

AN ANXIETY-WORRY-FEAR-FREE LIFE A Pipe Dream?

Many of us in our society today are conscientious about our health. The food industry, among others, seeing the trend jumped on the bandwagon, and many companies came up with products to help achieve our goal of being, and staying healthy. 'Fat-free', 'sugar-free', 'salt-free', 'gluten-free' are certainly catchy words they use in their advertisement to attract our attention, and to buy their products.

The emotional, and psychological well-being is also on the mind of many people. Yoga, relaxation techniques, stress management, private sessions with a therapist, books, seminars as well as prescription drugs are all there to help us cope with our lives. However, many people still live with stress-related disorders. Worries, anxiety, panic attacks, and fears are the most common. Fear of heights, fear of crowds, fear of being on water, fear of flying, fear of doctors and dentists, just to name a few. They worry, and are anxious about their finances, health, children, future, and what have you. So, the medical field expands all the time. It's getting to be a very lucrative business. In fact, these problems are so common nowadays that the experts don't even want to say they are able to completely eliminate them, but say they are able to *manage* them.

It's understandable why so many people try to escape the reality of life some way or another when we live in this unsafe and unpredictable world. However, the Christian community is not immune from stress either, and many of them are also experiencing some kind of disorders. This is very disturbing, and I am asking myself..., why is this? Shouldn't we be able to live as Jesus said we should? 'Peace I leave with you; 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.' (John 14:27) Is it possible to live an 'anxiety-worry-fear-free' life in our present world?

During my walk this morning, the first in 2018 after recovering from a stomach bug, and surviving a few days of bad weather being cooped up inside my home, I decided to go looking for the preacher. I found him on the water edge working on his boat. He was wearing a black cap with a silver cross embroidered on it, his usual red scarf tied around his neck, a brown windbreaker, jeans, and black rubber boots.

"Hello there!" I exclaimed as I was walking towards him. "What are you up to this morning?"

"I'm getting ready to go on the lake!" he answered as he looked up at me with a bright smile. "If you don't have anything too important on your agenda today, why don't you join me?"

"Oh, I don't think so! I don't like being on water... I don't know how to swim... I'm afraid I won't be of good company..." I replied sadly.

"I've got the solution for you! I have a couple of life vests in here..." he said as he quickly retrieved one from the boat, and handed it to me. "This way you don't have to worry about anything. If for some unexpected reason you fall overboard, which I doubt will happen, the vest will keep you afloat."

I hesitantly took the vest, feeling awkwardly inadequate and insecure about myself, as well as about the whole situation for that matter. But the 'Captain' had just given me his orders, and I couldn't argue with him! I slowly put the vest on, and tied it around my chest. *He has a point*, I thought, *with this life vest, I don't have any reason to fear... Everything's gonna be alright...*

"Ok, we're ready to go! Give me your hand," he said, extending his arm, and grinning like a young kid ready to embark on a pirate ship heading to the Caribbean!

As I reluctantly put one leg in, the boat started to rock a little, and I nearly lost my balance... I finally got the other leg in and immediately sat down, feeling quite uncomfortable, I must say.

“Are you ready?” he asked with a broad smile.

“Ready as I’ll ever be...” I replied, not totally convinced that it was such a good idea after all. I still had time to change my mind but for some reason, I didn’t.

He pushed the boat further into the waters, quickly embarked, and brought it even further out using one of the oars. When the boat was in deeper waters, he sat down, lowered the propeller, started the engine, and the boat slowly picked up speed. We could hear only the sound of the small engine in the background. He looked very comfortable and fearless sitting at the stern, while I felt tense and uptight sitting at the bow. I somehow envied him...

We were well offshore when he decided to stop the engine. The boat slowly came to a standstill. Egrets were flying overhead, and a group of crows that had gathered in nearby trees started to caw their hearts out. I still could see the silhouettes of sand cranes searching for food near the water edge. I finally took a couple of deep breaths, and tried to enjoy the scenery around me.

“So, dear lady, is this your first time on a boat?” he finally asked, retrieving two bottles of water from the cooler.

“No, not really... On a small one like this, yes. But when I was in my twenties, I went on a cruise with some of my friends. It was a HUGE ship! Kind of a hotel on water! I also went once on a sailboat, but not on the ocean. We stayed on a lake, a bit bigger than this one though...”

“I see... And you were okay with it?” he asked as he offered me one of the bottles.

“For some reason I did. But to say that I was relieved when I put my feet on solid ground again is certainly an understatement!”

He smiled. “And do you have any idea as to where that fear might be coming from?”

