

Anxiety and Fear Disposal

(Notes from Ed Welch)

To be human is to suffer from fear. We are tiny but the world is huge. Most people make plans, follow through on decisions, and chart a course forward. It is easy to get lulled into thinking that we are in control, but such is not the case. Make enough money to be comfortable in your later years and death knocks at your door. Set your security alarm if you have one, but your possessions are going to rust if they don't get stolen.

There is no consolation on the opposite side. It is true that the less you have the less you have to lose, but will you be able to keep the basic necessities like housing? Having material possessions can make you feel like a buffer is between you and...whatever is out there that is so scary.

How do we deal with fears and anxiety?

1. Locate them. If you can't see your fears and worries then comfort will be hard to find as well. For the sake of this exercise, go ahead and assume that you are absolutely riddled with fears. Find one and you will find dozens more. Fears, anxieties, and worries are pack animals. They always travel in groups.
 - A. What fears and worries can you locate immediately?

 - B. What fears do you have regarding the people you love?

 - C. Fears and worries arise when we lose something important to us-something we love. What are you afraid you could lose?

 - D. What fears do you have about your own life?

Whatever fears you have, you can be sure you are not alone. Tell someone else you are

doing a study on this. Ask them for their thoughts. What fears do they have? How do they deal with them? You will accomplish two things. First, it will confirm that you are not crazy. There are plenty of people out there who can trump your fears. Second, your conversation will turn you outward. One of the ways of wisdom is to look outside of ourselves and care about the interests of others.

2. Listen to your fears. Our emotions are a kind of language. For example, anger says, "It's your fault." Fear is also saying something, and you would be wise to listen. It says, "Run for the hills," and "Avoid, deny, pretend it's not going to happen."

A. What else can you think of that fear or worry might be saying?

B. Return to the list of your fears. Fear always makes a prediction. Both fear and anxiety live in the future. They say, "There is a future threat to something I love. According to your list, what prediction(s) is your fear making.

C. Fear and worry impose on our relationship with God. When we listen to fear and worry, we can usually notice that we are predicting the worst, and we can often detect the connection with people (or things) we love. God is connected to everything. You can see this truth when a child asks "Why" questions. "Why do I have a nose?" "Why do I have to eat peas?" "Why is the sky blue?" The only valid answer to give him/her is "Because God made it that way." *If all of life is connected to God, our fears and worries are no different. In everything, you are either going to be going to Him or away from Him.*

D. What do you think you might be saying about God when you are anxious or afraid?

Our job is to practice turning to the Lord. *Psalm 27:1-3 says "The Lord is my light and salvation-whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life-of whom shall I be afraid? When evil men advance against me to devour my flesh, when my enemies and my foes attack me, they will stumble and fall. Though an army besiege me, my heart will not fear; though war break out against me, even then will I be confident."*

Read Psalm 56. See how quickly David moved from fear to faith.

3. Do Not be Afraid. This is the most frequent command in the Bible. It can be found over 300 times. The words “do not be afraid” should be read like a parent telling their child to be careful. Listen to Jesus in Luke 12:32 – *“Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the Kingdom.”* **Fear and worry are reminders. Better yet, they are opportunities. They are a string around your finger reminding you that you can trust the Creator God who hears, cares, and acts.**

THREE REMINDERS:

1. Identify your fears and anxieties and see what they reflect about God.
2. Know that because God speaks so frequently about fear and anxiety, he must care about them-no fear or anxiety seems trivial or silly to him.
3. Turn more often and more quickly to the Lord when fear strikes.