

## Can I Find Balance When Overwhelmed with Anxiety? (Part I)

**1 Peter 5:6–7:** *6 Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time, 7 casting all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you.*



Anxiety seems to be everywhere, and everyone seems to have it. The good news is it can be a very normal and sometimes a healthy part of life. The bad news is that more often than not, it grows into an oversized burden that can be difficult and even debilitating. When we as Christians have anxiety that needs to be managed, we know the Bible has the answers. The good news is we know we need to trust in the Lord, pray continually and live in faith. The challenging news is many times our anxiety is so powerful that hearing these biblical answers hurts and doesn't help. Why? Because we have already worked at applying these things and are still stuck! Our objective today is to slow the whole process down and work on suggesting ways to cope with anxiety's overwhelming grip.



We are NOT medical professionals, and we have not been professionally trained to handle anxiety or depression disorders. Often Christians may need professional help, including medication, to handle these kinds of challenges. We fully advocate for such treatment where and when it is appropriate.

We also know anxiety isn't cured just by reading a few scriptures. Having anxiety doesn't make us a bad Christian, but we might have to work a little harder to keep scriptural principles in the forefront.

### Oxford Languages, definition

**anxiety:** *noun*

1. a feeling of worry, nervousness, or unease, typically about an imminent event or something with an uncertain outcome:
2. desire to do something, typically accompanied by unease: "the housekeeper's eager anxiety to please"

*psychiatry*

3. a mental condition characterized by excessive apprehensiveness about real or perceived threats, typically leading to avoidance behaviors and often to physical symptoms such as increased heart rate and muscle tension.

While anxiety can be debilitating, it can be good, in the case of the second definition. We discuss "good" anxiety in Part II.

(Source: Excerpt from Mayo Clinic *Anxiety Disorders*) Experiencing occasional anxiety is a normal part of life. However, people with anxiety disorders frequently have intense, excessive and persistent worry and fear about everyday situations. Often, anxiety disorders involve repeated episodes of sudden feelings of intense anxiety and fear or terror that reach a peak within minutes (panic attacks). These feelings of anxiety and panic interfere with daily activities, are difficult to control, are out of proportion to the actual danger and can last a long time. You may avoid places or situations to prevent these feelings.

**Rick**

I went through a period of life where I had anxiety attacks, these panic attacks, and it wasn't pretty. It took a lot of work to get beyond them. Anxiety is a big thing to deal with. We want to understand it so we can learn to better deal with it.

As we examine a scriptural approach to anxiety, we suggest a thought pattern to use as a template to gain some control over our anxiety. This pattern has four steps. They are not easy, nor are they a cure, but they are a coping mechanism.

We will fill in the “how to” as we go.



**Learn to gain a conscious awareness of our mind being overtaken by anxiety.** This recognition is, *Wait a minute. I know what is happening to me. I'm not in a good place.*



**Apply that awareness and pause the natural anxiety cycle of thinking and feeling.** Make the conscious decision to stop and not go any further. *I'm driving down the wrong road. I have to put the brakes on. I need to stop here!*



**Build towards feeding our hearts and minds with positive and productive ways of managing our anxiety-inducing circumstances.** We have to reframe the problem by looking at it differently. We then rehearse the new way of seeing it.



**Intentionally reboot our thoughts and emotions so we can see the circumstances through a lens of true faith, trust and peace.** We can understand “restarting by rebooting” when our computer gets wonky. The first way to troubleshoot is to shut it down and turn it back on so that all the programs and updates can reload properly. To reboot is to get a new start with the updates in place.

How can these four words help us get beyond our anxiety?

**In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus took some time and focused on anxiety. As he began to teach us about handling this challenge, he said something interesting: Matthew 6:25: (NASB77) For this reason I say to you, do not be anxious for your life, as to what you shall eat, or what you shall drink...**

*For this reason—for what reason? What did he teach us before this?*

Jesus took time to introduce specific patterns of behavior before he addressed anxiety.

**First, he focused our attention on the ambitions of life and challenged us to recognize how anxiety causing those ambitions can be:**

**Matthew 6:19–21:** (NASB77) *19 Do not lay up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. 20 But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal; 21 for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.*

Every human being has “treasures.” Jesus makes the point, *where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.* Are our treasures earthly things we have to worry about someone stealing, or that can rust and decay? Or are our treasures something different, something higher, something out of reach of those anxiety-producing possibilities?



**As a Christian,  
how often do I assess  
where my truest treasures are?  
Are my truest treasures  
anxiety-producing or anxiety-relieving?**

We know where our treasure lies by considering what we think about and how we spend our time.

**Jesus’ next focus: When we observe what is around us, do we have single (clear) or double vision (blurred)?**

**Matthew 6:22–23:** (NASB77) *22 The lamp of the body is the eye; if therefore your eye is clear (having single vision), your whole body will be full of light. 23 But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!*

Jesus says the eye is the key to determining if light or darkness is in us. Our eye as *the lamp of the body* may not be totally reliable. We want to focus our eyes with a singular vision to improve our focus. We want to see with what we might call “sanctified eyesight.”

