

Anxiety-Free Living, Part 1 **Luke 12:22-34**

Last week you heard a sermon on anxiety. Since this is a big issue, we will take the next three weeks to explore what the word of God has to say about anxiety, worry, fear, and stress.

Today, we will look at the problem.

Our levels of anxiety have increased dramatically over the last fifty to sixty years. According to psychologist Robert Leahy, in his book *Anxiety Free*, published in 2010,

“The average American child today exhibits the same level of anxiety as the average psychiatric patient did in the 1950s.”

Material comfort and security may be higher than it was back then, but other prevailing issues like separation from extended family, loss of community and neighborhood, uncertain employment, threats of terrorism, uncertain futures, high medical costs, immersion in technology, and lack of emotional support are a few of the many contributing factors.

American Psychiatric Association, 2023

Approximately 30 percent of Americans will suffer from an anxiety disorder.

Depression affects an estimated one in 15 adults (6.7%) in any given year. One in six people (16.6%) will experience depression at some time in their life. Depression can occur at any time, but on average, first appears during the late teens to mid-20s. Women are more likely than men to experience depression. Some studies show that one-third of women will experience a major depressive episode in their lifetime. There is a high degree of heritability (approximately 40%) when first-degree relatives (parents/children/siblings) have depression.

Orange Conference - workshop lead by Dr. Chinwe Williams

- The highest percentage of anxiety is found in young adults, ages 18-29.
- Major depression has increased 150 percent since 2010.
- Suicide rates have increased 34 percent in boys and 82 percent in girls ages 15-19 since 2010.
- Suicide rates have increased 109 percent in boys and 134 percent in girls ages 10-14 since 2010.

National Institutes of Health

Nearly 1 in 3 of all adolescents ages 13 to 18 will experience an anxiety disorder. These numbers have been rising steadily; between 2007 and 2012, anxiety disorders in children and teens went up 20 percent.

These stats combined with the rate of hospital admissions for suicidal teenagers also doubling over the past decade leaves us with many concerning questions.

There are several factors that could be contributing. In addition to genetics, brain chemistry, personality, and life events, take the following into consideration: High expectation and pressure, a world that feels scary and threatening, social media.

There are also some children who have unexpected and disproportionate reactions to normal developmental experiences

Technology

From somewhere in the past to 1900 AD, knowledge doubled every 100 years.

In 2022, knowledge doubled every 6 to 8 hours. We are living in a time of increasing acceleration.

Artificial Intelligence is here! Machines will be able to think on their own, but they will be amoral. AI is a tool which can be used for good or evil. It has the potential for abundance and for evil. AI will keep us connected like the cell phone, but it can do nothing for loneliness.

Then there is quantum computing.

AI could take over humanity; it is completely dependent on electricity.

With all of this, there remains the daily pressures that we all face.

Do you wonder why there is a rise in mental illness? Stress, anxiety, worry and fear. God is absent. These can affect your thinking. They can kill you.

The word "worry" comes from an old German word, *wuergen* which means to choke, or strangle. It's talking about mental strangulation through fear and anxiety and stress and worry.

Do you understand why people take drugs and get drunk and go on eating binges and shopping binges and go on wild adventures and so on, trying to fill their minds with other thoughts.

Do you understand why you are anxious and fearful, and how you handle these?

You and I are living in an anxiety-ridden culture.

In our society, people are never relieved of the anxiety; they just live with it. They try to manage it. (Clinical issues need to be managed because of physio-biological issues. These are usually because of trauma or chemical imbalances.) Most anxiety, worry, and the like don't need to be managed, they can be eliminated.

The best the world can offer you is to manage your anxiety. Jesus offers you to eliminate it.

The world will offer you cognitive behavior therapy, or a long list of drugs, but our compassionate God offers a far better solution, and that's the elimination of your anxiety altogether. Stop being anxious! Stop worrying. Stop being afraid!

So, if you do worry (anxious, fearful) as a Christian, you're sinning. This sin rises from a failure to understand and know God— a failure to understand His sovereign love, a failure to understand His sovereign care, a failure to understand His sovereign resources.

To know God is to trust God.

This is what Jesus unfolds in Luke 12. Jesus does offer anxiety-free living. When you come into His kingdom, God takes care of you and your worries really are ended so that what defined your life, worrying, being anxious, being fearful, is eliminated.

So, to prepare us for the next two weeks, lets read Luke 12:22-34.