

Worry, Anxiety and Stress

Online Sermon:

<http://www.mckeesfamily.com/sermons>

As we face an uncertain future filled with endless possibilities, it's natural to imagine some of the scariest and darkest outcomes, often replaying them in our minds. These fearful projections, which are usually beyond our control and unlikely to happen, become a breeding ground for stress and



anxiety—especially for those with a "stew without doing" mindset.¹ Worry leads us to irrational thinking, where our emotions are suffocated, hope is blocked, and we are drawn into reliving fictitious horror

stories born from our own dire imaginations. Even without a specific concern, the pressures of living in a fallen world, with its many tribulations like financial instability, diseases, and wars, feed a cycle of constant anxious thoughts, making us feel as though impending doom is inevitable. How many of you have ever felt overwhelmed by fear of the future? Just raise your hand

¹ Dr. David Stopp, You are What you Think, Kindle Version, Loc 1616.

if that's something you've dealt with. Today's sermon will explore how we often disguise our worries as useful tools to prevent tragedy, but in truth, this is futile. Only God knows and controls the future, and the only way to escape these imagined horrors is to place our faith in Him.

Trusting in Absolutes or in God

As we dwell on these anxieties, we often attempt to find security by clinging to the things we believe will make us happy—our relationships, achievements, or even our health. But



as Dr. Stoop rightly points out, "Just as guilt is an attempt to reshape the past, worry is our godlike push into the future, attempting to reshape it the way we want."

When we tie our happiness too rigidly to these desires, we risk being paralyzed in the present by fear of what could go wrong. Whether it's the fear of losing a job, facing divorce, enduring war, or contracting a disease, these "what ifs" can overwhelm us, even though we, as Christians, are given a spirit of power, love,

and self-discipline (2 Timothy 1:7). The more we build our lives on external, temporary events, the more we realize we're trusting in unreliable sources—mere "security blankets" on shifting sand (Matthew 7:24-29). Just like a character in a horror story anticipating the worst, we can become trapped in fear of an uncontrollable and uncertain future. How many of you have ever felt overwhelmed by fear of the future? Just raise your hand if that's something you've dealt with. But this is where the solution lies: true security comes from building our foundation on faith in God, who remains constant.

The key to overcoming worry and anxiety is to place complete trust in a sovereign God. Jesus teaches in His Sermon on the Mount that “No one can serve two masters... you cannot serve both God and money” (Matthew 6:24), revealing that



where we place our trust exposes the object of our faith. When we cling to material security or try to control our future, we only increase our anxiety. Jesus questions the futility of worry in Matthew

6:27, asking, “Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life?” Worry does not prevent hardship but steals our peace. Instead, we are invited to trust in God's promise that “in all things God works for the good of those who love Him” (Romans 8:28). Though we will face trials, we can find rest in

His sovereignty, knowing He is at work behind the scenes for our good. The battle against worry is won in the mind, where we must choose to trade our burdens for the light yoke of Christ, as He invites in Matthew 11:28-30. He assures us that He will carry our burdens and provide peace. Psalm 91:4 reminds us of God's protective care, sheltering us under His wings. Trusting God shifts our focus from fear to His unchanging faithfulness, and in even the darkest valleys, Psalm 23 reminds us that His rod and staff guide and comfort us. As Psalm 16:5 declares, God is our portion and sustenance, not our circumstances or achievements, and He will remain faithful now and forever. To see how faith can grow and overcome our fears, let's turn to the story of Abraham.

Abraham's Transition of Faith

To answer this question, we need only look at the life of Abraham. Though he believed God's promise to make him into a great nation (Genesis 12:1-3) and followed God's call without knowing his destination (Hebrews 11:8), his faith faltered when it came to trusting God for protection. Fearing for his life because of Sarai's beauty, Abraham lied and said she was his sister to avoid being killed by the Egyptians (Genesis 12:10-13). He repeated this deception with the king of Gerar (Genesis 20), showing a lack of trust in God's protection. However, by Genesis 22, Abraham's faith had matured. When asked to sacrifice his only son Isaac, he obeyed, believing that God could raise Isaac from the dead to fulfill His promise (Hebrews 11:17-19). Abraham's journey illustrates that faith can grow—what

began as fragile trust evolved into complete submission, embodying the truth of Proverbs 3:5-6, where faith in God's guidance leads to unwavering reliance on His promises.



Abraham's journey of faith teaches us that trusting in God's promises can lead to peace, even in the face of uncertainty. What steps can you take today to grow your own faith in God's promises? Is there an area where you're still

holding on to control? But how do we apply this kind of faith when we are confronted with the daily stresses and pressures of life? Just as Abraham grew in faith, trusting God can help us overcome the stresses and pressures we face daily.

The Affects of Stress

Stress is the body's natural response to any demand or challenge, whether physical, emotional, or mental, that disrupts its balance. Dr. Hans Selye describes stress as the "rate of wear and tear within the body" caused by life's circumstances that

² Taken from You are What you Think, Loc. 1790.

³ Taken from the following website: [Stress symptoms: Effects on your body and behavior - Mayo Clinic](#)

require adaptation or change.² While stress often carries a negative connotation, not all stress is harmful. Properly managed, it can enhance performance, foster growth, boost creativity, and even help us avoid danger. Spiritually, the tension of not living "in a manner worthy of the gospel" (Philippians 1:27) through the conviction of the Holy Spirit prompts us to



reassess our lives, confess sins, and return to righteousness.

