

Difference Between Good and Bad Anxiety

Tim Conway | illbehonest.com

Tim: Okay, well, I want to revisit; we looked at it two weeks ago. We began to think about this topic of anxiety. So, Luke 12. And this is just somewhat of a parallel to what we looked at 2 weeks ago just to start; just to kind of prime the pump. My Bible - now this isn't inspired - it is not inspired, but at Luke 12:22, I have a heading that says: "Do not be anxious." We're talking about anxiety. And we talked about anxiety attacks. Some, like between 20 and 30 million people have supposedly been diagnosed with some form of anxiety attacks, panic attacks. Like I said last time, perhaps that's the same thing as a nervous breakdown. Maybe that's just a bit of an older description of this. Anxiety.

The Bible has something to say about anxiety. It's not just the psychologists that say something about it. And verse 22, listen to what Jesus says. "Therefore, I tell you, do not be anxious about your life." Do not be anxious. That's what we're told in Scripture. No anxiety. Don't be anxious. And we can look down through here. Verse 25, "Which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life?" You can't. In other words, your anxiety doesn't fix things, it doesn't help things, it doesn't improve the situation. It doesn't do any good is basically the thing. Verse 26, "If then, you are not able to do as small a thing as that, why are you anxious about the rest?" In other words, you should not be. No anxiety. Verse 29, "Do not seek what you are to eat, what you are to drink, nor be worried." So you have it. Don't be anxious. Don't be worried. You keep reading a little further. Verse 32, "Fear not, little flock." So, don't fear. Don't be worried. Don't be anxious.

Here's one of the things that we have to recognize. The Gospel deals with anxiety. And so we should have that expectation. We should have the expectation that we know, we recognize, if you're not saved and you don't know the Lord, and you're in your sin and death is coming and you've got to face God on judgment day, there's all manner of things to be afraid of, to be worried about, to be anxious about. You have every reason to be fearful and anxious if you're approaching judgment day and you do not have your sins forgiven. You're in trouble. You're in trouble. You should be worried.

But the Christian, what Jesus is saying is look, My people don't have a reason to be anxious, to be worried, or to be fearful. They don't. The Gospel deals with that. And Jesus isn't just saying that well, if you've got anxiety attacks and you become a Christian, I will help you manage your anxiety. That's not it. Jesus comes along and He says, "Don't be anxious. Don't be worried. Don't fear. Fear not, little flock."

Why? I mean, you know the image that came to my mind today? Have you ever seen a parent when a child is traumatized? A child gets scared by something? I have this image in my mind. I remember when we were planting the church down in Stockdale, Texas. Caleb Mussulman was about that tall. He's already graduated from college and got himself a job as an engineer. But he

was just this little guy. We came out of the building and there was a house back behind there and they had a pit bull. And this pit bull reared up. We came out the door and he was there and I think his parents were over by their van. So there was a good distance between them. That pit bull raised up over there and it began to bark and it came running full speed. And it hit the end of its chain and it stopped it dead in its tracks. But Caleb was terrified. And I went, but it's like, he didn't want me. He wanted his dad. His dad was the place of safety.

And have you ever seen a father? They pick up a child like that and they say, "It's okay. It's okay." Well, isn't that the way a parent oftentimes tries to comfort the child? You know, they fall and they're crying, or they get scared or something. The parent puts their arms around them and says, "It's going to be okay." But you know the thing about that, they don't really know if it's going to be okay. Parents can't protect their children from everything. What they say is going to be okay, it may not be okay.