“Well, I remember an incident that happened when I was about ten years old. My family used to live in the country not too far from a lake. In the summertime, my brothers, their friends and I used to ride our bicycles around the neighborhood, and we would oftentimes end up at the lake for a swim. I didn’t know how to swim, so I mostly enjoyed sitting on a tube in the shallow water. But one day, I ventured to the end of the dock where the water was way over my head. One of my brothers’ friends – a smart aleck, I would say – started bullying me, and tipped me over... And as I was going under, I panicked and thought I would drown right there... But I eventually came back up hanging on to dear life. I finally got hold of the tube, and started calling him names. I remember yelling, “I can’t swim, you jerk!” And his response was, “Oh, I didn’t know that!” As you can see, this incident is still very fresh on my mind...”

“That’s a sad story, but kind of humorous as you recount the events! And you’ve never tried to conquer your fear?” he asked, a bit puzzled.

“Nope... But I made sure that my own children would know how to swim!”

“I must say that I’m surprised that you allowed yourself to go through life with this kind of fear. You could have taken swimming lessons. It would have surely helped conquer your fear, don’t you think?”

“To tell you the truth, I really don’t know why I didn’t... I guess facing my fears isn’t something I particularly enjoy doing?”

“I understand. It takes a certain courage to face our fears... But you’re probably missing opportunities to enjoy God’s beautiful nature by being on water or swimming in it for that matter. For you, it’s fear of water,

for others, it could be something else. It saddens me to see people missing out on God's bountiful blessings that He has for His children because of fears, worries, anxiety and stress..." he commented with a sorrowful tone in his voice.

"I know... If it were only for my fear of water, that wouldn't be so bad, but I must admit that worry and anxiety also become a problem for me from time to time... Years ago, I also dealt with panic attacks, and I promised myself I would never go through *this* again... I realize that the Christian walk is one of faith and growth. But the Word of God also says that we did not receive a spirit that makes us slaves again to fear. Instead we received God's Spirit when He adopted us as his own children. So, why do I keep living with fears, worries, and anxiety in my life?" I asked, sounding probably very desperate at this point.

"Oh, dear lady, do not let your heart be troubled," he answered. "As long as we live in this world, we'll always battle against our sinful nature, between good and evil. But we have to remember that we're not alone in this. The Holy Spirit within us is slowly but surely transforming us into the person God wants us to be. The Word of God also says that we may be hard pressed on every side but not crushed; perplexed but not in despair; persecuted but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed. So hang on to God and His promises. He will see you through this..."

This old man is never short for words, but he remained silent for a moment, keeping his eyes fixed on the horizon. Then he said, "Would you look at the stillness of the lake! It's like a mirror, isn't it? But it would take just a little wind to change this serene picture, wouldn't it? And the ripple effect of the waves against the boat would make it rock a bit... But then if the winds would really pick up speed, and the waves would grow even bigger, we would start getting really panicky, and we would quickly turn the boat around to return to shore for safety, wouldn't we?"

"Oh, here you go again with another one of your analogies!" I interjected quickly.

He smiled. "Do you remember the story when Jesus and his disciples were in a boat on a lake, and a violent wind suddenly came up creating such high waves that the boat was nearly swamped? Jesus was asleep, but they were terrified, weren't they? Despite their fear, the disciples remembered that Jesus was the One who had the power to still the storm and hush the waves. They saw Him heal the sick, feed the crowds, walk on water, deliver people from demons, change water to wine, resurrect people from the dead and more. So, they knew there was no human solution capable of helping them in this storm, and they applied their 'little faith'. The Lord heard their desperate cries, got up and rebuked the wind. The water, the wind, the waves recognized the voice of their Creator. What an incredible moment it must have been! He proved to them His unlimited power. They saw God's glory, and because of it they also recognized that they had doubted Him... Like the disciples, you've also cried to the Lord because you know deep down that He's the only one who can calm the storm in your heart... And He will do it. Keep the faith, keep seeking and waiting upon Him!"

"Oh, the walk of faith is sometimes a hard one." I commented. "When we're going through a storm, it's easy to lose sight of who's in control of it, isn't it? We try to handle it ourselves but in the end, we realize we're not equipped to do it. We have to turn to the infinite power of God, don't we?"

"We sure do... The Christian life is all about trusting God, and clinging to Him. But to be able to do that, we have to understand who God is, and the level of commitment He has made to us. Studying His Word is therefore a priority. He is our loving Father, and He will provide for all of our needs; spiritual, emotional and physical. However, if we do know Him and are still living in fear, then it's a matter of distrust in Him and it is a sin. So, we have to ask ourselves...., which group are we in?"

