



anxiety



2023
Grace Fellowship Church





Thank you for taking the time to attend this year's Counseling & Discipleship Training. We recognize the sacrifice it takes to be able to participate in a conference like this and we're grateful for the opportunity to host and serve you.

2 Corinthians 1:3-4 tells us, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God." We have received much grace, and it is our joy to pass on what we have been freely given!

Our prayer is that your walk with the Lord is strengthened and challenged, equipping you to be able to walk with others in grace and truth—to the praise of His glory!

If you have questions or need some assistance, look for people in shirts that say "VOLUNTEER." They are servant-leaders of GFC and would be happy to assist you in any capacity.



Dr. Mark Shaw
Director of Counseling
Grace Fellowship Church

Reminders

- WiFi: **GracePublic**
- **Lunch on Saturday is not provided**, but if you need recommendations, check out the Saturday Lunch Options page of your notes.
- Online notes and other conference info will be updated at: graceky.org/cdt
- **We will be recording the sessions.** When they are ready, we will email a link to the video recordings of the track you registered for.

Resource Center Hours

Friday: 4:00PM-8:45PM / Saturday: 7:30AM-5:00PM

Saturday Lunch Options



Blind Squirrel

8537 U.S. Hwy 42, Suite 6, Florence, KY – 1.6 miles



Valle Escondido (Mexican)

8863 US 42, Union, KY – 2.0 miles



Boomtown Biscuits (Biscuit-based meals)

9039 US 42, Union, KY – 2.3 miles



Panera Bread (Bakery/Soup & Sandwiches)

9085 US 42, Union, KY – 2.6 miles



Grandma's Pizza

8449 US 42, Florence, KY 41042 – 1.6 miles



Mai Thai (Thai)

7710 US 42, Florence, KY – 3.0 miles



The Farmstead Market & Café

9914 Old Union Rd, Union, KY – 2.9 miles

Advanced Track

1	<i>Schedule</i>
3	<i>For the Sake of Grace and the Gospel</i>
9	<i>Safe in the Storm: Session 1</i>
13	<i>Behold Your God: Reframing What We Worry About</i>
19	<i>Helping Counselees Choose 'Thanks' Over 'Angst'</i>
29	<i>How Does Godly Concern Turn Into Sinful Worry</i>
37	<i>Safe in the Storm: Session 2</i>
43	<i>Safe in the Storm: Session 3</i>
49	<i>A Closer Look at Anxiety</i>
55	<i>Safe in the Storm: Session 4</i>
61	<i>Prov. 8 and the Voices Surrounding Anxiety</i>

Friday Schedule

Sep 15, 2023

5:00PM-6:05PM
KEVIN CARSON

For the Sake of Grace and the Gospel

6:05PM-6:20PM

BREAK

6:20PM-7:20PM
PHIL MOSER

Safe in the Storm: Session 1

7:20PM-7:35PM

BREAK

7:35PM-8:35PM
BRAD BIGNEY

Behold Your God: Reframing What We Worry About

8:35PM-8:45PM

BREAK

8:45PM-9:45PM
PETER LARUFFA

Helping Counselees Choose 'Thanks' Over 'Angst'

Saturday Schedule

Sep 16, 2023

8:00AM-9:05AM BRAD BIGNEY	How Does Godly Concern Turn Into Sinful Worry?
9:05AM-9:25AM	BREAK
9:25AM-10:25AM PHIL MOSER	Safe in the Storm: Session 2
10:25AM-10:45AM	BREAK
10:45AM-11:45AM PHIL MOSER	Safe in the Storm: Session 3
11:45AM-1:00PM	LUNCH (on your own)
1:00PM-2:00PM BRAD BIGNEY	A Closer Look at Anxiety
2:00PM-2:20PM	BREAK
2:20PM-3:20PM PHIL MOSER	Safe in the Storm: Session 4
3:20PM-3:35PM	BREAK
3:35PM-4:35PM KEVIN CARSON	Prov. 8 and the Voices Surrounding Anxiety

For the Sake of Grace and the Gospel

Kevin Carson / Sunrise Baptist Church

Introduction:

- The _____ for anxiety
- What does the Bible teach about circumstances generally?
- What motivates you to desire to live without anxiety?
- What should motivate you to handle pressure-filled circumstances well?

Background to 1 Pet. and the backdrop of the conference:

- The purpose of the book: Standing firm in _____ (5:12)
- How does a believer stand firm in grace?
 1. Understanding and embracing _____ grace (1:3–2:10)
 2. Understanding and embracing _____ grace (2:11–4:11)
 3. Understanding and embracing _____ grace (4:12–5:11)
- In each of these three sections, we learn a key _____ for handling circumstances in a way that honors God.

1. Pressure-filled circumstances provide the opportunity to demonstrate the _____ of our faith (1 Pet. 1:3–12).

A. Praise to God as the one who gives _____ birth! (v. 3)

B. Why would we praise God for this new birth? (vv. 3–5)

What is God's _____ in the new birth?

- Unto a _____ hope
- To an _____
- For _____

C. _____ in this! (vv. 6–9)

- In your new birth!
 - Although you have had to _____ grief
 - Although you have _____ seen Jesus, yet you love Him
 - Although you do not see Jesus now, yet you _____ in Him
- In your _____ salvation!

D. Concerning our salvation, the prophets inquired and searched diligently (vv. 10–12).

2. Evangelism – it is not just what you say, it includes how you _____ around others (1 Pet. 2:11–12).

In this paragraph, Peter begins a new section related to how we live in a hostile world as followers of Christ. He is urging us based upon our relationship with Christ to embrace _____ grace as we live day-by-day.

A. Peter addresses us “I beg you... as sojourners and pilgrims” (v. 11)

B. What are we to do?

- Negatively: abstain from fleshly _____
- Positively: have your conduct _____ among the Gentiles
 - Your relationship with Christ should _____ how you live...

- ...especially among the _____!
- For what purpose?
 - In case they _____ you of wrongdoing...
 - That they may _____ your good works and glorify God on the Day of Judgment.

C. How does Peter see this playing out in daily living? Where are some key examples where this kind of living is evident?

- In our response to government and people in general (2:13–17)
- In our response in our workplace (2:18–25)
- In our response in our homes (3:1–7)
- In our response in everyday living (3:8–12)
- In our response to unjust suffering – as Christ (3:13–22)
- In our response to our own flesh (4:1–6)
- In our response to the people of God (4:7–11)

D. Here's the bottom line: evangelism is not just about what you say and "sharing the gospel" with your lips, it is also about how you live and "living the gospel" with your lifestyle.

The question: are your words and your lifestyle _____ with each other?

For the sake of this conference and session, how does anxiety reflect this?

3. Peter's Exhortation to the _____ (1 Pet. 5:5–11).

- A. _____ to the elders (v. 5)
- Clothe yourself with _____

- Why? Because God _____ the proud but gives _____ to the humble.

B. _____ yourselves (v. 6)

Why? That He may exalt you.

C. Throw your _____ on God (v. 7)

Why? Because God cares for you.

D. Be _____ and on alert (v. 9)

Why? Because of your adversary the _____

As a roaring lion

Walks about seeking whom he may devour

Take a _____ against the devil

E. _____ God to Make Things Right (vv. 10–11).

The God of _____ grace

God's _____

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

All _____ to God

Implications for this Conference and Your Counselors

1. We must _____ correctly about our pressured circumstances as opportunities to demonstrate the genuineness of our faith.
2. When we demonstrate the genuineness of our faith, we demonstrate the reality of the grace in which we _____.
 - Some people will be in _____ because of the way we handle our pressure-filled circumstances.
 - Our goal is to _____ the sustaining grace of God in our tough circumstances.
3. As we go through these circumstances, we can _____ God that He will fulfill His promise to perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle us for His glory.
4. How does anxiety affect each of these implications?
5. Consider these questions with your counselors:
 - What would your neighbor say about you?
 - What would your coworker say about you?
 - What would someone who “knows” you through social media say about you?
 - What would an unbelieving family member say about you?
 - Are you living your life that points people by your very lifestyle to Jesus Christ?
 - Will there be anyone in Heaven on the Day of Judgment who can say, “It was because of you and the way that you responded to life that I am here”?
6. Do you recognize how these three sections and this book provides you the motivation to both learn this weekend about anxiety and seek to live in light of the truth of the grace in which we stand?