But you know when God lays His arms around His children and says it's going to be okay, it is going to be okay. And that's what we have. That's what the Gospel answers. It's going to be okay. If He tells you not to fear, why? It's because you don't have to fear. Listen, if He's forgiven your sins, what do you have to fear? If you have God on your side, and He's stronger than everything else - in fact, He's not just stronger, He is minutely in control. You don't have to fear. In fact, if Jesus says fear not, if He says do not be anxious and we are anxious, it's sin. And as we looked at last time, the real issue is we are questioning the character of God. That's really the issue. We're doubting God. When God wraps His arms around us and says, "you're Mine, and you're going to be okay, and you don't have to worry," if we go on worrying, what we're really doing, the big deal is that we're saying, "we don't trust You." "We don't believe You." And see, we have to walk by faith. Because you know, the thing is, you know how God puts His arms around us? Through words written in a book. Not by actual arms that we physically feel wrap around us.

What's my point? My point is when a child is laid hold of by a parent, there are physical arms, they feel the warmth, they feel the security, they feel the strength. You know where our strength, where our security has to be felt? Through words in a book. That's it. We walk by faith, not by sight. But you know what? Just because it's words and not physical arms, doesn't make it any less. In fact, it's all the more, because those everlasting arms, if God is with us, who can be against us? And when He says He's with us by word, it would be more like the parent yelling from far away to their little boy in words, "Don't worry. It's going to be okay." God is speaking to us from Heaven. He's speaking to us through an inspired book.

Now, what happened last time is - and I don't know if everybody really recognized or understood maybe what our sister Claudia had brought up. She asked a question - sister, how did you ask the question? (unintelligible) Say that again.

James: When does concern turn into anxiety?

Tim: Okay, when does concern turn into anxiety? How do you test it? And you know, I gave a little, perhaps a minute answer to that, which I think the things that were said were right, but as time went on, I thought more and more about that. And I thought, you know what, looking at good anxiety versus bad anxiety would be a worthwhile little study for tonight.

So, let's open our Bibles. Look at Philippians. We're just going to look at some of these. Philippians 4:6 Somebody want to read that if they find it? "Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God." Tim: Okay. Don't be anxious for anything. So, let me ask this question. Is there a place for any anxiety? If you're going to be honest to that text what's the answer? What's the obvious answer? No. But here's the thing, Scripture will often make dogmatic statements about something when the truth is that the word that's being used, like here "anxiety," don't be anxious about anything. There are words in Scripture that sometimes can be used in a negative connotation, and sometimes in either a neutral or a positive connotation. And what we have to do is recognize how the word is being used. There are places in our Bibles where anxiety is actually a good thing. But we have to understand it. We have to understand it in context. Because it's the same word. It's the exact same word. The exact same word can be used in a good way; it can be used in a negative way.

Can anybody think about any other word that's used in Scripture that can either be used in a bad way and a neutral way, or a bad way and a good way? Same word. World. Following the course of the world. Right there at the beginning of Ephesians 2. Obviously, dead in trespasses and sins, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air. "World" there is bad. Love not the world. But, the world can be that which God created. What's another word? Fear. Absolutely. There is a bad fear. Give me an example of a bad fear. Well, we could say, Luke 12. We just saw it. "Fear not, little flock." But then, I'm thinking of 2 Corinthians 7 where we're basically working out this self-cleansing; cleansing ourselves of every defilement of body and mind. Anybody know how? Yes, bringing holiness to completion in the fear of the Lord. That is a good one. Anybody think of any other words like that? Lust. That's another one. Typically, when it gets translated "lust" it has a negative connotation, but the word is "passion" or "desire" and it often can be a good one. Any other words? Hate? Hate can be good and hate can be bad. But that's got more to do with the object of the hatred, but yes, that could be in that category. Law? (unintelligible) Yeah, there can be different meanings to law. That's for sure. There are places like where Scripture would say that we're dead to the law. Well, what that means is whatever the law is there, it's good that we die to it. But then we're also living to another law, so yes, depending on how that word is used. Maybe flesh has various connotations to it. Flesh can definitely be an evil thing or a negative thing. Works. Yes, works. But anyway, you get the idea. Anxiety falls into that camp.

