

Dealing With

# Anxiety

# Contents

<b>Chapter 1:</b> Surviving This Age of Anxiety	<b>4</b>
<b>Chapter 2:</b> Anxiety Disorders	<b>6</b>
<b>Chapter 3:</b> What Christians Need to Understand About Mental Health	<b>9</b>
<b>Chapter 4:</b> How to Replace Anxious Thinking With Positive Thinking	<b>12</b>
<b>Chapter 5:</b> How Should Christians Handle Trauma?	<b>13</b>
<b>Chapter 6:</b> Finding Peace of Mind	<b>15</b>
<b>Sidebar:</b> Practical Tips for Relieving Stress	

# Introduction Wrestling With Anxiety

No Christian is immune to the pulls of anxiety, but no Christian needs to be held captive by those pulls either. Here are ways God’s people can fight back.

by Jeremy Lallier

**A**nxiety is an ugly, vicious beast that excels at dragging its victims into a headlong, emotionally exhausting spiral, straining their relationships with others and leaving them burned-out. It’s a weapon that Satan employs to keep us both stressed and distracted. And it’s a foe every Christian has to learn to battle with on the path to the Kingdom of God.

One passage in the Bible seems to make it sound so easy. Paul told the Philippians, “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 understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:6-7).

*Be anxious for nothing.*

Simple as that. If you’re feeling anxious about something, well . . . don’t. Just stop.

## Appreciating the complexity of anxiety

Except if you’ve ever wrestled with any kind of anxiety, you know it’s not that simple. It’s not just some kind of switch that you can turn off at will, no matter how much you might want to. Paul wasn’t telling the Philippians to “just stop being anxious.” Anxiety isn’t that simple, and we do ourselves a disservice if we treat it that way.

In actuality, anxiety can take many forms. For some people, it’s just a general sense of unease or fear. But for others, it can manifest itself as everything from obsessive-compulsive disorder to panic attacks to social phobias. These aren’t things anyone can “just stop” at the drop of a hat. They’re obstacles that many people have wrestled with for years without gaining a definitive upper hand.

In this study guide, we’re not going to “solve” anxiety or discover some kind of one-size-fits-all panacea. What we’re going to do instead is explore a handful of methods you can use to combat anxiety in your own life by drawing on the tools and promises given to us by God.

## What anxiety means

But first, let's get something straight:

Anxiety does not mean you have failed as a Christian.

Anxiety does not mean that God has abandoned you or that you are somehow less than those who don't seem to struggle with it as much.

Anxiety means that situations in your life are causing you distress—perhaps health issues, financial challenges or relationship problems—and you're having trouble processing them. That's all. You are still a child of God. You are still loved by the Creator of the universe. He still wants to help you get a handle on this.

That's what it means, and that's where we're going to start.

## A promise of peace

Let's circle back to Paul's words for a minute. "Be anxious for nothing" isn't a flippant command to just switch off our feelings. It's an invitation to do something different with them. Peter says, "Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time, casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you" (1 Peter 5:6-7).

Together, these verses are a promise. No matter how much stress and anxiety we're facing, peace is within our grasp. That's not because of our own strength, but because of the mighty hand of God. The hand that shaped the cosmos is extended toward you, waiting for you to turn over the cares and anxieties that are eating away at you.

The more we learn to do that—the more we entrust our worries and concerns to God—the more we will find our hearts and minds guarded by the peace "which surpasses all understanding."

That's a promise. Not an outside possibility, not a likelihood, but an absolute, irrevocable promise from our Father in heaven.

## Making a habit of giving our worries to God

Of course, if turning our worries over to God is not something we're used to doing, it's not a habit we can form overnight—and it *does* have to become a habit. We can't leave our cares with God overnight and then take them back the next morning. When we take our worries to God, we have to learn to leave them with Him and trust Him with them.

One tactic that can help is learning to distinguish between what you're capable of doing to help the situation and what you're *not* capable of doing. Figure out what you're powerless to change and take those things to the God who is far from powerless.

Then get to work on the things you can do something about. Focus on the change you can actually effect,

knowing that God, in His infinite wisdom and power, is handling the things you can't. "And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose" (Romans 8:28).

Not just some things. *All* things. Even the things that aren't working out the way we want or expect. God is actively working out *all* things for good, and that's something He's far more equipped to do than we are.

## What we can do about anxiety

How we tackle our share of the to-do list can make a difference too. Imagine your goals as a pie. It would be reckless and unhealthy to eat the whole thing at once. You'd only end up feeling overwhelmed and useless. Instead, break those big, intimidating goals into manageable slices. Aim to eat a reasonably sized piece in a reasonable amount of time, and don't push yourself beyond your capabilities.

Another tactic is to sit down and share your anxieties with a trusted friend who's good at listening. But go one step further. With your friend's help, try to work out which of your anxieties are most likely and least likely to actually happen.

As U.S. President Calvin Coolidge once remarked, "If you see 10 troubles coming down the road, you can be sure that nine will run into the ditch before they reach you and you have to battle with only one of them."

Knowing the probability of potential issues can change how we feel about them.

## What to remember

Again, this is just a starting point. Another thing to keep in mind is that some kinds of anxieties are going to be easier to tackle with professional help. Science and medicine can't replace God, but they're certainly not mutually exclusive *from* God, either. Professional counselors can be a helpful tool.

However you battle with anxiety, remember these most important truths:

- God promises us a peace that surpasses understanding. That peace is attainable. We *can* win this battle.
- You aren't alone. In the Church Jesus is building, you have brothers and sisters fighting the same battles, and an even greater number willing to lend you strength and support.
- And no matter how long the fight takes, anxiety doesn't mean you're a failure as a Christian. It just means that, like the rest of us, you're a Christian in progress.



# Chapter 1

## Surviving This Age of Anxiety

The term *age of anxiety* has been around for decades. Why are we still plagued by this seemingly unending problem? Is anxiety getting worse? Is there a solution? The Bible says there is!

by David Hicks

During the trying years of World War II, W.H. Auden wrote *The Age of Anxiety: A Baroque Eclogue*. This poem seems to be the first recorded use of the term *age of anxiety*. However, since the poem's release in 1947, this phrase has been applied to eras spanning from the late 1800s until today.

So, why are so many experiencing life-altering anxiety today?

To answer this question, we need to understand anxiety—to really dig into its causes and effects.

### Anxiety in this era

If anxiety isn't a problem for you, this might seem like a trivial topic that can be dismissed by quoting a few encouraging verses.

Except those who struggle with anxiety know that the solution isn't quite as fast or simple as that.

To be clear, this isn't a chapter approaching anxiety from a clinical standpoint, nor is it a guide for diagnosing anxiety. What this chapter offers is firsthand experience in recognizing, accepting and working on overcoming anxiety from a biblical standpoint.