Jesus is speaking to a vast audience but more specifically to his followers, *So, what do you see?* If we are not seeing clearly from a godly perspective, *our body will be full of darkness.* That is not a very comforting statement for him to make! When we hear this, we might think, *I’m in trouble again. First, my treasures are in the wrong place, and now I can’t even see straight!*



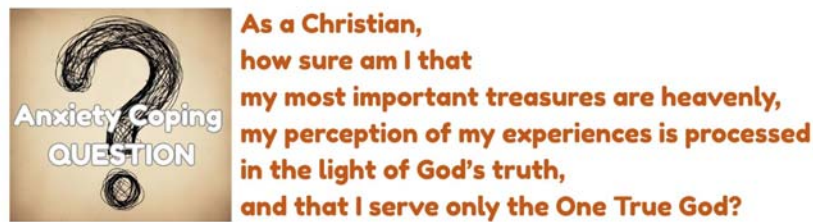
**As a Christian,  
am I perceiving my experiences  
through my own limited,  
personal interpretations,  
or am I seeing them with the  
light of God’s truth shining down upon them?**

When we have excessive and obsessive anxiety our vision is blurred, not clear. We see the situation through the lens of our own perspective instead of through the single, clear lens of God’s providence and overruling.

Jesus’ two statements—treasures on earth versus treasures in heaven and single eyesight versus blurry eyesight—can be anxiety-causing because they might cause us to think we are failing. But remember, these are just a precursor to what he will teach about anxiety.

**The conclusion of these introductory teachings for handling anxiety is simple:**  
**Matthew 6:24:** (NASB77) *No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will hold to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon (wealth, riches).*

Who/what will you serve? Which is it? We can’t be in between. Talk about an anxiety-causing issue! Jesus brings up our natural cares, warning we have to carefully choose focusing on temporary earthly treasure versus everlasting heavenly treasure.



How sure are we about whom we serve, how we serve, what is important to us and how clearly we see? Jesus hasn’t even started talking about anxiety yet.

His teaching here was incredibly wise and definitely challenging. He truly was drawing his followers to a higher standard of living.

**Wouldn’t asking ourselves these questions make us even more anxious than we were before we started? What is Jesus’ point?**

Jesus is priming our anxious hearts with these piercing self-examination statements to bring us to the reality of how our hearts and minds work. He wants us to be aware of these things. He wants us to feel our anxiety so he can answer it with an incorruptible treasure and light from the only true God who deserves our undivided loyalty.

*You cannot serve God and mammon*—Jesus will next give us lessons about anxiety.

We will consider these as: **ANXIETY’S OBSESSION** and then **ANXIETY’S SOLUTIONS**.

**ANXIETY’S OBSESSION: I am nervous and restless about my life and have an impending sense of doom!**

At one time or another, we likely all feel this way. This “obsession” is very big and broad.

**Matthew 6:25:** (NASB77) *For this reason I say to you, do not be **anxious** <3309> for your life, (in other words, because you are called away from worldly treasures and perceptions to follow the One True God, do not be anxious for your life) as to what you shall eat, or what you shall drink; nor for your body, as to what you shall put on. Is not life more than food, and the body than clothing?*

**Anxious:** Strong's Exhaustive Concordance #3309  
*merimnao*; from #3308; to be anxious about

Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon: 1) to be anxious 1a) to be troubled with cares

Sometimes we turn our feelings into facts. Anxiety can reframe our reality in such a way that we instinctively seek to deny that reality. These feelings override truth and are fundamentally destructive.

Jesus mentions several things in this verse, but for now we are only going to focus on his first statement, *For this reason I say to you, do not be anxious for your life.*

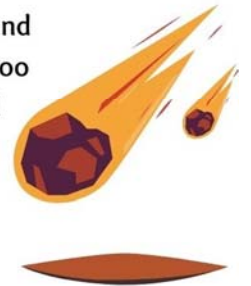
Anxiety looks at life and sees all the things that are “probably, maybe never, but very well could go wrong” at any minute. We fold under the pressure of an imaginary catastrophe.

## Automatic Thoughts and Distortions

### Catastrophizing

When you believe that something is a catastrophe, you tell yourself that it is so horrible and awful that “I can’t stand it.” In telling ourselves this, we convince ourselves that we are too feeble to cope with life. For example, “I couldn’t stand it if she were to leave me. It would be awful.” Although many things are unpleasant, inconvenient and difficult, we really can stand anything short of being steamrolled to death, as psychologist Albert Ellis has said. So one might think, “I don’t like this, but I certainly can stand it.”

**Source:** Excerpt from *The Self-Esteem Workbook*, Glenn R. Schiraldi, PhD



Most of what we worry about never comes true. We invest all that time and yet never had to worry about it. This kind of negativity smothers life, joy and peace. It’s like not being able to breathe!

The cares of this life are hard enough, but what about the anxiety around aging and dying? There is a lot of anxiety when you see the years ahead of you are much fewer than those behind you. *Is the Lord pleased with me? Should I have done something differently? Should I have done everything differently?* This creates a lot of anxiety, too. As we go through this conversation on anxiety and break it down into pieces, anxiety about aging and dying fits very well with this first **ANXIETY’S OBSESSION**.

*I look back and there is little time left...and I am such a failure...and there is no place to go, nothing to do... and I can’t fix it and I don’t know what’s going to happen and it’s really too bad...if only I had done, and on and on and on.* This is what anxiety feels like.

**ANXIETY'S OBSESSION: I am nervous and restless about my life and have an impending sense of doom!**

**ANXIETY'S SOLUTION: Recognize what is happening and methodically ACT upon that realization.**

Well, sure, but isn't this solution a little oversimplified? Yes.

Will it stop what is happening? No. But it's going to *begin* the process of stopping what is happening. We have to take that first step.

Let's get practical and go through each of the four steps:



**Learn. I see where my heart has gone, and I bring it before God in prayer.**

**Psalms 88:1-3:** *1 O LORD, the God of my salvation, I have cried out by day and in the night before You. 2 Let my prayer come before You; incline Your ear to my cry! 3 For my soul has had enough troubles, and my life has drawn near to Sheol (the grave).*

David feels utterly hopeless here. He is showing us how to recognize our anxiety by putting it into prayer. This is such an important step, no matter what the anxiety is, to be able to repeat the anxiety to God our Father. David says, *Lord, my soul has had enough troubles, and my life has drawn near to the grave. I don't know what else to do, I am that far gone.* And yet, he prays. We can feel like we are that far gone, and yet when we pray, we show God we recognize the scenario is out of our hands. This is a great way to begin.



