

Overcoming Anxiety: Finding Real Peace When Life Seems Crazy

What makes you feel anxious? Being late or unprepared for work or appointments? Maybe unresolved interpersonal conflict. Airline travel? Public speaking? Fears of losing love? Serious illness or a friend's death?



This article is also available in [Spanish](#).

What makes you feel anxious? Being late or unprepared for work or appointments? Maybe unresolved interpersonal conflict. Airline travel? Public speaking? Fears of losing love? Serious illness or a friend's death?

Pressures from the trivial to the traumatic can prompt feelings of fearfulness or apprehension.

Once at a booksellers convention my wife and I spent an exhausting day on our feet promoting a new book. Late that night, after a reception crowd had thinned down to mostly authors and our publisher, we stood in a circle engaged in conversation. I had to leave her side momentarily to attend to a matter.

Upon returning to the circle, I walked up behind my wife and began gently to massage her shoulders. She seemed to enjoy this, so I started to put my arms around her waist to give her a little hug. Just then, I looked up at the opposite side of the circle and saw ... my wife.

I had my hands on the wrong woman!

In that instant, I knew the true meaning of fear. Fear of circumstances. Even fear of death! Confusion clouded my mind.

Heat enveloped my back, shoulders, neck and head. My face reddened; my stomach knotted.

You've probably had embarrassing moments that generate anxiety. What about more serious causes?

Your Greatest Fear?

Fear of death is perhaps humans' greatest fear. In college, the student living next door to me was struck and killed instantly by lightning on a golf course one springtime afternoon. Shock gripped our fraternity house. "What does it mean if life can be snuffed out in an instant?" my friends asked. "Is there a life after death and, if so, how can we experience it?" Confusion and anxiety reigned.

If you can't answer the question "What will happen when you die?" you may become anxious.

How can you find real peace in a chaotic world? Consider a possible solution. It involves the spiritual realm.

As a university student, I wrote a paper for an abnormal psychology class investigating a biblical therapy for anxiety. I had come to faith as a freshman and found it brought me peace of mind. Complex psychological disorders often stem from more basic problems like anxiety, problems for which faith offers practical solutions.

I sent a copy of my paper to the author of our textbook, a prominent UCLA psychologist. A month later, he replied that he liked the paper and asked permission to quote from it in his revised textbook.

Somewhat amazed, I readily agreed. I also sent a copy of his letter to my parents in Miami, who were beginning to wonder about their son's campus spiritual involvement.

This professor felt that the principles in the paper—which

certainly were not original with me—had both academic and personal relevance. Several months later, we met at his lovely home in Malibu overlooking the Pacific Ocean. As we sat in his back yard, this professor told me he lacked personal peace and wanted to know God personally. I showed him a simple four-point outline based on one of Jesus' statements: "God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life."[\[1\]](#)

We discussed God's unconditional love for us, our dilemma of being unplugged from Him and the flaws (selfishness and "sins") that result. I noted that Jesus, through His death in our place and return to life, came to plug us back into God by paying the penalty we owed for our sins.

Finding Real Peace

This professor decided to place his faith in God and asked Jesus to forgive him and enter his life. We kept in touch. Later, over the phone, he told me that as he looked out over the ocean and saw the setting sun, "I really believe I'm a part of all this. Before I didn't, but now I do." He was seeing how he fit into God's universe. An internationally acclaimed scholar linked up with, if you will, the greatest Psychologist.

One of Jesus' earlier followers wrote to some friends about a divine aid for anxiety: "Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done. If you do this, you will experience God's peace, which is far more wonderful than the human mind can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus."[\[2\]](#)

Faith in God does not make life perfect and is no automatic solution to anxiety. Illness, chemical imbalance, emotional wounds and more can hamper coping. But a good starting place is to become linked with the One who loves us and knows best

what makes us fulfilled.

Might it be time for you to consider Him?

Notes

1. John 3:16 *NLT* (New Living Translation).
2. Philippians 4:6-7 (*NLT*).

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Anxious for Nothing (magazine article)

Why are we anxious, and what is the cure? Four possible causes and a glimpse at a solution.

This article is also available in [Spanish](#).