Safe in the Storm: Biblical Strategies for Overcoming Anxiety

Session 1

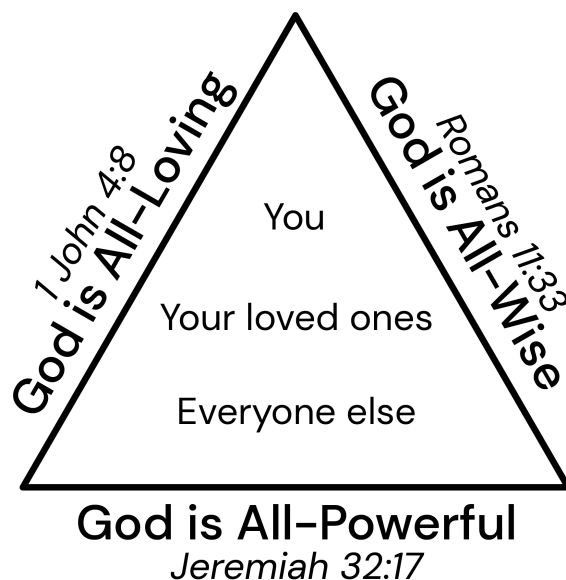
Phil Moser / Biblical Strategies

The First Principle: Belief — *Believe the Word, not your feelings.*

1 Pet. 5:6–8 “Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, ⁷ casting all your anxieties on Him, because He cares for you. ⁸ Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.”

(1) Trust Him: It may not feel like God cares, but He does.

1 Pet. 5:7 “...casting all your anxieties on Him, because He cares for you.”



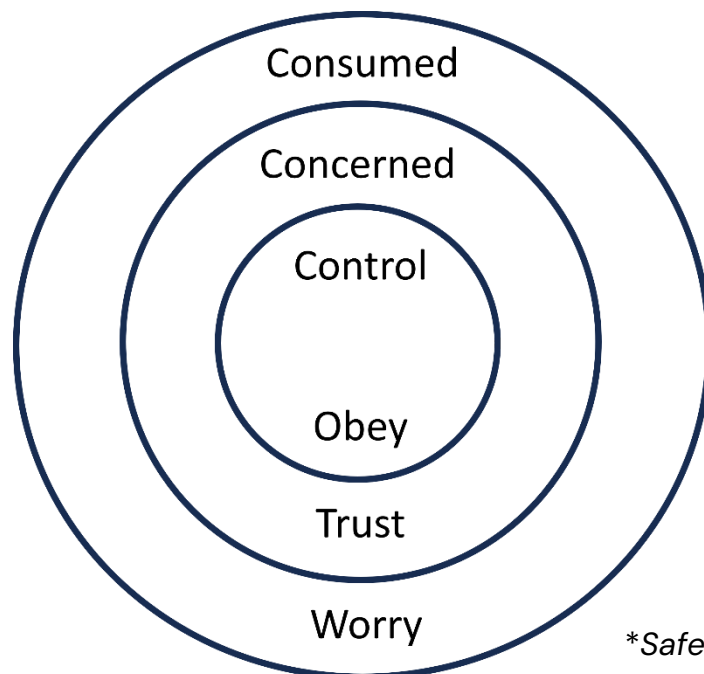
**Safe in the Storm, p. 70*

- God is all-loving: He wants what's best for you. 1 John 4:8–10
- God is all-wise: He knows what's best for you Rom. 11:33–36
- God is all-powerful: He is able to do what's best for you. Jer. 32:17

(2) Humble Yourself: It may not feel like pride, but it is.

1 Pet. 5:6 "Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God..."

The logical relationship between the two clauses is as follows: believers humble themselves by casting their worries on God. Conversely, if believers continue to worry, then they are caving in to pride. How can anxiety and worry be criticized as pride? ...Worry is a form of pride because when believers are filled with anxiety, they are convinced that they must solve all the problems in their lives in their own strength. The only god they trust in is themselves. When believers throw their worries upon God, they express their trust in His mighty hand, acknowledging that He is Lord and sovereign over all of life. As one has said, "Affliction either drives one into the arms of God or severs one from God." ...God is not indifferent, nor is He cruel. He has compassion on His children and will sustain them in every distress. *The New American Commentary*



**Safe in the Storm, pp. 71-73*

(3) Guard Your Thoughts: Wrong thinking may not feel harmful, but it is.

1 Pet. 5:8 "Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour."

In verse 8, Peter gives another warning: *"Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour"* [emphasis added]. The Greek word for sober-minded (some translate it self-controlled) occurs only four times in the New Testament. Each time it is in the context of suffering. We should expect that when we face a trial it's going to be difficult to think clearly. The Greek word *nepho* (translated here as sober-minded) means to be free from the influence of intoxicants. It comes from the word that means "to avoid drunkenness." In this context, it is a crucial reminder to see your battle with anxiety as a spiritual one. Be alert. Be vigilant. The devil is active and aggressive, like a hungry lion.

~ Phil Moser, *Safe in the Storm: Biblical Strategies for Overcoming Anxiety*

See Jesus' example:

Matt. 16:21-23 "From that time Jesus began to show His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised.²² And Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, "Far be it from you, Lord! This shall never happen to You."²³ But He turned and said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are a hindrance to Me. For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man."

See Paul's teaching:

2 Cor. 10:4-5 "For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds.⁵ We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God and take every thought captive to obey Christ."

Questions to consider:

- In what ways have you seen God care in your past?
- Why is it so hard to cast our anxieties on Him and not take them back?
- Consider your circle of control. What things do you tend to worry about that you don't have control over?
- As you attempt to be sober-minded, what thoughts reoccur that bring anxiety?

Behold Your God

Reframing What We Worry About (Isa. 40)

Pastor Brad Bigney / Grace Fellowship Church

Background

This great chapter of the Bible that so many of us love and know so well was actually written to a group of people who had just received some of the most devastating news that the future was not what they had hoped for.

Your future can change dramatically with one piece of devastating news that you didn't see coming, and have no power to change.

- What do you say when there is no “fix” and your counselee is living under a burden that God has allowed them to carry, that they may have to carry for years?

I. Help Your Counselees to Know Who God is in the Midst of Their Shattering Circumstances

Four times in this chapter he calls us to “behold” something about God (**vv. 9, 10, 15**), and then in **v. 26** he says, “Lift up your eyes on high, and see who has created this universe.”

The best way to persevere in hard circumstances is to make sure you're always seeing more than just your circumstances. You have to do everything you can to help them see that *who God is* intersects with their circumstances or they will lose heart.

2x he uses the word “know” in **vv. 21, 28**: “Have you not known?” “Have you not heard?”

Hebrew word that refers to an experiential side that is beyond just cognitive knowledge – where a person enters into an intimate relationship with the object they are knowing so that they can rest and trust in that person.

The Hebrew word “heard” is also a word that means to hear in such a way as to understand or comprehend the meaning of something, so that you grasp it in a way that makes a difference.

A. Show Them How God’s Power and Authority are Never Frustrated by the Decisions of Earthly Rulers

vv. 15–17 “Behold, the nations are as a drop in a bucket, and are counted as the small dust on the scales; Look, He lifts up the isles as a very little thing. ¹⁶ And Lebanon is not sufficient to burn, nor its beasts sufficient for a burnt offering. ¹⁷ All nations before Him are as nothing, And they are counted by Him less than nothing and worthless.”

vv. 22–24 “It is He who sits above the circle of the earth, and its inhabitants are like grasshoppers, who stretches out the heavens like a curtain, and spreads them out like a tent to dwell in. ²³ He brings the princes to nothing; He makes the judges of the earth useless. ²⁴ Scarcely shall they be planted, scarcely shall they be sown, scarcely shall their stock take root in the earth, when He will also blow on them, And they will wither, and the whirlwind will take them away like stubble.”

B. Show Them How God’s Love for His People is Never Diminished even in the Worst of Circumstances

In the context of very grim circumstances, look at the tenderness of God

vv. 10b–11 “Behold, His reward is with Him, and His work before Him. ¹¹ He will feed His

flock like a shepherd; He will gather the lambs with His arm, and carry them in His bosom, and gently lead those who are with young.”

