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December 16, 2020**

**Orcutt Christian Church's
43rd Meditation**

“A frightened world needs a fearless church.”†

The third wave of COVID-19 is here, and there is a dramatic uptick in deaths. I am hearing daily reports from people I know of relatives and friends who have recently died. The anxiety over COVID is not limited to the general public, folk like you and I. One medial doctor I spoke with recently said he was apprehensive about the vaccine which will be distributed: "We still don't have a vaccine for HIV/AIDS, Malaria, or Respiratory Syncytial Virus." A Chiropractor I know is emphatic that he will not be vaccinated. And then there is the disinformation that the vaccine will contain a "chip," or serum that will allow the government to track you; or it will contain "the mark of the beast."

The anxiety is real. Can your anxiety be reframed to be productive spiritually?

Well, YES! As a Pastoral Counselor, I appreciate the following article by Joel Weldmann. Read on...

**The Role Anxiety Has Played in My Spiritual Growth
Josh Weldmann***

I am not sure why I ordered anything to eat in the first place. Anxiety had locked up my appetite. Eating seemed more of a chore than a pleasure as I sat across the table from a trusted pastor and friend, pouring out recent pains and telling him how fear had gripped nearly every area of me.

Before long, he interjected: “I’ve been there too, more than I want to admit.”

We left the table to take a walk. Over the next half hour we took several laps around the block as he told me how anxiety had nearly crushed him. His story was painfully close to mine. I was surprised to hear it.

But we’re both pastors, I thought. Why should emotional suffering get the best of us?

Yet it did, at least for a season. Anxiety shows no favoritism. It can affect anyone, regardless of their occupation, age or spiritual maturity.

More common than we want to admit

Being overwhelmed is the new normal for many people. According to the Anxiety and Depression Association of America, the feeling that we are in over our heads affects 1 in 5 of us to a paralyzing degree. Things that were once normal—such as breathing and eating—now feel impossible. Past mistakes paralyze us in future decisions. Daily tasks feel more like Olympic feats than mundane to-dos. Relationships bring grief and dread rather than joy and comfort.

If Jesus ever experienced anxiety, he never let it undermine his trust in God. Perhaps the moment we see his trust most clearly is when he prayed to the Father before his death, begging God to take the cup of wrath away. He was so stressed that his sweat became like drops of blood (Luke 22:39–46). Though his flesh was weak and writhing under the coming punishment of the cross, his spirit was fixed on trusting God’s sovereign plan.

More misunderstood than we realize

I hear people often say, “That made me so anxious,” or “I have anxiety over this or that”—but I wonder if they really understand what anxiety is. We know it on the surface to be some kind of overwhelming nervousness about a relationship or situation. But what’s the line between mild nervousness and paralyzing fear?

I define anxiety as an overt emotional reaction to an uncertain situation. It might be something that threatens our physical health or makes us feel upset or distressed. It can relate to the past, present or future. Some anxiety over reasonable danger is good (“Stay away from that ledge!”). But irrational thoughts can cause other types of anxiety (“Everyone hates me.”).

Christians often shy away from these issues. We're not sure how to think, feel or speak about anything related to mental health. We treat emotional issues as if they are only for doctors or psychiatrists to figure out, and not God's concern. This is wrong. God cares for both the body and the soul. Both parts need Christ's redemptive power.

More Purposeful Than We Know

To be sure, we shouldn't sanctify anxiety or overspiritualize it. I want to be extremely clear: anxiety itself is not sin, but anxiety can cause us to sin. While the Bible calls us to "not be anxious" (Matt. 6:25; Phil. 4:6) it is communicating the necessity of stopping an action that is already going on. The force of the original Greek word is that we must "stop perpetually worrying." The ongoing attitude of the unsaved human heart is to be anxious about the problems and difficulties of life. God commands his children to "stop perpetually worrying about even one thing." If we go on being anxious and full of worry, we are not trusting God. This is sin. What we do in our anxious moments can lead us either to a God-honoring response of faith or to acts of disbelieving sin. While we can't choose our anxieties, we can choose our responses.

Rather than moving us into patterns of sin, our anxiety can actually move us to be more like Christ—growing us in dependence on God and helping us relinquish our will and yield to his.

When we experience anxiety, we just want to survive it! I get it. Talking about "purpose" in anxiety can feel insulting or cruel. But I've also discovered that when, in faith, I choose to believe God is up to something in my anxiety, the pain is more tolerable. God is not the author of anxiety, but he is sovereign over it. If my stress and fear push me closer to Christ, I'll relish the fact that God loves me enough to use my anxiety to draw me closer to him.

Paul writes about God's perspective on our suffering, which includes our anxieties. He says they are temporary and transient. Paul would have had great anxiety and emotional turmoil at times (e.g., 2 Cor. 11:28). Nevertheless, he understood that what his suffering was producing in him was greater than the momentary pain:

"For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, as we look not to the things that are seen but

to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.” —2 Cor. 4:17–18

In a paradoxical way, pain is one of the best reminders that God is good. More than comfort and peace and health, pressure and anxiety can push us to know Christ—the “man of sorrows” whose redemption through death on a cross utterly reframes how Christians must view suffering.

If you deal with anxiety as I do, it’s OK to ask God, Why are you allowing emotional suffering? But go beyond that question with these, too: What are you trying to develop in me, God? How is this momentary affliction preparing me for an eternal weight of glory?

* Josh Weidmann is senior pastor of Grace Chapel in Englewood, Colorado
This article originally appeared on TheGospelCoalition.org

Application

How to diminish anxiety.

In Job 33:1-3, Elihu **TELLS** Job to listen to him. “I know what I’m talking about,” he proudly pointed out. “I have important things to say. Listen up!” (paraphrased from verses 1-3).

He spoke as if he were the only one worth listening to. He seemed so arrogant.

But then again, how often do we want people to listen to us?

How often do we ignore what someone is saying because we’re too busy thinking about what we’ll say next?

How often do we turn the conversation back to ourselves?

This week, be a listener.

Be someone who asks about others and then really listens to their responses.

Doing so will diminish both you and the other's anxiety.

[John 17:6-19](#)

[Revelation 8](#)

[Job 33:1-11](#)

[Amos 7-9](#)



We may not be able to assemble in our chapel, but we can still give our eye to eye contact and wave our hands. In anticipation of reopening the Chapel, we are keeping the chapel, fellowship hall, and bathrooms clean and

welcoming. Lord willing, we shall be assembling in person soon.

Meanwhile, continue to meet for Drive-In worship where we praise God in Word and song. Listen in on stereo FM 94.7. Join with our prayers remembering they still make connection with our Heavenly Father.

Remember to keep a few minutes free at noon time on Tuesday when we gather remotely to pray for each other, and for other important issues.

Even if we are not assembling for weekly worship at 204 Patterson Road, your congregation still needs your prayers, your spiritual commitment, and your financial support. Orcutt Christian Church is a State of California 501(c)(3) incorporation [EIN # 952577218] . You can mail your personal check to

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† A. W. Tozer