

# **Whispers in the Dark**

## **What Me, Worry? Series week #2**

**by Bill Aumack**

Before we start today, I would be remiss if I didn't mention that about 40 years ago, 40 years ago on Monday, I was standing on this platform with Linda and we got married right here. It doesn't seem like it's been 40 years. If she had her way, she'd say, it feels like it's been 60. We joke about that all the time.

But you know, we're in our second week of talking about being anxious and how we should be anxious for nothing. And this week we're talking about whispers in the dark. Have you heard the whispers in the dark? Sometimes when you feel anxious, you're feeling discouraged, you're feeling overwhelmed, you're feeling like, I can't do it, I can't handle it. There's heaviness, there's panic.

And those whispers come, you're not good enough, you messed up, you can't handle it. Why do you even try? And those whispers in the dark can really be just crippling. My grandmother was a professional worrier. She was fortunate enough that she just was a stay at home mom and she took care of the family while my grandfather worked. And so she picked up a profession and it was worrying. And we used to call those “worry warts”. We don't use that term so much anymore. We say, I have anxiety. But back in the day she was a worry wart. She was a grade A, first class worry wart. She worried about stuff the rest of us hadn't even thought about yet, right? She could really work up a good worry. And one example now again, remember, this is long before cell phones. You have a family member that takes the car and goes out with some friends. If you're a parent and they're 16 or 17 years old and they drive off into LA traffic, you have thought, what have I done? Right? But they're going to hang out with some friends and they cheerily tell you, I'm going to be back around suppertime, 4 o'clock, you haven't heard from them. 5 o'clock, 6 o'clock, 7

o'clock, 8 o'clock. Finally they roll in about 9:30. And you have worked up a good worry, right? Because first of all you think, well, maybe they had car problems. Well, maybe it was worse, maybe it was an accident and maybe the accident was so bad they're in a hospital somewhere and the hospital doesn't know to call me. And then you're pretty sure little green men have come from outer space and abducted them and you will never see them again.

And we worry and we worry. And anxiety leads to fear, and fear is a liar. We've talked about that before. And that fear can be crippling.

And so as we look at anxiety this week and how that leads to fear, the first question we have to ask ourselves, is it a sin to feel anxious?

So take out your sermon notes with me, and is it a sin to feel anxious? Can you think of anybody in the Bible who had anxiety? Like just about all of them? I mean, it's harder to find somebody who didn't. Even Jesus. Remember when Jesus is in the garden before he's arrested and crucified, the Bible says he was deeply troubled and sorrowful. What does that sound like? Anxiety. Right? And he's praying, God, let this be taken off of me if there's any way possible.

So I think we can safely say that **anxiety isn't a sin, it's a signal.**

What do I mean by that? How many of you here drive? Let me see your hands. Okay, so you've all experienced this. You're driving along in your car, life's good, tunes are on, windows down. You got a Dr. Pepper in the cup holder, life's great. And then a light comes on on the dash. Oh, no, Right. What do we call those? Idiot lights? Do you know why we call those idiot lights? Cars used to have gauges, and we all learned how to read the gauges and what they meant, but that was too hard, so they took all the gauges out. And now you just get a light. And when that light comes on, what's it mean? Take the car to the manufacturer and see what's wrong with it. Right. Now, some of the warning lights you get may be kind of minor. Like you didn't close your door tight or your tire needs air or something, right? But when that check engine light comes on, it's time to take the car back to the manufacturer and see what's wrong with it.

*Anxiety is a signal that tells you it's time to talk to your manufacturer.*

I worked on that a long time. I want you guys to appreciate that it was difficult to come up with that analogy. Right? But that's what anxiety is. It's a signal telling you it's time to talk to your manufacturer. Right.

Open your Bibles with me to Philippians 4:4-7. This is written by Paul. And do you remember where he's sitting when he writes this? In prison. Now, I don't exactly know what a first century prison was like, but I'm going to guess it's worse than the prisons we have today. Kind of icky. And he's sitting in prison. And this is what he writes. Verse 4.

Rejoice in the Lord always. Really? We're sitting in jail. And by the way, we're sitting in jail for talking about Jesus. That's why we're in jail. Cause we talked about Jesus.

Rejoice in the Lord always. I'm thinking like, Lord, what am I doing here? Get me out. Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again. Rejoice. Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about how much anything. But in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your request to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

All right, we're going to look at this in bits and pieces. Verse 6. Be anxious for how much? Nothing.

Be anxious for nothing. But in every situation, what are we supposed to do? Pray. That's what you do. When the anxiety comes and that idiot light comes on, that's your warning to go talk to your manufacturer and pray. That's what the Bible tells us to do, right?

