

# HELP! I SUFFER FROM ANXIETY!

By Utami Rostoll

The Bible is filled with scriptures stating that we should not worry. There is Philippians 4:6 “Be anxious for nothing...”, Matthew 6:25 “...do not worry about your life...” and Matthew 6:34 “Do not worry about tomorrow...” But how do we simply stop worrying when there seems to be so much to worry about?

Anxiety can be described as a feeling of uneasiness, worry, apprehension or dread together with a heightened physical arousal. It can either be caused by a known fear, or it can be a kind of “free-floating” anxiety which means that the cause is uncertain.



## WHAT ANXIETY DOES TO YOU

Anxiety causes various negative effects not only on a person's body and mind, but also on a person's spiritual state. Physical effects of anxiety include various stomach problems like ulcers and discomfort, it can cause back pain, headaches, shortness of breath, inability to sleep which leads to increased fatigue, as well as loss of appetite.

Psychologically anxiety may cause you to be less productive, forgetful, irritable and impatient. It may also stifle your creativity and reduce your productivity. Sadly a constant state of anxiety may also harm your relationships with loved ones.

Often times people riddled with worry turn away from God rather than to Him.

When we look at all of these negative effects anxiety has on us, it is no wonder that God tells us to stop worrying. But the questions still remains – how do we stop worrying?

## SOME PRACTICAL TIPS

- **Relax:** When you are stressed and anxious, consciously relaxing makes a big difference. Stop what you are doing and breathe deeply. Focus on your body and make a deliberate effort to relax all of your muscles. Listening to soothing music or retiring for a quick break to a quiet spot can also do wonders.
- **Identify the source of your anxiety:** Think about the following things: In what situations are you anxious? When does the anxiety seem worst? When are you not anxious? Once you have identified the cause, you can work towards overcoming these feelings of excessive worry.
- **Make some changes:** Consider changing your lifestyle, certain relationships, or even your career if it seems that the cause of your worry is linked to one of these.
- **Face your fears:** It is much more beneficial to you to face and try to overcome your anxiety, than by wallowing in your worries. It might be a great challenge but set goals to help you take the steps to overcome your anxiety. Perhaps you need to develop certain skills like communication skills or assertiveness. Maybe you need to re-establish some broken relationships. Whatever it is that you need to do, view it as an act of courage to step out and take action, even if you are scared.

## WHEN TO SEEK PROFESSIONAL HELP

If your worry and anxiety becomes so excessive that it begins to disrupt your life as you know it, for example if you start missing obligations like work, exams or important social events because of anxiety, it might be time to consult with a registered counsellor or psychologist. Sometimes anxiety is so severe that it may cause panic attacks. Professional help will assist you in overcoming these issues so that you can live a normal, healthy life.



## THE BIBLICAL VIEW

God created emotions like anxiety to warn us of danger, and the Bible never suggests that we should ignore danger or simply do nothing. It is impossible to simply stop worrying by a mere act of will, but that is why the Bible gives us direct guidelines to help us overcome our anxieties:

- **Rejoice!** This is a command from Phil 4:4 and we have many reasons to rejoice! Jesus promised He would never leave us, He would give us peace and His holy Spirit as comforter. And the best thing is that He has saved us and that we will spend eternity with Him!
- **Pray:** Phil 4:6 gives instructions about prayer in times of anxiety. Through thanksgiving and telling God what we need, we will obtain peace.
- **Take your thoughts captive:** In 2 Corinthians 10:5 we read that we should bring every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ, and Philippians 4:8 instructs us to meditate on all things true, noble, lovely and of good report. This does not mean that we have to be in denial about our problems, but that our focus should be on the positive.
- **Take action!** In Phil 4:9 Paul instructs the Christians to do the things they learned, received, heard and saw him do. It is not enough to simply know what the Bible says, it should be put into practice!

Anxiety may be a sign that we are not trusting God for His provision and protection. It may also mean that we are carrying our own burdens and trying to handle our problems on our own. By trusting our Father and His promises we can however obtain that wonderful peace that surpasses all understanding. 🙏

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