

MESSAGE TRANSCRIPT //

WORRY, ANXIETY AND DEPRESSION | WEEDS IN MY GARDEN

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Traders Point, how are we doing? Hey, it's so good to be with you, everyone watching online, at the campuses—welcome.

I'm pumped to be working through this series Weeds in My Garden. And really it's a series on mental health and what God's Word has to say about it. And that line Weeds in My Garden comes from a song by Kyndal Inskeep where she said: "If I'm being honest, I'm not being honest. I'll give you roses just hopin you don't see the weeds in my garden."

And we actually have a word for that it's called dating. Right? Why do you think guys show up with flowers on the first date? "Look at this. Let's talk about how pretty you are for the next two hours. Don't ask me anything. Just a joke, guys. I promise you they already knew that is what you were doing. It's just more for you.

I'm excited for today as we begin to have a conversation around mental health and taking an honest look at it. Right? I mean, I know it's coming up more in culture. Maybe you hear about more people who are experiencing it.

And I just want to give you an honest look at where our church is for a second. Not what's out there but what's in here. We did a miscellaneous mental health survey right before Easter and here are some of the results that we got back. We surveyed roughly 5,000 people and:

92% responded that they know someone struggling with mental health
9% said they had no personal struggles.

Only 9 percent. And today we're really talking about worry and anxiety and depression. Here's the results that came back from those questions. When we asked who is struggling with these things:

Female: 2375 Anxiety/Worry | 958 Depression
Once again, 2,375 women said anxiety and 958 were talking about depression.

Male: 1210 Anxiety/Worry | 504 Depression
On the other side, the male side, 1210 men raised their hand and said they struggle with anxiety and worry, and depression 504.



So we see that this is something that is really impacting our church. And the thing is, it is getting bigger in culture, it's becoming more of a conversation. But what I want us to see is it's in our culture but not because of our culture. It happened way before any of us were here.

Struggling with these things is a human condition. Even 2,000 years ago Jesus was speaking on worry. Look at this in Matthew, chapter 6. It says:

"That is why I tell you not to worry about everyday life—whether you have enough food and drink, or enough clothes to wear. Isn't life more than food, and your body more than clothing? Look at the birds. They don't plant or harvest or store food in barns, for your heavenly Father feeds them. And aren't you far more valuable to him than they are? Can all your worries add a single moment to your life?" Matthew 6:25-27 (NLT)

Look at this—2,000 years ago worry was there. And I love the way that Jesus steps onto the scene and is like, "Hey, don't worry about every day life." And you're like, "Thanks, man. I should have started there." He's like, "Don't worry about everyday life," then He starts talking about birds. And maybe you're completely lost at this point. You're like, "Alright, I'm trying to go with you, man. Don't worry. And then look up at the birds?" What is He pointing to? He's pointing to the fact that God is sovereign. God is in control. God takes care of the birds. So, He says, "Look up. Raise your heads up. I know you are worried about your life and your circumstances, but look at these birds. They don't plant. They don't harvest and God takes care of them.

In another part of Scripture it says not a sparrow, not one, falls to the ground without God knowing about it. And then He says, "Aren't you more valuable than a sparrow?" What He's showing us is, God is sovereign. God is in control. God is good. God cares. That is going to be the answer to your worry and to your anxiety.

Do you believe that? Do you see God that way? He thinks that you are valuable. I want everyone to be able to hear this today. You can struggle with anxiety; you can struggle with depression and you can be a Christian. You can struggle with anxiety, you can struggle with depression, and that can be real and it's also really true that God is with you in the midst of all of it. That God sees you and cares about you and He says that you are valuable.

Not the version of you when you are free from anxiety, not the version of you when you no longer struggle with depression, the you right now is valuable to God. And He says that should bring us peace. That should be an answer to our worry.

But why do we worry? Why do we go over and over again... Why do we get so anxious? What do we think that we are going to get? I think it's:
Control



There is so much in our lives that is outside of our control. There is so much that is unknown, things that we can't see. We don't know how they are going to shake out. But we believe if we can just sit here and think about them a little bit longer, if we focus on it a little bit more, maybe the unknown will become known. Maybe the uncontrollable will become controllable. And what Jesus is saying here is that it's not going to work. Speaking as someone who has struggled with being an anxious person my whole life, I can tell you it takes more than it gives. And that's what He gets to at the end. He says, "All of this worry. All of this anxiety. Can it add one more day to your life?"