**Slow it down and apply. I work at pausing the natural anxiety cycle by pressing myself to look elsewhere!**

**Right after Jesus told us not to be anxious for our lives, he says this:**

**Matthew 6:26:** (NASB77) *Look at the birds of the air, that they do not sow, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not worth much more than they?*

God makes sure that nature supplies food for the birds—they matter to God. This helps us to pause, or refrain from being anxious, because Jesus tells us we are *worth much more than they*, so we must matter to Him!

One of the ways to alleviate anxiety is by getting out into nature.

(Source: [health.harvard.edu](http://health.harvard.edu)) **Even a short 20-minute nature break can significantly lower stress hormone levels.**

(Source: [sageclinic.org](http://sageclinic.org)) **Being in nature promotes mindfulness, helping you stay present and reduce anxious thoughts. Natural environments help lower cortisol levels, the hormone associated with stress.**

Get outside, look up, look around and listen to nature!

We want to see our lives the way God sees them and to trust His wisdom. He cares for His creation, and we are the higher end of His creation.



**Build. Acknowledge the fact that God personally knows who we are as a source of comfort. Psalm 139 is a song of high highs and low lows. David lays it all before God.**

**Psalms 139:1–6:** *1 O LORD, You have searched me and known me. 2 You know when I sit down and when I rise up; You understand my thought from afar. 3 You scrutinize my path and my lying down, and are intimately acquainted with all my ways. 4 Even before there is a word on my tongue, behold, O LORD, You know it all. 5 You have enclosed me behind and before, and laid Your hand upon me. 6 Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is too high, I cannot attain to it.*

When we realize the Lord knows all we are going through, it gives us a sense of security and a release to let go. *You have enclosed me behind and before—we are really protected.*

Anxiety makes it all about ME. We want it to be all about GOD and His son.



**If the worst DOES happen,  
do we believe God permitted the experience?  
Do we believe it was God's providence  
or don't we?**

We need to live the words of our belief. Spiritualize the matter and say, *If I am a Christian, I have dedicated my life to following God through Christ. Therefore, what happens to me is under His jurisdiction.* There is a big issue when we take something under God's jurisdiction and proclaim it to be ours. That is not where it belongs! This is how reframing comes into play.

There is a war going on inside of our heads and hearts as we struggle through these steps, but we are NOT doomed. We are cared for by the same Father who takes care of the little birds. Are we not more important than they are?



**Intentionally reboot our thoughts and emotions so we can see the circumstances through a lens of true faith, trust and peace.**

**2 Corinthians 4:7–10:** *7 But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, so that the surpassing greatness of the power will be of God and not from ourselves; 8 we are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not despairing; 9 persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; 10 always carrying about in the body the dying of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body.*

We are a *treasure in earthen vessels* so that our overcoming is not because of us, but is because of God's glory.

**This reminds us of the Apostle Paul praying three times to have an affliction removed:**

**2 Corinthians 12:9:** (NASB77) *And He has said to me, My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness. Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may dwell in me.*

We can see the anxiety steps in the Apostle Paul's prayer. He recognized his issue, put it before God, waited and reframed it and received the answer. Once he got the answer that the affliction would not be removed, he dealt with and accepted it, working mightily within his limitations.



**What happens if we break down before we even get to the “restart” phase? We barely reframe and then find ourselves not able to move forward because of our anxiety. Then what?**



This definitely happens and proves God's point: we are weak and need Him. *We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed.* We may think we are crushed because in our minds, we have created the idea that we can't go on. From God's perspective, He is just beginning.

Often when we think it is over, we are done, there is nothing left—we just can't take any more—is when He says, *Oh my child, let Me begin. Please, make some space for Me in your life, and let Me begin.*

We won't always get through these steps. This is not some miraculous cure. We can't take the “four-step pill” and be fine. This is a process. We work at it, fall down, get up, brush off and start over. RE-recognize, RE-refrain, RE-reframe and RE-rehearse that reframe, then RE-restart. Do it again and again. It's okay if we don't get through the whole process each time. We just keep trying to move forward a little at a time.

We are protected. God's got this. As overwhelming as our anxiety feels—especially when it is big and we feel just worthless and that there is nothing good about our life—hang on!

If we are in Christ, we are a “new creature.” God picked us. He chose us. He called us, therefore we aren't “junk.” We must reframe our mental position to say, *I need to trust His word and His way instead of mine.*

***Reexamining Our Anxiety: Sometimes our anxiety seems like a giant mountain that is in the way of every aspect of our lives. In such cases, we need to recognize what is happening, and work to replace the fictional worries of our internal conversation with the facts of God's care.***

Fictional worries, worries we make up, need to be replaced with the scriptural facts of God's care.

At first glance this all looks to be very overwhelming. It is not as easy to apply the answers as it is to see them!



**This first example of managing our anxiety was a big picture example.  
What do we do when our anxiety is more specifically focused?**

This is an important question because that is the very issue that many of us have with anxiety. Certain experiences, relationships, circumstances and unknowns can really throw us off, even though we are managing the rest. *I'm great in most of my life, but when this comes up, I fall apart and can't see myself through it.* Take heart! Jesus knew this and his lesson on managing anxiety was custom built for this very challenge!

Whether our anxiety is big about our whole life, or it is focused on smaller things, Jesus has it covered.

