

Main Point

The Gospel is the only solution to Anxiety.

Introduction (300)

Hook

Do you know peace? I mean internal peace. Peace in your heart. Do you have peace in your soul?

Do you go to sleep at night with no concern for tomorrow? Do you wake up excited about new possibilities and opportunities?

Do you know peace in your soul?

TB Story

I distinctly remember as a teenager, I was maybe 17 or 18, going on a hike with a group of friends.

And there was a key moment when we were all jogging along a ridge line, with ocean views before us. Food in our backpacks. Strength in our legs. A hatchet in our packs to cut wood. Everything was right. What could go wrong?

At that moment, I remember thinking “I have not a care in the world right now”. And it felt really good.

There were no cares or concerns weighing down on me.

This was good and worth working towards: Not a care in the world. Peace in my soul.

I'm sure you have your own memory of the "care free life". A life free of cares and concerns. It probably does not involve jogging along a ridgeline with friends, but I'm sure you have your picture of "the good old days".

But life goes on. Cares and concerns come thick and thin. Decisions of what to do after school, what to study, where to study, where to live, tests, assignments, exams, interviews, speeches, who to marry, where to work... and the list goes on

Is peace in the soul, a mere dream?

Is a heart that has "not a care in the world" only for children and teenagers?

Is it only "ignorance that is bliss"

Is it possible to have a life free of worry and anxiety, even with the responsibilities of adulthood? Even with a right understanding of the world?

Today I want to talk about that question.

Is it possible to have a life free of worry and anxiety?

And the short answer is YES!

Because of the Gospel, it is possible to have a life free of anxiety.

Outline

This is an important topic. To help us work through it I'm going to cover three parts:

1. Reality of Anxiety
2. Regular Approach to Anxiety
3. Real Solution to Anxiety

Part 1 – Reality of Anxiety

The world is an anxious place

I want to start off by saying the cares and the concerns you face are real. The weights of responsibility are heavy. The situations you face are serious

The possible outcomes are many, and not always pleasant.

We live in a world where a lot of things can go wrong.

Husbands

Think of a Husband and a father. He often know the cares and concerns of providing for his family.

Finances get tight, fuel prices go up, the rent or mortgage is relentless, food is expensive, the car needs maintenance, dentist appointments are coming up, power bills need to be paid,...and added to that workplaces are making redundancies...These are real concerns.

- It is easy to be worried.
- Easy to be anxious.
- Easy to be overwhelmed.
- Easy to have no peace.

How can a husband and father know peace in the face of all these pressures?

Mothers

Or think of a mothers who has her children on her minds.

- Will they hurt themselves while playing?
- Will they fall out of that tree?

- Will they get sick?
- Will they sleep well?
- Is the food I am feeding them healthy for them?
- Are they safe in public?
- Will they get harmed by others?
- Will they learn well?
- Will they get a good education and a good job?
- Will they become delinquent in society?
- And the list could go on.

Again, the concerns are real. Lots to be anxious about. Easy to have no peace.

Can mothers know real peace?

Youth

Or think of the youth and young adults who are faced with countless pressures.

“What are you going to do with your life?”

- What career path?
- What to study? s
- What to get an apprenticeship in?
- Who to marry? How to date?
- Acceptance by friends.
- Are they good enough?
- Do they measure up?
- What does it look like to do the right thing?
- How can I not waste my life?
- How do I make the best use of time?

It does not take long for a child to be swamped with concerns. Swamped with worries. Pushing out the peace that was once known.

Is being anxious just part of what it means to be an adult?

Workers

Or think of any person in the workforce.

They know the pressure of getting a job done.

- Will it be good enough?
- Will the boss be pleased?
- Will the client be pleased?

Not only quality, but timelines are the worst for anxiety.

- How can I get all that work done in that little time?
- Staying awake at night, going through the long list of things that need to be done by the end of the week.
- Deadlines and timeframes are an ongoing reality.