That's what we're hoping for with anxiety, that it will add to, it will be a net add. If we just keep thinking, keep fixating on it, then we will have something that we don't have right now.

How many of us are in that space? Looking out wondering, ruminating, trying to just get a little bit more, thinking that will be the thing. The more will be the thing that brings us peace. But didn't He say, "Isn't life more than clothing? Isn't life more than food?" So, the answer to our peace, the answer to our ache that we are all feeling is not going to be out there, it's going to be internal.

And what makes me believe this even more is the people who are coming to faith in this season. Maybe when you think about people coming to faith you think about them coming to faith at rock bottom. They lost everything. They have nothing. And then they place their faith in Jesus. And that's true. That happens all of the time.

But I'll tell you what I see all of the time now too. People are coming to faith, not at rock bottom but at their Everest. They lived their life; they did the things that they were supposed to do. They got more and more. They climbed that ladder all the way to the top thinking that there would be this space, this thin air where finally all of the anxiety would be gone, finally the depression would be gone, "Finally, I would feel like enough." And they are standing on Everest and they realize they still feel anxious. They still feel depressed. They still feel like they don't have enough and they are not enough. That's why Jesus is saying, "It won't be found out there," because life is more than any of the things that you can acquire.

Life is found when you find your relationship with God, the One who is the Creator of all things including you. The One who cares about you. The One who says you are valuable. Finding your place is there. That's when you find true peace.

I was thinking about how to talk about all of these things: worry, anxiety, and depression. What's the connecting piece that brings them all together? And this book that I was reading *Anxious Generation* classifies them all into internalizing disorders. And here's what internalizing disorders are:

Internalizing Disorders: These are disorders in which a person feels strong distress and experiences the symptoms inwardly

Which, for a lot of us, this is going to begin to sound familiar, “I’ve heard some of this before,” because when Jesus came a lot of people were expecting Him to change external circumstances, to be this kind of a Messiah, this kind of a leader. But when He came it was with a message that was going to change us, transform us from the inside out.

So, the idea is that we are experiencing all of this on the inside: anxiety, worry, depression and the answer isn’t going to be something external. It’s going to be something that comes from within, because it’s not dependent on circumstances. Life is not about curating all of these perfect circumstances, finding the right season and trying not to move. It’s about being with the One who is sovereign, the One who is in control, and the One who will be with you every step of the way.

So, what is anxiety? Let’s just picture that we are all on the same page when we’re talking about these words. Here’s what anxiety is:

Anxiety is related to fear, but is not the same thing. The diagnostic manual of psychiatry (DSM-5-TR) defines fear as “the emotional response to real or perceived imminent threat, whereas anxiety is anticipation of future threat.”

Alright? So, fear and anxiety both are good things. Fear and anxiety are both things that you need. They are built in as part of the survival mechanics of why we are still here. It’s a good thing when you get into a situation and your body says: fear. If you walked outside and there was a lion, your body would start telling you something like, “Hey, focus. Giddy up. We need to start moving this way.”

Once again, anxiety is also helpful. Our brains are so brilliant that they can perceive what could be a threat and begin to work through, how to solve that problem. Both of them are good.

Fear is connected to this rapid alarm system. It begins to start moving all kinds of things in our brains, it starts releasing hormones, it does all of this. Anxiety is good as well when there is a perceived or real threat.

The problem becomes when we get stuck in this perpetual state of distress, when the alarm doesn’t stop going off. It’s not that you’re anxious because there is a lion there, you’re anxious when you’re sitting at McAlister’s trying to enjoy a southwest chicken salad and you can’t turn it off.

Recently my family was staying at a hotel—one room for all of us, which is always such a great time. What could go wrong? If you don't know, I have a bunch of kids and they were all there. We were sleeping. And I woke up. And you know when you wake up and you don't know what time it is? You know it's early but it's like, "How early is it? Is it early enough to get up? Or, is it trying to go back to sleep?"

