

# The Beautiful Life

# When Anxiety Attacks

Paradigm Shift Video

Good morning church.

Paradigm Shift aims to help people who are unemployed, to upskill their business abilities, and to help them become entrepreneurs.

We all have a part to play in God's Kingdom. Please pray and consider if this is a way that God wants you to be involved in the transformation of our community.

At this stage, we are looking for individuals who are willing to attend training, to be equipped to act as facilitators for the program which we would like to run here from King of Kings. So if you're keen - please talk to one of the pastors or leaders. Amen.

Introduction

Time to spend some time around the word of God. We are still in our beautiful life series.

A beautiful life

I trust it's been a blessing to you... As we continue looking at Jesus words on the sermon on the mount, today's message is called;

When Anxiety Attacks

We live in challenging times. Anxiety was hardly a factor 50 years ago, but it's on the rise. According to studies, the average child today has the same level of anxiety as those who were in psychiatric facilities 50 years ago!

I myself have seen the rise in anxiety in those I council from our church community, and it almost seems to be an epidemic among the younger generations.

Data presented by the South African College of Applied Psychology (2018) suggests that;

(Slide) 1 in 6 South Africans suffers from anxiety, depression, or a substance use disorder

(Slide) About 60% of South Africans could be suffering from post-traumatic stress. This figure includes motor vehicle accidents and crime.

The reality is that we live in stressful times and that there is so many things that we can worry about, from our health, death, the welfare of our loved ones, job security, and global issues such as war and oil prices.

I've actually heard that there is a new virus variant that has just been identified. It affects those who own motor vehicles and now face high fuel prices...

It is called the Car-owner-virus!

I'm sorry - I had to drop that one in.

Who of you remember this famous song from the 80's?

Here's a little song I wrote... you might want to sing it note for note... Don't worry... Be happy... In every life you have some trouble... but when you worry you make it double... Don't worry... Be happy... Don't worry be happy now... (Ooh, ooh ooh ooh oo-oo ooh oo-oo)

Great song, right, so much fun, but if you really think about it, it is pretty rubbish advise for the person who is facing worry and anxiety! When anxiety attacks, it's not so simple to overcome it with a simple pep talk.

So this morning I want to spend some time looking at what Jesus said about worry, and he started with some similar words - Do not worry - but his instruction offers a whole lot more to us than Bobby McFerrin's song.

Come let us read his word -

Matthew 6:25 Jesus said;

“Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes?”

26 Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they?

27 Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life? 28 “And why do you worry about clothes? See how the flowers of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. 29 Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these.

30 If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith?

31 So do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ 32 For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them.

33 But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. 34 Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

Amen. Thank you Lord for your word. Let’s start here today...

What do you worry about?

It is so interesting that Jesus breaks down the issue of worry into three things – what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. They may appear simple, but they cover many of our main arrears of worry and anxiety; provision for the family, our health and how we present ourselves to others.

I love that Jesus understands what consumes our minds and our thoughts; How will I provide for my family? What happens if one of us gets sick? The word used in the passage for ‘worry’ is a very ‘specific type of thought,’ not just any thought, but an ‘anxious’ thought. Jesus does not tell us not to think about our lives, or not to plan properly, but rather, he is saying don’t give in to anxious thoughts.

Remember the parable about the sower. Do you remember the seed that grew nicely, but was then choked by the weeds? Do you know what choked it’s growth?

Jesus explained in Luke 8 that the seed that fell among thorns stands for those who hear the word, but as they go on their way, they are choked by life's worries, riches and pleasures, and they do not mature.

Do you find yourself choked by life's worries? I think many people do.

But Jesus does not just tell us not to worry – that is not helpful, he tells us why worrying does not work.

Why does worrying not work?

Matthew 6.27 Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life? Often at night when I tuck my kids into bed and pray with them, I will have to remind them that worrying about things is the most useless thing to do. Worrying does nothing but make things worse.

That song from the 80's at least got that right - 'Cause when you worry you make it double! So what can you do?

Stop worrying and start living!

Jesus commands you not to worry about your life or material things. Think ahead, plan ahead, but don't worry ahead. Trust in your Heavenly Father to provide. He knows your every need. Faith is the antidote to worry.

You cannot add a single hour to your life by worrying. As Corrie ten Boom put it:

“Worry does not empty tomorrow of sorrow; but it empties today of strength.”

I like to tell my kids to live in day-tight compartments. Live one day at a time. Don't borrow trouble from tomorrow, because each day has enough trouble of its own. Make a decision today not to worry about tomorrow. Trust God to provide for you one day at a time.

The reality is that many of the things we worry about are the things we have no control over, so worrying about them does not fix anything. Worrying makes us more anxious and more afraid of things.

I'm sure that when you have had a specific worry that worrying about it, turning it over in your mind, did not help very much. The neuroscientists teach us how our thinking and thought life build patterns in our brains so that we actually get stuck in a way of thinking and it is hard to shift out of it.