I want to give you four of what I think are the clearest New Testament examples - when I say New Testament, you have to remember there is an Old Testament Greek. It's the Septuagint. And we can find the word back there as well, but in the New Testament, the four most obvious uses. And it's the exact same word in the original. Exact same. One example would be found in

1 Corinthians 12:25. Let's look at that. Somebody read that when you get there. 1 Corinthians 12:25.

"That there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another."

Tim: That word "care," that is exactly the word from Philippians 4:6 for anxiety. Now the thing is, you do have to recognize this, it's the same word, but sometimes it's found in the noun forms; sometimes it's found in the adjective form as we look at these different examples. You have anxieties - that's the noun form. Or being anxious - that's the adjective. So, what we have here, read that again about care. Listen to this. This has to do with being in the same church together. "That there may be no divisions in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another." Tim: See, the members of this body have care. This body is not this universal body. You can't care for people that you don't know out in the middle of nowhere in China. I mean, you might be able to support a missionary that's going over there. But the obvious implication here of being a member of a body is it's the local body. You're living for each other. And the actual word is: you're being anxious for each other. That's the word. You're being anxious for each other.

I'll show you another similar usage in 2 Corinthians 11:28. Somebody can read that when they get there. 2 Corinthians 11:28.

"And apart from other things, there is the daily pressure on me of my anxiety for all the churches."

Tim: Right, there it is again. So you have members in the same body, or members in this body that are supposed to be anxious for each other. You have Paul who is admitting that above all the trials that he's dealing with, one of the greatest ones above and beyond them all is the fact that he carries around anxiety for the churches. What churches? Well, all the churches. He even would write to churches that he had never visited, never seen them face to face. And he would say to them he's praying for them all the time. He carried about a burden.

Let's see something similar. Go back to Philippians 2:20. I love this. This is one of the great descriptions - we often think about qualifications for ministry coming from the pastoral epistles. Well, there are qualifications that we can find in other places. The book of Acts chapter 20 is tremendous. 1 Peter has some great things to say about elders. But this, what words are spoken about Timothy! You want to talk about qualifications for the ministry. Somebody read Philippians 2:20.

"For I have no one like-minded who will sincerely care for your welfare."

Tim: That word "care" - again, same word that we have in Philippians 4:6 that says be anxious for nothing. Isn't this interesting? If you were listening to Paul speak in the original Greek, you

know what he says? He says to the church I don't have any man like him. He's anxious for you. And then he turns around and says to them be anxious for nothing. And he uses exactly the same word. Look, they're not going to misunderstand him. They recognize in one case it's used in a very positive way. In the other case, it's used in a negative way. Now keep reading. Who was reading that? Keep reading.

"For all seek their own, not the things which are of Christ Jesus."

Tim: Aye aye aye... You talk about convicting! When I read that, every time I read that, that is convicting. I'm blown away by that statement. Think about it. How many men did Paul work with over the years? You just think through the epistles. Who are the men that he names? Who are the men that he's sending in different directions? He worked for a time with Demas. We know Demas defected. But he worked with Tychicus. he worked with Onesimus. He worked with Epaphras. He worked with Apollos. He worked with Timothy. He worked with Silas. He worked with Barnabas. At least those guys. He worked with Luke. He worked with Mark. (incomplete thought) How about Epaphroditus? He worked with all these different guys. And yet, he's able to say, nobody has the anxiety for your soul. He doesn't mind his own things; he minds the things of Christ What a statement!

(from the room) I think of Mary and Martha. Martha actually told the Lord, "do You not care that my sister has left me to serve alone?" But then Christ says, "You're anxious and troubled about many things." (unintelligible)

Tim: Exactly, that's a bad anxiety. So right there, you care about the wrong things. That. That's at the heart of this. See, this is really where we want to make the distinction. How do we know? What are the tests? When can you look at yourself and say, wow, the anxiety that I'm feeling - because look, if you have the kind of anxiety that Jesus says you should not have and Paul says you should not have, you know those are imperatives. There are imperatives that are given that say - it's a commandment - don't be anxious. Which means if you are, it's sin. When you blatantly contradict something in your life that Scripture tells you not to do, that's sin. What is sin? Sin is transgression of the law. It's transgression of the commandments. It's transgression of the will of God. The will of God is what God sets forth in His Word. It's sin. So how do we distinguish between the two?