We are His reward. He’s not talking about bringing us a reward. He’s talking about the fact that we are His reward, His precious people that He will tenderly care for in the very midst of shattering circumstances.

This chapter shows both the power and personal tenderness of our sovereign God! You see the transcendence as well as the immanence of God!

II. Help Your Counselees to Depend on God’s Word

A. Show Them How God’s Word is Set in Contrast to the Frailty of Human Beings

vv. 6–8 “...All flesh is grass, and all its loveliness is like the flower of the field. ⁷ The grass withers, the flower fades, because the breath of the LORD blows upon it; surely the people are grass. ⁸ The grass withers, the flower fades, but the Word of our God stands forever.”

B. Get Them to Look Back – By Showing Them How God’s Word has Already Been Fulfilled in the Past in a Way that is so Very Encouraging for the Present

vv. 3–4 are promising and predicting the first arrival of the Messiah – Jesus Christ – and are talking about John the Baptist preparing the way 700 years before He was born.

C. Get Them to Look Ahead – By Showing Them How God’s Word Points Us to the Future in the Midst of Shattering Present Circumstances

v. 5 is talking about something even greater than the first arrival of Jesus Christ on this earth, because it says the “glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together.”

2 Cor. 4:16–18 “Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day. ¹⁷For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, ¹⁸while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal.”

Titus 2:13 “Looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ...”

Rom. 8:18 “For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.”

Heb. 12:2 “Looking unto Jesus (*NIV* ‘fixing our eyes on Jesus’), the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.”

It changes how you live now when you have an eye for what is coming!

D. Show Them How God’s Word Feeds Their Ability to Persevere and Take Baby-Steps Forward

v. 31 “But those who wait on the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint.”

This chapter is all about God but **v. 31** is about us, and the effect this chapter should have on us, because the intent of God's Word is always bigger than information. It should lead to a transformation of how we live in the face of shattering circumstances.

- o **Show Them How They Qualify for God's Power**

v. 29 "He gives power to the weak, and to those who have no might, He increases strength."

2 Cor. 12: 9-10 "And He said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.' Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. ¹⁰ Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong."

- o **Help Them to Understand What Biblical "Waiting" Looks Like**

The Hebrew word "wait" is not an empty, idle word, but is pregnant with meaning in the Bible.

The root word means to look with eager expectation and steadfastness so that you can persevere as an expression of your faith.

This word is an active, energetic word that requires faith. That means there's no way to keep this biblical waiting alive without a steady intake of God's Word!

- o **Help Them to Appreciate Just Taking the "Next Step"**

Look at the sequence of **v. 31**, because on a human level it almost seems anticlimactic: "...they shall mount up like eagles... they shall run... they shall walk."

God understands something we don't: steady walking, even if it's baby-steps, is what the Christian life is mostly comprised of. Perseverance is what it's all about. Slow and steady, not flashy.

"I can plod. That is my only genius... to this I owe everything. The greatest heroes of the faith are NOT always those who are soaring but those who are simply taking the next step."

~ William Carey

Ask your counselee:

- What can you do to lean into really "knowing" God experientially instead of just knowing "about" God?
- What can you do to feed your faith so that you can biblically "wait" on the Lord?
- What's the next step for you? Stop waiting to soar and just take the next step!

Helping Counselees Choose 'Thanks' Over 'Angst'

Pastor Peter LaRuffa / Grace Fellowship Church

I. Introductory Exercise

- A. What are some instances in which anxiety isn't just considered acceptable, but respectable?

- B. What are you currently thankful for?

- C. What should you be thankful for, but often take for granted?

- D. What things are you not thankful for, and don't think you should be?

Phil. 4:1–9

¹ So then, my dearly loved and longed for brothers and sisters, my joy and crown, in this manner stand firm in the Lord, dear friends. ² I urge Euodia and I urge Syntyche to agree in the Lord. ³ Yes, I also ask you, true partner, to help these women who have contended for the gospel at my side, along with Clement and the rest of my coworkers whose names are in the book of life. ⁴ Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! ⁵ Let your graciousness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. ⁶ Don't worry about anything, but in everything, through prayer and petition with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. ⁷ And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. ⁸ Finally brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable — if there is any moral excellence and if there is anything praiseworthy — dwell on these things. ⁹ Do what you have learned and received and heard from me, and seen in me, and the God of peace will be with you.

I. You're either anxious OR grateful... But you're never both!

A. If you're anxious, you're not grateful. One exists at the expense of the other.

- a. When we're anxious, we want a different reality – so we're **not grateful** for what God has given us.
- b. When we're anxious, we want to be in control – so we're **not grateful** for God's sovereign control of our lives.

- c. When we're anxious, we're **not thankful** in advance for what God can and will do in our lives as a result of the trial in our midst.

II. Choosing "thanks" over "angst" doesn't happen automatically. It's a command to be obeyed!

Phil. 4:6 –*"Don't worry about anything, but in everything, through prayer and petition with thanksgiving, present your requests to God."*

"PUT OFF"	"BE RENEWED"	"PUT ON"

III. Studies consistently show that gratitude is good for our bodies, minds, and hearts.

- A. **Gratitude creates opportunity for more relationships.** Even something as simple as saying "thank you" to a new friend makes them more likely to seek out a deeper friendship.
- B. **Gratitude increases our physical health.** Grateful people not only report fewer "aches and pains," but actually say they feel better physically than others.
- C. **Gratitude strengthens psychological health.** Gratitude lessens what we would consider more negative emotions, such as regret, frustration, jealousy, and

resentment and has been proven to increase happiness and reduce depression.

D. **Gratitude develops empathy and diminishes aggression.**

E. **Grateful people have better sleep habits.**

F. **Gratitude boosts self-confidence.**

G. **Gratitude grows psychological strength...** and also may help overcome trauma.¹

IV. **Choosing “thanks” over “angst” happens as a result of thankful prayer; not after, but while in the trial itself. (Phil. 4:6)**

A. Giving thanks for something means it, in and of itself, is worthy of thanks.

Phil. 4:8 – “Finally brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable — if there is any moral excellence and if there is anything praiseworthy — dwell on these things.”

B. Even though we shouldn’t be thankful for everything, we can be thankful in every situation.

1 Thess. 5:16–18 – “Rejoice always, ¹⁷ pray constantly, ¹⁸ **give thanks in everything;** for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.”

C. Major heart change takes place as a result of thankful prayer!

¹ Amy Morin, “7 Scientifically Proven Benefits of Gratitude That Will Motivate You To Give Thanks Year-Round,” Forbes, November 23, 2014.

- a. Thankful prayer shows we live by faith, not by sight (2 Cor. 5:7).
- b. Thankful prayer shows we trust God because of what He's done (Ps. 77:11).
- c. Thankful prayer shows we believe God is going to do something good for His glory and our good (Rom. 8:28–30).
- d. Thankful prayer happens when we tell God how much better we want tomorrow to be, but trust Him in what He's brought us to today.
- e. Thankful prayer begs God to move, and thanks Him for what He's doing in my life in the meantime.

V. Choosing “thanks” over “angst” brings about a peace that is better than having the answers we wish we knew. (Phil. 4:7)

Phil. 4:7 – *“And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.”*

VI. Homework suggestions

A. Start a “thankfulness journal”

- a. At minimum, list 3 things you're thankful for before you go to bed each night.
- b. At most, take some time to long-form journal your thoughts to God about 3 things you're thankful for.

B. Scripture memorization: Matt. 6:33–34

- a. Write a 3+ sentence prayer to God about the verse(s) you're memorizing.
- b. Write a 3–5 sentence summary of Matt. 6:33–34.
- c. Fight each day to focus your thinking and spend the bulk of your energy on solving today's problems that are truly your responsibility.

C. Scripture memorization: Phil. 4:4–9

- a. Write a 3+ sentence prayer to God about the verse(s) you're memorizing.
- b. Write a 3–5 sentence summary of Phil. 4:4–5.
- c. Write a 3–5 sentence summary of Phil. 4:6–7.
- d. Write a 3–5 sentence summary of Phil. 4:8–9.

D. Dig deeper: Phil. 4:8

- a. The end of Phil. 4:8 says to “dwell on these things,” and is referring to the things described with 8 adjectives used in that verse. Write down the definition of each word, followed by a 1-sentence prayer for God to help you dwell on something(s) like that.