**ANXIETY'S OBSESSION: I am worried that my life will not amount to much of anything. I'm a failure!**

It's sad, but we are all failures at something! But do our failures cause debilitating anxiety? Our first example was that everything in our life is wrong. Here it is about the details; my efforts, my focus, my moving forward. I'm a failure.

**What did Jesus say about this?**

**Matthew 6:27:** (NASB77) *And which of you by being anxious <3309> can add a single cubit to his life's span?*

There's some disagreement in the ancient Greek translations if this means "no amount of anxiety will make us taller," or if it means "it won't make us live longer."

The bigger thought here is feeling anxiety over being able to be relevant, being able to matter. One of the definitions for *life's span* means "maturity." Sometimes our anxiety is about being grown up in Christ, being able to serve God like Jesus taught, and not serving mammon. Our anxiety might be a maturity issue.

Many of us struggle with finding what value we can personally bring before God, and this results in doubts and fears. We need to put that in perspective and understand when we feel bad, as if we are failures with no way out, Jesus says, *Which of you, by being anxious can add a single cubit to his life's span?* Can we add value and maturity to our life by being anxious?

**ANXIETY'S OBSESSION: I am worried that my life will not amount to much of anything. I'm a failure!**

**ANXIETY'S SOLUTION: Find the factual value of what I can bring before God from HIS perspective of me. We must attempt to learn to see our value through God's words instead of through our emotions.**



**Learn. Expressing our perceived lack of value to trusted individuals and especially to God helps us recognize it for what it is.**

**Psalm 27:11:** *Teach me Your way, O LORD, and lead me in a level path because of my foes.*

“I am my own worst enemy” is a common expression. Seeking God’s way means seeking to fulfill what God sees and not what WE see, even if our “foe” is our own obsessive thoughts and feelings! Recognize and learn!

This is a good prayer: *Teach me...and lead me in a level path.* A level path is a stable path. We want a secure place to stand because Satan can really magnify our weaknesses and throw us way off balance. He takes our doubts and turns them into fear and confusion, and he can do that without anybody else being involved.

He can do that just based on our own feelings that we translate into thoughts, that we then turn into “realities.” We can certainly be our own foe here! This is why we need to be very careful to recognize, *Am I my own foe? Am I my own enemy here? Am I thinking and presenting things through the path my thoughts and emotions bring me down?*



**Apply. In seeking to stop our “enemies” from overcoming us, we need to be willing to stop OURSELVES and our broken obsessions dead in their tracks!**

**Psalm 27:12:** *Do not deliver me over to the desire of my adversaries, for false witnesses have risen against me, and such as breathe out violence.*

David was being pursued by individuals who spoke falsely against him. But in our own lives, am I a false witness against myself? Am I *breathing out violence* against myself? The answer can be absolutely yes! When we think we are a failure in life even when we are following Christ, we are *breathing out violence* against ourselves.

Let’s face that scary thought. *I really AM a mess—now I’m really doomed for failure!* No. Once we have recognized this, we can put the brakes on this destructive thinking, slowing it down and hopefully bringing it to a stop.

Do I focus on the value that God sees in me or the wreck I see in me? What is it that I’m focusing on? Pause, slow down and stop this negative thinking.

(Source: BBC Science Focus Magazine, “How to break the anxiety cycle,” by Ian Taylor) It’s not about avoiding a problem that needs addressing, but the emotion attached to it. “You identify the nature of the fear and recognize what it is,” says Prof Michael Anderson, one of the researchers on the team. “But then don’t go there. Don’t allow your mind to leapfrog into the cascade of thoughts that you usually experience. And if something does come into mind with a thought or an image, quickly push it out.” “When everything feels like it’s falling apart, trying to focus on positive thoughts can feel completely delusional,” Anderson says. “It’s not very helpful. But when you chop off a negative thought at the knees, you prevent it from doing all this secondary damage, too. You prevent it from making you lose sleep...”

If we simply try to stop thinking the obsessive anxiety thoughts, stop feeling that negativity without replacing it with something, we have just left the door wide open for it

to come back because there is still room. We have to take up the mental and emotional room inside of ourselves with something else.

This is why we need to go to reframe and rehearse. This is the “building area.” Again, this is where the war happens between how we naturally feel and where we are trying to go.



**Build. Reframing means taking a breath and restating the factual and godly perspective of our value.**

**Psalms 27:13–14:** *13 I would have despaired unless I had believed that I would see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living. 14 Wait for the LORD; be strong and let your heart take courage; yes, wait for the LORD.*



We might intellectually see the “goodness of the Lord,” but it’s hard not to think that if I see I’m failing at being good enough, surely God can see that, too! How do we reframe this insecurity?



By understanding God knew it before we did. Yet, we are still called by Him and are still blessed by Him. He has it all in order. Accepting this helps us with our negative mindset.

**Reframing and rehearsing mean we see our dramatic shortcomings in light of God’s dramatic grace:**

**1 Corinthians 1:26–31:** *26 For consider your calling, brethren, that there were not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble; 27 but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong, 28 and the base things of the world and the despised God has chosen, the things that are not, so that He may nullify the things that are, 29 so that no man may boast before God. 30 But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption, 31 so that, just as it is written, LET HIM WHO BOASTS, BOAST IN THE LORD.*

We might be thinking, *If in my weakness, God is glorified, then He must be REALLY glorified by me!*

But if I’ve decided I’m a failure at doing these steps, that I don’t have enough talent or even energy these days to use in the Lord’s service, if I’m not smart enough, it’s “I,” “I,” “I,” “me,” “me,” “me!”

The danger here is that, ironically, too much humility can lead to pride!