So, I woke up. I checked my phone. It's 4:30 right on the dot. I'm like, "That's weird, but I guess I'll just sit here for a second and then get up." I laid my head back down on the pillow, and maybe a minute or two later the fire alarm starts going off: eh, eh, eh—you guys know what that is. I don't need to do that for you.

But just to bring you into the room, alarm is going off, and I'm like, "Am I still asleep? Am I dreaming or am I really awake? Is this happening?" And I look over at my daughter sleeping in the bed next to me. The alarm is going off. She wakes up. I've never seen her move faster. She throws off the blanket, jumps out of bed, looks at me and then does this [twisting from side to side not knowing what to do].

I promise you, she was stuck. It was like she was glitching. Just moving back and forth not going anywhere. Her body was telling her, her mind was telling her that there was a threat, it is real, we need to do something, but she was stuck in fight, flight, or freeze. We all get to this space. We're all in the process. We're going through life and our brains are trying... There is this tension of how resilient we are and the neglect our brain is experiencing and how we navigate through all of this.

When I saw that picture I was like, "That's anxiety. The alarms are going off, but I can't figure out what to do or where to go."

And as we're all kind of jumping into this conversation, I want to be clear about mental health. I feel like sometimes it becomes an us versus them thing. Like they have mental health, I'm doing pretty good right now. I either have it or I don't.

Mental Health on a Spectrum

Aware ————— Consumed

I would put mental health on a spectrum. If we could put it on a spectrum that we are all on, all of us are somewhere along this line. Some of us are in a season where we're aware. Life is happening. We have good days. We have bad days.

We have things that sit with us longer than they should. But we're able to work through that tension and experience the neglect and keep moving forward. But we could be better at it, we could handle our mental health better, there is more room for growth.



Then on the scale, on the other end of the spectrum would be consumed. And some of you might be in a season like this right now, or you have been, where you are so consumed with mental health, the anxiety, the depression. And the way I would describe it is that it has been happening for a long time and it's stopping you from living the life that you want to live. You can't do... You want to do them, but you can't do them. We are all somewhere on this spectrum. There is no arriving. Right? If we think about mental health like we do all of other health: like spiritual health there is no arriving, physical health there is not arriving, you don't just show up one day and you say, "I think I'm done. I'm physically fit."

If that were the case, Pastor Aaron would have stopped working out years ago. But he still wakes up every morning and does 30,000 rib curls and runs 10 miles. So, that tells me that there is still room to grow. It's the same for our mental health. So, what I hope for today is that you would come to believe that this is a safe place where you can be honest about what you're going through. You can share your struggles—where you really are. We've worked really hard as a team to provide this for you. So, my hope is if you have this question in the back of your mind: What Do I Need?

We've put together this website, tpcc.org/care. And it's everything. Maybe you're in a space of, "What I need at this moment? I don't even know what I need, but I'd love to sit down with a pastor and just share where I am in this season, how I'm struggling, I need someone to pray for me." That's available.

Maybe you're like, "I think I need a licensed professional, a counselor, I just don't know where to start." We've vetted so many counselors, Christian based, in this city and surrounding areas, so that no matter where you live, we can probably get you connected to someone who is close.

Or, maybe you're in this season where you are like, "I think there may be some kind of chemical imbalance. I think I may need some medication," whether that's for a season or for the foreseeable future. Our hope is that at the end of today that you can raise your hand with courage and vulnerability and be able to take steps into getting what you need. Alright?

What I'm going to be preaching on right now is in Philippians, chapter 4. It's one of the most famous verses that speaks directly to anxiety. And no matter where you are on that spectrum, I believe that God's Word, today, is going to bring you help and hope no matter where you are. Okay?

So, this is Philippians, chapter 4. We're going to start in verse 4. And here's the thing. I don't know how much you know about how we got the Bible, where this Scripture came



from, but these are letters written to real churches. And a lot of times how they would send these or why they would send these letters is that word would get back to the authors. People are struggling with this. People are doing this. What do you say? How do we move forward?

Paul knows a lot about the church in Philippi. And he's writing to respond to what he's heard. Chances are that he's heard that the people are struggling with worry, that they have fear. So, he writes them to bring God's wisdom and perspective to their problems. Same boat that we're in. After looking at that mental survey, there are a lot of us who are struggling. What does God's Word have to say?

