



10 Ways To Overcome Your Fears and Anxiety

From
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I'm so glad you responded to the offer to send these ways to create the best outcome during uncertain times. I realize you might be single or married and kids of all ages may or may not be home. So, I have tried to provide options for as many situations as possible.

- 1. Real Truth:** There is a lot of information going around and it is important that we not listen to every voice. Be sure that you don't get too focused on information from a source that is not too reliable. When we struggle in uncertain times, it is easy to focus only on the bad news and miss some of the positive things that are happening. Additionally, as we go through a tough time, we start thinking it will never end or things will never be the same again. I remember during 9-11 it felt like things would never be the same or something else horrible would happen any minute. As we look back on that horrible crisis, we realize things did return to normal and another horrible thing like that did not happen again.

As I write this, the truth is that some terrible things have happened because of the Covid-19 Virus. Some have been very sick and someone very close to you may have died. Jobs have been lost and finances are strained. Acting like these things are not true does not help. But focusing on some truth from God's word does. Every day we need to open up the Bible and hear from God as God wants to comfort us and guide us with his word. His word tells us some very important things that I cling to during these tough times. The truth I rely on will remind you that God is there for you and will never abandon you. The Holy Spirit is there to comfort you and strengthen you. Here is some truth from God's word that is helpful to all of us during any tough time.

And now, dear brothers and sisters, one final thing. Fix your thoughts on what is true, and honorable, and right, and pure, and lovely, and admirable. Think about things that are worthy of praise. Philippians 4:8

This does not mean to ignore reality. It does mean that we need to limit the amount of crummy stuff coming into our brains so we have time to focus on the things listed above. This says to me, turn on the news and get updated, then turn off the updates on your phone and turn off the news for extended lengths of time so you can think about some pure and lovely and admirable things.

Your feelings are very important. But don't allow them to be the foundation of your day today. Let God's truth be your foundation. Allow God's truth to saturate your mind and heart and it will impact your feelings. Here is a great verse to memorize and meditate on throughout the day:

I know the Lord is with me. I will not be shaken, for he is right beside me. Psalm 16:8

- 2. Appropriate Precaution:** It isn't anything new to remind people that fear can be a very paralyzing emotion. Of course, God does not want any of us living in fear. Here is the most quoted scripture on fear which reveals a profound truth.

For God has not given us a spirit of fear and timidity, but of power, love, and self-discipline. 2 Timothy 1:7

You may have had that scripture verse quoted at you or even been shamed by it. I am so sorry if that is what has happened to you. No, God has not given us a spirit of fear, but let's consider the fact that sometimes fear is appropriate. If I am walking around in broad daylight in front of the Police Station in a small town like Mayberry on the Andy Griffith show, and I am scared to death of being robbed, I probably have a problem with fear and need some help. But if I am in a dark alley and a street light at the end of that alley reveals a huge person with a gun in one hand and a knife in

another is coming toward me, fear is the appropriate emotion. If it instantly motivates me to run as fast as I can; it might be a lifesaver.

Fear is not a sin or a weakness when you hear that someone could be symptom free with a virus but be carrying the virus and giving it to others. Appropriate fear during the crisis of COVID-19 that we are going through as I write this, would be to take every smart precaution I know to take so that I don't get sick. Not only that, I want to take every precaution I can so that even if I don't get sick I am not carrying around the virus, giving it to others, while I don't even know I am doing it.

Rather than worry or obsess of fear, let's all just do what we can to stay safe and keep others safe. Every time I wash my hands I think of washing away my fears and doubts. So, I am cleaning my hands and using it as an excuse to clean my mind of worry. Every time I reach for hand sanitizer I remind myself that God has sanitized my soul and I am free of the penalty of sin because he died for those sins. I don't just say that God is my protector, I do what I can do to protect myself and my family.