In our lives today, just as for people in previous generations, there can be many triggers for anxiety, some more common than others.

Here are three of the most common triggers in *this* age of anxiety:

### 1. Loss of control

Your heart pounds and your hands get clammy when you find yourself in the middle of a large crowd. You get nervous, even dizzy, in public places, unsure of what's happening around you. You need to be at the front of the pack when driving so you aren't boxed in.

This is what post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and other loss-of-control stresses can feel like.

Police officers, fire fighters and military personnel who have experienced combat are all susceptible to this type of anxiety, as are people in other high-stress, life-threatening professions. The need to be in control of their surroundings or current situation can bring on severe anxiety when that control is lost. And that need can remain even after the person moves on to other professions.

Having personally experienced this type of anxiety—having been the person who became nervous in crowds, who had to know what was around him at all times, who couldn't drive behind anyone, ever—I know it takes more than just saying “don't be anxious” to not be anxious.

So, how can we lessen this need for control and reduce anxiety?

The book of Psalms holds many passages of encouragement for those who struggle with the anxiety of loss of control. King David reminds us that God is our fortress, our deliverer and our shield, the One in whom we can take cover (Psalm 144:2). He also makes the point that we can release our fear because God is the stronghold of our life (Psalm 27:1).

The book of Psalms goes further than just telling us not to be anxious about loss of control; it explains *why* we can let go.

By strengthening our reliance upon God through prayer, Bible study, meditation and adhering to His instructions, we can learn to put our confidence in Him.

Accepting that God is in control can help us to gain a sense of peace. And in doing so, we can more easily release our need for control—and thereby release the anxiety that comes from a loss of control.

### 2. Lack of self-esteem

Your mouth gets dry. Your head lowers. Your palms get sweaty. Butterflies well up inside you. You feel yourself blushing. Should you cry? Should you scream? Should you run away in

terror? What's the proper response to the coworker who asks you a question in front of three other people?

Sometimes that's all it takes.

This is the anxiety that comes from a lack of self-esteem, also known as social anxiety disorder. This type of anxiety may describe you perfectly, but you may not know it as a sign of low self-esteem.

Or maybe you do.

Maybe this type of anxiety comes upon you because you feel like you have nothing to contribute—like you're not smart enough, or funny enough, or attractive enough, or wealthy enough, or some other stereotype enough to be counted worthy of being included.

A 2006 study published in *Behaviour Research and Therapy* determined that socially anxious people were less likely to associate positive words with themselves.

Physical, emotional and sexual abuse can be major contributors to low self-esteem.

And our self-esteem can also take a beating in social media, where some people have become extremely judgmental, hiding behind their screens while belittling, mocking and bullying others. Those of us who struggle with this anxiety can slip further into the abyss when we feel critically judged by every photo we post, word we type

or thing we "like."

As society turns away from God and the Bible, it's easy to see how

What matters is that we're important enough to God for Him to build a future for us.

people can forget why and by whom they were created, and thereby lose their sense of worth. In overcoming this lack of self-esteem, it's critical to understand what our Creator thinks of us.

We are created by our Father in heaven to become His children!

Think about that for a moment.

Before the foundation of the world, God planned for us to become His sons and daughters (see Ephesians 1:3-6). He wants us to be in His family—to share His love and nature. Not only does God *want* us to become His children, He paid the ultimate price to make that possible. Our Father, our mighty, loving Creator, was willing to give His Son, and Jesus allowed Himself to be beaten and scourged, to be crucified and die—and for whom?

For you.

For me.

For us.

It's not about being smart enough. Or attractive enough. Or wealthy enough. Or funny enough. Those things don't matter. What matters is that we're important enough to God for Him to build a future for us.

It's much easier to remove the anxiety of low self-esteem when we understand how valuable we are to our Creator—and that He has a great future in store for us.

### 3. Stress

Stress does not discriminate. It can attack anyone. And it can hit us in many different ways.

"I can't find a job."

"I hate my job!"

"Everyone tells me I should get married, but I can't find someone to love."

"My wife is pregnant again, and we're not prepared to have another child."

"My family is being persecuted for our religion."

"I didn't get into the college I wanted."

"The violence in my town is out of control."

"I'm being bullied at school, but I'm afraid to tell anyone."

"My boyfriend broke up with me."

"I have terminal cancer."

"My child has terminal cancer."

Life is stressful whether we're wealthy or poor—whether we live in a mansion or a shack.

The anxiety from life's stresses may sometimes sound superficial, but the impact is just as real as any other type of anxiety.

And it's not limited to adults with busy lives—children are also highly susceptible to anxiety caused by stressful situations. The stress of being shuffled from home, to day care or school, to the babysitter, back to home day after day can cause anxiety. In more extreme cases, some children go without food or suitable shelter every day. They live in poverty, in areas plagued by crime, experiencing stress-induced anxiety every day of their lives.

Children can also develop anxiety due to their parents' actions and words. An article on [KidsHealth.org](https://www.kidshealth.org) warns that parents should be mindful of how they discuss issues like finances, illness, and marital and work troubles when their children are present, because children can pick up on their parents' anxieties and start to worry themselves.

So how do we overcome the anxiety of our stressful lives?

Jesus told us not to worry about the concerns of life, like what to eat or drink. But He didn't just tell us not to be anxious—He also explained *why*.

The Creator of all is watching over us and is aware of our needs. If we set our mind on the things of God—the things of righteousness—while trusting God to provide what we can't, then our physical needs can become secondary and our anxiety can subside (Matthew 6:25-34).

This doesn't mean that our needs will go away and that we'll never suffer want. It simply means that when we align our priorities with God's priorities, our physical worries and stresses are put into perspective and become less important. And when we allow our focus to be on the spiritual, we can reduce the stress and anxiety that come from the physical.

### Don't try to deal with anxiety alone

Anxiety is real and is difficult to overcome.

And sometimes—despite our best efforts, despite all we do to draw closer to God—anxiety can still grip us and become a weight dragging us down into an abyss of loneliness and depression.

If this is happening, or even if we *think* this is happening—whether to ourselves or to someone we know—it's critical that we seek professional help.

A 2011 study on anxiety disorders and suicide found a distinct link between anxiety and suicide, most notably in those with panic disorders and PTSD (“[The Relationship Between Anxiety Disorders and Suicide Attempts](#)”).

I've witnessed this side of anxiety. Believe me, someone who doesn't seek help with anxiety can be in serious danger of turning to suicide as a solution.

If you or someone you know is having suicidal thoughts or considering suicide, there are resources in place to help. In the U.S. contact the [988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline](#) at 988. For suicide hotlines in other countries, see <http://suicide.org/international-suicide-hotlines.html>.

