

# Fear & Anxiety

Hey guys my name is Marcus and I'm a pastor in training here at City Church. If you haven't already done so, turn with me to Psalm 3. If you're new, let me catch you up to speed really quickly. We are in a series called All the Feels and if you can't guess it, it's all about our feelings. And not just about them but how to deal with them well. We've talked on anger, pain and suffering, and today we will be talking on the ever-so-light subject of fear and anxiety. Out of all the sermons to teach on, this one certainly hits close to home. Like we've said in a few sermons during this series, 2018 and the beginning of this year has been tough for our church family. I have dealt with anxiety on a personal level this past year in ways that I've never really dealt with or realized before. And I think that's part of why Kent asked me to teach on this topic this week. And if there's one thing that helps fear and anxiety, it's getting up on a stage and speaking to a room of people about fear and anxiety.

Before we get started, I want to say this up front, our point in doing a sermon on fear & anxiety isn't to say that it's *just* an emotion and all you need is some Jesus and some bible verses to get over it. Things like counseling and medication are common grace gifts from God that can help tremendously with fear and anxiety. Just to be clear, we are big fans of those things around here. I know because I personally take a daily anxiety med that helps with my anxiety. But at the same time, we want to make sure that we're not *only* looking at fear and anxiety from a medical or clinical standpoint, and neglecting to examine what these things are saying about us spiritually. So what David is going to do in Psalm 3 is teach us how to look at fear and anxiety from not just a clinical or medical perspective, but also from a spiritual and practical perspective.

With that being said, let's start at verse 1...

[1] *"O Lord, how many are my foes! Many are rising against me;*

So here's what he's talking about. At this moment, there are roughly 12,000 people trying to kill David. And on top of that these are his men, his own men are trying to kill him. But why? Who's leading David's men? Well, you'll get a kick out of this one, it's his son, Absalom. This is family drama on a massive scale—it's like the ancient day version of The Jerry Springer Show. So David is on the run from his own men and his son Absalom, and he's praying to the Lord saying, "are you seeing this? Look how many foes I have; they're all around me right now. They are literally ganging up on me." And this leads us to the first emotion we're talking about today - *fear*. Fear is right in his face. It's very present and clear danger. These men are a true physical threat to David right now. Let's continue.....

*many are saying of my soul, "There is no salvation for him in God."*

Now that verse may not seem like much but, while they are currently going after him physically, they are saying, “there is no salvation for him in God.” And by doing this, they are also attacking his identity. They are attacking his character and calling.

And here’s why that’s a big deal, because David, knows what happened to the previous king before him. Long story made very, very short: the king before David was a guy named Saul. Like David, Saul was made king by the Lord. At some point, Saul stopped listening to God, started ignoring the way God wanted him to lead. He basically became a really terrible and destructive king. And because of this, God removes his blessing from Saul's reign as king and eventually makes David king. So David knows this story very well, because he’s in the story, literally living the story. But the thing about that is so do the people that are after him. So they attack his character and say, look, God has removed his hand from David. God has taken the kingship from him just like he did Saul. They’re saying, look at the terrible things David has done. Look at how destructive he’s been. Sound familiar? There is no salvation for him in God. David is not fit to be king. So this is what’s happening in verse 2.

In many ways, we could say that David is feeling very anxious. On the surface, he’s fearful. He’s fearful that these 12,000 men are going to find him and torture him and/or kill him. But he’s anxious because of what that makes him believe about himself and about God. That God is no longer with him, that God no longer cares for him. This gives us a window into the difference between fear and anxiety. Fear is specific. It’s clear and present danger. It’s saying, “this is happening, it is going to go really bad for me, and so I’m fearful.” With fear, you can pinpoint it to a certain degree. Anxiety is different. Anxiety usually isn’t specific—it’s more vague. It’s way harder to pinpoint. **Fear says “this is happening, and you should be fearful of it.” Anxiety says “something bad could happen at some point, and so you should go ahead and prepare as if it’s happening.”** Do you see that difference?