Before we move on, I want to give you one more example of the positive use of this and it's found in 1 Corinthians 7. 1 Corinthians 7:32-34, we have an interesting usage of the word anxiety several times. Somebody that gets there, you can go ahead and read 1 Corinthians 7:32-34.

"I want you to be free from anxieties. The unmarried man is anxious about the things of the Lord, how to please the Lord. But the married man is anxious about worldly things, how to please his wife."

Tim: Keep going.

"And the unmarried or betrothed woman is anxious about the things of the Lord."

Tim: Okay, stop. Now, look, isn't that convoluted in itself? Listen to what he says in v. 32. He doesn't want them anxious. And yet in v. 34, what does he say? That the unmarried woman is anxious about what? The things of the Lord. So when he says he doesn't want them anxious, is that what he's talking about? Well, no, if you look at the flow, it's obvious what he's talking about. He comes along and he says I don't want you anxious. But there's a context there. He's saying if you get married, you're going to be anxious about things of the world. If you don't get married, then you'll stay focused and be anxious only about the things of the Lord. But that's a positive use right there. Be anxious about the things of the Lord. That's a good thing. In fact, that's why he doesn't want people to marry. So any of you guys thinking about getting married... I still recommend marriage. But okay, we don't need to sidestep.

But here's the thing. There's good use. There's bad use. You obviously see that from Scripture. We looked at examples of both. But the question that is on the table is how do we know the difference? Obviously, Jesus tells His disciples don't be anxious. We saw that in Matthew 6. We looked at it today in Luke 12. We heard from it our brother Tony mentioned Martha. Jesus said, "Martha, you're anxious about all sorts of things." Good or bad? Obviously bad. Why? What's the comparison? Her sister. Her sister who is not full of these anxieties. She's seated at the feet of Christ. She's chosen the good part. It wouldn't be taken away from her.

So how can we distinguish? Because here's the thing. I'll tell you this. I have four children. Somebody has said, as a parent, you can only be as happy as your saddest child. There's something to that. Do you know with every child that you have a new set of anxieties? (incomplete thought) I went bike riding this afternoon, which I typically do right before this study with Craig. And I told Craig that we had a number of visiting families and we had some people that were looking at moving here. We rode for a little while, and Craig said something like, I don't know if that's a good thing. And I said, well, it's true. It's kind of like a parent having another child, adopting another child. With each family that comes to the church, typically it brings responsibilities. It brings anxieties. Often, it brings problems. And you know, if you think about it, okay, Paul comes along and he says, hey, I want you free from anxieties. I just want you to be anxious about the Lord. So don't get married, because if you get married, you know what? Then you've got concerns about a wife. And if you've got a wife, then you might have kids and you've got concerns about all those things. And you know what? You know what we could say? I just want to withdraw. I don't want to have a family. I want to keep my distance. You know, if you get too close to people, then all of a sudden, you care, and if you care, it hurts.

And there's burden. There's troubles. Can you imagine? There's that family that has 18 kids. I thought about that. Oh, 18 children... it's like 18 children just multiplies. I have four. It multiplies by over four-fold the things that you feel; the potentials for them to be in car accidents, or get

leukemia, or to marry a lost spouse, and the person divorces them, or have your grandchildren be stillborn. You could think that way.