There is lots to be anxious about in any job. Easy to have no peace.

Can we only know peace of mind once we retire?

General Anxiety

These are some specific occasions that can cause anxiety, and the list could go on and on.

What about our own human **weakness**? Our bodies are prone to sickness and disease, despite our best efforts, and we all age making our body weaker and weaker.

And what about **Insults**? What others say about us? It is easy to be anxious about our reputation, our online image.

What about **hardships** of various kinds. I have already mentioned financial hardships, but there are all sorts of hardships like theft, abuse or abandonment?

What about **persecutions**? People shunning you because of your beliefs? People even attacking you because of your beliefs, even to the point of violence.

What about **calamities**? Earthquakes, Cyclones, floods, wars, and economic crashes. These are major events which could disrupt what we know in one quick sweep.

And of course, we all face the reality of **death**. The statistics are clear there. Every single person that is born will die. That is a cause of anxiety

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Weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, calamities, and death describe the world we live in.

There is a lot to be anxious about.

So how can we have peace in our souls? Peace in our hearts?

Before I give the real solution to anxiety, I want to briefly look at what the regular approach to anxiety is.

Part 2 – Regular Approach to Anxiety

DMS-5

It is not only Christians who recognise that anxiety is a problem.

The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders 5th Edition (DMS – 5) recognises 11 different types of anxiety disorders. And the eleventh one they

call “unspecified anxiety disorder” just to cover the basis

It describes all sorts of fears, such as social fears, fear of heights, of crowds or public transport, fear related to work or finances and the like.

Mental Health Foundation of NZ

Borrowing language from the DMS-5, the Mental Health Foundation of New Zealand defines it this way:

ANXIETY DISORDERS ARE A GROUP OF MENTAL HEALTH CONDITIONS THAT CAUSE FREQUENT, DIFFICULT-TO-CONTROL NERVOUSNESS, FEAR, APPREHENSION OR WORRY WHICH IS OUT OF PROPORTION TO THE SITUATION OR STRESSOR. ¹

Usual Solutions

Usual solutions include things a number of things.

Psychotherapy. This is often talked about as CBT or Cognitive Behavioural therapy. The approach here is to help change distorted thinking patterns, help the person build resilience through gradual exposure and help build practical coping skills.

Training and education is also a common approach. Teaching on how anxiety works. Teaching skills such as relaxation, breathing and stress management techniques.

¹ <https://mentalhealth.org.nz/conditions/condition/anxiety>

Sometimes **Medication** is used. Things like antidepressants and anti-anxiety medication to help reduce the symptoms of anxiety.

Doing exercise and **physical health** is also encouraged.

And there are other various **alternative methods** such as Mindfulness, hypnotherapy, yoga, relaxation, and massage

These are the usual sorts of things you would expect a psychologist or psychiatrist to instruct you if you asked for help with anxiety.

Other ways?

And maybe you do your own thing too that you find can help manage the symptoms.

Distractions through entertainment, movies, video games and the like.

Or Distractions through keeping busy at work and having a full schedule of activities

Or Trying to find some relief through social media, or alcohol, or various other substances and content.

Some reflection on these – different problems

Now some of these solutions can be helpful, others bring additional problems.

But none of these really solves the problem.

And to be fair, the mental health foundation is not trying to solve the problem I outlined at the start.

The mental health foundation, and psychologists are giving some help someone with anxiety that is *“out of proportion to the situation”*. They are trying to help

people stop being afraid of situations that most people are not afraid of.

They help anxiety disorder, not anxiety as such

But what if the anxiety **is** in proportion with the situation?

For example, what is the answer to someone anxious about the prospect of dying?

Surely no level of anxiety is out of proportion to the fear of dying?

Symptoms only addressed

But also, did you notice that the usual solutions do not address the cause, but just the symptoms?

- Just learn to live with it.
- Manage the symptoms.
- Use medication to dull your thinking about it.
- Distract yourself

But the **cause** of anxiety is still there.