Seeking God's help and guidance is very valuable, but God also wants us to reach out to others for help. The worst decision we can make is to try to overcome anxiety on our own. The Bible says that “two are better than one” and that it can be detrimental for the one “who is alone when he falls, for he has no one to help him up” (Ecclesiastes 4:9-10).

It's important to reach out to others who can support us as we overcome this very real problem. If anxiety becomes a chronic problem that hinders you from living a healthy life, it can be very helpful to seek professional help from a qualified counselor or psychologist (see the next chapter on “Anxiety Disorders”). Seeking help is not a sign of weakness.

### Exiting the age of anxiety

How can we survive this seemingly perpetual age of anxiety?

The answer is found in believing in *and* relying upon the Word of God. Paul told us to “be anxious for nothing” (Philippians 4:6). The rest of the Bible explains how this seemingly impossible task is possible.

When we let God take control, when we realize how important we are to Him and when we put our worries, stresses and cares in His hands—that's when we have a chance to *be anxious for nothing*, and when our personal age of anxiety can end.



## Chapter 2 Anxiety Disorders

Millions of people deal with various levels of anxiety. How can you know if your anxiety needs treatment? What can you do about anxiety disorders?

by Helen Richards

**D**o you worry—a lot? Are you continually restless—unable to sit still for work, classes, movies and concerts? When you are trying to concentrate, does your mind go blank and leave you unable to continue? Are you tense? Do you have muscle spasms?

Do you have difficulty in keeping yourself from snapping at other people over minor things? Do you feel tired, but unable to settle down and relax? Is it hard to fall asleep or stay asleep?

You could be suffering from anxiety.

## What is anxiety?

Listed above are the symptoms of anxiety.

Anxiety is an emotion we often identify as fear or worry. For most people most of the time, it is a healthy emotion to experience. It warns us of danger and aids us in escaping it.

However, when these feelings are experienced frequently and are interfering with our ability to go to work, do our jobs, function at school or relate to friends and family, it is a serious condition and needs treatment.

## How many people suffer from anxiety?

According to the Anxiety and Depression Association of America, Americans affected by anxiety number 40 million adults every year (19.1 percent of the population). Only about 37 percent of people with anxiety receive treatment.

Anxiety disorders are more common in women than in men (23.4 percent of women compared to 14.3 percent of men). Among adolescents, the statistics are slightly higher (31.9 percent). Again, young women are more likely to develop an anxiety disorder (38 percent) than young men (26.1 percent).

Like all illnesses, anxiety disorders can range from mild to severe. Severe cases impair a person's ability to function in daily life—at school, at work, in relationships and other aspects of daily life.

Among U.S. adults, about 22.8 percent of anxiety sufferers have severe impairment and about 33.7 percent have moderate impairment. Among children under the age of 17, about 8 percent suffer from severe impairment. Most anxiety disorder sufferers develop the disease before the age of 21.

## Where does anxiety come from?

Anxiety is caused by both environmental factors and genetic factors. One well-known illness that is caused strictly by environment is post-traumatic stress disorder. This illness used to be classified as an anxiety disorder, however, recent research has placed it in a category by itself.

Environmental factors play a role in other anxiety disorders. It is well-known that negative or extremely stressful events in childhood can lead to anxiety in adulthood.

Genetic factors include a history of anxiety disorders or other mental illnesses in family members. Other factors that lead to anxiety are shyness or other inhibited behaviors. Even physical conditions, such as thyroid conditions or heart arrhythmias, can cause

anxiety. The use of caffeine or other drugs can also produce anxiety.

Anxiety is manifested in the brain by the imbalance of certain neurotransmitters. Neurotransmitters regulate the transmission of nerve impulses from one neuron to another. Serotonin affects the emotional centers of the brain, and when there is either not enough or too much serotonin in the system, those structures that govern emotions do not function as they should. The result is a host of mental illnesses, including anxiety disorders.

You cannot feel the serotonin in your system, but you can feel the effects of imbalance. You may have a feeling of doom or tension in your muscles. You may have trouble sleeping. You could develop the symptoms of a panic attack: heart pounding, dizziness, lightheadedness, sweaty palms. You may feel as if you are going to die. Many people go to emergency rooms believing they are having a heart attack, only to be told it's anxiety.

## What can you do about anxiety?

If you recognize yourself in this article, what can you do about it? The good news is that anxiety is treatable. Along with the advice in the rest of this study guide, the first step in a treatment program is to go to your primary care physician and have a complete physical. Tell him or her about your symptoms. He or she may test your thyroid levels or order tests to check your heart.

If those test results come back normal, the next step is to go to a psychiatrist. This doctor is specially trained to recognize the symptoms of mental disorders and recommend treatment. If your symptoms are mild and do not interfere

with your life to the point where you are not able to function effectively at home,

work or school, the doctor may recommend the most conservative treatment. And that would be counseling.

There are many types of counseling that are used to treat anxiety. What they all have in common is helping you examine your thought patterns. Part of the anxiety cycle is that when you start to get anxious feelings, you automatically develop thoughts that make those feelings worse. And you tend to ruminate on them. That is, the thoughts keep going around in your head like a hamster on a wheel. And you cannot seem to stop them.

What they all have in common is helping you examine your thought patterns.

The counselor can help you identify what your thoughts are, develop thoughts and phrases to stop them, and turn them in a different direction. The most well-known and tested type of therapy for anxiety is cognitive behavioral therapy. But there are other types, so you may want to search for the one that is right for you.

If your anxiety is more severe and interferes with your ability to live your life, a psychiatrist may recommend medications. In the past, the go-to medications were in a class called benzodiazepines, which act on a different neurotransmitter than serotonin. However, these medications may cause dependence, so they are not prescribed as much today.

Another class of medications is the antidepressants called SSRIs (selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors). There are also SNRIs (serotonin-norepinephrine reuptake inhibitors) and other medications. Ask your doctor about the benefits, risks and side effects. But research shows that in many cases the best treatment combines medication and counseling.

## Anxiety and the Bible

The Bible has much to say about anxiety. It describes where anxiety comes from and how it can be overcome. Listed below are a couple of scriptures that describe sources of anxiety:

- Matthew 13:22: “Now he who received seed among the thorns is he who hears the word, and the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and he becomes unfruitful.”
- Luke 21:34: “But take heed to yourselves, lest your hearts be weighed down with carousing, drunkenness, and cares of this life, and that Day come on you unexpectedly.”

These verses describe sources of anxiety. They warn us that being too involved in the cares of this world and life can make us spiritually unfruitful and unprepared for Christ's return.

Anxiety can be caused by external events that induce fear. This produces a physiological change in the brain.