In the past 7 days I have had no physical contact with another human being as a precaution for myself and others. I was on a flight home from California Sunday and I did not want to give anyone in my family the virus. So, I have stayed away from them and everyone else. Last Sunday that might have seemed radical but it is what everyone is being asked to do now. Shelter in place. If you exercise, do it alone. Keep your distance. And when food is delivered or you get take out, follow the expert's advice and clean off the containers and leave the boxes they came in outside. That is not overreaction, that is taking care of yourself and the more you do that, the less you have to be afraid of.

Paralyzing fear is a negative thing. Precaution and preparation are a great thing to protect you and your family. Don't hyper-spiritualize this and say you are trusting God to protect you. If you are doing that you are probably waiting for God to do what God is waiting for you to do. So, take appropriate precautions and as you do, allow God's peace to enter into

your mind, knowing that you have been responsible and taken the recommended precautions.

Paul gave Timothy some really sound advice about 2,000 years ago. But Paul was not writing just to Timothy. He was writing to us also. In II Timothy 4:2 he writes: **...Be prepared, whether the time is favorable or not...** It was good advice for Timothy back then when times were not too favorable and it is really good advice for us today.

- 3. God's Love:** I am saddened that at a time when we need to connect with God and feel loved by God, some feel only distance or anger from God. When we struggle, rather than shun God we need to connect with God and we need to stay connected to God. God did not cause this to happen to our world or use it to punish us. How do I know this? First of all, God is love. The Bible does not say that God is lovely, like it is one of his traits like all knowing. No, it says He is love.

But anyone who does not love does not know God, for God is love. 1 John 4:2

Sadly, we live in a fallen world where evil also exists. But God loves us so much he wants us in a relationship with him and He sent His son to die for us so we could be in a clean and pure intimacy with Him. So many people doubt God's love because they were not loved as a child or God did not fix or prevent something they wanted Him to miraculously change. The first part of the verse is also very important. If we are not able to love others it is surely because we have a problem with understanding and accepting God's love. That makes this the perfect time to evaluate whether or not you are loving others, and whether or not you need to talk to someone about how you could live in a world created by the God who is love but not feel or experience that love.

During these anxious times it is essential that we work on our connection with God because it is key to overcoming our fears. The more of God's love we experience the less fear we are going to have to endure. John reminds us of this:

Such love has no fear, because perfect love expels all fear. If we are afraid, it is for fear of punishment, and this shows that we have not fully experienced his perfect love. 1 John 4:18

Let's go to work on our connection with God. And if you think you have sinned so much or gone too far to experience God's love, don't forget this astounding truth about God.

... God is so rich in mercy...Ephesians 2:4

That mercy is not for everyone but you. It is for you. Right now, ask God to be with you and love you. Tell Him for the first time, or one more time, you are going to believe He is full of love and that love is for you.

Finally, if you are not convinced God loves you, or this problem you are dealing with is not God punishing you, read the words from John below. It is the proof you need that God is not holding all of those sins against you and punishing you for them if you are accepting His son as your savior, and confessing your sins rather than denying them or concealing them.

But if we confess our sins to him, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all wickedness. 1 John 1:9

I believe this for me and I want you to believe it and live into it with all your heart and mind and soul.

- 4. Connection With Others:** It is ironic that at a time of being told to keep your distance from others, to isolate and practice social distancing, we need connection with others more than ever. We can connect in so many ways even though we need to keep our distance. We need it for our own health and stability but there are so many others who need us reaching out to connect with them because they are stuck and don't know how to reach out to others.

So often our shame causes us to distance ourselves and isolate from others. We need to accept God's grace and mercy and realize that living in that shame is what Satan wants for us and not God. God wants us to live in freedom from shame and he wants us to use that to reach out to others and serve them. It is what we are called to do.

For you have been called to live in freedom, my brothers and sisters. But don't use your freedom to satisfy your sinful nature. Instead use your freedom to serve one another in love. Galatians 5:13

That is so clear. We are free to serve one another in love. When we connect to serve and show love, it has an impact on those we reach out to, but the biggest impact is on us. We are no longer sitting and obsessing over our problems or our fears. We are no longer suffering from loneliness and isolation. We feel alive and feel like we have a purpose in this world as we hear how much others appreciate our reaching out to them.