And you know what? You know what the truth is? If I really don't want to have anxieties, the best thing is don't be married, don't have children, certainly, don't be a pastor. Don't be like Timothy. Don't be like Paul who's got all these anxieties over the churches. Don't be like Timothy who's got anxieties over the people at Philippi. Don't get close to anybody. In fact, withdraw. Go build a cabin out somewhere far away. Listen, I'm serious. If you do that, many of the anxieties - now, I know, you could all of a sudden have anxieties that a grizzly bear's going to come carry you off at night. But, what we don't want to do clearly is fall into that thinking. Let me tell you, a lot of people that struggle with anxiety attacks, you know what they end up doing in the midst of their anxieties? They end up withdrawing. They don't want to be around people. Why? It's too much. It's just too much. It's overwhelming anxiety. But here's the thing, we need to recognize that there's good anxiety and there's bad anxiety. The reality is to love more people, it's like the body in 1 Corinthians 12. You be a member of this body. You know what it says there? We weep with those who weep. You know if you weep with those who weep, like if it's really true, you can only be as happy as your saddest child, the truth is if that's what God wants from us - we're to weep with those who weep, then you know what, loving people brings certain sorrows. You know what the problem is if you love people? It opens you up to pain. And it opens you up to worry very possibly. Because if you love somebody, you're concerned about them. And what we certainly don't want to do as we try to steer people away from the negative anxieties, we want to at the same time encourage that they embrace the good anxieties.

So how can you tell the difference? How can you tell Paul who says, look, above all the things - somebody look at that text in 2 Corinthians. That text was found in 2 Corinthians 11. And the text specifically was in v. 28. Maybe I'll read that one. 2 Corinthians 11. Listen to this. (incomplete thought) What Paul's doing here is he's comparing himself to these false apostles. V. 22, "Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they offspring of Abraham? So am I. Are they servants of Christ? I'm a better one." Now he's not speaking pridefully here. He was a true apostle. They were false apostles. And he says it right away. I'm talking like a madman. He knew this sounds arrogant, and he says I'm talking like a madman here. But I've been in far greater labors. I've suffered much more for Christ than any of them because I'm preaching a message that gets persecuted. Unlike those guys. They're ear ticklers. They're man pleasers.

Anyway, look what he says. "Far greater labors, far more imprisonments." Some of us have perhaps been in jail. He was in jail for Christ's sake. But not just that. Countless beatings. If we had one person in our midst who had been beaten just once for the name of Christ, we would so highly esteem that person. Any of you... (incomplete thought). Kevin - he got punched right? (incomplete thought) Suffering for Christ's sake. I mean, people that are willing to do that. I love that. But he was beaten - he didn't even know the number of times he was beaten. He was often near death. Like he says at times, they feared for their lives. "Five times I received at the hands of the Jews 40 lashes less one." The most you could give under Mosaic Law: 40. So they

always did 39 lest they should accidentally go over. Can you imagine? I've got a rod right there behind Wendy. Can somebody imagine if I took that rod and I beat you with it 39 times? As hard as I could? This is what he went through. "Once I was stoned and left for dead." We know about that account. "Three times I was shipwrecked. A night and a day I was adrift at sea. Frequent journeys and dangers from rivers, danger from robbers, danger from my own people, danger from the Gentiles, danger in the city, danger in the wilderness, danger at sea, danger from false brothers, in toil, hardship, many sleepless nights, hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure and apart from other things, there is the daily pressure on me of my anxieties for all the churches." It's like he gets done, and it's like you want to know what really is a burden to me? Not all those things. Daily I carry around this burden for the churches. We want that. We want that kind of love. That is a good anxiety. We should pursue that.

But okay, how do we know the difference? How do we know when we feel panicked, or we feel cares, we feel burdens, we feel anxiety, we feel cares? What's a good mark that the thing is good or bad? Here's some things. You guys can be thinking if I don't hit on one that you think of, I'll give you the opportunity after I throw these out.