Let’s keep reading v. 3:

*[3] But you, O Lord, are a shield about me, my glory, and the lifter of my head.*

Now if we’re not careful, we can start to read this psalm through rose-colored glasses. Don’t be deceived by that. David is in a dark, miserable place here. So when David says God is a *shield* about him, think about what he’s saying. I think sometimes we could hear that and go “aw, look how wonderful that is—God is his shield.” But let’s think about what a shield is for a second. In what types of scenarios would you wear a *shield*? Do you wear a shield to a casual cocktail party? Do you wear a shield to a knitting class? Well that would be kinda hard, so no. You wear a shield to a *war*. You only wear a shield if you are *expecting* bad things to happen to you. So David is not saying “God, thank you that because you’re my shield, I know that nothing bad will ever happen to me.” He’s saying “since you are my shield, I know that you will be with me and for me even when the worst possible things happen to me.” Do you see the difference?

With this, David is hitting on a reality about life on planet earth that is at the very core of our fear and anxiety, and it's this (and you may want to jot this down): *you are not in control*. Your fear and your anxiety, in part, are telling you the truth. They're telling you that you are not in control of anything that happens to you. David, as far as we can tell, is not in control here: He was the most powerful person in his day. He was king. And even he lost control. He could not control what his son would do. He could not control what his people would do. He couldn't control the circumstances around him. And just like David, we do not have control. We cannot control the people or circumstances around us. Not sure if that messes you up inside like it does me.

See I've always known I've had a an issue with control, but it wasn't until last year that it truly got exposed. The first of many anxiety ridden events started when I got my car stolen, right out of our driveway. In my anxiousness, it led me to buy a motion-detecting flood light for both the front and back of the house because I was afraid for our safety at that point. We literally watched someone steal our car from our yard. So I bought flood lights because I figured that would make me less anxious. But turned out, every time our floodlights would turn on because of an animal or a tree branch or wind, I would get even more anxious because I was convinced it was somebody coming to get us. And hear me say, you are welcome to buy floodlights for your house. You're welcome to pay for a security system for your house. You're welcome to purchase insurance on literally every item you own. But I will tell you, from experience, **if you have an anxious heart, there are not enough floodlights, enough security systems, enough insurance policies in the world to make you feel not anxious. Anxiety is never satisfied.**

After the whole stolen car thing, we found out we were pregnant, and like any expectant parent we were excited and giddy. And then one day my wife, Melanie, started feeling pain for some reason so we had to go to the ER, and the doctor gave us news that would rock our world. This was not a normal pregnancy but an ectopic one, which is basically a miscarriage, that threatened Melanie's life as well. Which was a hard pill to swallow. Not only were we going to lose our baby but I could have also lost my wife in the process. Just a couple months later, I was heading to our volunteer appreciation night and started having trouble breathing and was getting lightheaded. Ended up having to go to the hospital and found out I was having my first ever panic attack. The list goes on, as we've already mentioned in this series, a member of our church died unexpectedly, and I was the first one to get the phone call in the middle of the night that they were rushing him to the hospital. I went to the doctor for checkups, luckily nothing was physically wrong but all signs pointed towards fear and anxiety. As long as I've been following Jesus, I've known that "I was not in control," right? But not until this past year has it made me all the more aware of the simple fact that I truly am not in control.

And that's the very thing—our anxieties, in part, are telling us the truth. They are telling us bad things can and do happen. We've all witnessed that in our lives. Here's the problem: they are only telling us a *half* truth. They tell us not only that bad things *can* happen, but that they *will* happen any minute, and that we should live in constant dread of them, and that it is up to us to stop whatever the potential bad thing is from happening because we are in control of everything.

**And on a deeper level, they tell us that if we just walk around in constant *fear* of them happening, if we're constantly on pins and needles, we will somehow be better prepared for them when they do happen.** The problem is that that's almost never the case. In most cases, expecting the worst at all times doesn't make you any more prepared for the worst. When the truly unexpected happens, being anxious about it for months or years on end before hand doesn't make the situation any more bearable when it happens. It just makes the *rest* of life miserable.