E. Think about your thoughts

a. For recurring anxieties, write a 3–5 sentence summary of when and why you’re tempted to be anxious.

i. Write out Phil. 4:8.

1. Make a list of the 8 adjectives contained in Phil. 4:8, and ask yourself if your thoughts are those things.

*Is _____ true?*²

Is _____ honorable?

Is _____ just?

F. How’s it going? (<https://forms.gle/McishmnjW8NR7x8t9>)

At least 1X/day, rate the day:

4 = (glorious; joy-filled; happy; grateful; hopeful)

3 = (could be better, but generally good)

2 = (could be worse, but generally bad)

1 = (bad; discouraging; awful; hopeless)

For each entry, make a quick note as to what factored into the rating you submitted. This can be as little as just a few words, or paragraphs similar to a journal entry (whatever you prefer).

Review the cumulative results each week, then after a month.

G. Meditating instead of musing

² 99% of the time, it’s not...because **F.E.A.R.** = **F**alse **E**vidence **A**ppearing **R**eal

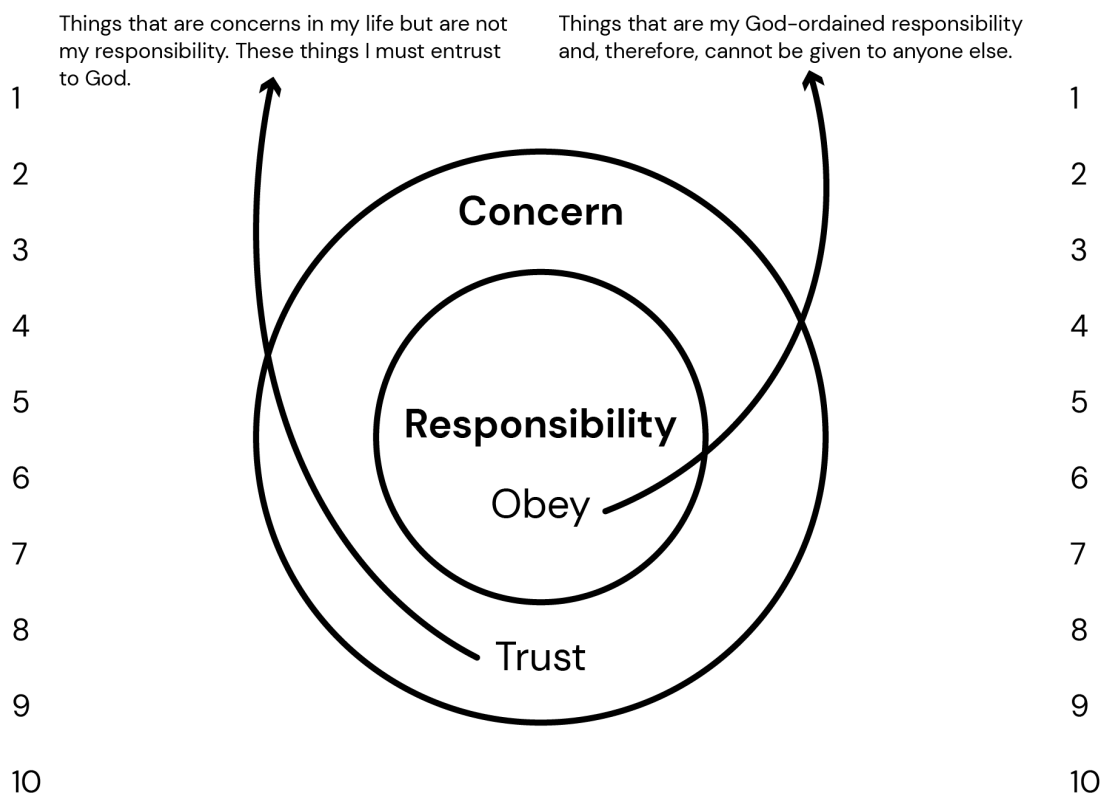
Do not pray as you are falling asleep because there is the danger that the praying can turn into worrying about the issue. Instead, make a list of the verses you have memorized and choose one each night that you want to spend time meditating on. Select verses that speak of God's sovereign control, His abundant provision, His protection, etc.

H. Responsibility vs. concerns

- a. List all that's on your mind and heart.
- b. Draw 2 circles inside of each other. Label the larger of the 2 circles "concerns." Label the smaller of the 2 circles "responsibilities."
- c. Place the items that are on your mind and heart into one of the circles.
 - i. You should be concerned about everything, but you're likely not responsible for all you're concerned about.
 - ii. Pray about everything, but only make action plans for that which you're responsible for.
- d. Make a list of everything that you are worried about. Bring it with you to our next meeting and we'll determine what things are your responsibilities and what things are simply areas of concern.
- e. Make a list of everything that you are worried about. Then prayerfully seek to determine what things are your responsibility and what things are simply areas of concern. If you need help, ask another godly Christian to talk with you about your list.

- f. For every area that is one of your responsibilities, make a list of what you can begin to do to solve the problem. Write steps to be taken.
- g. Eventually, have the counselee categorize the item on their own, and explain to you why they categorized it as they did.
- h. Fight each day to focus your thinking and spend the bulk of your energy on solving today's problems that are truly your responsibility, rather than worrying about endless possibilities of "what if?"

Clarifying Responsibility



Changes that I need to make:

I. *Overcoming Fear, Worry, and Anxiety* by Elyse Fitzpatrick

Read one chapter per week of Elyse Fitzpatrick's book, *Overcoming Fear, Worry, and Anxiety*, and write out your answers to the questions at the end of the chapter. Approach another godly Christian and ask if they would meet with you for prayer and to discuss your answers each week (continue this week by week, working through the book).

J. *What To Do When You Worry All The Time?* by Jay Adams

Read this pamphlet and underline the 10 most important sentences to you. Bring it with you to our next meeting for discussion.

K. Read and work through Paul Tripp's article about the "Circle of Concern Versus Circle of Responsibility."

Recommended Resources

Beside Still Waters, Charles Spurgeon

How to Handle Trouble, Jay Adams.

Trusting God Even When Life Hurts, Jerry Bridges

Overcoming Fear, Worry and Anxiety, Elyse Fitzpatrick

What Do You Do When You Worry All The Time?, Jay Adams

How Does Godly Concern Turn into Sinful Worry?

Pastor Brad Bigney / Grace Fellowship Church

Matt. 6:25–34

What's the difference between being concerned and worrying?

How do you know if you're sinning or not?

I. Your Godly Concern is not a Sin

God hasn't called us to stop caring about anything or anyone. He just tells us not to worry about it!

Paul is recounting how he has suffered, and includes concern for the churches on his list of weighty things he has endured for Christ's sake. He says:

2 Cor. 11:28 "...besides the other things, what comes upon me daily: my deep concern for all the churches."

Gal. 4:19 "...my little children, for whom I labor in birth again until Christ is formed in you."

Paul had an appropriate sense of concern and responsibility towards the churches as a result of God's call on his life and so should we in many areas of life.

The solution to worry is not to swing wildly to the other side, adopting an irresponsible attitude of emotional detachment from everything that's going on around you. Paul never stopped caring and neither should we!

2 Cor. 6:11 "O Corinthians! We have spoken openly to you, our heart is wide open."

2 Cor. 7:3 "I do not say this to condemn; for I have said before that you are in our hearts..."

Phil. 1:3-4, 7-8 "I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, ⁴ always in every prayer of mine making request of you all with joy... ⁷ because I have you in my heart... ⁸ For God is my witness, how greatly I long for you all with the affection of Jesus Christ."

II. Your Godly Concern is Often Just One Step Away from Sinful Worry

So how do you know when you've gone too far?

How do you recognize that extra step that takes you across the line into sin?

A. You've Crossed the Line into Sinful Worry When it Starts to Consume and Control Your Thoughts

A good rule of thumb is that concern has become sinful worry when it reaches a point that this cluster of thoughts is ruling your heart and you're focused on yourself.

Matt. 22:37-39 "Jesus said to him, 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.' ³⁸ This is the first and great commandment. ³⁹ And a second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'"

2 Cor. 5:14–15 “For the love of Christ constrains us, because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died; ¹⁵ and He died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again.”

“Worry is a trickle of fear running through the mind, ever cutting a deeper gorge into which all thoughts are drained.”