Here are some scriptures that point us toward each other rather than staying separate and alone.

Romans 12:5 says that we all belong to each other.

Romans 12:15 tells us to weep with one another.

Romans 15:14 tells us to teach each other.

1 Corinthians 12:25 tells us to care for each other.

1 Thessalonians 5:11 tells us to encourage each other and build each other up.

Every one of these verses, and there are so many more, is a challenge for each of us to get out of ourselves and into others. If we would stop obsessing over how bad things are or how bad they might get and think of ways to care for each other and encourage each other and build each other up, our lives would change dramatically.

For most of us, we have a list of people we have never called, another list of people we have not called in a long time, and another list of people it is time to call again. The phone is for most the easiest way to connect when we are shut in or shut out of the world. We just have to pick it up and start pushing on the right numbers. For some that phone is 200 pounds and the thought of engaging with someone is terrifying. Since that is what God calls us to do, we need to find the source of our terror, work through it and reach out in spite of it.

There are other ways beyond just calling that help us make the most of our connections. Facetiming, Zoom meetings, and all sorts of video conferencing can help us see into the eyes of those who may be thousands of miles away. And if none of those things are available an old-fashioned disinfected letter will help the writer and the one the letter is addressed to.

We are all in this together. It may not feel like it, but we are, and every step we take to reach out to others is not only nurturing to them, it is quite fulfilling to each of us.

- 5. Make It Right:** Most likely you have had time to reflect on many things you might have been overlooking in the past. Our busyness can prevent us from experiencing the reflective life that brings so much purpose and meaning. The fact is, as we have been running around doing what we do that we think is so important, we may have hurt some people along the way and even though we know we need to make it right, we have never taken the time to do it. We need to make amends with those we have hurt. It is not easy but it can change your life. It did mine.

I remember when I knew Christ had forgiven me of my sins but I still could not look people in the eye. I had hurt so many and rather than make it right I just got on with my life. Then I was challenged to make a list of everyone I hurt and commit to call, write or see them face to face to ask them for their forgiveness. Reluctantly, I made the list and with great anxiety I set out to contact each person. As I did, one by one, each encounter produced more and more freedom in my life. It made sense

when I look back because I had confessed my sins to God but had not done what I was told to do in **James 5:16**:

Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed...

Anyone thinking they don't need to open up to others, that it is just God and them, is ignoring this scripture. Healing can come when we humble down, open up and confess. When we take that to the next level and ask for forgiveness, the burden of shame is lifted because I am no longer living in fear of being confronted by someone from my past. For me it changed everything. Every call brought tears that lead to restoration. I had no idea that one commitment to make things right could change so much within me.

This paper I am writing is a way to overcome fears and anxiety. It might seem strange to include this within it but I could not leave it out. I don't know of anything that produces a more radical transformation than to sit down and make a list of those you have hurt and then begin the process of repairing the relationship with a phone call. If you cannot call, a letter is next best. An email or text is really far down the list of good options so maybe just use that to ask if you could connect by phone.

And if you owe anything to anyone, make a plan to pay it back and tell them you are committed to make them whole again. Here is how important it is to make things right with others.

So, if you are presenting a sacrifice at the altar in the Temple and you suddenly remember that someone has something against you, leave your sacrifice there at the altar. Go and be reconciled to that person. Then come and offer your sacrifice to God. Matthew 5: 23-24

If God would rather you make it right with someone here on earth than worship him in heaven, it must be very important. And while doing this might increase your short-term anxiety, in the long run it will produce a peace and serenity beyond anything you might have experienced before.

- 6. Be Creative:** Now is the time to use everything you have to be creative. Rather than live in miserable sadness, let's turn up the possibility dial and see what we can come up with. For you personally it could be going on line and finding a new craft or skill to develop. Drawing is something that looks impossible to some but can be learned by anyone. Maybe there are others you could involve in your quest to learn something new that you might enjoy.

