

BIBLE STUDY and REFLECTION

Fear or Anxiety?

Written by: Karen McGuire
Small Groups and Resources Coordinator

Have you ever been plagued by either fear or anxiety? I've encountered a growing number of people who are fearful and anxious – often at the same time. With a behavioral science background, I'm fascinated with how people act, react, feel, adapt, change or fall apart.

Recent conversations have caused me to wonder about these two subjects and so with a short search through dictionary.com, I found concise definitions of both that I offer here:

Fear is an unpleasant emotion caused by the belief that someone or something is dangerous, likely to cause pain or a threat.

Anxiety is a feeling of worry, nervousness, or unease, typically about an imminent event or something with an uncertain outcome.

In an insightful article in *Psychology Today*, Dr. Julian Humphreys describes the differences between fear, anxiety, and stress. He offers some thoughts about how to recognize and handle all three. His focus is on the impact on leadership in the workplace.

The Bible addresses these subjects and is my *go-to* resource for anything spiritual and human. My experience is that every human mentioned in the Bible, either by name or reference, is the same as any human who's living today. I'm always amazed at the similarities, challenges, world views and more that I find within the pages of Scripture. God's Word is always spot on when it comes to the human condition.

For example, recognizing humankind's tendency toward fear, God inserted 366 times in the Bible when we're admonished to *not be afraid*. In case you missed it, that is one for every day of the year, including leap year! God knows us so well.

Consider the Old Testament story of Joshua. He had an unbelievable task – he was to follow in Moses' footsteps and then lead the people of Israel (somewhere in the 1.5 million people category) into the Promised Land. I don't know about you, but the thought of following in Moses' footsteps can cause a great deal of discomfort.

Knowing humanity as He does, God greets Joshua with this news in [Joshua 1:2](#), *Moses, my servant is dead. Now then, you and all these people, get ready to cross the Jordan River...* I don't know about you, but this would have filled me with great fear. God, however, was ready, in [Joshua 1:5-6](#), He proclaims this to Joshua, *No one will be able to stand against you all of the days of your life. As I was with Moses, so I will be with you; I will never leave you nor forsake you. Be strong and courageous ...* Of course, we know the rest of the story and Joshua did lead the people into the Promised Land, he did follow God's instructions at Jericho, got a little over-confident at Ai but quickly learned to lean on God.

BIBLE STUDY and REFLECTION

God also covered the anxiety part of life as well. In [Philippians 4:6](#), He reminds us through Paul, *Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.* Then in verse 7 Paul says, *And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*

There you have it! Did you read those words? Did you pay attention to what you read? Go back and read it again ...

Do not be anxious about anything (not some things, not a few things, not many things but don't be anxious about anything (nothing, not one thing.)) Why? Because God has us and God has whatever is causing your anxiety.

But in every situation (how many situations? home only, work only, church only? No, in every situation (every, each one, all of them)).

How – *by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving.* The NLT version says, *Tell God what you need, and then thank Him for all He has done.* Look at all God has already done in your life – He saved you, He loves you unconditionally, He wants the best for you, He has plans for you since before the foundation of the world. Be grateful and know that He will never leave you or forsake you – HE. NEVER. GIVES. UP!

Then it comes – *Peace*, glorious peace. Not the temporal kind that the world gives but the peace that passes everything you know, can dream up or imagine. Jesus in [John 14:27](#) says, *...My peace, I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.*

Let the fear and anxiety go, my friend. God has whatever is causing you to be afraid or anxious long before you were born. Release it to Him and then rest in the peace that only comes from Him.

Let it go! HE. NEVER. GIVES. UP!

For Study and Reflection:

Read [Joshua 1:1-9](#).

1. How do you react when you are asked to do something you feel unqualified to do?
2. What emotions might Joshua be experiencing as he hears of Moses' death and the assignment God has for him?
3. What promises does God make to Joshua?
4. How would these promises strengthen and encourage him?
5. In [Joshua 1:5](#), God reminds Joshua that *...I will not fail you or abandon you.* In what ways can this promise encourage and strengthen us in challenging times?
6. What commands does God give to Joshua in [Joshua 1:6-9](#)?

BIBLE STUDY and REFLECTION

7. What is the relationship between God's promises and His commands? Describe why this is important.
8. In what ways does meditating on Scripture and being careful to do what it says make us prosperous and successful? See [Psalm 1:1-3](#).
9. What challenging task is ahead of you?
10. Ask God to strengthen and encourage you for that task as you seek to obey Him.