Pick up with me. Philippians, chapter 4, starting in verse 4. He says:
"Always be full of joy in the Lord. I say it again—rejoice! Let everyone see that you are considerate in all you do. Remember, the Lord is coming soon." Philippians 4:4-5 (NLT)
And you are like, "Here we go again. I thought we were talking about worry and anxiety, and he says, 'Have joy.'"

What's the connection between joy and mental health? The connection between anxiety and depression? Well, as I was studying for this message, I read a lot about mental health and how the brain works, neuroscience. And I think I understand just a little bit about it. I'm going to share that with you.

One book that I read was called *The Other Half of the Church*. And it talks all about the make-up of our brain from a neuro theologian, someone who studies brain science and theology. He looked at how God made us, what God's Word says, and now what science is catching up with. And what it looks at is that our brains crave joy. It scans our surroundings for joy. Joy is one of these things that actually regulate the rest of our emotions. Joy is critical to our character development.

I want you to think about this. What is the opposite of joy? Is the opposite of joy sadness? I think that's what a lot of us would say. The opposite of joy is sadness. But that's not true because you can be joyful and sad at the same time.

The opposite of joy is hopelessness

When we begin to have conversations about mental health, it's feeling hopeless. When we talk about depression, it's not, "I feel sad." It's not, "I don't feel right." It's that I've lived in that space for so long that I begin to believe that I will never feel right again, "This darkness will always be with me. I am always going to be depressed and sad." You get to the bottom of that, that's where you get to this place of hopelessness, "I don't believe that it's ever going to change."

And what the Bible is saying here, you see how it is connected back. It says, "Be reminded that the Lord is coming soon." And somebody needs to hear that today. You're in this space where it's dark and it's heavy, and you are wondering if it's ever going to feel better. You feel hopeless.

I need you to hear the word right from the Bible. God sees you. God knows you. God believes that you are valuable, right now, in the darkness, in the depression. And then he says, "But remember. The Lord is coming soon." There is coming a day. I'm not saying it's today or tomorrow but there is coming a day when the Lord is coming where all pain will be gone, all depression, all anxiety and you will be in perfect peace. Remember. And then he says:

"Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything." Philippians 4:6a (NLT)
So, "I think I've heard this before." He says, "No, no, no. Don't worry about anything." He's doing the same thing. He doesn't just say, "Don't worry. Just stop it." He's saying, "Here's what I want you to do. You have all of that energy that is going to worry, all of that energy that is bringing that anxiety to life." He says, "I want you to take that and I want you to shape your worries, I want you to shape your anxieties and I want you to turn them into praise."

There are so many people who are like, "I want to pray. I want to talk to God. I just don't know what I would say." What I would say is, "Do you have any fears? Do you have any worries? Do you have any anxiety? Do you have anything that is keeping you down?" "Yeah, I've got a lot of that." Then you can pray.

Taking and shaping my worries that are going to lead to anxiety, if I can take those worries and I can shape them and turn them into prayer, then I can get to the hope that I'm really looking for. I get the control that I'm really looking for.

Pray Your Fears

Here's what I want to encourage you to do. Pray your fears. Pray your fears. A lot of times we pretend like we don't have fears, we just try to stuff them down. We try to ignore them. But what if we could pray our fears? What if you came to that place and when those fears came, that was your trigger. "I'm going to take this and I'm not going to let it fester and turn into anxiety. I'm taking this to God."

If you can worry, you can pray. If you can ruminate on all of the negative thoughts, you can meditate on what God says, "What if I could get to that place?"

And here's the difference that I would say. Anxiety is wrapped around the question: What if. What if.



What if the darkness stays? What if the rain doesn't stop? What if they do leave? What if I don't get the money? What if they don't show up? What if my kids don't respond? What if. What if. What if. More anxiety. More worry.

Prayer shifts them. Prayer turns them into: Even if. Even if the rain keeps coming. Even if the fog doesn't lift. Even if they don't show up. Even if the money doesn't come through, "I still have my faith and I have hope that my God is going to come through. I have all that I need."