“Death is the only joy, and the only release.”

“Contrary to popular belief, there is no hope.”

What gloomy thoughts. The first came from the classified section of a college newspaper, the second from an anonymous inscription on a classroom blackboard. Both exhibit what psychologists call “existential anxiety”—frustration with a meaningless existence.

I was plagued by similar anxiety as a college freshman until some friends exposed me to the claims of Jesus Christ as found in the Bible. After accepting Him as Savior and Lord, I found that He freed me from slavery to anxiety. As a psychology

major, I was fascinated, first to observe that many serious psychological disorders stem from smaller problems, and in turn to watch Jesus deal with these problems in my life.

Let's consider two definitions and then examine four main causes of anxiety.

"Anxiety" represents a state of emotional turmoil characterized by fearfulness and apprehension.[{1}](#) It is not external stress, but an internal reaction to strenuous circumstances.[{2}](#) A "Christian" is an individual who has recognized his lack of fellowship with God and placed his complete trust in Jesus Christ as the only means of restoring that relationship.

Four causes of anxiety are guilt, fear, lack of interpersonal involvement and lack of meaning in life.

Guilt

Failure to achieve standards (internally or externally imposed) often results in guilt feelings. Often psychologists attribute these feelings to problems in the past or to following legalistic moral codes. Many persons do have these problems, but a more plausible explanation for guilt feelings is that a person has them because he is guilty. If this is true, then therapy for a person experiencing guilt feelings would include admitting his guilt. This, however, can be rather difficult.

O. H. Mowrer, a psychologist at the University of Illinois, points out the dilemma:

Here, too, we encounter difficulty, because human beings do not change radically until first they acknowledge their sins, but it is hard for one to make such an acknowledgement unless he has "already changed." In other words, the full realization of deep worthlessness is a severe ego "insult," and one must have a new source of strength to endure it.[{3}](#)

Jesus provides the strength needed to endure it. We must come to Him, admitting our sin and worthlessness, but the moment we accept Him as Savior, God forgives all our sins past, present and future. The Bible says that “He (Jesus) personally carried the load of our sins in His own body when He died on the cross . . . “[{4}](#)and “. . . paid the ransom to forgive our sins and set us free....[{5}](#) Each year we spend thousands of dollars in the hope that psychology and psychiatrists will solve our guilt problems. Yet the complete forgiveness—freedom from guilt—Jesus offers is free of charge.

Fear

Let's consider two types of fear: of death and of circumstances. Fear of death is perhaps man's greatest fear. When I was a sophomore in college, the student rooming next to me was struck by lightning and killed. His death shocked the men in my house, and they began to consider seriously the implications of death. Anxiety struck.

The person who accepts Christ as his Savior has no problem with death. The moment he receives Christ, his eternal relationship with God begins. The apostle John writes to Christians, “. . . God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has the life. . .[{6}](#) For the Christian, death loses its terror.

Fear of circumstances can also produce anxiety. Daily anxieties common to all of us include fear of inadequate finances, of social inadequacy, and fear for our personal safety and health.

All of these fears tend to occupy our minds and to keep us from enjoying the privilege of being alive. Enough worry and we soon find ourselves merely existing. But can we really be secure?

Financial security is tenuous, injury and danger are as near

as the car whizzing by on the highway, and we can never be certain that everyone likes the way we act.

One summer I drove from Washington, D. C., to California with four girls. After that experience, I know the meaning of fear. Facing this responsibility, I became somewhat apprehensive. What would I do if a car broke down or one of the girls got sick? What if we had an accident? Also, the girls expected me to make all the decisions for the group.

At times, I became fearful, until I remembered what Jesus told His disciples: "Men, don't worry about what you are going to eat or drink or wear. Your Father in heaven loves you and knows what you need. Seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you."[{7}](#) And it works.

Lack Of Involvement

William Glasser, a medical doctor, writes in his book, *Reality Therapy*, that every man experiences two basic needs—the need to feel a sense of worth to himself and to others, and the need to love and to be loved. He says that the best way to satisfy these needs is to develop a close friendship with another person who will accept him as he is, but who will also honestly tell him when he acts irresponsibly.