Creating laughter is one of the most healing things you can do. In the midst of so many crummy and crass comedians there are some really funny clean ones too. No one's humor is the same as another's, so search out some clean comedians online. We love Brain Reagan and recommend him to those who love to laugh. Having a joke writing contest is always a good idea because you end up laughing at even the worst attempts.

Music is also a great way to create. If you don't play anything, write lyrics from your own life for someone who does play something. But every house has instruments even if it comes down to spoons, glasses with various water levels or trash cans you can beat on. Being creative does not mean that what you create will turn out beautiful. But you will feel more beautiful because you took the time to involve others in creating something new or simply creating some unexpected good times.

Speaking of creating. Here is a verse that is a great prayer to the creator of the universe:

Create in me a clean heart, O God. Renew a loyal spirit within me. Psalm 51:10

Ask God to create a clean heart but remember that is one creation God needs your help with.

- 7. Comfort Yourself:** It is not selfish to comfort and take care of yourself. When Jesus was asked about the most important commandment he said that loving God with all of our heart, soul and mind was number 1. Then he

says that the second most important commandment was just as important. Strange that something could be number 2 but equal, but Jesus is God and what He says is true. Second and equal is loving your neighbor. And the standard of loving your neighbor is how you love yourself. So, there is an expectation that you would love yourself and that love would cause you to take care of yourself and comfort yourself. Here is the passage.

“Teacher, which is the most important commandment in the law of Moses?” Jesus replied, “You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. A second is equally important. ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’” Matthew 22:36-40

That should assure us it is ok to take some time to care for ourselves and comfort ourselves. How about a warm bath? Could it be a great book while consuming a warm beverage under a warm blanket? Those are some B words that provide the most comfort in the simplest ways possible.

Sweet music, someone reading to you, a wonderful candle, or looking at beautiful art. Think of all of the things you love to do when you have the time, but you rarely ever have time for and spend time comforting yourself doing it. And don't forget there are some great apps that read the Psalms out loud with great music in the back ground.

One final note. Yes, everyone has a favorite comfort food. Maybe during these tough times, it is time to indulge and comfort yourself with a love snack or two.

- 8. Be Courageous:** In the midst of fears it is easy to forget that courage is not the absence of fear. Whatever we do would not be courageous if we were not afraid to do it. Here is my definition of courage: Doing what needs to be done when it needs to be done no matter the consequences. Afraid or not, we just do it because it is the next right thing to do. If you are afraid you are not alone. Join others who have been afraid and act with courage in spite of your fear. Here are some great verses to inspire you to be courageous.

So be strong and courageous, all you who put your hope in the Lord!
Psalm 31:24

Having hope will give you courage. You will be protected and will rest in safety. Job 11:18

...I restore the crushed spirit of the humble and revive the courage of those with repentant hearts. Isaiah 57:15

If you are a little low on courage, God wants to revive you. Get out that Bible of yours and look under the concordance or go online and find every verse that has the word courage or courageous in it. I think you will be astounded at how much better you will feel about the future once you realize how much God wants you to be courageous and how much help he has to offer you. So, if you want to overcome fear, meet it head on with God's truth about courage.

- 9. Acceptance:** In the *Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous* Bill Wilson makes one of the most profound truths ever written in a book other than the Bible. Since Bill Wilson says he did not invent the 12 Steps of AA but discovered them in "the good book" there are many things he writes that reflect God's truth in a profound way. But for me he was most profound when he wrote, "Acceptance, is the answer to all my problems today."

When you think it through, it is really hard to argue with that point. I was reminded of it when my personal Christian counselor brought it to my attention for my situation. I soon realized it could be applied to every area of my life. If the world is in crisis, I need to come to a place of acceptance of that reality and then, make the best choices for today in the face of that tough reality. Acceptance of responsibility to deal with it realistically is quite different than trying to ignore it or over spiritualize it. My job is to act responsibly and set an example for that with others. Acceptance also means that my struggle may be greater than someone else's. What I have been through may make this time a greater challenge for me than others. Accepting that can change everything.

