

Fear is a strong, unpleasant emotion caused by an identified looming danger or threat, whether real or perceived. Anxiety, is lingering apprehension caused by unclear future events that seem challenging, daunting, or uncertain. These two are interrelated; fear causes anxiety and anxiety can lead to fear.

Fear is a God-given emotion created to protect you when you face real danger. Fear triggers adrenaline, inciting a fight-or-flight-or-freeze response for survival. God, however, did not intend for your mind or spirit to be persistently controlled by fear or anxiety. A mind and spirit preoccupied with fear can be paralyzing, rob you of peace, and harm your physical, mental, and spiritual health; it can shift your focus from the all-powerful, sovereign God who loves you and who has your best interests in mind. Constant worry and anxiety are often a result of misplaced meditation.

The Bible repeatedly says to not fear, but to focus on Christ, trust your life to God, and follow His will according to the Bible. Learning to trust God and live in His will leads to peace. (Jeremiah 17:5, John 14:27, Isaiah 41:10, Isaiah 26:3)

Common Characteristics of Fear and Anxiety:

- **Avoidance:** Specific events/places/situations/people are avoided. Avoidance provides a person a feeling of safety (often a false sense of security), but does little to address real underlying problems that trap her in her emotions. It limits the full life of freedom that God intends for her.
- **Insecurity:** An anxious person may continuously wonder to himself, or ask others, if his fear is rational. He routinely seeks reassurance that his fear will not likely become reality.
- **Negative thinking:** Anxiety discounts God's good character, sovereignty, and promises. It overrates the probability of bad outcomes.
- **Obsessive thoughts and behaviors:** For some, obsessive fears can affect mental health. Irrational, uncontrollable compulsive actions can develop as false safeguards.
- **Inability to rest:** Sleepless nights are common when the mind is preoccupied by worries and fears.
- **Physical pain:** Prolonged anxiety and stress can lead to physical symptoms such as: nausea, rapid heart rate, chest or stomach pains, muscle aches, numbness or tingling, and panic attacks.
- **Addictive coping strategies:** Substance abuse and other addictive behaviors are common coping strategies for those seeking anxiety relief apart from the peace offered by Christ.

Biblical Insights

Anxiety/worry cannot solve problems. You matter to God; He knows your needs and will provide.

- *"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? Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life?" (Jesus Christ, Matthew 6:25-27)*

God is good, sovereign, and in control. His resources are limitless.

- *"For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together." (Colossians 1:16-17)*
- *"Have you not known? Have you not heard? The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He does not faint or grow weary; his understanding is unsearchable. He gives power to the faint, and to him who has no might he increases strength." (Isaiah 40:28-29)*

Trouble in this world is unavoidable, but Christ is stronger than any trouble you will face. Jesus helps those who trust and rely upon Him through hardship. You are powerless apart from Him.

- *"I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world."* (John 16:33)
- *"I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing."* (John 15:5)

God commands us to not be ruled by fear, but to courageously trust/follow Him despite worldly fears.

- *"And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell."* (Jesus Christ, Matthew 10:28)
- *"Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."* (Philippians 4:6-7)

God promises eternal peace, joy, hope, and rest to those who rely on Him through fears and hardship.

- *"Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you [God] are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me."* (Psalm 23:1-4)
- *"You keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on you..."* (Isaiah 26:3)
- *"May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope."* (Romans 15:13)

God can use you mightily when you are weak. His power is magnified when you must depend on Him.

- *"But he said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.' Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong."* (2 Corinthians 12:9-10)

Next Steps

- Ask Christ for His peace that surpasses understanding (Philippians 4:7). If you do not yet have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, learn more at www.regenerationrecovery.org/freedom.
- Find a safe place that is Christ-centered, like a *re:generation* group, where you can understand the source of your anxiety, heal, and learn to surrender to Christ with others. (Hebrews 12:12)
- Don't isolate. Find a bible-teaching church and begin to establish interdependent relationships with Christians who can remind you of God's character and love for you. (1 Thessalonians 5:14)
- Spend time in God's word daily learning of His goodness, power, and love. Pray and journal daily taking your worries/fears out of your head, and casting your anxieties on the Lord (Psalm 68:19).
- If worries are becoming obsessive or harming your health, consider a medical evaluation from a Christian physician.
- Let uncertainty draw you near to God to be reminded of His character (James 4:6-8). Thank Him for each opportunity to trust Him and rely on Him more. Ask to see and know His power and love.

Additional Resources:

- Go to www.regenerationrecovery.org for stories of hope: Ann and Andrew
- Read these *re:generation* blogs: "How To Stop Worrying And Living In Fear", "Finding God through Facing our Fears"
- www.desiringgod.org/topics/fear-anxiety
- Books: *Anxious for Nothing: Finding Calm in a Chaotic World* – Max Lucado; *When I Am Afraid: A Step by Step Guide Away From Fear and Anxiety* – Edward T. Welch; *Overcoming Fear, Worry, and Anxiety Becoming a Woman of Faith & Confidence* – Elyse M. Fitzpatrick; *Calm My Anxious Heart: A Woman's Guide to Finding Contentment* – Linda Dillow