For example, no matter how much medication, mindfulness, Cognitive Behaviour Therapy or exercise you do, the reality of death will still be there.

The cause of the anxiety is still there. There is no “gradual exposure” to death.

These so-called solutions manage the symptoms in some way but do not deal with the cause of anxiety.

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What I want to show you now is that the Gospel deals with the cause of anxiety.

Because of the Gospel you can have peace in your soul not because you are ignoring the facts or because your mind is dulled.

On the contrary, with the Gospel, you can have peace in your soul no matter what circumstance you face, no matter what responsibility you carry, no matter what deadlines you face.

Listen to how a follower of Jesus Christ put it:

*¹⁰ For the sake of Christ, then, **I am content** with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong. (2 Cor 12:10)*

He is content in the face of all these things that usually cause anxiety. He is content. At peace.

Or listen to this one:

⁶ do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.

*⁷ **And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. (Phil 4:6-7)***

This is the hope I want you to see. Because of the Gospel, It is possible to have peace in the midst of anxious situations.

Ok, but how? How can someone be content in the midst of insults, hardships and calamities?

How can we have “the peace of God” in the midst of anxious situations?

Part 3 – The Real Solution to Anxiety

The Gospel – Death pending

Let me explain.

The Gospel deals with the biggest things we should be anxious about. There is one thing that should preoccupy us more than finances, deadlines or fuel prices.

And that thing is our pending death.

I have mentioned it before intentionally. You do not have an anxiety disorder if you are worried about your death. To be afraid of death is the most rational, intelligent, logical, and sane thing to do.

The only reason we are not more concerned with it is that it is hidden, and we are distracted. But death comes to us all, and if you are not a Christian, death should fill you with dread and terror.

Why death frightening

Why is death so frightening?

Well your soul tells you that you are guilty. Your conscience tells you that you have broken God's law.

Have you told a lie, been angry or looked with lust at another? Have you disobeyed your parents or taken God's name in vain?

A single lie, a single thought of lust or anger, is a crime against God.

Every honest human knows they are guilty before God. God's law tells you and your conscience tells you.

You should be afraid of Death, because once you die, you will face God as judge. And God is a good and just judge. He will not see crimes go unpunished.

And God has told us that the punishment of Sin is Hell. Eternal punishment.

Once you die you enter eternity. If you are a criminal before God it will go to hell.

Yes, if you are not a Christian, you should be afraid of death.

No more fear of death in Christ

So what is different for a Christian?

Well God had made a way for sinners to be made right with Him.

When Jesus Christ died on the Cross he legally paid for your sins so that you do not need to pay for them in hell.

He paid the punishment in your place.

Your sin is like a debt to your name. But when Jesus died, he made a way to pay that debt for you.

If Jesus paid for your debt, how much is left for you to pay? 0.

And if you have 0 debt, will a just God punish you?

No the debt has been paid for and so you can go to heaven when you die!

Is that good news? That is the best news ever!

That is the gospel!

Making the Gospel true to you

How do you make that true to you?

You believe it. You hear these words, you come to a conviction that they are true and you trust Jesus as your saviour. You trust Jesus as the one who paid your debt.

To make this great gift of eternal life yours, all you need to do is believe that Jesus paid for your sins.

Changed life

If you believe that, that changes everything.

Death is no longer something to be feared. The ultimate cause of anxiety is dealt with.

Not only that, but when you recognise that someone gave their life to save you, you live differently now. Since he died for you, you now live for him. And that simple fact frees you from all anxiety.

Your life is no longer about yourself. Your biggest concerns are not for yourself anymore. Your biggest concern is to please him.

So there is no more reason to be anxious about things that caused you such worry before. War and fuel prices don't have the same grip on you. Insults and calamities don't carry the same concern.

Remember the verse we have already read. It begins with "*for the sake of Christ*". That is the reason he is content.