Interpersonal relationships are important, but people are only human and do let us down and err in judgment. Wouldn't the ultimate therapy be to become involved with our creator? He is faithful and righteous,[{8}](#) never lets us down, and always has the best advice. Because He loves us, the Christian experiences freedom to love others.[{9}](#) We are worth much to Him: "God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us."[{10}](#) A person forgiven values himself, because he is "a new creature."[{11}](#) He is secure in Christ. The apostle Paul writes: "I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities,

nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord,{12}

Lack Of Meaning

Another doctor conducted studies of 31,000 Allied soldiers who were imprisoned in Japan and Korea during the 1940's. He found that, although sufficient food was offered to them, more than 8,000 died.{13} He diagnosed the cause of many deaths as "despair."

Contrast this situation to that of thousands of Christians who have spent years in prison for their faith in Christ, only to be released to continue sharing God's love, especially to those who persecuted them.

The Savior's love sustains them and motivates them as "ambassadors for Christ." {14} What greater purpose could there be than serving as an ambassador for the King of kings?

A Common Question

Frequently it is suggested that Christianity could be merely a psychological "trick" or gimmick. After all, the reasoning goes, if someone thinks that the Bible is God's Word, couldn't he convince himself that what it says sounds true, and that through following the Bible he has found a groovy lifestyle?

After doing some research, I must conclude that Christianity could not be an illusion. There are three reasons for this.

The first concerns the object of the Christian's faith—Jesus Christ. The evidence for His deity, His resurrection, the prophecies He fulfilled and the lives He has changed present an overwhelming case for the validity of His claims. Because the object of my faith is valid, I believe faith in that object to be valid as well.

The second reason has to do with the nature of human personality, which is composed of intellect, emotion and will. Psychologists feel that our will does not have complete control over our emotions.[\[15\]](#) Nor does it seem likely that our intellect can completely control them. Yet some like those who have been imprisoned find it possible to love those who tortured them. Such behavior seems impossible, apart from supernatural intervention.

The third reason concerns the book that presents Christ's answers to our problems—psychological and otherwise. The Bible, although written over a period of 1,500 years, in three languages and by 40 different authors (most of whom never met), has proved itself to be thematically coherent, internally consistent and historically accurate. Completed more than 1,800 years ago, it contains the cure for the psychological problems experienced by countless thousands of people today. The Bible is a supernatural book!

As a college student, I was curious to see what a professional psychologist would think of these views. Having written a term paper for my abnormal psychology course investigating how Jesus treats anxiety (this article contains some thoughts from that research), I sent a copy of my paper to the author of our textbook.

In his reply, he expressed an interest in the content. Several months later, I visited him personally, and he told me that he would like to have a personal relationship with Christ. After I shared with him the claims of Christ as contained in the "Four Spiritual Laws," he prayed inviting Jesus Christ to come into his life. The latest edition of his text includes a short statement about the fact that many people today are finding psychological help through Christ.

Men everywhere are searching for freedom from fear and guilt. They need to know that God loves them. If you have never asked Christ to be your personal Lord and Savior, I encourage you to

do so today. If you have, tell others how they can know Him.

He frees us to “be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, shall guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus”[\[16\]](#)

Notes

1. Coleman, James C. *Abnormal Psychology and Modern Life*, 3rd edition, p.657.
2. McMillen S. I. *None of These Diseases*, p. 106.
3. Mowrer O. H. “Sin, the Lesser of Two Evils,” quoted in Henry Brandt’s *The Struggle for Peace*.
4. I Peter 2:24, Living Bible.
5. Colossians 1:14, Beck.
6. I John 5:11,12.
7. Matthew 6:31-33, paraphrased.
8. Psalms 36:5,6.
9. I John 4:19.
10. Romans 5:8.
11. II Corinthians 5:17.
12. Romans 8:38,39.
13. “A Scientific Report on What Hope Does for Man,” (New York State Heart Assembly, 105 East 22 St, N.Y.), quoted in McMillen’s *None of These Diseases*, p 110.
14. II Corinthians 5-20.
15. McMillen, p. 77.
16. Philippians 4:6,7.

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