**If it's big enough to worry about, it's big enough to pray about.**

How many times have you spent time worrying about something you know? And like, two weeks later, you're like, I haven't prayed about this yet. Right? If you're spending time and effort worrying about it, it's big enough to pray about

it. You think God's too busy, oh, can't believe he's worried about that again. He'll get over it. No, no, no.

If you're worried about your doctor's appointment or some medical test is coming back, pray! There's some big decision you need to make, Pray! If you're a student going back to school, pray. If you're a teacher going back to school, pray! If you're a parent worrying about how you're going to pay for the new scientific calculator this year, pray! Right?

**If it's on your mind, it's on God's heart.**

If it's on your mind, it's on God's heart. Right? The last part of verse 6 says, present your request to God. What does that mean? Tell him what you need. Let your needs be known.

Now, how do kids let their needs be known? I can tell you how they don't do it. Very politely in King James proper English. O greatest father, thou has been with me a longest time. I beseech thee. Right? That's not how they do it. Right. Babies cry. Toddlers throw tantrums. Children beg. Preteens yell and whine. Teenagers text. They don't even talk to you. And adults hint. They don't say it either. They hint.

When you're presenting your request to God, ask. Use words. And sometimes, if it's really just... It's so much you can't even say anything, He'll get that. Just spend time with Him. Just spend time with him. You can sing it, you can write it. Journal, write Him a letter. You can even yell in anger at God. He can handle it. He's been around the block. He knows how to deal with these things.

I don't know about you, but when my children needed me, I never minded helping them. Right. I think that's what good parents do. Right. When their children need you, you help them. I think that's how God feels about us. When the children need him, he doesn't mind helping.

Are you anxious? It's a signal telling you it's time to pray. Let's look and see what Peter says about it in 1 Peter 5:5-7. Everybody there?

Just humble yourselves. Therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time. Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.

How much of your anxiety do you cast on him? [All] Am I supposed to keep some of it? I'm not done worrying about this part yet, God.

When you have an anxiety attack, who does the devil attack? All of us, at one time or another. But primarily, if you're in war, who are you going to attack? And the people that are doing you damage. Right. If I've got all my troops lined up and the guys over here are getting damaged, we're going to attack there and try and suppress that. Right? So you go where the battle is, where the fight is, where they're doing damage. When the devil's trying to attack you, sometimes it's because you're in the battle and you are doing damage because you're trying to invite your friends to church, because you're trying to be a good example for your grandchildren. Whatever it is, you're in the battle and you're doing damage. And the devil will sometimes attack that. Right? And sometimes maybe it's a preemptive strike to keep you firmly in his grasp. But generally he attacks those that are doing some damage. So when you're anxious, what do you do? According to Peter, we humble ourselves and pray. How long should we pray? However long you need.

And we have some misconceptions about prayer. And a lot of times, unfortunately, it's because of church. Because when we come to church and somebody prays during the prayer, that's what we call a corporate prayer. It's a public prayer. We're all together. And the person that has prayed that prayer or gets ready to pray that prayer generally has spent some time getting ready. They know what they want to say. They've thought about it. Maybe they've written it down. They've kind of planned the prayer because it's a corporate, public prayer. And sometimes we think that our prayers with God need to be this perfectly polished monologue. And I'm gonna use flowery words and say the right thing and do just this and just that. And that's what prayer looks like, because that's what we see here.

But personal prayer is different than public prayer. In personal prayer, you present yourself to God, your messy self. It doesn't have to be perfect. God's

not looking for this perfect monologue and grading it, going well, you know, he didn't use the right verb form there. That's a no. God wants your entire messy self.

Have you ever sat down to pray and you're thinking, you know, I've got this problem at work, and so I'm gonna pray about my problem at work. You start praying about your problem at work, and your mind is somewhere else, right? I'm not the only one? Guess what then pray about that. Maybe your mind is telling you, you think it's the problem at work that's causing you anxiety. It's not the problem at work. It's this. Sorry, Victor, I don't mean to be pointing at you. That's just a general something here, right? Maybe your mind is telling you. Maybe God is telling you, that's not the problem. This is the problem. Go with it. Pray about that. And if your mind wanders and is now over there, then pray about that. Who says I have to pray about work and cover every spectrum and every inch of that before I talk about anything else? Do you do that with your friends? When you're having conversation, you're sitting around having pizza one night, right? The conversation bings and bangs all over the place, right? We're talking about football, we're talking about politics, we're talking about work, we're talking about my car. It just goes everywhere. Okay? If that's what happens when you're talking to God, go with it. Pray about those things. It's okay. You feel a little freer? Feel a Little better? It's okay. It's okay.