It's different. He says, "I want you to take all of those worries and I want you to turn them into prayer." And then he says:

"Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done." Philippians 4:6b (NLT)
I want you to come with me and just from my experience. When I bring God all of the things that I think I need, sometimes I'm going to hear it. Sometimes He gives me what I think I need. And it is incredible. And there is this wild moment when I prayed for something and God gave me what I needed.

But I would say far more than not, what happens is when I get in this space when I'm praying and I'm brought into the presence of a holy and good and powerful God, that it raises my eyes up and I see what I really need.

And it turns out that the thing that I thought that I needed, I didn't really need. I would like to have it, it would be good to have, but the thing I need is what I'm experiencing. I have this relationship with God and I know that He is with me through all of it. I love the way Steve Cuss talks about anxiety. He ties need to it. Look at the way that he talks about it. He says,

"Anything that you think you need that you don't actually need that prevents you from being present with God and with others that's what anxiety is."

The Anxiety Cycle:
I think I need something
Then, I don't get it
I feel anxious

That's the cycle. I want you to go there. This will happen this week. If you could picture the anxiety cycle. The first part that comes up, you're going to be going through your day and you're going to have this thing, "I think I need something." "In this moment, I feel like I need to be in control." "I feel like I need to be liked." "I feel like I need assurance." "I feel like I need a sense of peace."



And then look at what happens next. I don't get it. That's life. That is most of our lives that we are experiencing, "I think I need something." I really need something. Turns out I'm not going to get that something. And then I feel anxious.

And anxious—some of us don't even have a vocabulary for what anxiety is. Anxiousness could feel different for different people. But for some, it's like a racing mind. It just keeps going and going. For some of us it's a beating heart. It just beats out of our chest. For some of us, our bodies get tense. A lot of times it's our stomach or kind of the back of our head, our neck.

I went through so much of my life, "That thing? I didn't know that was anxiety. I thought that was Tuesday. I thought we are all worried all of the time." There is a better way. Those can be cues for us to know what to do. We're going through life. We feel like we need something. We don't get it and anxiety comes.

You know, I was reminded of this just a couple of weeks ago. I probably had the hardest day of ministry that I'd ever had. I love being a pastor. I love this part of it, I love studying, and praying, and preaching.

But I love being with people. I love sitting in the hospital rooms. I love sitting in living rooms. It is the honor of my life to be pulled in to the hardest situations people will ever go through and trust me in that moment. It's not missed on me. And I love it.

A lot of times it's life giving for me to be able to sit in those spaces. But this wasn't one of those days. It was like a perfect storm, one after another. The heaviest and most complicated problems of cancer and death and loss and cheating and abuse. It was one room after another. And I didn't feel like I was really helping at all.

I got to the end of the day and I'm driving home and I felt so low. I felt so sad. I felt so empty. And then I just started ruminating, which only made it worse. I was like, "You should have been able to help those people more. You should have said this. You should have done this. What if you would have done that?" And then you begin to believe all of these lies in your head.

Then I get home and I walk through the door and my whole family is in the kitchen. My wife is making dinner. The kids are bouncing around. There is music, there is dancing. And I feel even worse because I know I can't meet them where they are. Now I'm about to mess up their night.

I sat down at the island and I didn't even know what to do. So, I just texted my wife and I gave her the overview, just what I just gave you. All that I sat through and how I was feeling. And she turned to me and she said, "What do you need?"

And I thought about that. I didn't know what I needed. I thought what I needed leading up to that moment was that I needed to be better. I should have done better in those rooms. I should have brought people more help. I should have been able to heal them. I should have been able to help them. I should have been able to do more.

What I thought I needed was to be able to match the energy of my family. I thought I should be strong enough to be able to leave that there and to come in and be joyful. But as I sat there with that question, I really didn't need any of those things. What I needed was to be able to say it out loud. What I needed was for her to see me. What I needed was to know that I could still belong even if I was in a crappy place. What I needed was to know that even at my lowest it was okay for me to ask for something even if I had nothing to give in return. That's what I needed and that's what I got. What do you need?

As you are going through this week I just want to put this question in front of you. As you begin to think:

What are two or three things that I think I need, but I don't actually need?
There are going to be moments when that anxiety pops up, depression pops up, heart beats faster, your mind starts racing, your body starts tensing up. Trace it all the way back to, "What am I looking for? What do I think that I need in this moment? And do I really need it?"