One focus of therapy is to learn what types of thoughts or circumstances trigger your anxiety. It takes effort and practice to develop this skill. Once you do, you can develop lists of words or phrases to contradict those thoughts.

Bible verses can be helpful in this process. Reminding yourself of God's care for you, His love and His plan for your future can be useful in contradicting thoughts of worry, doubt and fear. A list of possible verses is provided below, but you can use any scriptures you find that give you comfort.

## Helpful scriptures for dealing with anxiety

- **Trust:** “Do not fret because of evildoers, nor be envious of the workers of iniquity. For they shall soon be cut down like the grass, and wither as the green herb. Trust in the LORD, and do good; dwell in the land, and feed on His faithfulness. Delight yourself also in the LORD, and He shall give you the desires of your heart. Commit your way to the LORD, trust also in Him, and He shall bring it to pass” (Psalm 37:1-5).
- **God's provision:** “Then He said to His disciples, ‘Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat; nor about the body, what you will put on. Life is more than food, and the body is more than clothing. Consider the ravens, for they neither sow nor reap, which have neither storehouse nor barn; and God feeds them. Of how much more value are you than the birds?’” (Luke 12:22-24).
- **Assurance of God's sovereignty:** “And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose” (Romans 8:28).
- **Power of prayer:** “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 understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:6-7).
- **Good things to think about:** “Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things” (Philippians 4:8).
- **God's care for us:** “Casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you” (1 Peter 5:7).

Meditating on these verses and praying about them can help to lessen your anxiety. Remember, you are dealing with a physical illness of the brain. Having anxiety doesn't mean you don't have faith, but strengthening your faith can help you be rid of the uncomfortable and sometimes distressing symptoms of anxiety.

*Helen H. Richards is a licensed professional counselor in the state of Texas. She holds an A.B. degree from Sweet Briar College in Virginia and a master of science in counseling from Texas A&M, Commerce. She has extensive experience working in the mental health field with patients young and old.*



## Chapter 3

# What Christians Need to Understand About Mental Health

Poor mental health and mental illness can feel like a shameful, personal failing. Why? What is mental illness, and how should Christians view it?

by Jeremy Lallier

It can be hard for Christians to talk about mental health.

That’s a ridiculous sentence to have to write.

The Bible tells us that, as far as the world is concerned, God’s people are the foolish, the weak, the low and the despised (1 Corinthians 1:27-28, English Standard Version). We’re called to be compassionate, to bear with one another and to pray for each other (1 Peter 3:8; Ephesians 4:2; James 5:16). It stands to reason that we of all people should have the easiest time talking about the twin issues of mental health and mental illness.

In my experience, that’s rarely true. There are powerful stigmas attached to those subjects. Discussing them can feel uncomfortable, embarrassing, shameful or outright taboo—even for Christians.

I have an idea about why.

I think it has to do with some of the Bible’s most beautiful passages—verses like, “You will keep him in

perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on You, because he trusts in You” (Isaiah 26:3), or, “Be anxious for nothing . . . and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:6-7).

Passages like these, which ought to give us comfort and perspective, can sometimes feel like an indictment. *Good Christians trust in God, and He gives them peace*, we tell ourselves. *If I don’t have peace, I am not a good Christian.*

Is that true?

Are we bad Christians if our minds are not constantly in a perfect state of serenity and happiness?

### God’s people and mental/emotional stress

Let’s talk about that.

Let’s talk about David, the man after God’s own heart, the man who will once again serve as king over Israel—the man who wrote, “My heart is severely pained within me, and the terrors of death have fallen upon me. Fearfulness and trembling have come upon me, and horror has overwhelmed me” (Psalm 55:4-5).

Let’s talk about Elijah, who performed incredible miracles as a prophet of God, who served as a stand-in for all the prophets of God during Christ’s transfiguration—who collapsed under a tree, exhausted and overwhelmed, begging, “It is enough! Now, LORD, take my life, for I am no better than my fathers!” (1 Kings 19:4).

Let’s even talk about Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the eternal Word made flesh—who told His disciples before His crucifixion, “My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even to death” (Mark 14:34), who, “being in agony,” prayed to the Father while “His sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground” (Luke 22:44).

Jesus obviously had perfect mental health, but part of His destined human experience was to be “in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin” (Hebrews 4:15). He knows what it’s like to suffer mental and emotional pressure.

These were all faithful servants of God who shared a close relationship with our Father in heaven, and each of them had days when they endured a lot of mentally and emotionally stressful situations! So let’s cut ourselves some slack:

It doesn’t mean you’re failing as a Christian even when your mental state isn’t where you would like it to be.

You are not failing as a Christian just because your mental health is suffering.

You are not failing as a Christian just because you are living with a mental illness.

### The complexity of the mind

The human mind is an incredible thing.

More to the point, the human mind is an incredibly *complicated* thing, whose inner workings we are only just beginning to understand in any sort of meaningful way.

The lump of gray matter floating between your ears is an intricate network composed of around 86 billion neurons, each designed to convey electrical currents at incredible speeds so that you can think, feel, move and function as intended. Your brain stores memories, controls muscles, automates bodily functions, processes emotions, forms complex thoughts and evaluates arguments, all while presenting you with data from your body's five senses in a way that doesn't overload you with more information than you can handle.

The fact that there is a stigma attached to mental health—the fact that there is a stigma attached to the health of our brain, our most intricate and nuanced organ—is

fundamentally absurd. Our day-to-day existence depends so heavily on that delicate, incredible

More Americans will have experienced mental illness than not.

mass of expertly designed neurons we all have, and yet so few of us have any idea how to react when things go wrong.

We can change that. We *have* to change that.

But we have to do it together.

## The need for mental health awareness

Mental illness might sound like a rare thing. It's not. According to research collected by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention:

- Over half of all Americans will be diagnosed with a mental illness or disorder during their lifetime.
- During any given year, one in five Americans will experience a mental illness.
- One in 25 Americans is living with a serious mental illness (such as schizophrenia, bipolar disorder or major depression).

Those are some pretty telling numbers. *Over half*. At the end of their lives, more Americans will have experienced mental illness than not—not just poor mental health, but medical conditions impacting the quality of their lives. And while percentages for the rest of the world aren't as readily available, it goes without saying that mental illness is more than just an American issue.

It's a Christian issue too.

So what do we *do* about it? What action steps can we take to help remove the stigmas attached to poor mental health?

## What is mental illness?

First, we have to define a few things. There's an important difference between poor mental health and mental illness. Mental illnesses are conditions—sometimes temporary, sometimes long-lasting—that affect how we think, feel and act. Mental health, on the other hand, is a general assessment of our emotional, psychological and social well-being.

The two terms are closely related, but it's entirely possible to have poor mental health without having a mental illness, and it's possible to have periods of good mental health in spite of a mental illness. (Depression and anxiety are mental illnesses, for example, but that doesn't mean we experience mental illness every time we're sad or worried.)

