

Anxiety and Christ  
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Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. Philippians 4:6

These famous words of Paul about anxiety and worry are often misquoted or misheard because, like many things in life, we do not listen to the end. Paul starts out by reminding us, “Do not be anxious about anything.” If we stop listening here, we will inevitably always be anxious about everything. Telling someone not to be anxious often makes them more anxious because it is impossible to not be anxious, especially as we experience life.

Jesus promises us in John 16:33 that we will have trouble. How do we not worry if we know trouble is guaranteed? Paul’s instruction to not be anxious is better understood as, “do not spend unnecessary energy on worry.” Anxious thoughts or uncertain circumstances are inevitable. A sense of fear about things we cannot control is part of being human. We will have worry and anxiety, but we are more successful when we are not controlled by it and don’t spend our energy on worry.

In Philippians, Paul does not simply say, “Don’t worry.” What he teaches us is how to transfer our energy from the ineffective activity of worry to the powerful work of faith. “Do not be anxious, but instead....” Instead of spending energy on fear and worry, spend your energy and put your focus on this.

Worry and anxiety have the same effect as a deer in headlights. The deer sees the very real danger of car headlights and instead of using its energy to move, uses its energy to stare at the impending doom. Satan makes us seem like we are being active and accomplishing things, but when the things we are doing are done in fear from staring at the impending doom, we are not going to be effective at preventing anything.

When we face the certainty of trials and the outcome is unknown, we can scurry around acting busy, feeling like we are doing something. But Paul gives us a very real and successful process for facing our fears. Take them to Jesus. Take them over and over and over and over to Him. Read His word and hear His guidance. Trust the promises that God has given to us and the work He has already accomplished. Focus on living out the faith, and that troubles will be resolved in Christ.

It is not easy, or simple, but it is powerful and real. The peace of God overwhelms our worry and even though the situation is still uncertain, we become certain about Who controls the situation. The presence of Christ creates peace amid the trial, not just in the absence of trouble.

May that peace of God guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus our Lord, today and every day.