Number one, here's a question that you need to ask. What are you concerned about? See, that's a good thing to ask. Because I can tell you this, every time in Scripture that it's a good anxiety, it's being anxious for people or the 1 Corinthians 7, it's being anxious for the Lord. Versus the bad anxieties which would be being anxious for money or for clothing or for food or for drink or for the physical things. You know what Paul said when it came to financial things? When it came to wealth? When it came to provision in this world? He said God has taught me both how to be abased and how to abound. In other words, I don't freak out either way. He's taught me how to go through both resting on Him and trusting in Him. He says this to the Philippians. He's going to supply our every need according to His riches in glory through Christ. It's going to happen. He's taught us.

But think about what you're anxious about. It doesn't mean that a bad anxiety can't be attached to people. But it's just a point well worth making that when Paul was anxious for the churches, it was people. When Timothy was anxious for the Philippians, it was people. When you think about these examples and then the 1 Corinthians 7, where the person that marries, he's anxious for the things of his wife versus the girl that stays single - she's anxious for the things of the Lord. That's the first thing to think about. What are we anxious about? Is it people and is it the Lord who are driving our concerns? Or is it stuff? Is it the fear of whether God's going to provide for us? Is it the fear of whether we're going to get something that we think we want? Even if that's a spouse. Just panicking because you're not sure about tomorrow. You're just worried all the time. How am I going to make it? How am I going to take care of my family? How is this going to happen? So that's the first thing.

The second thing is this. Look at Matthew 13:22. This is the well known parable of the four soils. The third soil type is found in Matthew 13:22. The explanation, the interpretation. Somebody want to read that? "As for what was sown among the thorns, this is the one who hears the Word

and the cares of the world..." Tim: Right there. The cares of the world? That's the anxieties of the world. Keep going. "...and the deceitfulness of riches choke the Word and proves unfruitful." Tim: It chokes the Word and it proves unfruitful. Cares of the world lead to no fruitfulness. In fact, if you compare this to the other Gospels, what happens is it chokes, it keeps the fruit from coming to fruition.

Or, look at this text. Luke 21:34. Somebody read that when you get there.

"But watch yourselves, lest your hearts be weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness and cares of this life and that day come upon you suddenly like a trap."

Tim: There it is. Cares of this life. Cares of this life. You get weighed down by them. And what does it say there in Matthew 13? It said that there's a choking. These cares choke. And what happens? There's not fruit. And so the thing that we need to ask is this: Does your anxiety produce fruit or does it choke it? Because think about this. If a person is having anxiety attacks, and they can't even get themselves to get out of their bed or out of their home on a Sunday to come to the service, to use their spiritual gifts to strengthen other people, to encourage other people, to get there to stir up one another to love and good works and not forsake the assembling together, to get there and hear about what's happening in other people's lives, to bear one another's burdens, to rejoice with those who rejoice, to weep with those who weep - if you're not able, do you know what that anxiety is doing? It's choking fruit. Whereas Paul, thinking about the churches all the time, his care for the churches, that didn't produce a choking. That didn't produce a fruitlessness. That didn't produce in Paul a desire to fly away and build a cabin out in the woods.

You know what it did? Listen to him speak to every single church. He says I am constantly remembering you in prayer. That's fruit. His anxiety caused him to take those churches before the throne of grace over and over and over again. It caused him to go to those churches, to risk his life. Do you remember what he said to the church at Rome? He says, oh, I have longed to come to you that I might have some fruit among you. He wanted to come and preach the Gospel. He wanted his faith and their faith to mutually edify each other. Listen to how he talked to the church at Corinth. He talked about coming, and what did he want to do? He didn't want to come and have to use the rod. But he would if he had to. Why? Because he would come to set things in order. What did Paul send Titus to the churches in Crete to do? Good things. Fruitful things. When Paul and Barnabas went through the churches in Acts 14, do you know what they were doing? They were encouraging the brethren and appointing elders. But good things. They were risking their life. They were risking imprisonment. They were risking beatings. Why? Listen, when Paul said that he could just as well die as live, what did he say? What did he say? I desire to depart and be with Christ, but what?

James: To remain in the flesh is far more necessary...