The next thing that he says is this:

"Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done." Philippians 4:6b (NLT)
Did you catch that? Thank Him for all that He has done. If I could say it this way:
Gratitude is the Soil that Joy Grows In

If joy is what is connected to hope and joy is going to be what I have when I have Jesus and all of these other things are trying to steal my joy, including anxiety and depression, I want to do everything I can to be grateful.

Here's the secret to it. If you can go into prayer, you're taking everything to God and you are telling Him all of the things that you need— if you can go into that prayer time already thankful, if you can be thankful and grateful before you get what you asked for, that's the secret. And it's possible because you have a God who is good and He cares and He is all powerful.

So, hear this. When you sit down to pray you're already grateful. You're sitting down and you're going to make all of your needs known to God and you're going to pray for little things and for big things. Here's the wild thing. God can do anything. There is nothing



that is impossible for your God. So, when you pray, He might just do it. He might just answer your prayers.

But, here's the thing. Even if He doesn't, even if I pray to God and I share my heart and He doesn't give me what I think I need, I know that He is good, so I know that He has a good reason for why I'm not getting it.

And I can be thankful. And I can be safe. And I can feel like He is with me in the moment because even though I didn't get it, God has a good reason for it and He's going to be with me in this next season.

Gratitude. How many of our days start from a place of gratitude? Maybe you wake up and anxiety is already there for you. What's the day going to bring? What do I need to do? How do I need to show up?

Gratitude Journal

What would it look like to have a gratitude journal? And some of you are like, "I don't know about journals." Okay, call it what you want. Call it a gratitude log. Sometimes I just do it on my phone on my notepad. In the mornings I just write down the things that God has already given me, the things that I already have to be grateful for.

Think about how much of our lives are spent looking out, focused on what we don't have yet. The unknown and the uncertain. And that leads to more and more anxiety. Gratitude is based on the right now, the present moment with our reality. I always have something to be grateful for because of who Jesus is.

What if I could spend my days, not looking out there—that's coming—but what if I could be grounded and rooted in all the things that I'm grateful for? Doesn't that change things?

Won't that change the way that you go throughout your day? "I am grateful." Look at this, when you are anxious (and you know this) it is very hard to be grateful for anything because you're looking at all of the things that you don't have.

When you are grateful, it is really hard to be anxious because you're just focusing on how good you've got it. What you have right now. You may not have everything, but you have a God who is with you, who has already given good gifts. And if He's done it once, why won't He do it again?

It's real when you are going through anxiety and depression, but it's just not what you need to focus on completely. There is a bigger truth. I love the way author and pastor, Aaron Hoover says it:

“The truth I need to focus on is not that I’m not anxious. The truth that I need to focus on is in my anxiety, He is still good.”

He is still good. And I’m telling you... That quote comes from one of Aaron Hoover’s books. A lot of people know that name. He’s a pastor on staff here. He’s on our executive team. He’s written two books. One for adults and one for kids. I cannot recommend them enough.

If you’re looking for a book to help you, Anxiety, Depression, and Jesus, is about how to find hope in the truth in the midst of it. And if you’re looking for somebody (I’ve never experienced this the way I did with this book) who is rooting for you and cheering for you and wants you to find that hope, there is nothing like this book.

And then the other one Lord I Worry. It’s great for kids to give them language on how to process what they are feeling and what they are going through. You can get both of those on Amazon.

I think that one way to begin to experience joy and gratitude is to thank God for all that He has done.

The other thing that I would say to do is to make a:
Life-giving List: A list of every gift God has ever given me
This is also something that I got from Steve Cuss. It’s just a list of every good gift God has ever given me. And then here’s the thing. This week. I’m challenging you to it. I pray that you take me up on it.

Make a Life-giving List

It may start with 10 things, 20 things, you could have 100 or 200 things on there and then:

Make sure you experience a handful of these every day

Think, once again, how much of our lives are centered around this idea of: What am I going to do to experience joy? What am I going to do to experience the good gifts that God has give me? God has given you things. He wants you to have them. He wants you to experience joy.

I heard a pastor talk this past week and he said, “It takes me two hours in the morning to become the man that I need to be during the day.”

