



guidelines for living

a 5 minute message

January 9, 2018

ANXIETY: A BETTER WAY

Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God. Psalm 90:2, KJV

The National Institute of Mental Health did a study that required more than six years to complete. It was the most extensive piece of psychological research that has ever been conducted by this prestigious organization, or, for that matter, by any such organization anywhere. Their research confirmed what I have suspected for a long time: that the number one mental health disorder today is anxiety.

More than 10,000 people from different walks of life were interviewed, and their responses were fed into computers and checked against criteria for some 13 different mental disorders. They concluded that one adult in eight suffers from anxiety at the present time, and that one in five is so disturbed as to require professional help in his or her lifetime.

The behavioral health experts who were involved registered some surprise that anxiety is far more troublesome than depression, as some professionals had thought. Most affected or troubled by anxiety are women, and women are more prone than men to seek help. But when it comes to age categories, those under age 45, and especially young adults, are among the most troubled.

The study did not release findings on anxiety relating to a person's religious commitment, but I could not help wondering how the anxiety barometer would register if Christians and non-Christians were separated in two categories. Would you assume that people who believe in prayer, and say that God is in control, should not struggle with anxiety in the same way that a person does who looks up in the sky and wonders if anyone is in control? "Certainly," you respond, "we, who are Christians, should not be troubled with anxiety as much as the non-believer, at least not so much."

I agree with you in theory, but I honestly wonder if this statement is borne out by the facts. How many Christians do you know by the smoothness of their brows? On the personal level, do you take fewer aspirins than your neighbor? When you go to bed, do you drop off to sleep with a prayer, or lie awake struggling with decisions that can never be made in the middle of the night?



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Anxiety is a form of worry, and worry has been called "the acceptable sin of the saints" because so many are troubled by it. Perhaps you are asking yourself, "I wonder if that fellow Sala ever worries about anything?" And I would freely admit, that on occasion, I find myself worrying about things that sap my energy-- when I fully know that my concern cannot change a thing. But there are some things I do that help me when I catch myself worrying, and they will help you too.

The first thing I do is to remind myself that God is sovereign, that He is in control. I will look into the starry sky and remind myself of the words of Scripture, "Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God" (Psalm 90:2, KJV). It makes my concern rather inconsequential.

The second thing I do is to remind myself that prayer, not worry, changes situations. I then earnestly ask the Lord to deal with my concern. Then, believing that He has done this, I try to leave the burden at the foot of our Lord. Peter wrote, "Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you" (1 Peter 5:7). The Psalmist wrote, "Cast your cares on the LORD and He will sustain you" (Psalm 55:22). Whatever is troubling you isn't worth the effort. There is a better way. Anxiety is never an acceptable sin for any of God's children.

Resource reading: Psalm 55