Tim: For their sakes. See, kill me. Chop my head off, Nero. And I get to go to glory. But you know what? You know what's more needful? Not that I fly away, build a cabin outside of Frisco, Colorado. He says it's more necessary that I stay. Why? Because the people of God needed him. See, this is what I would ask you. Whatever anxieties you have in your life, is it leading to fruit? Because what we see is that the anxieties of this world choke the Word and there's no good fruit. It doesn't come to fruition. Versus the kind of care that Timothy had. Listen, the kind of care that was there in 1 Corinthians 12. You've got this body - this body full of these members. And these members, they have anxiety for each other. And so what do they do? They weep with each other. They rejoice with each other. And of course, that chapter is speaking about spiritual gifts. They're using their spiritual gifts to build up one another.

You see, that's what you have to think. Is your anxiety causing you to pray for those people? Is it for people? Is it for the Lord? And is it causing you to pursue fruit? Are you anxious for the Lord? If you cross reference what it says about the young man who doesn't marry, and the young lady who doesn't marry, the young man, it talks about being freed up so he can pursue righteousness and holiness. With the young lady, so she can be anxious about the things of the Lord. That's an interesting parallel. What does it mean to be anxious for the things of the Lord? It means you're set on a course of holiness. You're set on a course of righteousness.

(from the room) Early on, you were talking about being anxious for people and for the Lord. That text of Mary and Martha, it seems to attach bad anxiety with being distracted. So Martha was distracted with much serving whereas Mary, it says the Lord says, one thing was necessary, and so she chose it, right? And she wasn't distracted by the cares of this world. They didn't choke out the Word. She was focused on the Lord specifically.

Tim: I want you to think here. You have one sister sitting at the feet of Christ as He teaches. You have another sister in the kitchen making food for Jesus. Now I want you to really think about that. We can fool ourselves. And I think Martha did. Martha believed: what I'm doing, I'm serving the Lord, and my sister is lazy. And I need help. And I think when she appealed to the Lord, she fully expected the Lord to say, Mary, get up off your rear and go help your sister. Because think if you're Martha. Wasn't it Mary who brought out the alabaster box and she poured it on Christ? Think about serving the Lord. Serving the Lord. It sounds good. That's a biblical thing. Here's the amazing thing. You can get to where you're even anxious about serving the Lord, and it's a bad anxiety. Because it's an anxiety that is the fruit of not choosing the better part. It's an anxiety that isn't focused on the right things. You see, Mary was focused on Christ. And she sat there at His feet and heard Him teach. And this is subtle. Because if you asked, well, wait, isn't there good fruit in making a meal for Jesus? Yeah, perhaps, but here's the thing. When we think about what we're being anxious about, I didn't put that in here, but that is a good thing to ask yourself. Is my anxiety - even though it may seem good, it may seem biblical, it may seem right and righteous, but is my anxiety causing me to miss the best parts of Christianity? Christ Himself. Are my anxieties distracting me? Because that's what she was. You're distracted. You're anxious and you're distracted about many things. Distracted from what? She's chosen the good

part. That's a good question to ask. Is my anxiety in any way drawing me away from Christ, even if it's serving Him?

Because I find this, if I have a healthy anxiety for you as a pastor, it takes me to Christ. It takes me to Him. It takes me to Him to plead for you to Him. It makes me think, honestly, I recognize, what I'm preaching on right now in the church, that you really focusing on the love of Christ is the most healthy thing. I recognize you beholding the glory of the Lord is at the heart. So we need to ask ourselves that. Do our anxieties cause us to choose Christ and focus on Christ? That's a good sign that that's a healthy anxiety. Or does it, even if it's serving Him in a certain respect, does it cause us to be distracted from Him? Good thought there.

Number 3 and closely associated to this, how do my anxieties affect my prayer life? Because remember - James probably can quote it - Philippians 4:6,

"Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything with prayer and supplication with thanksgiving..."