So what *causes* mental illness?

*So many things.*

Broadly speaking, experts in the field tell us there are three main categories of causes—biological, psychological and environmental factors. Many of these factors are completely out of our control.

Mental illness can be triggered by a chemical imbalance affecting the neurotransmitters our brain cells use to communicate. It can be triggered by personal trauma and loss. It can be triggered by something that happened to us while we were in the womb, by certain infections, by societal pressures or just by existing in a dysfunctional environment.

Attempting to just “push through” an illness or “tough it out” can be disastrous. We can't fix things like biochemical imbalances through sheer willpower and determination. The brain is a complicated organ. There are a lot of issues that can keep it from working optimally—and when that happens, it's okay to get help.

## Advice for readers with mental illnesses

If you are struggling with mental illness as a Christian, here are three important things to keep in mind:

### 1. You are not your condition

Sometimes you might feel like you are. Sometimes other people might make you feel like you are. But you're so much more than that. You are, first and foremost, a child of God—personally called by your Father in heaven, who wants to see you become just like Him (1 John 3:1-2).

That's your identity. That's who you are, that's why you exist, that's what you're working toward. A mental illness is a thing you have; it's not who you are. Don't let anyone—including yourself—tell you any differently.

### 2. Mental illness is not a moral failing

An incomplete reading of the Bible might convince us that things like sickness and poverty are direct punishments from

God, and that He supplies His righteous saints with limitless health and riches (see Psalm 112, among other passages).

But practically all of God's faithful servants have experienced their share of sickness and poverty—and not always because of sin, but because those tragedies and trials had an important role to play in the plan of God. Consider the stories of Job, Joseph, Ruth, Esther and the untold “others” of Hebrews 11—“of whom the world was not worthy” (Hebrews 11:38).

A mental illness does not inherently mean that God is punishing you because of something you did. More often than not, it's part of a bigger picture that you can't quite see yet. Trust God, but don't default to blaming yourself.

### 3. Seeking professional help is not a lack of faith

God is the ultimate source of all healing, and while our approach to solving any problem should begin with prayer, there's nothing wrong with getting help from qualified professionals. (King Asa was faulted for seeking the physicians *instead* of God in 2 Chronicles 16:12, not *in addition to*.)

Sometimes, as a Christian, you might face pressure (from yourself or from other Christians) to deal with these things on your own—to simply pray harder and study more until God intervenes and heals you. But that's not how we tend

to handle other kinds of medical issues.

If you would go to the emergency room for a broken bone, or the dentist for an aching tooth, or

a surgeon for a ruptured appendix, or ask a family doctor to diagnose and treat various aches and pains, what makes getting help for your mind any different or less important?

Mental illness can take a variety of forms with a variety of causes. A trained professional can help you understand what's happening in your brain, why it's happening and what you can do about it. There's nothing shameful about getting help from a doctor or a psychiatrist as you seek to make sense of the most complicated organ God designed for the human body.

### Advice for readers without mental illnesses

If you've never experienced mental illness, here are three things professionals say to keep in mind during your interactions with those who have:

### 1. Understand that you don't understand

This is huge. Clinical depression is not the same as experiencing sadness. An anxiety disorder is not the same as experiencing worry. In short, *unless you've experienced a mental illness, you don't know what it's like to experience a mental illness*. That might feel a tad obvious, but that principle should impact both how we all think about mental illnesses—and how we talk to people who have them.

Speaking of which . . .

### 2. Offer support, not solutions

It can be tempting to offer advice (“Have you tried focusing on happier things?”), empathy (“I know how you feel”) or perspective (“It could be worse!”), but these approaches are usually less helpful than they might sound.

How unhelpful, exactly? Imagine a man saying those things to a pregnant woman who was actively giving birth. “I know how you feel” isn't even true, and the other two statements could easily come across as insulting and ignorant.

Instead, show support. If others open up to you about their struggles, ask how you can help. Tell them you can't imagine what they're dealing with. Thank them for sharing. Check in with them periodically.

Let them know, either through your words or your actions, that they are loved. That can make all the difference in the world.

### 3. Fight the stigma

For thousands of years, the human race has misunderstood and misrepresented mental illness. That's not something anyone can fix overnight. But each of us can address the stigma of mental illness when it shows up in our little corner of the world, whether we personally understand it or not.

We can do a better job getting to know our brethren who have mental illnesses. We can do a better job creating an environment where they feel comfortable opening up about the challenges they face and the struggles they have. We can show our support and unconditional love on good days and on bad days.

### Many members, one body

“But now indeed there are many members, yet one body . . . And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; or if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it” (1 Corinthians 12:20, 26).

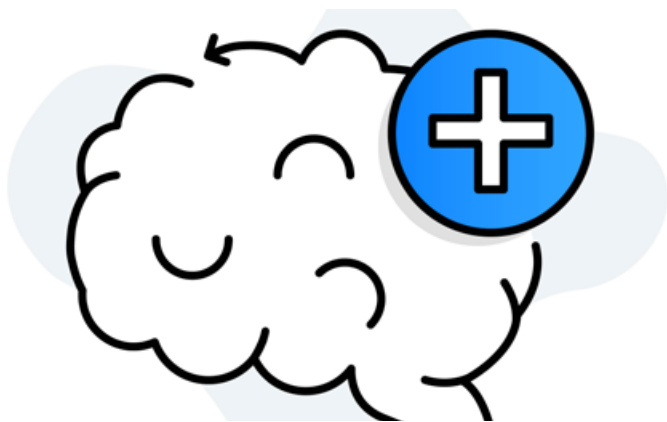
No one with a mental illness should feel like he or she doesn't belong in the Body of Christ. As members of that body, we have a responsibility to one another.

Suffer with those who suffer . . . rejoice with them in their victories.

Suffer with those who suffer, and to rejoice with them in their victories.

The first steps to dismantling the stigma of mental illness within the boundaries of the Church begins with us. *All* of us.

Let's do our part to create an environment where all, no matter their struggles, feel safe and equipped to fight their battles.



## Chapter 4

# How to Replace Anxious Thinking With Positive Thinking

The Bible tells us not to worry, but what if we are stuck in a vicious cycle of anxiety? How can we identify anxious thinking and replace it with positive thinking?

by Eddie Foster

**A** life full of anxiety makes it very hard for us to believe and trust in God's perfect will and plan of salvation. It also causes us to trust more in the physical environment and less in the invisible Creator who makes sure that "*all things work together* for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose" (Romans 8:28).

Anxiety is a huge threat to the fruit of faithfulness, and thus it needs to be dealt with immediately.

