



Life Principles Notes™

When Anxiety Strikes

Summary:

December can be one of the most joyous times of year. Churches host special events to celebrate our Savior's birth. Families and friends gather to exchange gifts. And strangers wish each other, "Merry Christmas!"

But for many, it is also a stressful season. Traffic is often terrible; relationships can become strained; credit card bills may pile up. In the midst of all the celebration, people often feel worried or tense. Unfortunately for some, anxiety isn't just a seasonal problem but a daily one. It interferes with

their sleep, disrupts their concentration, and hinders their productivity. God desires for every one of His children to know peace beyond human comprehension. Even when we experience the most painful situations, we can rest securely in the knowledge of His care and concern for us.

Key Passage: **Philippians 4:4-9**

Supporting Scripture: *Psalm 34:17; Isaiah 26:3; Matthew 6:25, 27, 31, 34; 7:23; John 14:27; Romans 8:28; Philippians 4:11; Hebrews 5:7*

Scriptural Principles:

1 What is the nature of anxiety?

Anxiety can be defined as *an overwhelming sense of tension that fragments our thoughts and divides our minds*. In our complex world, we will always have opportunities to fret. But a few *moments* of stress—after hearing frightening news, for instance—is far different from a life *controlled* by anxiety.

The Bible teaches us how to avoid letting worry take over our lives. While imprisoned in Rome, the apostle Paul wrote, "Be anxious for nothing, 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 comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 4:6-7). He knew how to have peace and contentment, no matter what his circumstances (Phil. 4:9).

Why is it so important that we learn to deal with anxiety? This emotion disrupts our thoughts, preventing us from thinking clearly and making wise decisions. Our productivity decreases because worry wastes time and energy. Relationships with our spouses, families, coworkers, and friends suffer. Anxiety also affects us physically by contributing to a host of health problems. It can hinder marital intimacy and hamper our fellowship with God. Jesus told His disciples, "Do not worry then, saying, 'What will we eat?' or 'What will we drink?' or 'What will we wear for clothing?' . . . Do not worry about tomorrow; for tomorrow will care for itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own" (Matt. 6:31, 34). When believers live in fear, you and I are essentially saying that we don't trust our heavenly Father to take care of us.

2 How can believers overcome anxiety?

By praying right (Phil. 4:6-7): Christians should pray in all circumstances and situations, not just about the “big things.” If we neglect to talk to God about a particular area of our lives, it often leads to a larger problem. But instead of focusing exclusively on a list of requests, we should seek to adore and worship the Lord. God already knows our needs, and He has the power to supply them. More than anything else, the Father desires for us to build an intimate, trusting relationship with Him.

Believers should also pray *specifically*. “Lord, please bless them” is not sufficient. Instead of making a general request, we should ask God for a friend or family member’s healing, protection, or spiritual growth. Make time to pray for others even when you are going through a difficult season of life. Focusing exclusively on your own problems—even in prayer—can cause you to dwell on them even more.

Christians should cry out to the Lord in *supplication*. This word indicates a passionate outpouring of the heart in contrast to mere “lip service.” David testified to the Lord’s faithfulness to deliver the righteous when they called to Him (Ps. 34:17). And our Savior cried out in supplication to the Father just before the crucifixion (Heb. 5:7). As believers, we can trust that God will also answer our fervent prayers.

Lastly, we are also to pray “with thanksgiving.” You and I are dependant on the Lord for our very lives. When God doesn’t answer our prayer immediately—or He says no—we should continue to be grateful for all He has already given us.

By thinking right (Phil. 4:8): What believers dwell on has a direct effect on how anxious we feel. Instead of worrying about what the future will bring, try focusing on your relationship with the Lord. Seek His will regarding your goals and life’s purpose—for today, tomorrow, and the distant future. Talk to Him about stressful situations, and ask Him to help you handle them in a godly manner. Remember that the Father loves you and wants to guide and direct your decisions.

God’s people are to meditate on “whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute . . . [and] anything worthy of praise” (Phil. 4:8). The way Christians conduct ourselves in business, in recreation, and with our families should be consistent with this standard. If believers want to have victory over anxiety, we must not only pray correctly, but think rightly as well (Isa. 26:3).

In John 14:27, Jesus promised, “Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Do not let your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful.” As believers, we still face adversity, but God can give us supernatural peace in the midst of suffering. Children of God have the security of knowing that nothing happens unless He allows it. And the Lord promises to use difficult situations for our ultimate good (Rom. 8:28).

By living right (Phil. 4:9): Those who lead ungodly lives can not experience lasting peace. And people who don’t know the Lord have no hope of life after death (Matt. 7:23). They may mask their fears with drugs, alcohol, work, or some other distraction, but they are living with apprehension about their eternal future. In chapter four of Philipians, Paul wrote, “The things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you” (v. 9). Only when our relationship with the Father is right can we truly be free from anxiety.

Conclusion:

The Bible gives us clear instructions about how to find peace. As we commit our anxiety to the Lord, determine to think on truthful and righteous things, and surrender control of our lives to God, He gives us the grace to overcome this destructive emotion. Paul’s instructions were simple: To find supernatural peace, you and I must choose to pray

right, think right, and live right. No matter what heartache, pain, or difficulty you go through, you can learn to say with the apostle, “I have learned to be content in whatever circumstance I am” (Phil. 4:9). We can rest in the fact that our sovereign God lovingly cares for His children. ✨

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