

Dealing with Anxiety, Stress, Worry

I was quite surprised when I looked on line and discovered that a little over 27% of US Americans struggle with anxiety. That's 1 in every 4 people! Here are some other "stats" I found per <https://cfah.org/anxiety-statistics/>:

- Anxiety disorders affect 3.94% of the worldwide population.
- 41.7% of young adults (18 to 29 years) suffer from anxiety.
- 9.4% of children in the US have anxiety.
- 36% of teens experienced higher anxiety levels during the pandemic.
- 31% of college students have an anxiety diagnosis.
- The prevalence of anxiety disorders in the US is higher in women at 30.8% than in men at 23.5% [3].
- 94% of the workers feel stressed out at work.
- The COVID-19 pandemic caused a 25% increase in anxiety prevalence.
- 60.76% of healthcare workers felt higher fear and anxiety levels due to COVID-19 virus exposure.

And perhaps the saddest stat is that only 36.9% seek treatment for their anxiety disorders. Anxiety disorder is one of the most common mental health disorders.

There is certainly a time and place for appropriate meds, doctors, and therapy, and I would urge you to seek good professional help! But it shouldn't surprise us that God has some things to say about this matter in Scripture, and He offers us some practical counsel and solutions. So lets take a look at some Bible texts and what God is telling us

Have you ever stopped to consider your value? Perhaps you fell worthless or been told your worthless. If so, consider this, God thinks you are priceless! So much so that He traded the life and blood of God the Son to redeem you! Considering God desires to spend eternity with you and paid this price, that makes you very valuable as a person – priceless because God is priceless!

Matthew 6:25-30 tells us that God provides for even the little birds and the flowers growing in the field. We have nothing to fret over considering that He values us above all His earthly creation! He will provide for all the needs of His children, but He does it in His time and manner because He knows what is best for us. We should reflect on Jesus' question – will worry benefit us in any way? Of course not! I've heard worry described as borrowing, or taking on, tomorrow or today's anticipated problems today. That itself is a problem, as our anticipations often do not match reality. But even when they do, we have a God who is in control of our lives, if we chosen to let Him be, and will proved our needs. Instead

of worry we are counseled to make God and a saving relationship with Him our greatest priority so that God truly has our permission to take care of us.

Joshua 1:9. Sometimes people feel alone, even abandoned, but God promises to always be with His children, He will never leave or forsake them (Hebrews 13:5-6)! With a promise like that, from a God who never lies, we can be strong, we can have courage, we do not have to succumb to fear or stress.

Psalms 4:8. Pause for a moment to consider King David's life. He was hunted by King Saul and his army and had to flee through the wilderness of Israel. King Saul was intent on killing him. He was pushed into exile and had to flee from the throne because his own son, Absalom, sought his harm. Yet, David wrote he could lay down and sleep in peace because he trusted in God for his safety! What would you give for a good night's sleep, for peace? God simply wants and asks for your heart in a committed, surrendered, relationship to Him.

Isaiah 26:3-4. Perfect peace... that is hard for many to contemplate let alone experience. But we can by keeping our focus on God and our trust in God. May I ask you a silly question? Can you tell me what my morning breakfast tasted like – was it sweet, tart, sour, salty, bitter? You're probably going to say something like – "how should I know? I didn't taste your breakfast!". There is my point, have you tasted my Savior, Jesus Christ? People like to put Him, and Christians, down or make crude jokes about them, or even reject God because of what others have said. But they haven't taken the time to "taste and see that the Lord is good" (Psalm 34:8). God wants to earn your trust and love, give Him the opportunity, "taste" or spend some time to experience Him and get to know Him. He wants to be your strength!

Psalms 27:14. And that's why the Bible says to "wait" on God. Waiting doesn't mean do nothing, it means to look for, to expect, to hope. When we look for God, expecting Him to keep His promises, placing our hope and trust in Him He strengthens our heart. Our faith grows each time we have those positive experiences with God, but it can also grow during the trials. Trials allow us to see our faults, our weaknesses. And then we know more specifically what to take to God for His help.

Psalms 37:5. When people have been hurt by some people it becomes more difficult to make commitments to other people. And that is part of Satan's strategy in keeping us from God. But if you will accept God's invitation to make a commitment to Him, to trust in Him, He will take care of you. Do keep in mind, God's end and priority goal is your salvation and for you to be with Him through eternity. This world, this life on earth, is temporary.

Isaiah 41:10. How powerful is God? He spoke this world into a perfect existence, even the sun and planets. This God of unimaginable power promises to hold His children in His strong yet gentle right hand. You won't need to worry, stress, or fear with God at your side strengthening you, helping you through every trial journey of life.

Psalms 3:5-6, & 8. This is similar to what we read in Psalm 4:8. Repetition is a good teacher. It doesn't matter what trials, human or other, you may be facing – if God is for us, who can be against us! David knew it was God who sustained him. God wants to sustain you too, and give you His perfect peace.

Philippians 4:6-7. Instead of being worried and anxious, God gives us this solution: talk with Him. That's what prayer is really, talking to God as a friend, but a friend who deserves our utmost respect and reverence. Talk with/pray to God and let Him know your troubles, your joys, your needs, and your praise. God is omniscient (all knowing) but He still wants to hear from you, because He loves you! Yes, building a proper, healthy, trusting relationship is a process that takes time. God understands that and is patient with us. And as you build this trust relationship with Him, you will gradually begin to experience a peace, His peace, that we will not ever fully understand, but we can fully experience. And that gradually developing peace helps us keep our focus, our thought, our attention, our hearts and minds, on Jesus Christ. Jesus counseled us to abide with and in Him (John 15:5). That means to stay attached to Him. It's not a one time decision/event but a lifetime ongoing process.

1 Peter 5:6-7. If you will choose to humbly stay connected to Jesus, He will lift you up. He will build you up. So why not take the step in learning to trust God. He never asks for "blind trust" but will give you experiences where you will learn He is trustworthy. So, what are you waiting for? Isn't it time to cast all those worries, cares, stresses, the emotional burdens you are carrying, on Him?