What would it look like to start my day...? I have my list of the things that I know bring me joy and then I’m beginning to start well. Not just all of the things that I need to do for



my work, for performance, for the job, for the family. But what are the things that I'm going to do that fill me up?

There are going to be some things that are super small, really quick. There are going to be some things that are big. Some things that you do every day. Some things you do weekly, monthly, yearly. But build this list.

I'll just share with you a few that are on my list. One of them is making coffee in the morning. Making it myself. Grinding the beans, watching it happen, it slows me down, it slows down my mind in a way that is really good for me. It brings me joy.

One thing that brings me joy is when I come home from work at the end of a hard day. Usually I walk in, my wife is cooking dinner, and she will turn to me and she will open her arms and she will say, "Warm welcome." And then I hug her for an inappropriate amount of time, until the kids are screaming. Gross, this is weird. That brings me so much joy in life. It's a little thing but it does it.

Sitting at a table at dinner. My family's table. We have six chairs at our table and every single one of them is filled; me, my wife, and my four kids. And for the longest time, there was this lie in the back of my mind that I would never have a wife, I would never have kids. And I sit down every single night and I realize how good God is and I'm reminded of His goodness and His joy and His providence.

Make a list and then make a point to do the things that are on your list. God is a heavenly Father. The thing that I know about being a father is what I love doing is giving my kids gifts. I love that place when you give them something that they weren't expecting or even if they asked for it and you give it to them they light up. That's an amazing feeling.

But when you give them something and they don't use it, they don't play with it, it just lays there it's like, "Come on man." When you walk into a room, it makes the gift so much better and you appreciate it so much more when they are actually using it and they enjoy it.

So, begin to do a work in your life, "This is important for my mental health, to have things that bring me joy. And I am worth it." This is not an issue of being selfish, it's about stewardship. You are going to fill yourself up so that you can pour yourself out for service to other people.

Then look at this. Just a recap. He says, "If you do this, if you are filled with joy, if you have gratitude, if you take everything to God and pray about everything, "Then you will experience God's peace, which exceeds anything you can understand." His peace:



“...will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus.” Philippians 4:7 (NLT)
He says, “You do all of this, slowly God will begin to bring you all together.” Anxiety—the word means to be in pieces. And what God is saying here is, “If you bring all of this to Me, if you wrap your life and make Me the most important thing, then I’m going to make you whole and holy. I’m going to take all of the anxious and depressed parts, I’m going to take all of the divided thoughts and I’m going to bring them together and I’m going to guard your heart and mind.

“I’m going to bring you to this space where you have one priority and it’s to love Me with everything that you’ve got—all of your mind all of your strength, every bit of you. And you’re going to see a shift. You’re going to know that I am with you. And there is always going to be hope.”

That’s what He says. He will guard our hearts. That’s the thing that I want to put out there for everyone who is here today and you are like, “Okay, I believe that. I think it’s true. I know I need something.”

I sat down with a counselor a couple of weeks ago and he gave me this truth.
Your best chance at recovery is communal

You’re thinking that just a little bit more time, if I come to church a few more times, then this will kind of go away, then it will just naturally remove itself. Probably not. But my hope is that you find that this is the place where you can be honest about not being okay.

And if your best chance at recovery is communal, when you bring it to God, then you bring it to other people. And for all of us who are going to be sitting on the other side of the conversation, when someone is brave enough and vulnerable enough to say, “I’m struggling. I’m anxious. I’m depressed,” what I would offer you is just this phrase:
Hold Space

You’re holding a space. You’re creating a safe place, a sanitary place where people can come and share who they are and what they are going through. You’re not there to solve the problem, you’re not there to reduce or minimize it, you’re not there to say, “It’s not that bad.” Or, “You’ll be okay, just keep going, champ.”

What if someone sits down and he tells you what he is really going through? And he says, “There is this thick fog that is sitting on me and it is so dark that I can’t see out of it. And I can’t even breathe most of the time.” Don’t look at him and say, “Hey, look. There is no fog.” It’s not helpful. What you need to do in that space, when you are holding that space is to try to imagine what it would be like if...



What would it be like if you woke up with a fog that you couldn't see past? What would you do if you were so depressed and so brought down and downcast that you couldn't even breathe, what would that be like?