### Identify the cause of anxious thinking

The biggest step is admitting that anxiety, clinical disorder or not, *demand*s a change in thought patterns.

To change, first we need to find out what are the main causes of our anxiety.

Write down the answers to questions like the following and talk to a friend, minister or professional about your answers:

- What is it about being around people that sets me off?
- What parts of my job make me fearful?
- How is this person intimidating to me?
- What part of this particular action makes it so terrifying?
- If the horrible thing I think is going to happen happens, what will the result really be?
- Does social media cause me to become anxious? If so, what in particular on social media is triggering those feelings?

If we can identify major stressors or causes of anxiety in our lives, then we should act on changing them as fast as possible! Unfortunately, many causes of anxiety (such as our careers, relationships or responsibilities) cannot be just abandoned without being irresponsible. We must begin by changing our thinking.

### Analyze and compare anxious thinking to reality

It's time to jot down those thoughts that go with the events or questions. They might include:

- I'm going to look stupid, and everyone will openly laugh at me.
- I won't be able to excel at my job taking on a new responsibility.
- They'll make fun of me and talk about me behind my back.
- I'll get hurt for sure.
- They'll think badly of me.
- My entire world as I know it will come crumbling down.
- I'm worried about the image I project on social media or feel insufficient when compared to the images others project.

Take a good look at the thoughts. When we stop justifying the thoughts as being part of us and something we can't help, we will likely see that they are caused by being overly concerned about what other people think

of us and pride, and they certainly don't include God anywhere. So, analyze them.

1. Is it fair/rational to think that everyone in a room or in a situation is fixated and staring at every little thing we do? Think about how often (or rarely) we notice other people and how quickly we forget things people do.
2. Is it fair/rational to think that the worst-case scenario will happen, or that we need to be prepared for every possible thing out of our control? We can plan, but remember that God is ultimately in control: "A man's heart *plans* his way, but the LORD directs his steps" (Proverbs 16:9).
3. Is it fair/rational to think that in the situation we are in, God has abandoned us and is not available to help us? Is it fair/rational to think that God can't protect you from something if He wills it?

### Substitute the irrational with rational (and godly) thoughts

We know that thoughts not in line with God's thinking have to be changed. When anxiety rears its head, we should fill our minds with encouraging Bible verses and thoughts:

- God is with me in this.
- I can handle this.
- I don't think like this anymore, remember?

It will definitely take work, patience and dedication.

Anxious, irrational thoughts will continue to invade our heads thanks to Satan's influence, but with God's truth, we can be ready to reject those thoughts.

### What if I've already lost control?

Pray immediately to God and ask for His Spirit of power, love and a sound mind. Repeat an encouraging scripture

We must begin by changing our thinking.

in your mind or, better yet, say it out loud. The longer we go without praying and

writing down our thoughts, the more we dwell on and let anxiety fester in our minds.

Now ask, "Do I believe that God can help me in this?" "Am I committed to changing my anxious thinking to peaceful and faithful thinking?" "Do I control my anxiety, or does my anxiety control me?" Then review what you've written and prepare for your next fight with anxiety.



## Chapter 5 How Should Christians Handle Trauma?

How can we better serve people who have experienced trauma? And how should we react if we have suffered traumatic experiences ourselves?

by Erica Golden

According to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), "Individual trauma results from an event, series of events, or set of circumstances that is experienced by an individual as physically or emotionally harmful or life-threatening and that has lasting adverse effects on the individual's functioning and mental, physical, social, emotional, or spiritual well-being."

Trauma can stem from emotional abuse, physical abuse, sexual abuse, violence, substance abuse or mental illness in the household. Other factors can include parental separation or divorce, incarceration of a family member, neglect or loss. Still others may experience the impacts of historical and intergenerational trauma, which can have a lasting detrimental effect on their lives.

Unfortunately, trauma is not rare. It can happen to infants, children, adolescents, adults and older people. Because of the brokenness of our world, trauma is everywhere. No one is immune to it.

## Lasting effects of trauma

What happens to us changes us.

This is true psychologically, of course, but it is also true neurologically, gastrointestinally and cardiovascularly. Trauma has a massive impact on the long-term health of those who go through it.

For example, [research](#) suggests that post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) impacts our risk of chronic fatigue, fibromyalgia, irritable bowel syndrome (IBS), high blood pressure, obesity and heart disease. In addition, chronic inflammation is more common in adulthood among people who suffered adverse childhood experiences (ACEs)—even after accounting for lifestyle choices and other environmental factors ([Danese et al., 2007](#)).

Because our world is filled with war, divorce, death, addiction, abuse and neglect, the rate of people who experience ACEs is estimated at a terrifying 60 percent ([Merrick et al., 2018](#))—and many suspect that is an underestimation.

It's heartbreaking.

It's impossible to find reasons for the things that many people have gone through in their lives.

Yet even Jesus Christ, our God and Savior, experienced traumatic events throughout His physical life. We are told that He was “despised and rejected by men, a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief” (Isaiah 53:3).

As a young child, Jesus was a refugee in Egypt with His parents. Sometime during His childhood or young adulthood, He apparently experienced the loss of His stepfather, Joseph. He was also rejected by many of His family members and countrymen. And that's all besides the horrific and traumatic death He experienced at 33 years of age.

God the Father did not exempt His Son from trauma. Why?

## Trauma and resilience

For those who have experienced trauma, knowing they are at an increased risk of chronic disease isn't exactly hopeful. However, modern research on trauma doesn't just focus on the prevalence and health risks.

Researchers today are starting to give more attention to how outcomes can differ between people who have experienced trauma.

Not everyone exposed to a traumatic event develops PTSD.

This research was spurred on by examples of resilience among groups such as Holocaust survivors. After their liberation from Nazi death camps, many of them successfully and quickly rebuilt their lives despite their horrific experiences.

The term *post-traumatic growth* was coined to describe this resilient reaction in the face of trauma.

While different people might find reacting with resilience to be more difficult, it is possible. Many Holocaust survivors reported actively engaging in behaviors that helped them grow during the years after experiencing this massive trauma. Many strove to leave a legacy and work to better their communities—through activities that foster connection and a sense of purpose ([Greene et al., 2012](#)).

This doesn't mean their lives were easy or idyllic. But it does mean that many could live meaningful, hopeful lives despite the horrific experiences in their past.

The people around them were indispensable in this process. Holocaust survivors living in Israel, for example, have had better mental health than Holocaust survivors living in other parts of the world—likely due to living in a community that supported them and understood their past.

Likewise, Christians can show love to those who have suffered by caring for them, reaching out to them and listening to their stories (if they want to share them).

People who have been traumatized need to be in an environment where they feel safe, heard and supported.

Even though we can't end trauma and suffering in this life, we can help people experiencing it.