¹⁰ For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong. (2 Cor 12:10)

Free of anxiety in everyday life: Matt 6:25-34

But even more than that, the one who follows Jesus as Lord and saviour can be free of anxiety from the relentless pressures of our everyday life. From the realities of adulthood.

Now, if you have a Bible, I want to read you a passage from the book of Matthew. It is the first book in the New Testament.

In chapter 6, we have a record of a Sermon that Jesus Christ preached. And in verses 25-34 he talks specifically about anxiety. And the hope He gives of peace of heart is stunning.

But I need to stress, He is talking to his disciples. He is talking to those who trust in him as saviour. He is talking to those who believe the Gospel.

If you do not believe the Gospel, this is not speaking to you, but it can be! If you would believe.

So look at verse 25-29:

²⁵ “Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing?”

²⁶ Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? ²⁷ And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life?^[g] ²⁸ And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, ²⁹ yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.

Here Jesus highlights the kind of things we usually get anxious about, the kind of things we talked about at the start: Length of life, food, drink, clothes. These are the sort of things we think we should be anxious about.

- Like a husband being anxious for providing for his family,
- or the mum being anxious for looking after her children
- or the young adult in the face of decisions,
- or the worker in the face of deadlines.

But Jesus says. Don't be anxious. Worry is needless, senseless, useless.

Now he does not just say "stop being anxious", he goes further and gives the cause for their anxiety.

Look at verses 30-32

³⁰ But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? ³¹ Therefore do not be anxious, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' ³² For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all.

Did you spot the cause of anxiety? I mean the real root cause.

You see it in the mild rebuke of Jesus "*O you of little faith*".

The root cause of anxiety is unbelief.

The cause of anxiety is doubt. Doubt of God's goodness. Doubt of God's wisdom. Doubt of God's power.

Jesus says “*your heavenly Father knows that you need them all.*”

This is so so important.

God knows.

- He is not oblivious of your needs,
- of your concerns,
- of your responsibilities.
- He knows.

And what more, he is your heavenly Father!

- He cares and loves you.
- He delights to give you good gifts.
- He wants what is best for you.
- He is your loving, wise and powerful father.

Again, this only makes sense if you believe the Gospel. If you believe that Jesus died for your sins, God promises that you are included in his family, and this promise can be true to you too.

Jesus finishes this portion on anxiety by showing the solution is to trust God.

If unbelief is the cause, trust is the solution.

- We are to work hard at the things before us,
- prioritise what God says is important,
- and trust God with the future.
- Verse 33 says:

³³ But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.

³⁴ “Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.

Conclusion

Friends it is possible to know peace in our souls.

Tonight I have sketched the hope the Gospel offers. This is a bird’s eye view. The Bible has much more to say about anxiety. If you have questions about your specific circumstance, please come and chat afterwards. We can’t cover everything in half an hour. But I hope this bird’s eye view gives real hope.

Being an adult means having responsibilities and deadlines, and our lives are surrounded by weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions and calamities.

But peace **is** possible in the midst of these.

And that peace is not just for those who have no responsibilities like children, or those who somehow remove all circumstances for concerns, like some hermit.

Ultimately, we all face the concern of death.

Psychology may give some relief to the symptoms of anxiety, but it does not deal with the cause of the problem.

But the Gospel does.

The Gospel gives us peace in the face of death.

The Gospel gives us peace in the face of weakness and insults

The Gospel gives us peace in the face of hardship and persecutions

The Gospel gives us peace in our everyday responsibilities, situations and deadlines.

If God is our heavenly father there is nothing to fear.

If God is your heavenly father there is nothing to be anxious about

If God is your heavenly father you can have peace of mind.

But if God is your heavenly judge you have everything to fear.

So let me finish with this question: Do you Believe that Jesus died for your sins?

If you do, God is your heavenly father and there is nothing to fear. If you don't, God is your heavenly judge and there is everything to fear.

Pray