I heard an analogy of how a skier or a snow boarder goes down the mountain on fresh snow. For the first few guys they are cutting the path down the hill, but eventually as people wear the same route in the snow the skiers coming behind have no choice but to stick to the worn path because of the ruts in the snow. It is the smoothest and easiest path down.

The same is true of our thought life – worry produces more worry and gets us stuck in a rut of worry.

Society has recently identified the importance of mental health and wellbeing, but the bible was far ahead of that trend. There is so much the bible has to say about our thought life and our minds. It challenges us to think differently and to not let our thoughts run out of control.

2 Corinthians 10:3

For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. 4 The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. 5 We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.

We all face anxious moments, but God tells us deal with those quickly. Just as it does with issues like anger and lust. Letting our thought life run rampant will result in anxiety.

We need to learn to shut that door and not open it. And if it has snuck through, we have to take those thoughts captive, and not allow them to run rampant and out of control.

We cannot control the situations we face, but we can control how we think about them and reframe them from God's perspective.

What should you do instead of worrying?

So how do you get out of that worry pattern? How do you deal with anxious thoughts? Jesus suggested getting some perspective – looking around and seeing how the world and God works.

He directs our attention to the birds and the flowers (The Message)

“Look at the birds, free and unfettered, not tied down to a job description, careless in the care of God. And you count far more to him than birds.”

“Look at the wildflowers... have you ever seen colour and design quite like it? The ten best-dressed men and women look shabby alongside them.”

“If God gives such attention to the appearance of wildflowers—most of which are never even seen—don’t you think he’ll attend to you, take pride in you, do his best for you?”

Now this is not an instruction to sit back and do nothing about the situations we find ourselves in, but rather a paradigm shift to trust our heavenly Father to help us move forwards.

A Christians, freedom from anxiety is not due to some guaranteed freedom from trouble, but to the overcoming of of worry, and especially the confidence that God is our Father, and that even ‘permitted suffering’ is within the orbit of his good care (John Stott)

So what should you do instead of worrying?

Look to God instead of worrying.

Jesus antidote to worry is to focus on God, not on our fears for the future. Do what you can today to obey God, and let tomorrow be, for you have no control over it.

Jesus says we must sort out our priorities. Verse 33;

33 But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. 34 Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

Jesus tells you to change your ambitions and priorities. Seek God for who he is and not for what he can do for you. Like us, God does not want his friends only to be interested in what they can get out of him. He wants you to seek his ‘presence’ not just his ‘presents’.

Take on a new set of responsibilities that are both exciting and challenging:

“Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and all these things will be yours as well.”

This ties so nicely with the message that Engela and Valarie-Gail shared last week – if you are worried - pray! Talk to God about it, as He is the one who have control, not you.

I’m not sure how many of us took the challenge for payer and fasting from last week, but I would love to hear from you if you did, and if you experienced a breakthrough!

I would like to share with you a practical way I find it helpful to stand firm and remain calm when anxiety attacks in my life. Max Lucado wrote an excellent book called “Anxious for nothing” where he gives a practical tool to overcome anxiety by remembering the word CALM, and it is all taken from Philippians 4.

The C in CALM stands for;

C - Celebrate God’s goodness (Phil 4:4)

Philippians 4:4 says;

4 Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!

The first thing to do when I anxiety attacks, is to celebrate God’s goodness, and to rejoice in the Lord, praising him! Doing this helps to shift your gaze from the problems on earth, to your hope in heaven.

The A in CALM reminds us to;

A - Ask God for help (Phil 4:6)

Philippians 4:6 says;

6 Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.

Instead of responding to the anxiety with further worry, we ask God to help us! In this way God can supernaturally transform our hearts and minds. I think a lot of us do this, but we leave out the following important step;

The L in CALM is;

L - Leave your concerns with God (Phil 4:7)

Philippians 4:7 says;

7 And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

This requires us to trust God, and leave our worries in his hands.

Finally; the M;

M - Meditate on good things (Phil 4:8)

Philippians 4:8 says;

8 Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.

At the end of Paul's prescription against anxiety in Philippians, he urges us to meditate on things that are of God. Maybe this means you memorise a portion of scripture and meditate on it, maybe it means you take time to pray or to worship, you refuel you mind with whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable, whatever is excellent or praiseworthy.

As I close, I want to say this;

Jesus cares about you

I think sometimes we feel like we should not burden God with the things that bother and concern us, but the reality is that Jesus is familiar with our sorrows. Our emotions are not something wrong – they are God given, we just need to learn how to not let them rule us!

Isaiah 53:3 says that Jesus was despised and rejected— a man of sorrows, acquainted with deepest grief.

So today here is what I want us to do. I want to give people space in this service to deal with worry and anxiety in their lives.

Give all your worries and cares to God, for he cares about you.

Ministry time - I lift my hands

(I recognise that there may be some here today who are struggling with anxiety to a degree where it has gotten out of hand in your life, and it is impacting everything, and you may may need to unpack your struggle in a deeper way with people who you may need to speak to your doctor & there is no shame in that at all)