Now we're going to circle back around to what David means by that next part, where he talks about God being his "glory." For now keep reading, and take a look at what he says next:

*[4] I cried aloud to the Lord, and he answered me from his holy hill.*

So here we find out what David does with his fear and his anxiety: he *prays* it. It says "*I cried aloud to the Lord, and he answered me.*" Some of us need to hear that right now. We've said this throughout this series, the point of emotions isn't to suppress them (guilty) and pretend they aren't there, or on the flip side to obey them and let them be the end-all-be-all of our life. The point of emotions is to *pray* them. For a lot of us, we have tried to deal with our emotions in tons of different ways. We have talked about our anxiety, we've been anxious about our anxiety, we've gotten counseling, we've taken medication, and all of this is great. But for many of us, we need to do what David did. We need to pray our anxiety. Some of us need to go to our rooms, close the door, and just cry out to the Lord. Or maybe that's not you and maybe you need to go outside your house and just interact honestly and bluntly with God about where you are, and invite him to work in the midst of where you're at. And that's what David does here: he *prays* his fear and his anxiety to the Lord in the midst of 12,000 men coming after him.

And when he does, we find that God answers him. But that might not mean what you think it means, keep reading in v. 5:

*[5] I lay down and slept; I woke again, for the Lord sustained me.* [Okay, so far so good—that sounds better than what he was experiencing before. But then v. 6: *[6] I will not be afraid of many thousands of people who have set themselves against me all around.*

Huh. Well, ok. Let's work through this. David cried out to the Lord, and God answered him, and now he's sleeping soundly. But even so, apparently none of that is because God has changed his *circumstances*. Do you see that? Apparently God has not solved the problem of the thousands of people who are attempting to chase David down and kill him. They're still there, v. 6: "*I will not be afraid of many thousands of people who have (present tense) set themselves against me all around.*" **So his circumstances have not changed, but something about his anxiety has.**

And that's because at the end of the day, anxiety is not about our circumstances. It's about something deeper. Listen, you can try to alleviate your money anxieties by taking a job that pays more money. You know what I'd be willing to bet though? Your anxiety is still gonna be there. You can try to alleviate your anxiety about the future by working your tail off in college, making sure you get straight A's in every class, graduating top in your class, and then taking every possible awesome career opportunity there that is before you. But again, I'd bet you'll still be anxious about the future. Your anxiety is still going to be there. You can try to alleviate your anxiety about your kids by putting them in the best possible schools, and the best possible day care, and giving them every possible opportunity you can, and by never letting them cry for more than 2.4 seconds before coming to their rescue. But here's the thing, as they grow older, your anxieties will only shift to other anxieties concerning your kids. Your anxiety is still going to be there. Because our circumstances don't cause anxiety. Now, they may *not help* it, but they don't *cause* it. **What causes our anxiety is what we believe about God in the midst of our circumstances, and what we believe about ourselves in the midst of our circumstances.**

More on that in just a few minutes. For now, let's finish out our passage, v. 7:

*[7] Arise, O Lord! Save me, O my God! For you strike all my enemies on the cheek; you break the teeth of the wicked. [8] Salvation belongs to the Lord; your blessing be on your people!* (water)

So it is precisely because of God answering his cries about his fear and anxiety, that David can say with confidence: "just like you did something about my anxiety, I know that you will ultimately do something about my circumstances too." Because you could be trusted with what's going on internally, you can also be trusted with what's going on *externally*, all around me. But notice that comes second. **David knows that what he ultimately needs isn't for God to do something about his circumstances, but to do something about what's happening in his heart.** His circumstances changing are secondary at best. But first what matters is that he needs to have God deal with what's going on internally with him.

Okay—all that said, that's what we need God to do for us as well. Before we need him to fix or resolve the circumstances around us, we need him to help us address the root cause of our anxiety. Why is it that we are anxious in the first place? To get anywhere with it, you've got to ask that question. And I think for that, we need to look to this one little word David used in v. 3. Back there, he said that God is his "*glory*," and "*the lifter of [his] head.*" Now, *glory* is one of those words that we see all over the bible. And we see it so much that it becomes easy to look right past it and not think much about what it means. But I believe this word *glory* is actually pivotal to recognizing, investigating, and doing something about our anxiety.