That kind of humility is not real humility. That is a fantastical result of imagination. Real humility is an accurate assessment of oneself. *God has chosen the things that are not, so that He may nullify the things that are.* Therefore, when we are weak, it means we are in a position of strength because we have been pulled from our weakness to follow Christ.

But it's not OUR strength! This is the reframing—this is what we have to rehearse. It is not supposed to come from us. Yes, we are failures as individuals, but in Christ we are here for a higher purpose.

(Source: BBC Science Focus Magazine, "How to break the anxiety cycle," by Ian Taylor)  
 Reasserting control over the way you think is one of the best ways to block out anxious thoughts in the first place...When you view anxiety as something potentially useful, it loses its power to become something terrible. A common example, which shows the effectiveness of reframing, is to imagine stress or fear as excitement. Let's say you're worried about giving a speech or getting on a plane. When you feel the adrenaline begin to pump, tell yourself the heightened emotions that come with it are a sign that you're excited about your holiday or how well that speech is going to go. Nervousness and excitement feel roughly the same, physically. If you can flip your brain to thinking it's actually a positive feeling, the sense of anxiety can vanish.

This is reframing. We need to rehearse doing this to make it happen automatically.



**Intentionally reboot. Let us emphatically choose to see ourselves as God's children. And like any caring father, His children are always on His heart and mind!**

**The Psalm continues with David praising God's ability to SEE him in whatever state his heart was in:**

**Psalms 139:7–12:** *7 Where can I go from Your spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence? 8 If I ascend to heaven, You are there; if I make my bed in sheol (the grave), behold, You are there.*

David starts with this poetic phrase by saying, *It doesn't matter if I am at the highest heights or the lowest low; You are there because You are with me.*

*9 If I take the wings of the dawn, if I dwell in the remotest part of the sea, 10 even there Your hand will lead me, and Your right hand will lay hold of me.*

Even if impossible things happen, God is still there and *Your right hand will lay hold of me.*

*11 If I say, Surely the darkness will overwhelm me, and the light around me will be night, 12 even the darkness is not dark to You, and the night is as bright as the day. Darkness and light are alike to You.*

David's message to God was, *You see me—and I matter—in whatever state of heart or mind I am in.*

When we have that sense of being a failure come upon us, it is good to read **Psalm 139** and recognize that wherever we think we are, the hand of God, the sight of God, the providence of God goes before us and after us.

No scripture tells us that God gives up on us even when we fail. If He has guided us to this point, why are we telling ourselves He stopped? If He tells us and shows us He cares, why are we arguing with Him?

This goes back to separating fact from fiction. Don't let yourself create an earthly thought pattern where there's no way out. Human beings are good at doing this! We end up wallowing in self-pity, which is not godliness.

**Reexamining Our Anxiety: When our anxiety is obsessing over our own perceived lack of value and contribution, our corrective recourse is to NOT trust our own judgment. Instead, we must trust our heavenly Father who not only knows who we are, but He knows the pathways and tendencies of our hearts and minds. There is NO PLACE we can go in our fear or darkness that is beyond His loving and protective reach!**

Jonathan

When I become anxious, I repeat my favorite scripture, **Proverbs 3:5-6**: (KJV)  
*Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding.  
 In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths.*

This is putting His perspective before our own. Why? Because we matter to Him, and He called us.

While this is a deeply intense journey, it is also becoming a deeply comforting one as well. God knows, and He cares!

**So far, we have seen anxiety that is about EVERYTHING and anxiety that is obsessed with our own perceived lack of value. Is there a pattern here, and if so, what's next?**

The pattern is that Jesus is starting with the biggest things and working through these anxiety management lessons toward the smaller things. His next lessons will focus on how we look to others, and our worries about sustaining ourselves.

There are two lessons here. We will talk about how we look to others next. We will save the worrying about sustaining ourselves for Part II.

**ANXIETY'S OBSESSION: I'm troubled internally with self-conscious anxiety. I believe that I look inferior to others. We start comparing ourselves to others in our natural life and in our spiritual life.**

Consider social media as a prominent example!

In the last segment, the obsession was *I can't get there; I'm a failure*. This segment is, *I don't even look the part of getting there*. This is a more narrow focus of anxiety.

**Matthew 6:28**: (NASB77) *And why are you **anxious** <3309> about clothing?...*

Why are we anxious about "looking the part"? Perhaps the main thought here is image.

There are two parts to image:

1. The "image" we portray by how we look. It is no secret that this image drives a large portion of people's preconceived notions about others. We are influenced by

social media. We might feel we can't measure up; we can't look the part.

2. The image of who we are. This will reveal itself from the inside out; it is not necessarily readily obvious. It is revealed as someone gets to know us better.

It's not about our outward appearance that is important, but what is inside. The sincerity of our hearts which should be visible.

Looking the part doesn't mean being the part. Not looking the part doesn't necessarily mean that we aren't the part.

**ANXIETY'S OBSESSION: I'm troubled internally with self-conscious anxiety. I believe that I look inferior to others. We start comparing ourselves to others in our natural life and in our spiritual life.**

**ANXIETY'S SOLUTION: Find the factual value of what I look like before God from HIS perspective, not mine!**

**Matthew 6:28–30:** (NASB77) 28 ...*Observe how the lilies of the field grow; they do not toil nor do they spin, 29 yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory did not clothe himself like one of these. 30 But if God so arrays the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the furnace, will He not much more do so for you, O men of little faith?*

Think about this beautiful example. Jesus just said, "Why are you anxious about clothing, about looking the part?" God clothes the grassy fields with the delicate beauty of the lilies. If He can do that, surely He can clothe us with His grace! It's not about the fabric. It is the fabric of our lives we need to be focusing on.