“What if?” is best answered by what God already did! The remedy for worry is rooted in the cross.

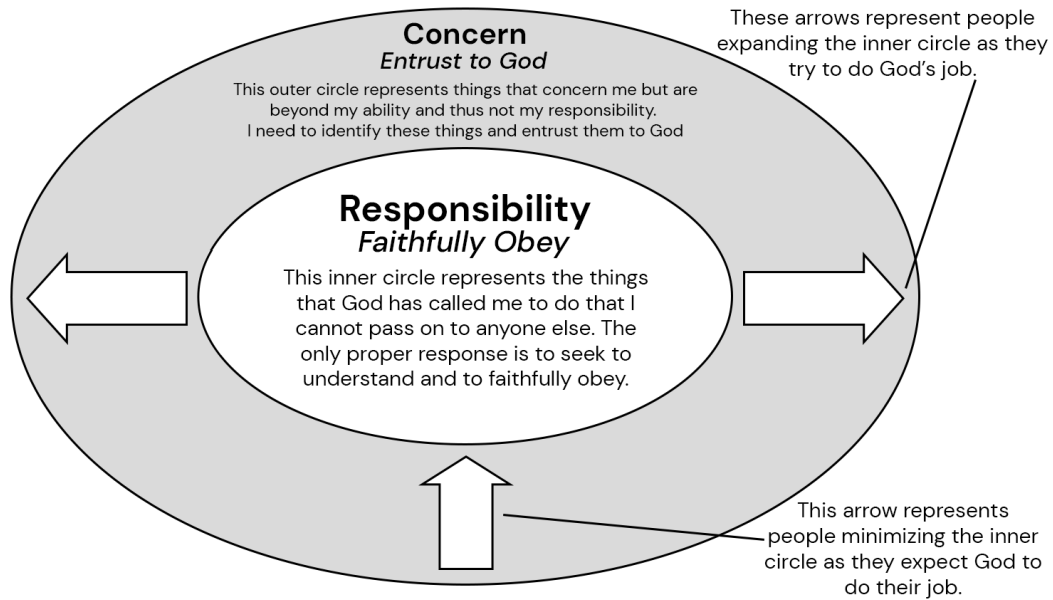
Rom. 8:31–32 “What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? ³² He who did not spare His own Son but gave Him up for us all, how will He not also with Him graciously give us all things?

The answer for worry is not looking into the future, but looking to the past. Look back to what God in Christ did for you once and for all that can never be taken away. If He would do **that then**, we don’t need to worry about whether He’s going to take care of us now.

B. You’ve Crossed the Line into Sinful Worry When You Start Focusing On What You Can’t Control and Neglecting What You’re Called to Do

Clarifying Responsibility

Taken from *Instruments in the Redeemer's Hands* by Paul David Tripp ISBN 9789-0-87552-607-2
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www.prpbooks.com



Worry is the gap between what's on God's list and ours. It's the space between what we're trying to do and what God's called you to do.

III. Worry Is More than Just Weakness – It's a Sin Against God

Matt. 6:25 "Therefore, I say to you, do not worry about your life..."

Matt. 6:34 "Therefore, do not worry about tomorrow..."

"Sin is what you do when you're not satisfied in God." ~ John Piper

"The humble are genuinely carefree. I've discovered how true that is about myself and my soul. Where there's worry, where there's anxiousness, pride is at the root of it. When I am experiencing anxiety, the root issue is that I'm trying to be self-sufficient. I'm acting independent of God. What's the solution? Humble yourself, God says. How?

Acknowledge your need for Me! Cast your cares upon Me, and I will transform you... I have to remember that whenever I feel buried under care, the real issue is pride and my self-sufficiency. I must deliberately and specifically cast my cares upon Him and thereby humble myself. Don't be mistaken. God hasn't gone anywhere. He's just as sovereign, just as good, just as faithful when I'm buried under care as He was... The issue isn't God. It's my pride that resists trusting in Him through dependence upon Him."

~ C.J. Mahaney, *Humility*, pp. 75-76

Calling worry a "sin" injects hope into the equation because sin can be repented of. If it's a sin problem, the Bible has answers and there's hope!

A. Worry is a Sin Because It's a Subtle Form of Unbelief

Whenever you worry, you're really saying, "God, I can't trust You," and you're questioning God's ability to run the universe. So, when you worry, you slander God's character!

Matt. 6:31-32 "So do not worry saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we wear?'

³² For the pagans run after all these things, and your Heavenly Father knows that you need them."

Your Heavenly Father Knows!

Worry is the result of not realizing:

The omniscience of God (He knows!)

The compassion of God (He cares!)

The resources of God (He provides!)

The wisdom of God (He provides right on time!)

B. Worry is a Sin Because It's Giving In to False Worship

Worry magnifies the problem; worship magnifies our God and shifts the focus back to who He is and what He can do.

Worship is one of the few places where you get your eyes off of yourself and onto the God of the universe.

"Very often when I've left a place of worship the first impression I have of the 'outside world' is how small it is – how puny its politics, paltry its appetites, squint-eyed its interests. I've just spent an hour or so with friends reorienting myself in the realities of the world – the huge sweep of salvation and the minute particularities of holiness – and would blink my eyes in disbelief that so many are willing to live in such reduced and cramped conditions. But after a few hours or days, I find myself getting used to and going along with its assumptions..."

~ Eugene H. Peterson, *The Wisdom of Each Other*, p. 109

Worship is not an exit and it's not escapism! It's the entrance into the real world and out of this twisted world of lies and deception.

To steer clear of worry, you need to see the **real world** again — a world that has God seated squarely on His throne.

Worry dies when worship thrives!

Recommended Resources

Worry: Pursuing a Better Path to Peace, David Powlison

Anxiety: Knowing God's Peace (31-Day Devotional for Life), Paul Tautges

Overcoming Fear, Worry, and Anxiety, Elyse Fitzpatrick

Safe in the Storm: Biblical Strategies for Overcoming Anxiety

Session 2

Phil Moser / Biblical Strategies

The Second Principle: Change — *Change your mind, not your circumstances.*

Phil. 4:6–8 “Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. ⁷ And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. ⁸ Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, 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.”

(1) Change how you think about worry: *God commands us not to worry; when we do, we sin.*

Phil. 4:6 “...do not be anxious about anything...”

Even though those anxious thoughts may feel like they control us, the Bible makes it clear they do not. Paul writes, “*Do not be* anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God” [emphasis added]. The Greek language can, among other things, communicate the attitude of the writer in regards to the action. We call this the mood of the verb. It can be a declaration of fact, a wish/possibility, or a command. When the Spirit of God communicated the action “do not be anxious” He emphasized the command. This is significant. Inherent in the command is that we have a choice to make: to obey or not obey, and to receive the subsequent

consequences. If God had wanted to communicate that anxiety is an unchanging condition, He would have chosen the mood of fact. If He had wanted you to believe that overcoming worry was simply a desire, He would have used the mood of possibility. But God wanted you to realize that worry is a choice you make, so He used the imperative mood. He gave a command. Through the Spirit's power, you are both capable of obeying and expected to obey the command: do not be anxious.

~Phil Moser, *Safe in the Storm*, p. 17

Jerry Bridges understands anxiety to be a sin for two reasons:

- Anxiety is a distrust of God. See Matt. 6:25-34
- Anxiety is a sin because it is a failure to accept God's providence in our lives.

(2) Change how you think about prayer: Make it your pattern not your panic button.

Phil. 4:6 "...but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God."

- Everything: Realizing nothing is too small or too big for God.

You start your prayer time with the understanding that no request is too small for God to be concerned with, nor is any request too large that God would be incapable of handling it. You may find it helpful to include those very phrases in the opening of my prayer. Certainly, God doesn't need the reminder, but we often do. No task is too small or too large.

- Supplication: Acknowledging your need for God.

You humbly acknowledge your inability to handle life on your own. You realize you lack the strength and stamina to carry the things you are worrying about. As you wait upon the Lord, He will renew your strength. You will find that when you acknowledge through prayer what you can't do, you will grow increasingly dependent on the Lord.

- Thanksgiving: Looking for reasons to praise God.

You review God's work in your past. You rehearse the aspects of His character for which you are thankful. You replace worrying with a grateful spirit. Even in the most difficult of circumstances, you can give thanks.

