

# SUNDAY WORD

MAY 21, 2023



Proverbs 12:25a - "Anxiety weighs down the heart." (NIV)

All of us have something that we are afraid of, something that, in reality, is beyond our control. We may hear one thing that sets us off, like a health scare or financial setback or bad news, and then the next thing we know, we are spiraling into a senseless fear of "what if". Many of us are living with what the Bible calls an anxious heart. Proverbs 12:25a - "Anxiety weighs down the heart." (NIV)

There's a heaviness about you. There is something that is weighing you down, making it difficult for you to cope, and difficult to do what God wants you to do. The reality is, in your heart and mind right now, something is particularly bothering you, something that you are worried about. This is what the scripture says about the anxious heart. There are those who are being held down by the heaviness of a certain concern in their life.

## ANXIOUS HEART

How do you know if you are living with an anxious heart? There are six characteristics of those who have an anxious heart. If your answer is "Yes", check the box. If you check three or more boxes, you are living with an anxious heart.

First question: Do you easily get rattled or nervous? You are rattled when things don't go as you expected. Second question: "Do you often worry about things that are beyond your control?" Third question, "Do you lose sleep over pressing issues?" Fourth question, "Is it hard to turn off your mind? Your mind is always rewinding and playing, negotiating and bargaining around." The fifth question, "Does the unknown scare you? Does the future scare you?" Final and sixth question: "Do you often imagine the worst-case scenario? If you have three or more questions checked, chances are that you are living with an anxious heart, and it's weighing you down in your own life.

## LIFE GROUP DISCUSSION

- 1 Are there any areas of life where you fear losing control? What is your reaction when comfort or control is threatened?
- 2 Why do you think it's hard to let go of control and trust God for your life?
- 3 Reflect on a time when you came face-to-face with the reality that you were helpless in a specific situation and God came through for you.

## WE DO LIFE TOGETHER!

If you haven't been involved in a LIFE Group yet, send us a message us thru Fb, and we will get you connected to a small group.

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The reason why so many of us fear losing control is that control is something that we never had in the first place. We live under the illusion that if we do everything just right, then the events will come out the way we want to. The ironic thing is this: oftentimes, the things that we desire to control the most, the things that are most precious to us, are the very things that are most out of our control. Our loved ones, our children, our spouses, our future. That's why so many people have learned to live with an anxious heart, and don't even realize that their anxiety is weighing them down.

What do we do? Jesus teaches us the principle of how to experience His peace in the middle of all our worries and cares. Matthew 6:25- 27 - "25 "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes? 26 Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? 27 Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life?" (NIV)

How can we find inner peace from God amidst worries and fear? Here's the first step: Redirect your thoughts away from the worries and fears that trouble us and shift them to the word of God. Instead of dwelling on the "What if" scenarios that cause fear, such as "What if I can't provide for my family?" or "What if everything I've worked for collapses?" or "What if I lose my job?" or "What if my partner is unfaithful?" or "What if the doctor delivers bad news?" or "What if our marriage doesn't last?" or "What if we can't get pregnant?" or "What if I never get married?", consciously decide not to allow worry to consume us. Instead of letting WORRY consume us, let the WORD of God consume us.

The presence or absence of worry measures our trust in God. As believers of Jesus, we should aspire to focus on God and have confidence in Him. In this passage, Jesus taught that worry is unproductive. Worry keeps us from fulfilling the kingdom purposes to which He has called us. Worry never changes anything for good. Will worry change some things? Yes, but not for good. It will mess up your health, your relationship with God, your relationship with others, and your ability to be engaged in action.

Every place that the word "worry" appeared in Matthew 6, there were two words in front of it. They are the words "DO NOT". Every single time worry appeared in the New International Version, it was preceded by the words "do not" worry. Why? Because worry never changes anything for good. That's why Jesus asked this question in Matthew 6:27, "Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life (NIV)?" In other words, what good is worrying going to do?

