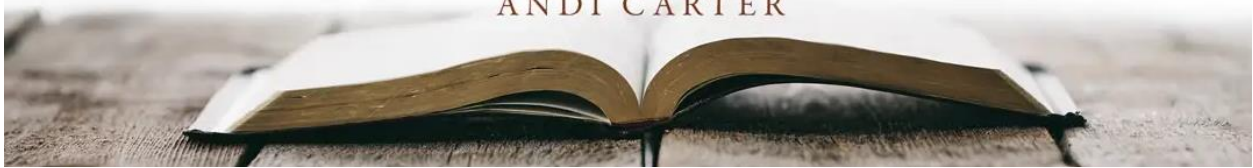


Women's Equipping Seminar

WHEN I AM AFRAID: TRUSTING GOD IN ANXIOUS TIMES

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What are we all afraid of? List some fears that you face and take a minute to write them down. Think about the biggies as well as the small fears.

Check the fears that resonate with you:

- Our safety, the safety of those we love
- Fears about how you will die- either with Alzheimer's, being alone, being poor or dying with unresolved relational issues.
- Fears about what happens after death, being judged or forgotten,
- Fears about living a meaningless life
- Fears about being alone
- Fears about being in love and therefore getting hurt, or getting hurt again
- Fearing people's perception of you
- Fearing that you are not a good parent
- Fears about what you might lose- your appearances, your hair, your youth, your money, your job, your health
- Fearing your kids will not have salvation
- Fears about God and what he is doing or not doing in the world
- Fear of sickness
- Fear of flying
- Fear of heights, needles, dentists, drowning, driving in traffic or in the rain or in the snow, etc.

BIG IDEAS

Some fear is natural and expected... but sinful roots of theology can lie beneath much of our fear.

Scripture is clear that there are root-level motivations and beliefs that lead us to acting and feeling the way we do.

- Luke 6:43-45
- Proverbs 4:23
- Matthew 15:18-20

These roots will rule our hearts, and what rules our hearts will rule our lives. If our fears rule us, we will feel overcome, controlled, and mastered by them, and that is the kind of anxiety we are told to avoid in Scripture.

FIVE ATTRIBUTES OF AN ANXIOUS HEART

HOW DO I KNOW IF I AM RULED BY MY ANXIETY?

1. The anxious heart fears losing what it loves or not getting what it wants.

Notes:

List of motivations: (feel free to check those that apply and add more)

- Pleasure
- Power
- Love/Intimacy
- Control
- Comfort
- Meaning
- Autonomy
- Peace
- Happiness
- Significance
- Reputation
- Success
- Additional motivations: _____

Diagnostic Questions:

What am I really wanting in this situation? Go a layer deeper and pray that the Lord will give you insight.

Is Christ alone enough for me in this situation? If not, what is it I am wanting more?

2. The anxious heart distorts or forgets God.

Notes:

First, we can distort who God is to fit our situation or perception.

Secondly, with this seed of doubt, we can tend to forget God and can live a functionally “godless” life when we feel anxious.

Diagnostic Questions:

What kind of God do you see in your life when troubles come? If you were honest, do you see Him as your good and all-powerful Father or something else?

When troubles come, how is your prayer life? What barriers do you currently have in the way of experiencing God in the context of prayer and Scripture reading?

3. The anxious heart elevates mankind.

Notes:

Elevating mankind puts control of our lives in our own hands instead of God's. We will do anything to find assurance in our own devices.

Diagnostic Questions:

When you struggle to trust God, where do you turn for assurance? To self, others, something in the world?

Do you see this playing out in your current fears, and if so, how?

4. The anxious heart is unavailable for service and love toward others.

Notes:

When ruled by our fear, most of us close other people out. And not only does this make us feel very much alone, but it also keeps us from obeying Christ by loving and serving other people.

Diagnostic Questions:

Do you feel pressure to hide from others when you struggle with fear and worry?

What do you miss out on when you distance yourself?

5. The anxious heart views suffering as unacceptable.

Notes:

The real challenge in our walk on this earth is to know what to do when suffering comes knocking at our door.

We have a difficult time seeing that suffering for the believer is something to expect and to embrace.

Diagnostic Questions

Do you feel like God has disappointed you in your current fear or struggle?

How do you see this disappointment play out in your daily life?

FIVE STEPS TO WALK IN FAITH RATHER THAN FEAR

1. Love God and fear Him above all.

Notes:

Our Challenge:

"The fear of the Lord results from knowing that I always live coram deo- I live before the face of the Holy God. His holiness leaves me amazed at both the magnitude of his forgiveness and the seriousness of my sins.. because He is holy, I want to obey him wholeheartedly." (Ed Welch).

The fear of the Lord will displace our worldly fears because it will set everything into its right perspective. Make fearing God “most important,” and that is what will rule your heart.

Scripture to meditate on:

- Deuteronomy 10:12
- Psalm 130:3-4
- Proverbs 9:10
- Psalm 119:120
- 2 Corinthians 7:1

2. Love others and seek to serve them.

Notes:

Our Challenge:

Our mission is to love others with self-sacrificing love. Service to others will lower our anxiety by putting our focus in the right place.

If we hope to trade our fear for love, sometimes uncomfortable obedience is a first step.

Scripture to meditate on:

- Mark 12:28–31
- John 13:34-35
- Ephesians 4:1-6
- Philippians 2:1-11
- James 2:14-17
- 1 John 4:7-21

3. Take seriously the idols of your heart.

Notes:

Our Challenge:

Know your heart- know where it does not love God and instead loves something else more. Know where it perhaps wants something too much. Know where it runs to and turns to find security, comfort, or assurance- and fight against these desires.

Scripture to meditate on:

- Proverbs 4:23
- Colossians 3:1-17
- Matthew 22:37
- James 4:1-10
- 2 Corinthians 5:14-15
- Philippians 3:7-12

4. View suffering as a measure of grace instead of a break in trust.

Notes:

Isaiah 53:3–6 (ESV):

³*He was despised and rejected by men,
a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief
and as one from whom men hide their faces
he was despised, and we esteemed him not.*

⁴*Surely he has borne our griefs
and carried our sorrows;
yet we esteemed him stricken,
smitten by God, and afflicted.*

⁵*But he was pierced for our transgressions;
he was crushed for our iniquities;
upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace,
and with his wounds we are healed.*

⁶*All we like sheep have gone astray;
we have turned—every one—to his own way;
and the LORD has laid on him
the iniquity of us all.”*

Our challenge:

Are we willing to say, “Not my will but Yours” as well? Are we willing to see suffering as a measure of grace in our lives?

“God allows what He hates to accomplish what He loves- which is His work within you.” (Joni Erickson Tada)

Will you allow God to do this work?

Scripture to meditate on:

- Psalm 119:50
- John 16:33
- Romans 8:28
- Hebrews 12:1-13
- James 1:2-3
- 1 Peter 2:20-24
- 1 Peter 4:12-14

5. Focus on eternity.

Notes:

Our Challenge:

To have the perspective that our daily fears and anxieties are part of an eternal plan- governed by a sovereign God who has saved us and loves us.

And this significantly changes the perspective of our fears.

2 Corinthians 4:16–18 (ESV):

¹⁶ So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day.

¹⁷ For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison,

¹⁸ as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.”

Scripture to meditate on:

- Matthew 5:11-12, 17-19
- John 10:27-30
- Romans 8:32, 37-38
- 2 Corinthians 4:16-5:9
- Galatians 6:7-9
- 1 Peter 5:10