## Why does God allow trauma?

Why would a loving God allow trauma in our world? Why would God let trauma touch the life of His Son?

I certainly cannot give a complete answer. Understanding God's mind will be beyond my ability until Christ's return. But here are a few possible reasons to consider:

- Trauma can teach us that bad things happen to good people and that righteousness isn't an easy path to a trouble-free life. If it were, people would seek it for selfish reasons.
- Trauma provides an opportunity to build resilience through the power of the Holy Spirit (2 Corinthians 4:7-9).
- Trauma can help teach us compassion for those who have suffered and how we must be careful not to instinctively blame the person suffering (compare the book of Job and the story of the man born blind in John 9).

Even though we can't end trauma and suffering in this life, we can help people experiencing it.

A time is coming when God will intervene to end pain and suffering in our world. To learn more about that time,

read the online post [“The Kingdom of God Will End Suffering and Evil.”](#)

## How to help someone who’s experienced trauma

What can you do if you want to serve those who have experienced trauma? Here are a few ways to start:

1. Recognize the scope of trauma, and don’t assume you can always tell who has a history of trauma and who doesn’t.
2. Recognize trauma’s power in impacting someone’s responses. Seek to understand and avoid actions and words that might provoke a negative response.
3. Be a part of a supportive community for those who have suffered.

## How to build resilience

What if you have experienced trauma?

There is some great encouragement in the research (and in the Scriptures) about the value of resilience, a trait we can all learn. Here are a few important first steps:

1. **Pray for healing.** Humbly claim God’s promises to uphold, strengthen and help (Psalm 37:23-24; 2 Corinthians 4:8-9; Proverbs 24:16). Even if you don’t feel like praying, kneel before God and tell Him so. His understanding and help is infinite.
2. **Get support from as many people as you can.** You might start by talking to one person you feel comfortable with or by reaching out to your pastor or a counselor. You don’t have to tell everyone everything, but you do need to tell someone something.
3. **Take care of yourself physically.** This includes getting adequate sleep and exercise and eating well. (See the online article [“5 Ways to Refresh Yourself When You Don’t Have Time.”](#))
4. **Serve others.** The outward focus of serving helps give us purpose and meaning and a new perspective.
5. **Remember Jesus’ example.** He was “a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief” but fully relied on God, even when He was physically alone. He had the advantage of knowing the purpose of His suffering and *chose* that path. We do not choose to suffer, but we can still know the story’s end and our ultimate purpose.

If you’re struggling, support is available if you reach out for it.

For more on resilience and hope, read the online article [“Perseverance and the Science of Resilience in Trials.”](#)



# Chapter 6 Finding Peace of Mind

In a world of turmoil, with crisis after crisis, stress and anxiety thrive. How can we find peace of mind when life seems unpredictable and out of control?

by Mike Bennett

Life for many is stressful and uncertain. In the face of disasters and crises, the level of anxiety and stress explodes.

And like disastrous hurricanes, crises spawn tornadoes of trauma for families and individuals around the world.

Feelings of panic, lack of control and uncertainty fuel worry and fear, depression and substance abuse. Mental anguish and turmoil sap us of hope and peace of mind.

## Natural reaction to disaster

Experts acknowledge that emotional distress is to be expected in times of trauma.

The CDC said, “It is natural to feel stress, anxiety, grief, and worry during and after a disaster. Everyone will react differently, and your own feelings will change throughout the emergency response. Notice and accept how you feel. Taking care of your emotional health during an emergency will help you think clearly and react to the urgent needs to protect yourself and your family.”

But facing unrelenting waves of crises makes this even more challenging.

## The new normal?

Do we have to just accept the unpredictability of our age as the new normal? It certainly is not normal. And its effects are not healthy or sustainable.

So where can we find inner peace and serenity during stressful and uncertain times?

## Finding peace of mind

How can we find true inner peace? Where can we find someone capable of helping us? Someone with the power, wisdom and caring concern to calm the storms and give us peace of mind?

A story of seasoned sailors facing a literal windstorm helps point us to the answer.

Jesus and His disciples set out across the Sea of Galilee in a small boat, and the exhausted Jesus fell asleep as they sailed.

Meanwhile, “a great windstorm arose, and the waves beat into the boat, so that it was already filling . . . And they awoke Him and said to Him, “Teacher, do You not care that we are perishing?” (Mark 4:37-38).

Several of the disciples were experienced fishermen, and if they thought their lives were in danger, surely they were.

Instead of bailing water or preparing to swim, Jesus “arose and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, ‘Peace, be still!’ And the wind ceased and there was a great calm” (verse 39).

The loving God who has the power to create the earth, sea and wind, and to control them, can also easily calm the storms of worry, doubt and uncertainty plaguing our minds.

William Barclay concludes his commentary on this passage with: “He gives us peace in the storms of anxiety. The chief enemy of peace is worry, worry for ourselves, worry about the unknown future, worry about those we

love. But Jesus speaks to us of a Father whose hand will never cause his child a needless tear and of a love beyond which neither we nor those we love can ever drift. In

the storm of anxiety he brings us the peace of the love of God” (*Daily Study Bible*, note on Mark 4:35-41).

## “Peace I leave with you”

During the most traumatic time of His life, Jesus made a profound and surprising promise to His followers. The night before His arrest, trial, beating and crucifixion, He said:

“Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid” (John 14:27).

Saying “shalom”—peace—was the common way to say hello or good-bye, but Jesus’ promise meant far more.

“The peace Jesus spoke of could not be exemption from conflict and trial. Jesus himself had been ‘troubled’ by the impending Crucifixion (12:27). The peace he spoke of here is the calmness of confidence in God. Jesus had this peace because he was sure of the Father’s love and approval. He could therefore move forward to meet the crisis without fear or hesitation” (*The Expositor’s Bible Commentary Abridged Edition*, note on John 14:27).

Jesus Christ made it possible for His followers to share in this powerful inner peace by becoming right with God and trusting fully in His loving care.

What He offered was real peace of mind.

“The world can give only false peace, which mostly comes from the ignorance of peril or self-reliance” (ibid.).

## “I have overcome the world”

Later the same night Jesus added, “These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world” (John 16:33).

The kind of peace Jesus offers is not found in some monastery cut off from the world, but right out here in the midst of the troubles and uncertainties of the real world.

“Jesus does not overlook the trial that will affect them as well as himself, for that is inevitable in a world alienated from God. He does, however, proclaim victory over it” (ibid., note on John 16:33).

Even while troubles swirl around us, we can have a real inner peace. Jesus set us the example of experiencing peace and joy in spite of terrible trials. He did this by focusing on His essential mission in fulfilling God’s plan of salvation and on the end result, the peaceful Kingdom of God. And He wants us to focus on the mission He has given us and that wonderful world that will come at His return.