When the news of COVID-19 hit home, some had just been through a divorce, just heard from their doctor that they have cancer and they are still dealing with a child or two that is out there in the world and may be in danger. Put all of that on top of childhood where they were neglected or abused and it is just too much to handle alone. There is no need to handle it alone. God will meet our needs but that does not mean they will be met if we never humble down and ask for help. In fact, when the weight of the world is so great you finally do reach out and ask for help, it could be the beginning of God bringing something good into your life out of something bad.

One of the things that I like to do in the area of acceptance is to imagine the worst case for me and my family. I don't mean obsess over the worst case but to consider it. I think for us that would mean my family would be living in a very small rental home. Could I survive that? Yes. I would still have my church and a way to communicate with people, and I would have my God, and I would have my family. It wouldn't be what I planned, but I could survive it. We could survive. If you look at your worst case and you don't think you can handle it, or you could not come to a place of acceptance, now would be a great time to reach out and get the help you need so you are not fearing the worst case, but instead you are accepting that you could survive it. And with God's help, not survive it but begin a whole new way of living with greater faith and deeper intimacy with Him.

10. Persevering Endurance: At the end of the day and after we have tried everything possible to change the way we think and the things we do, we are still in a place where nothing seems to make sense. Here is a passage of scripture that might help if that is where you are.

Remember dear brothers and sisters, that few of you were wise in the world's eyes or powerful or wealthy when God called you. Instead, God chose things the world considers foolish in order to shame those who think they are wise. And he chose things that are powerless to shame those who are powerful. God chose things despised by the world, things

counted as nothing at all, and used them to bring to nothing what the world considers important. 1 Corinthians 1 26-29

God's ways are not our ways. He has been making good of foolish things since the beginning of time and he is not going to stop doing that. The question is whether or not we will trust that God is still in control and has our best interests in mind.

And in the midst of not fully understanding what God is doing or what God is not doing, we are called to simply not give up, keep moving forward and persevere. If it takes 20 phone calls a day along with 5 online meetings and hours in prayer and fasting we need to do it. We just decide to hang in there and endure whatever comes our way. Here is what happens when we do.

Patient endurance is what you need now, so that you will continue to do God's will. Then you will receive all that he has promised. Hebrews 10:36

Another translation says that those who persevere will receive the crown of life. We don't have to do it perfectly. We just have to get through it and never give up.

Love never gives up, never loses faith, is always hopeful, and endures through every circumstance. 1 Corinthians 13:7

At the moment of greatest despair open up the Bible and read about God's love for you because God's love empowers us to endure. And fellow believers have been asked to endure since the early days of the church. Paul encouraged young Timothy to endure along with him.

Endure suffering along with me, as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. 2 Timothy 2:3

So, I close with asking you to endure along with me. Endure along with the rest of us who struggle. Endure as those who came before us endured and persevered. Don't give up. Don't quit. Do what you have to do to get

through this and we will get through this. And when we do, we will have to endure another “this”. But we will be stronger for what we have gone through together. And don’t forget, God will bring good from all of this one day, somehow, someday, only God can understand.

Here is a great truth that God offers us as we struggle to endure with strength and persevere with Him.

Don’t be afraid, for I am with you. Don’t be discouraged, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you. I will hold you up with my victorious right hand. Isaiah 41:10

With all of my heart, I believe God can, will, and wants to hold you up and strengthen you, no matter what you are going through. God uses others to do his work and I believe God called me to start New Life 31 years ago for such a time as this so we could be there for you. Please accept our offer to help you in any way we can. We are just a phone call away. If you need some help, we are here for you.

If you need to talk to someone, please call us and see if we can help you in whatever you are facing: 800 NEWLIFE (639-5433).

If you are interested in our resources, counselor network or all of the ways you can listen to or view our broadcast, our website is: newlife.com

(I’d love to hear from you personally if this has been helpful or if you have a suggestion on how it could be more helpful. You can email me at stevesocial@newlife.com)