It doesn't matter if it's true. It's true to him. It's really happening to him. Hold that space and create as much empathy as possible and let him know he is not alone in this battle and you will be with him and for him throughout all of it. That's how you hold space. And then for all of us in the room today, this whole talk has been about taking it to the One who is in control. Taking to the One who can actually do something with our anxiety, and our depression. He is the One who can do that.

But, chances are you have found a cheap substitute that is doing that as well. I'm telling you, if you ever see someone or meet someone who is struggling with addiction, you're probably looking at someone who is struggling with mental health.

There is no alcohol that tastes that good. Imagine living your whole life and you were anxious and you were depressed and you felt low and you didn't feel like you fit in. And you couldn't get your mind to stop and you couldn't get those feelings to go away. Then one day you got exposed to this thing and for a moment it took it away. It alleviated it. It brought you peace that nothing else had ever brought you. And you thought, "This is it." All of you know the other side of this story. It's good until it's not. And whatever you place your cares and your worries on, it's only a matter of time before it takes more than it gives.

Jesus is the only One who can be trusted. Jesus is the only One who has been found to be true. Jesus is the One big enough and strong enough and willing to take on everything that you are experiencing. And it's not just that He can, it's that He wants to. In 1 Peter, chapter 5 it says:

"Give all your worries and cares to God," why? "for he cares about you." 1 Peter 5:7 (NLT)

Some of you almost gave up on faith. Some of you are on the fringe of stepping away right now because you've said, "Hey, listen. I did this thing. I was struggling. They told me about Jesus. I took it to Jesus. And I was still left with my anxiety. I still have depression. I still struggle with addictions. He didn't take it away."

That's not what it says. He didn't say, "Bring Me your cares and your worries and I will take them away. Bring it all to Me and I'll give you exactly what you need." He said, "Bring it to Me because I care. Because I will be with you in the problem."

Here's the thing. A lot of us are holding God responsible for promises He never made. He did not say He would take it all away, He said, "I will be with you in the midst of it." That's the truth to focus on.



Not that what is happening to you isn't true—it is. But the truth is that God is with you and God is for you. The truth in the matter is that you are with the One who is in control. And that even though you walk through the valley of the shadow of death, you will fear nothing because your God is with you.

That's what we want to offer you today. There are no quick fixes. There is no magic wand. It's to come to this place, "I want to give my life—everything—my cares, my worries, everything about me, I want to lean it up against God. I want to place my faith in Him. Not because He'll remove everything. Not because He'll make my life perfect. But because He cares."

How do I know that He cares? Because of Jesus. God sent Jesus to the earth. God's only Son. Jesus lived a perfect life that you and I could never live. He faced every temptation. Struggled with it all and came out victorious.

How much did He care? He went to war with the devil and won. He went to the cross, died on our behalf and won. Died and then resurrected three days later, defeating the power of sin and death and getting back on the other side He said, "I'm not done. I want you to know that I'll be with you. I will give you My very Spirit."

Now you and I have an opportunity to have that. And if we have that Spirit, there is nothing, no angel, no demon, no circumstance, no anxiety, no depression, no state of mental health that can take us away from Him. He is with us.

What I want to give you right now is a moment to place your faith in Him. To give it all to the One who is in control. So, right now at all of our campuses, close your eyes, bow your head, and pray this with me.

Father, we come to You because we believe that You are good. We believe You are in control. We believe that all of the anxiety, all of the worry, all of the depression won't be answered with anything external. There is no amount of money, there are no resources that we can obtain. It's only found when we find peace in You. We have gratitude and joy in the fact that You made us, that You created us. You are for us. You are with us. And You are coming back.

God, I pray for those today who have almost placed their faith, they are right there, they want to believe, they are right there. God, I pray that this would be that day.

God, I pray that every anxious thought, every fear, every worry would be met right now and Your Spirit would be there with them. That they would know that they don't have to



wait for the fog to lift. They don't have to wait for the storm to be over. They don't have to wait to be better. They are valuable right now. You want them right now. God, I pray in this moment they would give their lives to You. That they would believe You are who You say You are. And You will meet them in this moment and You will never leave them. You will never abandon them.

Father, be with us all this week as we look to get closer and closer to You and look more and more like You. It's in Your perfect name we pray. Amen.