**Learn. Our life focus is being presentable before God, NOT looking good to others.**

**Jesus used the Pharisees as an example of what NOT to do:**

**Matthew 6:1–2:** 1 *Beware of practicing your righteousness before men to be noticed by them; otherwise you have no reward with your Father who is in heaven. 2 So when you give to the poor, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, so that they may be honored by men. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full.*

The Greek word for *hypocrite* means an actor. Enjoy the applause, Pharisees, because that's the extent of your reward!

This is about our motivation. Yes, we are supposed to "let our light shine before men" (**Matthew 5:16**), but not if we are trying to impress everyone with how magnanimous and holy we are. God is looking for the right motive, the right heart attitude in our actions. Today we don't blast a trumpet for people to turn around and notice the good things we are doing, but we sure do post them on social media!





**How much of my heart and mind is influenced by how I perceive I look to others?**



**Apply. Our anxiety over “looking good” is a misplaced priority. Pray when challenged!**

**Philippians 4:4-7:** *4 Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice! 5 Let your gentle spirit be known to all men. The Lord is near. 6 Be **anxious** <3309> for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. 7 And the peace of God, (the opposite of anxiety) which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*

If we choose to challenge our anxiety, to slow it down, we have God’s peace waiting for us.

Consider transparency, authenticity and accountability. We don’t want to have our Christian costume hanging in the closet that we put on every Sunday. That’s for an actor—a “hypocrite.” We want our motives to be transparent, our actions to be authentic, and we want to be accountable for both. We pray for David’s level path. If we work on these things, we stop focusing on “me.” We look outward with a clear eye to God and can be a genuine blessing to others.

When we stop focusing on “me,” we stop being our own enemy. Then we can make space for these scriptures and for *the peace of God which surpasses all comprehension* to be part of our life.

We have recognized our erroneous thought pattern; we have refrained or paused our comparisons of how we think we look to others. Now comes the hardest part; the reframing and rehearsing.



**Build. Build a thought and appreciation pattern to replace obsession.**

**Philippians 4:8-9:** *8 Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things. 9 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.*

We have examples to follow, and we have the promised relief to receive if we put in the effort.

We must see it differently and then work on doing this again and again. Rehearsal is the time where things go wrong, but we work the bugs out. Then when we feel “I don’t look the part” coming on again, we recognize it and can pause and reframe our thinking just like we rehearsed.

**RESTART**

**Intentionally reboot. Our theme text offers a dramatic cause and effect, and conclusion for managing anxious thoughts. It begins by again addressing our clothing.**

**1 Peter 5:5–7:** *5 You younger men, likewise, be subject to your elders; and all of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, for GOD IS OPPOSED TO THE PROUD, BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE. 6 Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time, 7 casting all your anxiety <3308> on Him, because He cares <3199> for you.*

*Clothe yourselves with humility toward one another—now this is the right “wardrobe”!*

Thayer’s Greek-English Lexicon says “clothe yourselves” here refers to “knot or band by which two things are fastened together, to fasten or gird one’s self.” This was the white scarf or apron of slaves, which was fastened to the belt of the vest and distinguished slaves from freemen. This text encourages Christians to show their subjection one to another by putting on humility. This could also refer to the overalls which slaves wore to keep clean while working—an exceedingly humble garment.

We can cast our anxiety on God, because we know He cares for us. We matter!

**Anxiety:** Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance #3308 *merimna*; from #3307 (through the idea of distraction); solicitude: care

**Care:** Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance #3199 *melo*; a primary verb; to be of interest to, i.e. to concern (only third person singular present indicative used impersonally, it matters): care, take care

We can cast our anxiety, our worries and our emotions upon Him because He has concern for us. God is not worried for us; He is powerfully concerned for us. This is a tremendous promise, giving us a solid foundation.

**Knowing God Himself has genuine concern for us helps us to face this next challenge with far less anxiety:**

**1 Peter 5:8–9:** *8 Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. 9 But resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world.*

We are NOT alone! *The same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world.* Let us cling to others who are also clothed with humility and faith, because our adversary, the devil, looks to destroy us!

We unwittingly give the devil the upper hand when we are stuck in the vortex of our own personal anxieties. This is why these four steps are so important. It helps us put things back into priority so that we put our trust in God, who cares for us, rather than opening the door to Satan who looks to destroy us.



**Reexamining Our Anxiety:** When our anxiety is obsessed with how we perceive we look to others, let us realize that such worry is really an overstated concern that God Himself does not see us as important. Let us seek to instead be clothed with humility, for in so doing, we open the door for God's true concern for our lives to hold us and guide us.

Anxiety is an enemy of the heart. It paralyzes our heart's ability to access true reality.

In Part II, we will pick up with Jesus' teaching about anxiety over healthy sustenance. We will also talk about scripturally GOOD anxiety and its benefits.

For now, think about the four steps:

**RECOGNIZE   REFRAIN   REFRAME   RESTART**  
**REHEARSE**

This is a scriptural way to begin the process of coping with something that feels bigger than we are.

**So, can I find balance when overwhelmed with anxiety?  
For Rick, Jonathan, Julie and Christian Questions...  
...Think about it!**

*All scriptures cited are from the NASB1995 translation unless otherwise noted.*



**Next episode**  
Episode 1384: Can I Find Balance  
When Overwhelmed With Anxiety? (Part II)



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to receive our Weekly Newsletter, Show Notes and Study Questions

## Bonus Material and Study Questions

### Recommended additional study:

Ep.1180: Am I My Own Worst Enemy?