- Requests: Seeking first the kingdom of God.

Jesus encouraged us to change the content of our prayer requests. Our chief pursuit is no longer relief from anxiety, but rather the kingdom of God and His righteousness. For the anxious person, this is only possible when you prime the pump with the previous three steps: prayer, supplication, and thanksgiving.

(3) Change what you think about: It's your mind. You are responsible to control it.

Phil. 4:8 "Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, 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."

When it comes to anxiety, the distinction between the mind and the brain is essential. Because worrying is so closely associated with your thoughts, we must first answer this question: can we control our thoughts, or are they simply the electronic processes that are a result of certain stimuli upon the soft nervous tissue? While scientists and philosophers will continue the debate, the Bible presents a more definitive answer. You are not a victim, enduring a set of electronic impulses in the expanse between your ears. You can control your thoughts. Consider the following biblical passages: Matt. 16:23; 2 Cor. 10:5; Rom. 8:5–6; Phil. 2:5; Col. 3:2.

~ Phil Moser, *Safe in the Storm*, p. 29

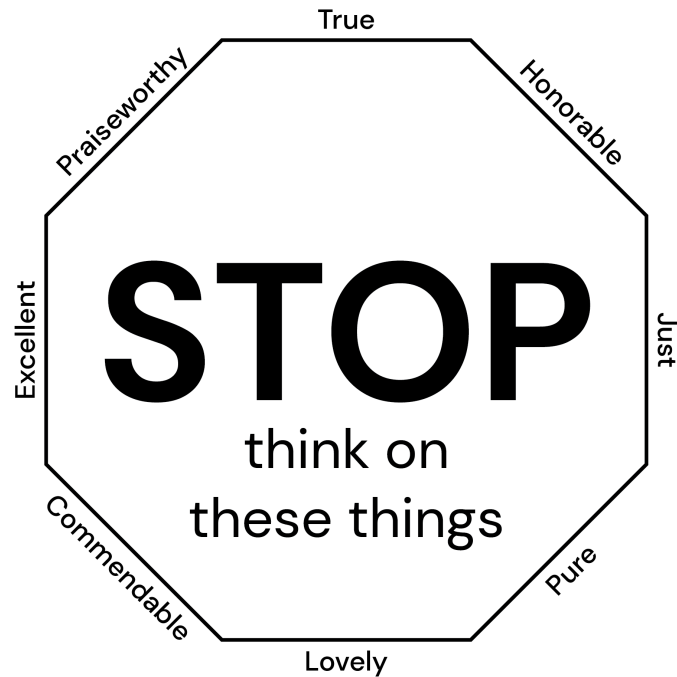
- Renew your Mind: dwelling upon the Word. Rom. 12:2.

John MacArthur clarifies in *MacArthur New Testament Commentary Series: Romans*:

The Holy Spirit achieves this transformation by the renewing of the mind, an essential and repeated New Testament theme. The outward transformation is affected by an inner change in the mind, and the Spirit's means of transforming our minds is the Word. David testified, "Thy word I have treasured in my heart, that I may not sin against Thee." God's own Word is the instrument His own Holy Spirit uses to renew our minds, which, in turn, He uses to transform our living.

- Set your mind: think intentionally. Rom. 8:5–6

Using Phil. 4:8
parameters:



Questions to consider:

- In what ways is an occasional anxious thought different from the all-consuming ones we need to avoid?
- List some ways that developing an ongoing pattern of prayer might enhance your spiritual walk?
- Which words in the Phil. 4:8 “think list” could serve as a warning for you to recognize your anxious thoughts?

Safe in the Storm: Biblical Strategies for Overcoming Anxiety

Session 3

Phil Moser / Biblical Strategies

The Third Principle: Desire — *Desire God more than relief from anxiety.*

¹ Don't worry about the wicked or envy those who do wrong.

² For like grass, they soon fade away. Like spring flowers, they soon wither.

³ Trust in the LORD and do good. Then you will live safely in the land and prosper.

⁴ Take delight in the LORD, and He will give you your heart's desires.

⁵ Commit everything you do to the LORD. Trust Him, and He will help you.

⁶ He will make your innocence radiate like the dawn, and the justice of your cause will shine like the noonday sun.

⁷ Be still in the presence of the LORD and wait patiently for Him to act.

Don't worry about evil people who prosper or fret about their wicked schemes.

Ps. 37:1-7, New Living Translation

(1) Trust in the Lord: *You can be concerned without being consumed.*

Ps. 37:3 "Trust in the LORD and do good. Then you will live safely in the land and prosper."

"The anxious person tries to figure it out on his own, and he knows he doesn't have the resources. This is especially evident when we worry about others. Our relationships with our family members are a good example. Parents are prone to worry about their children's future. A sister worries about her brother's drug addiction. A middle-aged woman worries about her aging parents' failing health.

When we deal with others' choices, the outcome is outside of our control because their will is their own. We cannot make them want what they don't want for themselves. We can instruct and discipline our children. We can grieve over our siblings' destructive choices. We can lovingly share our concerns with our parents. But in all of these relationships, we cannot ultimately control their will. It is outside the realm of our ability; their future is outside of our field of vision. So, we worry. To ultimately gain victory over this type of anxiety, you will need to acknowledge that your resources are limited and trust in the one whose resources are not."

~Phil Moser, *Safe in the Storm*, p. 37

(2) Delight yourself in the Lord: Work towards joy and not obligation.

Ps. 37:4 "Take delight in the LORD, and He will give you your heart's desires."

- **Look Forward** by turning your anxious thoughts into prayer requests.

It's hard to be joyful and anxious at the same time. There's a promise connected with the command to delight in the Lord. The text says, "And he will give you the desires of your heart." The word desires could be understood as "requests" or "petitions." When we delight in the Lord, we have turned our desires into prayers. Imagine if each time your heart grew anxious you interpreted it as a signal to bring a prayer request to the Lord. You wouldn't have time to worry. You would be taking your burden to the Lord and leaving it there. When we focus our attention on the Lord like that, we actually end up getting what we desire — the peace of God (*Safe in the Storm*, p. 39).

- **Look Backward** by listing the things and events for which you are thankful.

Recommendation: have the one struggling with anxiety, to begin to write out — then review — a list of things for which they are grateful.

This is the idea behind a *One Thousand Gifts Journal*. Giving thanks for three specific things each day amounts to a list of 1,095 items each year for which you're thankful. That would be 10,950 in a decade and 76,650 reasons to give thanks in a lifetime (Ps. 90:10).

"God is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied with him." ~ John Piper

(3) Commit your way to the Lord: Make prayer your pattern, not your panic button.

Ps. 37:5 "Commit everything you do to the LORD. Trust Him, and He will help you."

Recommendation for prayer: the 10-minute prayer pattern includes an opportunity to Yield.

The 10 Minute Prayer Pattern: The PRAY acrostic is a memory device for prayer. It can be as short as a few minutes or may include more time as God leads. PRAY stands for Praise, Repent, Ask, and Yield.

- **Praise**. At the beginning of prayer, praise the who, what, and why of God. Remember who He is by reflecting upon His character. When you remember what He's done, you are meditating on His works. Finally, remember the why of God. He is motivated by His steadfast love towards us (Ps. 100:5).
- **Repent**. Once you've thought about what God has done, you can move easily to what you haven't done. Repentance takes place when we remember our failures and turn from them. A humble confession in prayer reveals a dependence on the

Spirit in order to be restored to God. True repentance includes my actions and attitudes (Phil. 2:5).

- **Ask**. Jesus taught us to ask of God, and Paul gave us a great prayer list to follow (see Col. 1:9–12). The spiritual nature of the prayers of Scriptures are helpful in praying for yourself and others.
- **Yield**. Jesus grew to the point where He could say, “Not My will but Yours be done.” Yielding your desires (as hard as that may initially be) is an essential element of prayer. Once you’ve made known your requests, make sure you surrender your desires.

(4) Be Still before the Lord: The worried mind is a hurried mind.

“When we’re anxious, it’s hard to be still. We think if we work harder relief from the anxiety will come. But we accomplish one task, only to grow anxious about another. We run faster, only to discover our anxious thoughts were waiting for us at the next destination. We cannot outwork nor outrun our anxious thoughts. This prompted King David to write: “Be still before the Lord and wait patiently on Him” (*Safe in the Storm*, p. 41).