"Well, you're certainly giving me a spoonful of food for thought this morning!" I commented.

"The bottom line," he continued, "is really asking ourselves...., where is our heart? The Word of God says,

'For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.' Do we focus too much on ourselves, and on the matters of this world? If so, we become completely overwhelmed because we can't really trust in ourselves, and everything around us changes. But if we focus on heavenly matters, we can trust in God who never changes, and we can feel secure and at peace. Salvation through Christ, besides giving us the certainty of eternal life with God also gives us the freedom from worry, fear and anxiety in this life. Does this sound appealing to you?"

"No doubt, it does... And I'm looking desperately for it..." I answered with a pleading voice.

"Well, Jesus is offering it to you! He has given you all the power you need to do that through his Holy Spirit, and His Word. God has a plan and a purpose for you. So, just let Him take the reins of your life. Let go... Surrender everything... And release His power that is already in you. Don't quench it with your worries, fears and anxiety. You're only hurting Him, and yourself in the process. Think about that..."

We both remained silent for a while, and then he asked: "Well, dear lady, should we head back to shore?"

"That would be a good idea..." I replied as my mind tried to absorb everything he had said.

He started the engine, and turned the boat around. We both didn't say another word throughout the entire trip back.

Once the boat touched land, he helped me disembark. I took the life vest off, and gave it back to him. We had stayed quite a while on waters, and it was now time for me to head back home. I thanked him for the ride, told him how appreciative I was for all his comments, and left him.

Oh, I knew I had some deep soul searching to do. And as soon as I got home, I sat on my special rocking chair where I pray, study God's Word and meditate. I replayed in my mind all that the preacher had said, and pondered over his comments. I could only ask God to forgive me for my lack of faith.

Not many people know this about me, but I have dealt with worries, fears, anxiety and stress a good part of my life. In the back of my mind I sort of accepted this as a reality of life. However, I knew God enough to be certain that He would always be there to help me sort of get a handle on them, to somehow *manage* them. But today, I desperately wanted more... I wanted Him to *eliminate* them altogether...

Am I asking for something impossible? The Word of God says, 'For nothing is impossible with God'... So why does my request sound so desperate? I know that God doesn't want me to live like this after all He has done for me. It saddens Him when I do, and my greatest desire is to please Him. But I also hate living with these debilitating feelings. They drain me mentally, emotionally, and they also affect me physically.

I do understand that the Christian life is one of salvation, transformation, eternal security, but I also have been given the unlimited divine power to live a victorious life on this earth... God is my Creator. He's the one who determined where, when, to whom I was born and how long I'll be here on this planet. And since He has given me life, He will sustain that life until my service here is done. He has created me for a higher purpose, and I want to be available and able to accomplish what He wants me to do for Him down here. Holding on to these negative feelings will only interfere with His plan and purpose for my life, and I don't want to do that. As the Word of God says, 'Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!' (2 Cor. 5:17) And I want to live with gusto this renewed life in Christ!

I was then reminded of a verse that really spoke to me. 'For you were once in darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light and find out what pleases the Lord.' (Eph. 5:8-10) So, that's what I did. I asked Him what I can do to please Him. And I found His answer in the following scriptures.

'For God has not given [me] a Spirit of fear but of power, of love and of a sound mind.' (2 Timothy 1:7) I

realized that when I worry and fear, I don't live up to his Word, and He's saddened by it. Instead, I will choose to praise Him; I will think about His many blessings, and what He has done for me in the past. 'Whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things.' (Philippians 4:8)

'For I know the plans I have for you, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.' (Jeremiah 29:11) I knew that I had given everything to God the day I understood what Jesus did for me on the cross, and that I had nothing to fear. But I realized today that at some point in my life, I had let my fear, worries and anxiety take control of my mind. So, it was with a contrite, repentant heart, and tears in my eyes that I gave my whole heart, my will and my life to Him. At that moment, it also became clear that this is something I have to do on a daily basis. Oh, God heard my desperate plea, and finally calmed the storm in my heart. I am deeply grateful for His love, faithfulness, mercy, and compassion towards me.

However, I wouldn't want my Lord to be saddened again, so I will continue to 'Watch and pray so that [I] will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak.' (Matthew 26:41) With the power, and the help of the Holy Spirit within me, I believe that I am already on the right path to an anxiety-worry-fear-free life! Praise God!

© My Walks With God

You may reproduce part of the content of this website for non-commercial purposes only. May not be reproduced or featured on any other websites without permission of My Walks With God. For additional information or to obtain permissions, contact: mywalkswithgod@gmail.com