*Unlocking the solutions to seven truth-distorting reactions*

<https://christianquestions.com/character/1180-worst-enemy/>

<https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/anxiety/symptoms-causes/syc-20350961>

<https://www.webmd.com/depression/depression-or-anxiety>



Parents and Bible class teachers, continue your studies on this topic with this short, animated video for kids at ChristianQuestions.com/YouTube:

- What can we do when we're sad or frustrated?  
<https://christianquestions.com/cq-videos/videos-cq-kids/what-to-do-if-sad-or-frustrated/>
- How do we keep trying when things are hard?  
<https://christianquestions.com/cq-videos/videos-cq-kids/keep-trying-when-things-are-hard/>
- Why can't we have everything we want?  
<https://christianquestions.com/cq-videos/videos-cq-kids/why-cant-we-have-everything/>

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*Many of our topics are compiled with a Word Study using several concordances and other Bible helps. We see how a particular word is used in both the Old and New Testaments. Understanding how the words are used not only tells us what they mean, but it gives us the nuances of the original Hebrew or Greek when comparing how the writers of the Bible use them in different contexts. We can also learn more by seeing the origins of a particular word, providing a depth of understanding just reading scriptures in English cannot provide.*

**Anxious:** Strong's Exhaustive Concordance #3309  
*merimnao*; from #3308; to be anxious about

Thayer's Greek Lexicon: 1) to be anxious 1a) to be troubled with cares  
2) to care for, look out for (a thing) 2a) to seek to promote one's interests  
2b) caring or providing for

### All uses in the King James Version:

**Matthew 6:25:** *Therefore I say unto you, take no **thought** <3309> for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?*

**Matthew 6:27:** *Which of you by taking **thought** <3309> can add one cubit unto his stature?*

**Matthew 6:28:** *And why take ye **thought** <3309> for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin.*

**Matthew 6:31:** *Therefore take no **thought** <3309>, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed?*

**Matthew 6:34:** *Take <3309> therefore no thought <3309> for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought <3309> for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.*

**Matthew 10:19:** *But when they deliver you up, take <3309> no thought <3309> how or what ye shall speak: for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak.*

**Luke 10:41:** *And Jesus answered and said unto her, Martha, Martha, thou art careful <3309> and troubled about many things:*

**Luke 12:11:** *And when they bring you unto the synagogues, and unto magistrates, and powers, take <3309> ye no thought <3309> how or what thing ye shall answer, or what ye shall say:*

**Luke 12:22:** *And he said unto his disciples, Therefore I say unto you, Take <3309> no thought <3309> for your life, what ye shall eat; neither for the body, what ye shall put on.*

**Luke 12:25:** *And which of you with taking thought <3309> can add to his stature one cubit?*

**Luke 12:26:** *If ye then be not able to do that thing which is least, why take ye thought <3309> for the rest?*

**1 Corinthians 7:32:** *But I would have you without carefulness. He that is unmarried careth <3309> for the things that belong to the Lord, how he may please the Lord:*

**1 Corinthians 7:33:** *But he that is married careth <3309> for the things that are of the world, how he may please his wife.*

**1 Corinthians 7:34:** *There is difference also between a wife and a virgin. The unmarried woman careth for <3309> the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and in spirit: but she that is married careth <3309> for the things of the world, how she may please her husband.*

**1 Corinthians 12:25:** *That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have <3309> the same care <3309> one for another.*

**Philippians 2:20:** *For I have no man likeminded, who will naturally care <3309> for your state.*

**Philippians 4:6:** *Be careful <3309> for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.*

**Anxiety:** Strong's Exhaustive Concordance #3308 *merimna*; from #3307 (through the idea of distraction); solicitude: care

Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon: care, anxiety

**All uses in the King James Version:**

**Matthew 13:22:** *He also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word; and the care <3308> of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful.*

**Mark 4:19:** *And the cares <3308> of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things entering in, choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful.*

**Luke 8:14:** *And that which fell among thorns are they, which, when they have heard, go forth, and are choked with cares <3308> and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to perfection.*

**Luke 21:34:** *And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares <3308> of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares.*

**2 Corinthians 11:28:** *Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care <3308> of all the churches.*

**1 Peter 5:7:**  *Casting all your care <3308> upon him; for he careth for you.*

**Divide:** Strong's Exhaustive Concordance #3307 *merizō*; from #3313 (which means a part, division or share); to part, i.e. (literally) to apportion, bestow, share, or (figuratively) to disunite, differ

The King James Version translates this as “divide” 9 times, “distribute” 2 times, “deal” 1 time, “be difference between” 1 time, “give part” 1 time

Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon: 1) to divide 1a) to separate into parts, cut into pieces 1a1) to divide into parties, i.e. be split into factions 1b) to distribute 1b1) a thing among people 1b2) bestow, impart

**All uses in the King James Version:**

**Matthew 12:25:** *And Jesus knew their thoughts, and said unto them, Every kingdom **divided** <3307> against itself is brought to desolation; and every city or house **divided** <3307> against itself shall not stand:*

**Matthew 12:26:** *And if Satan cast out Satan, he is **divided** <3307> against himself; how shall then his kingdom stand?*

**Mark 3:24:** *And if a kingdom be **divided** <3307> against itself, that kingdom cannot stand.*

**Mark 3:25:** *And if a house be **divided** <3307> against itself, that house cannot stand.*

**Mark 3:26:** *And if Satan rise up against himself, and be **divided** <3307>, he cannot stand, but hath an end.*

**Mark 6:41:** *And when he had taken the five loaves and the two fishes, he looked up to heaven, and blessed, and brake the loaves, and gave them to his disciples to set before them; and the two fishes **divided** he <3307> among them all.*