Allow me to explain. The word *glory* in Hebrew is actually *kavod*. *Can you say kavod?* And most literally, it just means *heavy*. So in the Old Testament, there's this story about a king of Moab, named Eglon, who was said to be an overweight man, and he is called *kavod*. So that imagery of heaviness gets used as a metaphor for something that is significant or important. So the word

“heavy” or “weighty” actually works this way in English too. When we hear someone say something and we say “whoa, that’s heavy,” or “that’s weighty,” what do we mean? We mean what they said somehow has a lot of depth of meaning or *significance*. That it’s *profound* in some way. So glory literally means *heavy*, but by association also means meaningful or significant.

So looking back, when David says that God is “his glory,” what does he mean? **He means that God is now what gives his life significance or meaning.** He’s saying that what makes his life matter is God, and what God has done for him. Now, let me ask you this: why would he say that about God, unless something else had been his “glory” at some point in time? By saying “**God is my glory, the lifter of my head,**” David is saying that at some point something else had taken the spot of his glory.

Think about this story from David’s perspective. He had been *one of*, if not *the* most loved king in Israel’s history. People respected him, people revered him. And no doubt, that gave his life *meaning right? Purpose*. It had *weight*. So, in light of that, what is he *anxious* about in this passage? We mentioned it earlier: he’s anxious that all of that is being *stripped away*: that all the things that made his life meaningful are no longer true of him. That his *glory* is being *taken* from him. That’s the source of his anxiety.

And it tends to be the source of ours too. If you want to really do work on your anxiety— find out why it’s there and do something about it. In order to do that, you need to trace it back to its source. Remember, Kent said in week 1 that our emotions are like smoke from a fire. So if anxiety is the *smoke*, we need to figure out what *fire* is causing it. Chances are, your anxieties can be traced back to where you have located *your glory*. What is it that makes life *matter* to you? What makes your life meaningful, significant? What things are more important to you than anything else? Chances are, *those* are the things that you are most anxious about. Let’s just walk through some examples so you can see how this works:

Let’s just start with an easy one: Maybe for you, what gives your life meaning and significance is money. Maybe it’s that life has more meaning when you have all the money you need to be able to buy all the things you want to buy. Or maybe you’re more of a saver, so when you have a certain amount saved up or put away for the future: that gives you security and peace. But either way, if money is what gives your life meaning, if it is your *glory*, then you are probably going to be most anxious about all the things in your life that threaten your *glory*, or endanger your money.

Maybe money isn’t your thing—maybe for you it’s *the future*: maybe it’s God’s purpose for your life. Maybe that’s what gives your life meaning -- knowing what God has for your life and following through on that. If that’s you, you will be most anxious about all the things connected to *that*: your major, your success in school, career decisions you make, friendships and connections you make in the workplace. If your *glory* is in the future, you’ll be most anxious about things that could threaten the future.

Maybe your glory is in what people think of you, then you could find your anxiousness in how your physical appearance looks. You find this most notably in celebrities that find their glory in this. They will do any and everything to look young. You may not be a celebrity but this is certainly a thing for regular people too. But maybe physical appearance isn't what you think of when it comes to what people think of you. Maybe you're more like me and it fleshes itself out in work and how people perceive your work ethic. If that's the case, when you work on projects and it's up for review guess what you will be anxious about.

Here's one that isn't fun to talk about. For some parents in the room, maybe what gives your life meaning is your kids. Your kids being happy, having fun, or just being well-balanced and successful. If that is what gives your life meaning, you will be most anxious about anything related to that. You'll be anxious about the decisions they make, about *you* making the right *parenting* decisions at all times, and them being safe and healthy at all times. If your *glory* is your kids, you will be most anxious about them.

Are you starting to see how this works? Chances are, the things you are most anxious about, are somehow connected to whatever your *glory* is. So to do work on our anxiety, we need to trace our anxiety back to its source: *what is our "glory"?* For David, it was being a revered king of Israel. What is it for you?