Satan's tool of fear is meant to deter you from God's best. What does a farmer do whenever the farmer's got some good corn, and the birds are getting the good corn? What does a farmer put out? A scarecrow. Does the scarecrow have any power to harm the birds? No. What is the scarecrow's only weapon? Its only weapon is fear. Our spiritual enemy has a few weapons. One is the lie, deceiving our minds to believe something that is not true as if it were true. Another one of his weapons is the weapon of fear. God has not given us fear, but our spiritual enemy has.

Isaiah 26:3 - "You will keep in perfect peace those whose minds are steadfast, because they trust in you (NIV)." Look at the promises of faith. The Bible says, "You will keep in perfect peace because he trusts in the Lord." You will be kept in perfect peace, the supernatural peace of God, which transcends all human understanding, in the middle of a difficult situation. When? When your mind is fixed and focused on the things of God, you will have perfect peace. When you trust in the Lord with all of your heart, all of your mind, all of your soul, and all of your strength. Here's the bottom line: Whenever we are worried and afraid, we are not trusting God.

**GOD'S WAYS ARE HIGHER**

How many of you have experienced the frustration of making plans well in advance, only to see them fall apart on the actual day due to unexpected events? Covid was an unexpected event. It exposed the vulnerability of humanity, highlighting how little control we have over our lives.

Any task in life, is easy if you know the answers, procedures, and skills necessary. Not knowing the correct answer is what makes a test hard. Not knowing the necessary procedures and skills required is what makes a complex task hard. Not knowing what to do is, so often, what makes life hard. The problem is not the test, task, or life at hand; the problem is simply not knowing. Ignorance, the simple absence of knowledge which is important to us – is not always bliss as they say. It can be a terrifying thing.

When we lose control over our situation, let's recall what Isaiah 55:9 says, "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts (NIV)." God's ways are not our ways, His thoughts are not our thoughts. We may not see it from our limited vantage point, but God sees the whole story, not just the page we sit on.

God knows how it all started and what it was working towards. He knows how He and His Son would save the day from all the evil that we brought to the world. He knows how He works all the evil committed in the world together for good. He knows it all. Think about this for a minute. You and I have thoughts every day. And to us, our way of thinking is perfectly clear and reasonable. Remember when Israel left Egypt to go to the promised land? God did not allow them the quickest and easiest route. God took them the long way around.

Exodus 13:17-18 - "17 When Pharaoh let the people go, God did not lead them on the road through the Philistine country, though that was shorter. For God said, "If they face war, they might change their minds and return to Egypt." 18 So God led the people around by the desert road toward the Red Sea.[a] The Israelites went up out of Egypt ready for battle (NIV)." The Israelites needed to know without a doubt that it was the Lord God who brought them out of Egypt, not Moses. It was the hands of the Lord.

This passage serves as a reminder that regardless of what we suffer, God is with us and that at the end of our testing period, God will work all things together for our good. I did not say they would feel good, but that God would work them for our good.

Labor pains are not soft and easy pains, they hurt! But, what is born from that pain is what brings joy afterwards. God wants to make us into a "vessel" that He can use on earth and unfortunately, that process does not come without pain and suffering. Folks, This is what I believe: If your life is HARDER right now, it means that God is preparing you for a HIGHER calling. There is one whose ways and thoughts are higher than yours and mine, and He is cheering us on to the finish line.

Remember, every aspect of history has been carefully considered and meticulously arranged as part of God's greater plan of good. Our struggle to see what God sees shouldn't cause us to doubt Him, but to trust Him. Even if we were able to fully understand the extent of His plan, our understanding would be limited as humans. Therefore, our only choice is to trust Him.

Sometimes, life does not feel as if God is in control. We may question where God is as our loved ones face health concerns. Our plans crumble around us. All valid fears elicit valid emotions. Yet regardless of the scary unknowns in your life which seem large and looming, many of which you feel inadequate to handle, there is great news.

As believers of Jesus, we all have the power of the Holy Spirit within us to break down the stronghold of fear and grab hold of the peace God offers. Instead of tossing and turning every night under the weight of worry, we can all learn to submit our fears to God if we choose to put our trust in Him.

How wonderful would life be without the presence of fear? How much happier would you feel if you no longer had to carry the burden of worry? That type of living is possible, as we learn to focus on faith instead of fear. We can control our minds, or it will control us.