**Luke 12:13:** *And one of the company said unto him, Master, speak to my brother, that he **divide** <3307> the inheritance with me.*

**Romans 12:3:** *For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath **dealt** <3307> to every man the measure of faith.*

**1 Corinthians 1:13:** *Is <3307> Christ **divided** <3307>? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?*

**1 Corinthians 7:17:** *But as God hath distributed <3307> to every man, as the Lord hath called every one, so let him walk. And so ordain I in all churches.*

**1 Corinthians 7:34:** *There is difference also between <3307> a wife and a virgin. The unmarried woman careth for the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and in spirit: but she that is married careth for the things of the world, how she may please her husband.*

**2 Corinthians 10:13:** *But we will not boast of things without our measure, but according to the measure of the rule which God hath distributed <3307> to us, a measure to reach even unto you.*

**Hebrews 7:2:** *To whom also Abraham gave <3307> a tenth part of all; first being by interpretation King of righteousness, and after that also King of Salem, which is, King of peace;*

**Care:** Strong's Exhaustive Concordance #3199 *melo*; a primary verb; to be of interest to, i.e. to concern (only third person singular present indicative used impersonally, it matters)

The King James Version translates this as “care” 9 times, “take care” 1 time

Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon: to care about

**Matthew 22:16:** *And they sent out unto him their disciples with the Herodians, saying, Master, we know that thou art true, and teachest the way of God in truth, neither carest <3199> thou for any man: for thou regardest not the person of men.*

**Mark 4:38:** *And he was in the hinder part of the ship, asleep on a pillow: and they awake him, and say unto him, Master, carest <3199> thou not that we perish?*

**Mark 12:14:** *And when they were come, they say unto him, Master, we know that thou art true, and carest <3199> for no man: for thou regardest not the person of men, but teachest the way of God in truth: Is it lawful to give tribute to Caesar, or not?*

**Luke 10:40:** *But Martha was cumbered about much serving, and came to him, and said, Lord, dost <3199> thou not care <3199> that my sister hath left me to serve alone? bid her therefore that she help me.*

**John 10:13:** *The hireling fleeth, because he is an hireling, and careth <3199> not for the sheep.*

**John 12:6:** *This he said, not that he cared <3199> for the poor; but because he was a thief, and had the bag, and bare what was put therein.*

**Acts 18:17:** *Then all the Greeks took Sosthenes, the chief ruler of the synagogue, and beat him before the judgment seat. And Gallio cared <3199> for none of those things.*

**1 Corinthians 7:21:** *Art thou called being a servant? Care <3199> not for it <3199>: but if thou mayest be made free, use it rather.*

**1 Corinthians 9:9:** *For it is written in the law of Moses, Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn. Doth <3199> God take care <3199> for oxen?*

**1 Peter 5:7:** *Casting all your care upon him; for he careth <3199> for you.*

# Study QUESTIONS

Ep.1383: Can I Find Balance When Overwhelmed with Anxiety? (Part I)

<https://christianquestions.com/character/1383-anxiety-part-i/>

See:  CQ Rewind  
SHOW NOTES

1. **Jesus' teachings on anxiety in the Sermon on the Mount** (Matthew 6)
  - a. In what way do our ambitions cause anxiety in our lives? (verses 19-21)
    - Are your truest treasures anxiety-producing or anxiety-relieving?
  - b. How is our eyesight a factor in obsessive anxiety? (verses 22-23)
    - How do you perceive and interpret your experiences?
    - Whom must we serve? (verse 24) Do your earthly ambitions pull you away from God?
2. **Anxiety's Obsessions and Solutions – "I am nervous and restless about my life and have an impending sense of doom!"** (See Matthew 6:25)
  - a. How can anxiety "**reframe** our reality?" Why does aging and dying fit into this obsession?
  - b. What is the solution? Is this a sure "fix" for fictional worries? Explain. In what ways do you struggle with this form of anxiety?
  - c. What did David do when he felt hopeless? How did he **recognize** his anxiety? (Psalms 88:1-3)
  - d. Is there something that can help us **refrain** from continuing this cycle? Describe. (Matthew 6:26)
  - e. How does Psalms 139:1-6 help us to **reframe** our anxiety? Do you truly believe in God's providence?
  - f. Why is knowing we have "our treasure in earthen vessels" so important to **restart**? (2 Corinthians 4:7-10, 12:9)
  - g. What happens if we fail to get through all four steps?
3. **Anxiety's Obsessions and Solutions – "I am worried that my life will not amount to much of anything. I'm a failure!"** (See Matthew 6:27, Psalm 27:11-14)
  - a. What is the solution? How can we **recognize** our own doubts before Satan magnifies them?
    - Are you "your own worst enemy?" How does Psalm 27:11 help with this?
  - b. How does **refraining** from this negative thinking stop our foes from "breathing out violence"? (verse 12)
    - Who are your "foes," the "false witnesses" in your life?
  - c. How do we build and **reframe** our negative self-talk? Why is this necessary? (Verses 13-14)
  - d. What must we emphatically choose in order to **restart**? (Psalm 139:7-12)
4. **Anxiety's Obsessions and Solutions – "I'm troubled with self-conscious anxiety. I believe I look inferior to others in my natural life and my spiritual life!"** (See Matthew 6:1-2, 28-30)
  - a. What are the two aspects of "image?" What's the difference between Matthew 5:16 and being a hypocrite?
  - b. What do we gain if we **refrain** from or slow down these anxious feelings? (Philippians 4:4-7)
  - c. How do we build and **reframe** to replace obsession, to fill the void when we **refrain**? (Philippians 4:8-8) How does 1 Peter 5:5-9 help us intentionally **restart**?