Now I do want to be very clear: with most all of these, the problem *isn't* that you *care* about them. The problem isn't that you *care* about your finances, your future, or your kids. You most certainly need to care about those things. But there is a difference between *caring* about something, and that something being the *one thing that gives your life meaning*. There's a difference between caring about money or your kids and one of those things being the one thing that makes your life meaningful. There's a difference between caring about your kids, and your kids being the one thing that makes your life *meaningful*. If you *care* about your finances, you will have a desire to make smart financial decisions. If your *glory* is in your finances, it will keep you up at night. If you *care* about your kids, you will want to love and protect them well. If your *glory* is in your kids, you will be constantly paralyzed by *fear* over what could happen to them. **As long as your *glory* is found in something that can be taken away from you, you will always be anxious.**

Wherever you have placed your *glory*, *that* is where anxiety will spring from in your life. So in order to get anywhere with your anxiety, you have to learn to *relocate* your glory. Only then will you truly be able to lie down and rest at night. This is what Jesus gets at in [Matthew 6](#), where he himself discusses anxiety. He wraps up his teaching on anxiety by saying:

*But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.*

Now, contrary to popular perception, Jesus is not saying “hey, just focus more on God and you won’t be anxious.” He’s saying, “the more the significance of your life has to do with God and his kingdom, *the less anxious you will be.*” God and his kingdom are the two things that can never be taken away. You’re not at risk of losing them. And so the more that *they* are what give your life meaning and significance—the more they are your *glory*—the less anxious you will be.

*So what does relocating your glory look like in the examples I gave at the top?*

When the goal of parenting isn’t to make your kids awesome, or perfect, or safe, but rather preparing them for the mission of God—you will notice that your anxiety about keeping them awesome, perfect, or safe will begin to lessen.

When the goal of your life isn’t rooted in how successful you are, whether in college or at work, but rather using where the Lord has placed you as a way to bring about his kingdom here on earth, you will notice that your anxiety about your success will start to wane.

When money is not the focus of your life but rather leveraging your money for God’s purposes on earth, by giving generously, you know what will happen to your anxiety about money? It’ll start to lessen over time. Are you starting to see what relocating your glory looks like?

Ok so, before we close, I want to speak directly to those of us who have anxiety more regularly. Who can’t go to sleep at night because they feel like they may not wake up. For those that know what it feels like to have panic attacks. Who feel helpless at times or most times. First, let me say, I’m so sorry. I may not know your story. I don’t know what led you to have fear and anxiety in your life. But I can I say that I hate it. I hate that the brokenness of this world has caused fear and anxiety to exist. But I can say this without a shadow of doubt that the Lord loves you dearly. It may not feel like it right now, and maybe it hasn’t felt that way for a while, but he does. I know it might be tough to hear that but I need you to hear me say that, he loves you and he will give you what you need. He may not give you everything you want\*—he may not give you everything you \*think you need in the moment; **but he will give you what you need. He will sustain you.** I know that because of the cross. Take a look on the screen at this verse from [Romans 8](#) that goes like this...

*32 He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?*

When your anxiety is at its worse, and relief seems nowhere to be found, I want you to know there’s hope because the God of the Universe did not withhold his own Son from you or from me. Jesus went to the cross so that we could back in right relationship with God the Father again. And we know that because God didn’t spare his own son, he can be trusted to give us what we need. Anxiety’s source, as David mentioned earlier, is not so much that bad things may happen, but that God will not give us what we need in the midst of them happening. And this



passage blows that idea out of the water. It says "if he could be trusted at the cross, he can be trusted. Like David, you can trust him with your fears. You can trust him with your anxieties.

So here's what I want us to do, Eric and Sara can you come on up. I want to give us some space to pray for our fears and anxieties. And for those that don't really deal with anxiety as much, I want you to pray for your brothers and sisters that do in the room. But for those experiencing some form of this right now, I want to give you space to ask the Lord a few questions. So if everyone can bow their head and close their eyes. Here's what I want you to ask the Lord. **1. Have I in the midst of my anxiety located my glory somewhere not in you?** Am I currently placing something in the spot that you should be in? **2. If so, can you help me see this clearly and be able to acknowledge this to my LifeGroup or to people that are close to me?** **3. Will you help me relocate my glory?** Will you help me to trust that you know what you're doing and you know what's best?

Take some time and do that now.