When you're feeling down, depleted, hopeless, you're sinking first. Peter says, humble yourselves therefore under God's mighty hand that he might lift you up in due time. Due time. What do we think due time is now? [No] Got a digital watch here, Lord, it's taking you three seconds. How come we haven't answered yet? God is the God of forever. What's three of my seconds to Him? Right? We gotta be in his time. We gotta relax a little bit. But he's heard us. He's gonna deal with us.

I got a picture here. When I show this picture, what do you think of? Peter? Jesus walking on the water, and Peter wants to come out and join him. Peter gets a little bit worried about the waves and starts to sink. And what does Peter do when he starts to sink? He yells, save me. And holds his hand up.

When you're sinking, what should you do? Yell, save me. And hold your hand up.

Listen, the problem is that you aren't close to his hand. See, some of you think the problem is I'm sinking. I can't deal with it. There's too much. It's overwhelming. I'm going under for the last time. That's not the problem. **The problem is you aren't close to his hand.**

Get yourself close to his hand. Hold your hand up. Hold your hand up. Hold your hand up.

We have a cycle of anxiety where we're feeling anxious. Organisms, as a general rule, whether that's a person, a plant, an animal, even groups, a church, their company where you work, it's hard to have a steady state. Generally, we're growing or we're dying. That's pretty much the two states you have growing and dying. And if anxiety has got you and you're circling down, and when you feel the anxiety, what do you do? You try to grab control. And when you try to grab control, what happens? You realize you don't have any control. And the anxiety gets worse. And I try to grab more control and I realize I have less control. I try to grab more control and I realize I have less control. And that anxiety starts going down, and that's what happens.

And the way to get out of that is to break the cycle. Because I don't want to be spinning down. I want to be coming back up and growing. So how do I stop this and get it to go the other way? That's tough. That's tough. See, **we don't always have the power to control the cycle, but we always have the power to surrender.** I can't control the cycle. I can't control what happens at work. I can't control what my family members do. I can't even control my children do. I can't even control what my loving wife does sometimes. I can't even control what I do. I have no control over the cycle. But I always have the power to surrender. I always have the power to surrender.

1 Peter 5:6 and 7. Humble yourself therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he might lift you up in due time. Verse 7. Cast all of your anxiety upon him.

What does cast meaning? Heave ho, right? You ever been at the beach and the guys are fishing on the beach and they got those fishing poles that are about 10ft long. They're huge, right? And they wind up and they can cast way out past the waves. That's where your troubles belong. Get out that pole, wind it up and toss it. Because what do we do? We pray to God and we say, God, let me give you my anxiety. We feel better. And then about 3 o' clock in the afternoon, like God, I'm not done worrying about that yet. I just take that back now. I need to work on it some more. No! You chucked that thing so far, you can't get it back. That's what cast means. I got rid of it. I didn't just put it over there so I can grab it back. I got rid of it. I cast it. Okay, get rid of that.

Anxious about the future. Your job, your finances, your marriage. Whether you'll ever get married or not. Children. What do others think? You have aging parents to take care of? Do you have health issues? There's a thousand things to worry about and be anxious about. But anxiety is a signal telling us it's time to pray.

If we go back to Philippians 4:6 and 7, it said, do not be anxious about anything. But in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your request to God. And what happens? The peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

What's going to happen? Something you can't explain. Something I can't explain. But you will feel peace. And people say, how can you be peaceful with all this stuff going on? I don't know. It's a peace from God. It's not from this world. Nobody can take it from you. Nobody can take it from you.

In reflection, real quick, are you close to his hand?

Turn your anxiety over to God and leave it there. Quit taking it back. You shouldn't have to pray about your anxiety every single morning.

Maybe it's beginning because it's been spiraling down and it's tough to stop that and get it going the other way. I ain't gonna lie, that's not easy.



But when you're praying to God and you're leaving it on him, say, God will let you handle it. I can't. I've proven I can't handle it. Look what's happening.

Let God handle it. Let God handle it.

Real quickly. I want to do something with you. Want everybody to raise at least one hand, if not both hands. When I say Jesus. The very mention of that name should shatter darkness. It should calm your soul. It should make the anxiety go away. And when those whispers in the dark come and you don't know what to do with them, I want you to whisper back, Jesus, Jesus, Jesus. That's all you have to say. Jesus, save me.

You should feel the peace. You should feel it letting go. You should feel it releasing as you let that go to Jesus, even in a whisper, it'll be gone.

Heavenly Father, thank you so much that we know that all we have to do is lift our hands and say, save me and turn it over to you, cast it on you. Give us the courage and the strength to do that, to let go and let you handle it, Lord. Even that part can be hard, Lord. You don't want us to be anxious and fearful and crippled. You want us to be rejoicing and have the peace that's unexplainable because it comes from you, Lord. For those that are dealing with anxiety, be with them. Help them hold up their hands and say, Jesus, save me. Be with us now. In Jesus name, amen.