptures countless times—even memorized them and claimed them as your own—yet struggle to apply them effectively, perhaps the solution can be found in the context. Let us look at some antidotes to worry found hiding in plain view.

### SINGLE-MINDEDNESS

We’re familiar with Jesus’ teaching in the Sermon on the Mount: “Therefore I say unto you, Take no [anxious] thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on” (Matthew 6:25). If you’re having trouble applying these principles, take a look at the first word. “Therefore” points us back to the previous verse and reveals the root of our struggle. “No man can serve two masters ... ye cannot serve God and

mammon [money]" (Matthew 6:24).

If we are going to be able to trust God for our daily physical needs, we must be single-mindedly serving His interests. "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matthew 6:33). As we begin chasing after material wealth and earthly ambitions, our focus becomes divided and worry flourishes.

### JOY AND GENTLENESS

Paul tells us to "Be careful [anxious] for nothing" (Philippians 4:6), and we usually follow on to the next verse to find the prescribed method for achieving peace of mind through prayer. But what if you've taken this remedy to heart, praying about your anxieties, and the peace of God remains elusive?

Look at the previous verses: Paul instructs us to "rejoice in the Lord always" and "let your moderation [gentleness] be known unto all men" (Philippians 4:4-5). Are joy and gentleness defining characteristics of your life? If these two attributes of a Spirit-filled believer are missing, don't be surprised if peace is also not present (see Galatians 5:22-23).

### HUMILITY

"Casting all your care upon Him; for He careth for you" (1 Peter 5:7). How many of us have attempted to accept this lovely invitation but found that something was missing? If you open your Bible, you'll see what's missing—the rest of the sentence! We have to go back to the previous verse to complete the instruction: "Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God ..." (1 Peter 5:6).

When life isn't going according to (my) plan, do I react with worry or humility? When we worry, we're telling God that He's not big enough—

or caring enough—to deal with our difficulties. But humility allows God to stay on the throne, and trusts that He will "exalt you in due time" (1 Peter 5:6).

Are you infected with worry and anxiety? Ask God for help in applying these antidotes! —T. Don Johnson

*Anxiety never strengthens you for tomorrow: it only weakens you for today.* —John Blanchard

## GOD'S CONCERNS

When it comes to worry, followers of Jesus stand out in two ways: what they are concerned about and what they do with their fears. Christians have exactly the same worries as everyone else, but as they get to know God better, they realize that they can trust all their concerns to Him. If all their concerns are being handled by God, they are freed up to focus on God's concerns. What is God concerned about? His concern is to see more and more people trusting Jesus and coming back into a relationship with Him.

And this should be our first concern too. But it can't be if we are distracted by our worries. This doesn't mean our everyday challenges aren't valid or serious. They are, and God knows this. But God can do more for us than we can do on our own. He loves us and will provide what we need. If we can start to give our worries to Him, we will begin to see how dependable He is. And as we grow in confidence, seeing that our lives are in His hands, we will be able to share our confidence with others. In this way we will join God in His concern for the many people who still don't know Him.

—From *What Are You Worried About?* Discovery Series, Our Daily Bread Ministries.

## SET YOUR ANCHOR

*Jesus said, “Whosoever heareth these sayings of Mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock. And every one that heareth these sayings of Mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it” (Matthew 7:24-27).*

The apostle Paul uses a similar analogy when he argues for Christians to anchor to spiritual maturity. When we are anchored to God, Paul says we will “be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind” (Ephesians 4:14).

The final answer to anxiety, then, is to firmly anchor your faith in the strong and mighty bedrock of God and His promises. Anxiety has kept you tethered to the sandy shores of worry, fear, doubt, and dread. When the storms of life hit, when the streams of circumstance rise, even a little, and when the winds of doubt buffet your mind, you crash and give in to panic. Jesus calls this foolishness.

Anxiety does not like to be called foolish. Anxiety likes to be called prudent and watchful and alert. Anxiety puffs itself up and claims that it is the opposite of foolishness, that its concerns are wise. Yet Jesus calls this type of anxious life foolish.

The time has come to stop doubting God, as your anxieties demand. Saying no to anxieties can be a scary activity. Make no mistake; your anxieties will fight hard to retain control.

As you begin to surrender your trust more and more to God and His promises, the less and less your anxieties will be happy. They will scream and wail and throw a temper tantrum for attention.

You may be a Christian who is allowing your anxieties to speak for God, which is never a wise thing. Allow God to speak for Himself. Here are just a few of my favorite examples:

- He loves you (Deuteronomy 23:5).
- He does not want you to live in fear (Psalm 27:1).
- He knows who you are and still loves you (Psalm 139:1).
- He wants you to be with Him always (John 3:16).
- Nothing can snatch you from His hand (John 10:28-29).
- His love for you will never fail (1 Corinthians 13:8).
- He says you are His precious child (1 John 3:1).

These are just a very small sample of God’s thoughts about you and His promises. There are so many more! As a baby step, find and memorize two or three promises that give you a sense of security and peace. Allow God’s voice—instead of the voice of anxiety—to fill your heart and mind. When you listen to God’s voice, Paul says God will “keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:7). God will guard your heart and mind. There is no stronger protection.

—From *Seven Answers for Anxiety* by Gregory L. Jantz.

***Sometimes we find ourselves saying that we are happy under the circumstances, but as Christians we have no right to be under our circumstances. We should be on top of them reigning over them with Christ.*** —Herbert Lockyer