Ps. 46:10 “Be still and know that I am God. I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth.”

“Worry is a cycle of inefficient thoughts whirling around a center of fear.”

~Corrie Ten Boom

The development of a consistent “Quiet-Time / Devotional Time is essential as a means of “being still before the Lord.”

Recommendation: The *Kairos Journal* is a great tool for deepening this time for the counselee. Often they will not know where to start. There's a two-page spread for each day, and a place to review what you're learning as the week draws to a close (dailykairos.com).

Pastor Zach Schlegel reminds us to have the right heart, time, place, and plan.

- The prepared heart. Your heart should be expectant, willing to obey, teachable, and humble. Before you open the Word, pause and prepare your heart. Humility is essential.
- The right time. The right time will be the time that works best for you. When are you the most alert, focused, and fresh? I had a seminary professor who did his best studying at 3:30 AM. A friend of mine commented, "God's not even up at that hour!" Your best time might be early in the morning or late at night. Pick the time that's best for you and stick with it.
- The best place. The best place will be one free from distractions. Pretend you just boarded the plane and "turn off all electronic devices!"
- The committed plan. Whether or not you are a planner, you will still need to discipline yourself to study the Scriptures diligently (*Just Like Jesus*, p. 31).

Questions to consider:

- With what relationships do you find it most difficult to trust the Lord? Why do you think that is?
- At what times during your day (or events of the day) do you find that you are most anxious?
- What might you do in preparation to "be still before the Lord?"
- Using the alphabet as a memory device, list qualities of God that come to mind from A-Z.

A Closer Look at Anxiety

Phil. 4:4–9; 1 Pet. 5:6–7

Pastor Brad Bigney / Grace Fellowship Church

According to the *Journal of Clinical Psychiatry*, 40 million Americans now struggle with anxiety.

See Phil. 4:4–9

Where would you begin in helping someone with anxiety?

I. Help Your Counselee to Take a Closer Look at What They're Actually Worried About

Give it a definition and parameters. Ask them to take some time to get quiet and consider: What's **really** bothering you? What have you been **saying** to yourself? What have you been **thinking** and **rehearsing** over and over? Put it down on paper.

A great prayer to get them to pray is **Ps. 139:23**: "Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts!"

"Scripture never trivializes the things we worry about. It just says you have greater reason to take them to someone who can help, rather than worrying about them. In other words, you have good reason to worry... but **better reasons** not to worry. So, don't get caught in the 'spin cycle' (like a washing machine going round and round) – twisting, turning, driving, churning."

~ Taken from lecture notes at BCTC, Faith Church, Lafayette, IN, 2004

The first step to breaking out of that “Spin Cycle of Worry” is to sit down and make a list of the specific things you’re worried about. Name them, define them, and bring them out into the light and onto paper!

II. Help Your Counselee to Take a Closer Look at Who and Where Their God Is

You may be familiar with **Phil. 4** as a place to get help in fighting worry. Most people start with **v. 6**: “Be anxious for nothing...” But God plants a “grace bomb” here at the end of **v. 5**: “The Lord is near.”

To fight worry, you have to fight the lies that keep worry alive. This lie of being orphaned, abandoned, and left on your own is one of the biggest!

Verses 4–9 are not just filled with a few tricks or techniques that you can slap on your life. These verses are God-centered:

v. 4 Rejoice *in the Lord* always...

v. 5 The *Lord is near*

v. 6 Let your requests be *made known to God*

v. 7 And the peace *of God*... will guard your hearts and minds *through Christ Jesus*

v. 9 And the *God of peace* will be with you

This passage is radically God-centered because anxiety always tries to isolate us and to push us into a godless echo chamber of our own thoughts.

The issue of control is a critical component of the whole worry problem!

“Central to worry is the illusion that we can control things. ‘If only I could get my retirement right, I could control the future.’ ‘If I could get my diet and medicine right, I wouldn’t get cancer.’ ‘If I could figure out the right child rearing technique, I could

guarantee how my kids turn out.' Worry assumes the possibility of control over the uncontrollable. The illusion of control lurks inside your anxiety. Anxiety and control are two sides of one coin. When we can't control something, we worry about it."

~ David Powlison, *Worry*, p. 12

III. Show Your Counselee How to Talk to God about #1 in Light of #2

In other words, you start praying, but pray in the right way.

Phil. 4:6-7 "Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; ⁷and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."

You start praying to God about what you're worried about, but you do it in light of who He is and where He is.

Prayer should be giving something to God. Give Him praise as you remember who He is and where He is in your life. Then give Him the problem and leave it there!

IV. Show Your Counselee the Sin Beneath the Sin of Anxiety: Pride

What is it that keeps us holding onto our cares instead of giving them over to Him?

1 Pet. 5:6-7 "Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time, ⁷casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you."

Freedom from your anxiety starts by repenting of your pride!

Peter is reminding us that the presence of anxiety is related to the absence of humility. It's only as you stop trying to be God that you can start being a child of God who's willing to cast all your cares on Him as your Father!

V. Show Your Counselee that an Actual Transaction Has to Be Made

The Greek word for "cast" in **verse 7** is a word that means to hurl or to use energetic force in tossing something away from you and onto something else.

Often, our counselees are guilty of holding onto their anxieties because they think it allows them to control the outcome, but it just weighs them down and crushes them.

It's like picking up a backpack and starting to fill it with the things you think you need to hold onto. The more you worry about it, the worry straps get tighter and tighter until you're struggling to breathe and handle everyday responsibilities.

It's only as you choose to humble yourself that you can trust Him enough to finally and fully cast your cares on Him.

VI. Show Your Counselee Where to "Park" Their Mind

The anxious mind parks in a lie. The trusting mind parks itself in the truth.

Phil. 4:8 *The Message* "Summing it all up, friends, I'd say you'll do best by filling your minds and meditating on things true, noble, reputable, authentic, compelling, gracious — the best, not the worst; the beautiful, not the ugly; things to praise, not things to curse."

That word “meditate” is the Greek word “logizomai” that was an accounting or mathematical term that meant to calculate something or to factor it in by establishing a solid column of facts that represent this side of the ledger.

When you’re caught up in worry, you are only taking into account the problem. So, Paul says, you draw a line down the middle of the page and you start listing specific things for which you can be grateful and for which you can praise God... where you see something good in the midst of all the mess.

Recommended Resources

Worry, David Powlison

Anxiety: Knowing God’s Peace (31-Day Devotional for Life), Paul Tautges

Overcoming Fear, Worry, and Anxiety, Elyse Fitzpatrick

Safe in the Storm: Biblical Strategies for Overcoming Anxiety

Session 4

Phil Moser / Biblical Strategies

(A) The Example of Jesus

A key passage on overcoming anxiety is found in Matt. 6:25–34. In His Sermon on the Mount, Jesus shares a number of key truths. It is worth remembering these were truths He would personally apply as He faced the suffering of the cross, and the punishment of His Father for the sins we had committed.

(1) If your priorities are divided, focus on the eternal.

Matt 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. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing?”

“The more we accumulate on this earth, the more we will have a tendency to worry that we might lose it. It seems like we should be able to keep our possessions secure, but Jesus’ teaching is clear: we cannot. Thieves break in, moths devour, and rust destroys the remainder. So much of our time is spent worrying about how we can hold on to something that, at best, is only temporary. Jesus’ answer is to focus on what is eternal. This is why He says that you cannot serve God and money. When your heart is divided, you will always have a tendency to worry about the things you can see. The very things you can’t take with you.”

~Phil Moser, *Safe in the Storm*, p. 45

(2) If you've forgotten God's faithfulness, increase your dependence through prayer.

Matt. 6:31–33 “Therefore, do not be anxious, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.”