## “Be anxious for nothing”

The apostle Paul identified peace as part of the fruit produced in a repentant Christian through God’s Holy Spirit (see our online article “[Fruit of the Spirit: Peace](#)”).

Paul also outlined steps we can take to enjoy a peace that is beyond our full comprehension. Let’s look at it again:

“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

Jesus set us the example of experiencing peace and joy in spite of terrible trials.

understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:6-7).

When our worshipful and trusting prayers include both requests (supplications) and gratitude, God promises to give us His peace.

William Barclay says, “Paul insists that we must give thanks in everything, in sorrows and in joys alike. That implies two things. It implies gratitude and also perfect submission to the will of God. It is only when we are fully convinced that God is working all things together for good that we can really feel to him the perfect gratitude which believing prayer demands” (*Daily Study Bible*, note on Philippians 4:6-7).

Not only does the peace of God remove the need for anxiety and fretfulness, but it transcends our understanding.

William Barclay says this “means that the peace of God is so precious that man’s mind, with all its skill and all its knowledge, can never produce it. It can never be of man’s contriving; it is only of God’s giving. The way to peace is in prayer to entrust ourselves and all whom we hold dear to the loving hands of God.”

As Paul said, God’s peace serves like a soldier, protecting our hearts and minds.

### “Meditate on these things”

Paul continued in verse 8 with a plan for directing our thoughts. Thinking about positive things is another key to inner peace.

“Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things.”

### Cast your cares on Him

What storm are you facing? Cast your cares on God, and ask Him, with thanksgiving, to give you peace of mind and help to face the challenges with faith and a positive attitude.

When He says, “Peace, be still!” miracles happen. Accept His offer of the peace that passes all understanding.

## Sidebar

# Practical Tips for Relieving Stress

We naturally feel stress when facing turmoil and trauma. Experts point to the health benefits of stress-reducing activities such as:

**Exercise.** According to [Mayoclinic.org](https://www.mayoclinic.org), “Exercise in almost any form can act as a stress reliever. Being active can boost your feel-good endorphins and distract you from daily worries.”

**Enjoy God’s creation.** Clinical psychologist Robert Puff advises, “A daily practice of appreciating nature is one of the most beneficial activities you can do to increase happiness and reduce stress. While you may

feel like you have no time in the day, it only requires a few minutes. Start by taking a five-minute walk outside every day. During this time, disconnect yourself from electronic devices” ([psychologytoday.com](https://www.psychologytoday.com)).

**Spend time with a pet.** This may even combine the previous points. The U.S. National Institutes of Health article “[The Power of Pets](#)” says, “Nothing compares to the joy of coming home to a loyal companion. The unconditional love of a pet can do more than keep you company. Pets may also decrease stress, improve heart health, and even help children with their emotional and social skills.”

**Spend time without screens.** “High screen use can have a negative impact on mental health,” writes Nina Schroder on the [National Alliance on Mental Illness website](#). “Research suggests that less time on social media leads to better well-being.”

# Further Reading

- *Finding Hope in a Hopeless World*
- *Change Your Life*
- *Coping With Anxiety*
- *How to Deal With Fear and Stress*
- *How to Gain Control of Your Life When You Feel Helpless*
- *4 Ways to Find Joy in Trials*
- *5 Keys for Handling Stress*
- *How to Win Over Worry*
- *7 Keys to Coping With the Trials and Tribulations of Life*
- *4 Keys to Raising Resilient Kids*
- *How Can We Cast Out Fear?*
- *Bring Every Thought Into Captivity*
- *Overcoming Dangerous Emotions*
- *4 Keys to Defeating Toxic Emotions*

**This publication is not to be sold. It is produced as free educational material by the Church of God, a Worldwide Association, Inc.**

P.O. Box 3490 • McKinney, TX 75070-8189  
972-521-7777 • 888-9-COGWA-9 (toll-free in the U.S.)

© 2026 Church of God, a Worldwide Association, Inc.

All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise indicated, are taken from the New King James Version (© 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc.). Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Images supplied by Iryna via Adobe Stock; gmast3r, DrAfter123, Govindanmarudhai, Abdul Basit Noohani, Kubkoo, aleksandarvelasevic via Getty Images.

**Authors:** Mike Bennett, Eddie Foster, Erica Golden, David Hicks, Jeremy Lallier, Helen Richards

**Reviewers:** John Foster, Bruce Gore, Peter Hawkins, Don Henson, Doug Johnson, Chad Messerly, Larry Neff

**Design:** David Hicks, Elena Salyer

# About **LifeHope&Truth**

LifeHopeandTruth.com exists to fill a critical void in this world: the lack of understanding about the purpose of life, the lack of realistic hope for a better future and the lack of truth!

Neither religion nor science has satisfactorily addressed these issues, so people today are of divided opinions, confused or, worst of all, don't care anymore. The ancient words of the prophet Isaiah ring so true today: "Truth is fallen in the street." Why? Is it because God was right when He warned that humans are inclined to reject Him and usually choose not to know Him?

We are here for people who are searching for answers, who are ready to prove all things or who are hungry for more than what they've been taught most of their lives about God, the Bible, the meaning of life and how to live. We want to help you truly understand the good news of the gospel and fulfill Jesus Christ's admonition to "seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness."

[LifeHopeandTruth.com](http://LifeHopeandTruth.com) is sponsored by the Church of God, a Worldwide Association, Inc. It is supported by the generous contributions of donors and members of the Church around the world, who make it possible for everything on this site to be free of charge based on Jesus Christ's statement, "Freely you have received, freely give." You will never be charged or made to feel obligated to pay for anything on this site.

The Church of God, a Worldwide Association, has congregations around the world in more than 50 countries, with headquarters in the United States near Dallas, Texas. To learn more about the Church, please visit our website **[cogwa.org](http://cogwa.org)**.

## More from LifeHopeandTruth.com



Wake up to daily inspiration right in your inbox! Subscribe at [LifeHopeandTruth.com](http://LifeHopeandTruth.com).



Verse by Verse is a companion podcast to the Daily Bible Verse Blog. Listen at [LifeHopeandTruth.com](http://LifeHopeandTruth.com)



Never miss a post! Subscribe at [LifeHopeandTruth.com](http://LifeHopeandTruth.com) to receive the week's latest articles and updates.



Read our bimonthly magazine that will give you refreshing and practical answers to the questions that affect your life! Subscribe for free at [LifeHopeandTruth.com](http://LifeHopeandTruth.com).

## Connect With Us!



[LifeHopeTruth](http://LifeHopeTruth)

[Life,Hope & Truth](http://Life,Hope & Truth)

[LifeHopeandTruth](http://LifeHopeandTruth)

[info@cogwa.org](mailto:info@cogwa.org)