However, unchecked stress poses significant risks. Research by the Mayo Clinic shows that

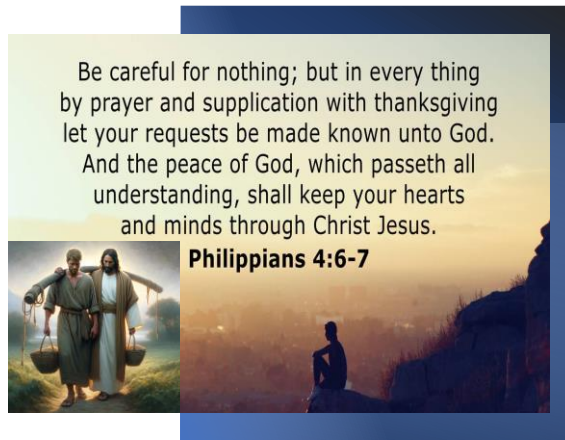
chronic stress can lead to health issues such as high blood pressure, heart disease, stroke, obesity, and diabetes.³ Similarly, studies by T.H. Holmes and R.H. Rahe identified 43 life events—including the death of a spouse, divorce, and personal injury—that strongly predict the onset of illness.⁴ While stress can serve as a signal for personal and spiritual growth when managed well, unchecked stress can harm both our physical and spiritual health, leaving us paralyzed by fear. In moments like these, Paul's words offer guidance on how to confront anxiety and uncertainty by shifting our focus from fear to faith in God. Let's now consider Paul's insights on how we can effectively

⁴ You are What you Think, Loc. 1790.

handle stress by placing our trust in God's sovereignty, rather than being consumed by the pressures and uncertainties of life.

Paul's Words on Handling Stress

While the world offers various methods for managing stress—such as exercise, mindfulness, meditation, medication, therapy, escapism, time management, and positive affirmations that are extremely helpful—the Bible provides timeless wisdom on how to face our uncertain futures. Paul exemplified this in his



life, learning to be content in all situations and even commanding, "Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!" (Philippians 4:4, 11). His advice is far

from superficial; it comes from a man who endured immense suffering—five times receiving the forty lashes minus one, three times beaten with rods, stoned, shipwrecked, and constantly in danger of death (2 Corinthians 11:22-29). Through his humbling experience on the road to Damascus, Paul learned that true happiness and contentment are not found in hoarding fleeting possessions but in faith and total submission to God. Though

tribulations are unavoidable, we have a choice in how we face them. To the Philippians, Paul revealed the key: "Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:6-7). Paul fully embraced Jesus' invitation to "take My yoke" (Matthew 11:28-30), trusting that through Christ, his burdens would be light.

Life is full of challenges that often shake us to our core. I vividly remember a trip my friend and I took to Wolfville, N.S., as we sought approval to begin our journey toward ordination. While we were excited, we were also anxious—afraid that our calling might be questioned or, worse, rejected outright. During the drive, we asked each other questions we thought the approval board might pose, rehearsing what we believed would be the best responses. When I entered the examination room and saw the serious faces of those filled with wisdom and truth, my heart pounded, and I could feel the sweat on my hands and forehead. As the questions came, and it seemed like they were agreeing with my answers, I started to relax. All the preparation with my friend was paying off!

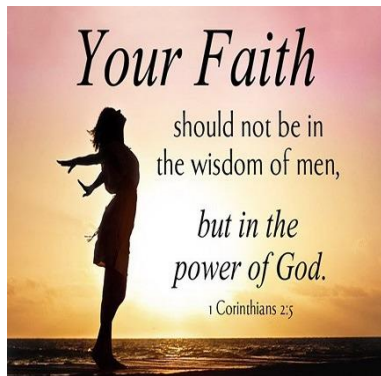
But then an elderly woman asked a question I hadn't anticipated. She referred to a deep personal tragedy—my first wife had died in a car accident just six months after we were married. She gently asked, "You went through such a painful experience—who helped you heal? Was it family, a friend, a pastor?" Instantly, I felt myself begin to sweat again. My mind raced because, up to that moment, I hadn't truly considered how I had healed. As I began to panic, the Holy Spirit

reassured me, reminding me that the question wasn't for me, but for Him. He told me to respond, "Do you not believe in the power of the Spirit to heal? While my servants may guide and lead, this kind of deep pain requires My tender touch."

The room was stunned by my answer as much as I was! By placing my faith not in myself, but in God, they saw the miracle of His healing power and recognized the authenticity of my calling. I'm sure many of you have gone through situations where you didn't know what to do, but God stepped in and guided you. Take a moment to think about a time in your life where you saw God's hand at work, even when the future seemed uncertain.

Conclusion

As we close today, let's take a moment to reflect on how we've been handling the stresses and anxieties in our lives. Are we relying on temporary solutions, trying to control



the future, or are we willing to place our trust fully in God's sovereignty? We've seen how worry leads us down a path of fear, but faith brings us peace. Paul reminds us that through prayer and thanksgiving, we can bring our burdens to God, and His peace, which surpasses all understanding, will guard our

hearts and minds (Philippians 4:6-7). Abraham's journey shows us that faith is a process—our trust in God grows as we learn to rely on His promises. Like Abraham, we can face uncertainty knowing that God's plan is always for our good. Today, I encourage you to release whatever burdens you're carrying, trusting that God cares deeply for you. His yoke is easy, and His burden is light (Matthew 11:28-30). May we leave here today with renewed faith, knowing that true peace is found in surrendering to the One who holds the future in His hands.

"The Lord is my portion," says my soul, "therefore I will hope in Him" (Lamentations 3:24).