

“When I Am Afraid”:
Praying Through Anxiety
Sermon Notes

➤ **Anxiety is a massive, universal, root-level, life-dominating issue - with a very simple solution**

**So if you belong to Jesus, press forward in faith to...*

1. Pray the problem of anxiety (vv.1-7)

2. Pray God’s promises for anxiety (vv.8-13)

Next Week: Psalm 73 - “Whom Have I In Heaven But You?”:
Praying Through Bitterness

MEFC Community Group Study Guide

For the week of August 9th-15th

Getting Started

1. What are you afraid of? What creates worry or anxiety in your heart? If you're not sure, consider some of the following: heights / flying, closed spaces, crowds, blood, germs / viruses, clowns, particular animals, insects, certain kinds of movies, evangelism, being alone, choking, drowning, when you don't know what to say / uncomfortable silences, thunder & lightning, darkness, failure, going to the doctor / dentist, public speaking, etc...

Take some time to talk through these fears (or others not listed above) as a group. Do some of these fears go back to a particular starting point in your life that you can identify? Or have they been with you as long as you can remember? Make sure everyone who would like to has an opportunity to share.

Digging Deeper

2. In Scripture, though it can occasionally mean "terror" (Luke 12:4-5), "fear" is the rough equivalent to "regard", "awe", or "reverence". Therefore, "fear" is more or less a word that lies right at the heart of worship - both of the one true God, and also our idolatry (see Proverbs 1:7; Isaiah 8:12-13; 1 Peter 3:14-15). In the secular world, certain manifestations of anxiety are considered disorders. Yet we might bring the issue into clearer focus by identifying anxiety as a *worship* disorder. What do you think? Reflecting on the Scriptures above, how does seeing fear, worry, and anxiety as through these biblical lenses bring clarity (and possibly great conviction) to our daily struggles in this area of life?

Open Your Bible to Proverbs 29:25...

3. Proverbs 29:25 tells us that: "The fear of man lays a snare...". What does this mean? How does it do that? Can you think of any practical examples in your life or in the lives of others? While you're pondering these things, stir in the Lord's words to his people in Isaiah 2:22. Is this a temptation for you? In what ways? How does this verse help to provide perspective in what can be a debilitating temptation in the Christian life?
4. While Proverbs 29:25 says: "The fear of man lays a snare...", the same verse goes on to say that: "...but whoever trusts in the LORD is safe." What does this verse teach us about the nature of fear and faith? What is the relationship between these two powerful realities? John Piper has preached and written extensively on what he calls "Battling the Unbelief of Anxiety"¹. Have you ever thought of anxieties as manifestations of unbelief? If so, which ones? How so? How does this make you feel?
5. Take a look at Psalm 56:3-4. Think carefully through the flow of thought David presents to the reader. Using the list of fears from the first question in this study guide, what specific promises from Holy Scripture (chapter and verse!) can you begin to use in order to fight the fight of faith

¹ <https://www.desiringgod.org/messages/battling-the-unbelief-of-anxiety> . Accessed 8/7/20 @12:45pm.

which will serve to “sever the root”² of anxiety in your life?³

6. The Apostle Paul offers us a fascinating perspective on anxiety in 1 Corinthians 7 where he outlines both holy and unholy versions of it. In 1 Corinthians 7:32-35, Paul is knee-deep in an extended instruction to the church regarding sexual purity, marriage, divorce, and singleness in the Christian life. Walk phrase by phrase through these four verses. What sort of anxieties does Paul want believers to be free from? What sort of anxieties does Paul want believers to be freed for? What does it mean to be “anxious about the things of the Lord”? How does this principle in his instructions for marriage work itself out in broader applications where we might be tempted to experience anxiety?
7. 2 Timothy 1:7 is crystal clear that our sinful fear does not have its source in God. On the contrary, it proceeds to tell us what gifts he offers us to fight such anxiety in our lives. What three realities has God given us to defang and dethrone ungodly worry, fear, and anxiety? Consider each, one at a time. Why are these three particular graces tailor-made to crucify such sins?
8. As you close your time together, be sure to pray specifically for one another in the areas of sinful fear and anxiety that you’ve shared (i.e. pray the problem). Furthermore, be sure to pray through specific blood-bought promises of God through Christ that we may lay hold of to triumph over sinful fear and anxiety – 2 Corinthians 1:20 (i.e. pray the promises).

² Again, a phrase from the work of John Piper. If you’re interested in learning more, consider reading his wonderful book: *Battling Unbelief: Living and Dying By Faith in Future Grace* - <https://www.desiringgod.org/books/battling-unbelief> .

³ If you need help getting started, consider: Isaiah 41:10; 43:1b-3a; 1 John 4:18.