“Jesus saw prayer as an expression of dependence on the Father, as a tremendous resource in living life for God's glory. When tempted, He responded, ‘Man shall not live by bread alone.’ It's easy to overlook the context of Jesus' statement. He had just completed 40 days of prayer and fasting. His hunger had driven Him to a greater level of dependence on the Father. He was so physically weakened that the Father sent angels to restore His strength. Jesus borrowed this statement from Deut. 8:3. There, Moses reminded the Israelites that their parents' hunger should have intensified their dependence on the Lord, but it only became another venue for their complaints. Jesus chose an attitude of dependence over a spirit of complaining. Prayer enabled this choice.” (*Just Like Jesus*, p. 19)

(3) If you're doubting God's sovereignty, review His promises

“God is described in the Bible as all-powerful and all-knowing (Ps. 147:5), outside of time (Ex. 3:14; Ps. 90:2), and responsible for the creation of everything (Gen. 1:1; John 1:1). These divine traits set the minimum boundary for God's sovereign control in the universe, which is to say that nothing in the universe occurs without God's permission.” (<https://www.gotquestions.org/God-is-sovereign.html>)

Recommendation: Memorize the promises of God in the Bible. Scripture provides an excellent offense to weaken temptation's appeal. This is why we offer 10 verses

in every Biblical Strategies paradigm that emphasize the character of God and the nature of the gospel. Loving God well and appreciating the Gospel weakens the appeal of the temptation.

Recommendation: Dwell upon the character of God — attribute by attribute.

- The Navigators provide a 30 day calendar to pray through the attributes of God, giving one each day for a month.
(<https://www.navigators.org/resource/praying-names-attributes-god/>)
- Develop your personal mental list by reviewing qualities of God through the alphabet (A-Z). See *Just Like Jesus*, p. 60.

(B) The Power of the Spirit

“The fact that *peripateō* (walk) is used here in the present tense indicates that Paul is speaking of continuous, regular action, in other words, a habitual way of life. And the fact that the verb is also in the imperative mood indicates he is not giving believers an option but a command. Among other things, walking implies progress, going from where one is to where he ought to be. As a believer submits to the Spirit’s control, he moves forward in his spiritual life. Step by step the Spirit moves him from where he is toward where God wants him to be.”

~ *Galatians*, John MacArthur

The Bible uses the word walk to describe the choices we are making. Because we experience anxiety as a feeling, we often don’t think of it as a choice. But walking in the Spirit is not something that happens to us; it is a process we participate in, and it will require a conscientious thought pattern. We will only be able to stop worrying about the future when we learn to think like God thinks today. (*Safe in the Storm*, p. 52)

(1) Avoiding *if only* and *what if*.

- Don't forget the redemptive nature of the gospel

If only is the phrase that is used when you worry about the effects of your past. You find yourself so chained to the events of your yesterdays, that you cannot give your best effort to opportunities that occur today.

- Don't assume you know the future

What if is the phrase that shows you are worrying about the future. When you worry about the future, you set your mind on uncertain things. You cannot know whether these events will come to pass or not; you can only assume they will. When you worry, you center your imagination around possibilities, not realities. Once activated, your imagination swings into overdrive. It's easy to think of additional things that could go wrong. The more you worry, the greater the possibilities. To break the cycle, you will need acknowledge a crucial assumption: only God possesses the wisdom to know all things actual and possible. When we use the words *what if*, we are assuming we can be like Him. (*Safe in the Storm*, pp. 54-55)

(2) Practicing a new way of thinking.

The believer has the distinct advantage of the Holy Spirit enabling this process. As we take the first step by faith, he enables us to take future steps. The Holy Spirit makes change possible, but He does this in cooperation with us.

In *Dead-End Desires* I wrote about this process as a crossroads:

"Imagine yourself at a crossroads. There are only two paths from which to choose. [...] Applying the Word for change is what happens every time you make that choice at the crossroads. Often your feelings will be drawing you one way, but by faith you will need to choose the other. Eventually the new habit will become instinctive, and you will keep in step with the Spirit more naturally. In the beginning, developing this habit will take a concentrated effort.

Don't be overwhelmed by the whole process, simply take it a step at a time... Use the Phil. 4:8 stop sign as a reminder of where you should be setting your thoughts. When your thoughts wander beyond those parameters, choose to bring them back. Dwell upon the new thoughts. Like a stroke victim learning to walk again, you will need to tell your mind what to do.

~Phil Moser, *Safe in the Storm*, p. 57

Questions to consider:

- What are some regrets you have from the past, or fears you have for the future?
- How can the gospel redeem the way you think about your burden (as opposed to how it became a burden)?
- How can you express to God your trust in Him (thereby replacing your worrisome thoughts about the future)?
- List one positive element related to each of the eight qualities expressed in Phil. 4:8 as it relates to your burden.

Prov. 8 and the Voices Surrounding Anxiety

Kevin Carson / Sonrise Baptist Church

Introduction:

- Would you say that anxiety can suck the life out of you?
- How would you describe anxiety? Would the word “_____” be anywhere in that description?
- In fact, wouldn't you say that _____ sin and our handling of suffering comes down to which voice we listen?
- To whom do you listen?
- As you consider anxiety specifically and other areas of life, to what are you going to listen?

1. Consider the _____ in the garden

A. Gen. 1 – Man was never meant to live on earth _____ God's Word.

1. God is the _____.
2. Once created, man needed God's _____.
3. God configured man's _____ for Him.
4. God's voice was the _____ voice.

B. Gen. 2 – Man begins to live and do _____ God commanded.

1. Man is _____ to God.
2. Man begins to use his _____ voice.
3. Man's voice was the _____ voice.

C. Gen. 3 – Man hears a _____ voice of counsel.

1. A _____ voice enters the garden.

2. The serpent _____.
3. Notice about what the serpent _____.

D. Notice how _____ changed ...

1. From _____
2. To _____
3. The third voice disorients us to _____.
4. In some sense, you can say that the _____ was changed.
5. Since this day _____ voice was the third voice.

E. Adam's sin affected his relationship with ...

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. Sin will _____ cause problems in one of these three areas.

Now...

5. Knowledge of _____
6. Man desires to be _____.

F. Man desperately needed the intervention of the _____ voice.

1. From _____
2. To _____
3. To _____
4. God's voice is slow; it invites a _____.
5. God not only spoke words of redemption, He moved with _____.

G. Gen. 4 – The need for biblical instruction _____ as we see Cain's condition and beyond.

Within this world, what do you think happens with anxiety?

2. Enter Prov.:

- Solomon wanted his son to _____ to God's wisdom.
- He describes the _____ of wisdom in this passage, among other key attributes.
- Solomon connects listening to wisdom to a _____ life. Wisdom benefits you!

A. Why should we listen to Wisdom? (vv. 32-36)

- Wisdom says to _____ to her (v. 32).
- We are _____ when we do (v. 32).
- How should we listen? (vv. 33-34)
 - As one who listens with _____
 - As one with _____
- What are her big-picture benefits? (vv. 35-36)
 - If you find wisdom, you find _____ and favor from the Lord.
 - If you sin against wisdom or hate her, you _____ yourself.

B. Wisdom speaks and gives! (vv. 1-21)

- She _____ out to all mankind to benefit them (vv. 1-5).
- She helps us _____ what is right and true (vv. 6-11).
- She helps us live _____ as those who honor God (vv. 12-16).
- She gives _____ gifts to those who listen to her (vv. 17-21).

C. Wisdom _____ can provide these benefits for the Christ-follower. (vv. 22-31)

- Wisdom _____ everything (vv. 22-26).
- Wisdom was _____ at creation (vv. 27-31).

Implications for Counselors and Counselees:

1. Friends, what is the big idea?

Wisdom provides you the _____ life under God! Listen to her. She is part of God's voice of orientation and reorientation.

2. Wisdom's voice is _____ than the voices of the world – regarding anxiety and everything else.

- It was there in the _____.
- It is different than those who would _____ you from wisdom.
- It is different than those who would promise a _____ life.
- It is different than those who would _____ others.
- It is different than those who would want you to just simply follow your own _____.
- It is different than those who _____ the fear of God.
- It is different than those who _____ what they can't deliver.
- It is different in that it _____ God.

3. What do we hear from wisdom that we want to _____ obey and help our counselees obey?

- We want to _____ to her.
- We want to _____ her.
- We want to see what _____ she puts us on.
- We want to strive to _____ her carefully.
- We want to recognize her _____.

4. How should we then live?

- Wisdom as God's voice provides us an _____ for our soul.



- Do you long as a counselor to hear wisdom? Does your counselee long to listen to wisdom?
- Do you appreciate what wisdom gives? Does your counselee appreciate what wisdom provides?
- Are you listening to God's voice on the hill, along the path, at the gate, and in your values?