Tim: Did you hear that? Prayer and supplication. You are supposed to make your requests known to God. Here's the thing. Be not anxious, but rather, what are you supposed to be doing? It's like Paul sets these things against each other. Anxiety over against taking these things to the Lord. I would ask you this. A good indication as to whether your cares, your concerns, your anxieties, whether they're good or bad is do they tend to take you to the Lord in prayer? Or do they traumatize you? Do they cause you to neglect the Lord? Do they cause you to ignore the Lord? Do they cause you to be distracted from the Lord? What does it do for your prayer life? Because you know what? That parent who says I have all these children and I'm anxious for them, well, when you say you're anxious for them, does that mean, like Paul being anxious for the churches, that you're taking your children before the throne of grace all the time and pleading, pleading on their behalf? Like Job did. Bringing that sacrifice. Bringing that offering to God, in case your children sin. You're pleading for their souls. Does it bring you there? Or is it the kind of thing where no, it doesn't. You just worry, worry, worry, worry and going to God doesn't help, and so you don't go there. You tend to neglect that. Now that's a big indicator that your anxieties are basically coming from idolatry. You've made too much of a god out of the thing that you're anxious about, whether that be your children or whatever. But examine the prayer life.

I put here "good anxiety suffers." We already kind of talked about that. But obviously, if being anxious for one another means that we weep for one another, it means if our brothers or sisters are hurting, we seek to enter in. We don't seek to be distant. And I guess that's one of the things that we need to ask ourselves. Are we pursuing those kinds of anxieties? Are we seeking to feel for what other people feel? Are we seeking to enter in to bear one another's burdens in that sense? Because true anxiety - the good anxiety - is willing to feel pain, obviously, from that 1 Corinthians 12 passage. It's willing to feel pain. It's willing to hurt with others.

(from the room) Proverbs 12:25 says, "Anxiety in a man's heart weighs him down, but a good word makes him glad." (unintelligible)

Tim: Well, let's talk about that. I'll just shoot right to that one. Read that proverb again.

"Anxiety in a man's heart weighs him down..."

Tim: What proverb was that?

(from the room) Proverbs 12:25

Tim: But listen to that. Here's one of the questions I want to ask. What did Peter say about anxieties? Cast them on the Lord. Can anybody quote it? I Peter 5:7. (unintelligible) "Casting all your cares upon Him, for He careth for you." (KJV) But think about that - casting. You know, that comes from a psalm. It comes from - somebody find this, Psalm 54:23. Somebody look that up. Tony, throw me a water. (unintelligible) Psalm 54:23. (unintelligible)

James: It's Psalm 55:22

Tim: Is it? Both my numbers were off by one? Okay, go ahead and read it.

James: Cast your burden on the Lord?

Tim: How was I off that much? That's really bizarre. Anyway, but listen, I want you to get this, because this is a big one. And this is helpful. Peter basically says "cast all your cares." Cast your anxieties. In the Septuagint, the word anxiety is used right here as well. And this is really where Peter gets this from. If you look at the word in the English in our ESV and probably in most of the translations, it's "burden." Cast your burden. Okay, think about the proverb. Anxiety does what? It weighs us down. Cast your burden. A burden is heavy.

Let me give you another one. Somebody look at 2 Corinthians 11:28 and read it. This is of course Paul talking about the churches. Can somebody read that one?

"And apart from other things, there is the daily pressure on me of my anxieties..."

Tim: Right there. The daily pressure of the anxiety. Let me give you one more. Somebody read Luke 21:34 again. Because there is a recurring theme. There is a pressure. Proverbs says anxiety weighs. 2 Corinthians 11:28, there's a pressure. Psalm 55, there is a burden. Now listen to what Luke 21:34 says. Somebody read it.

"But watch yourselves, lest your hearts be weighed down..."

Tim: Your hearts what? Weighed down. This is a big one. What I would ask you is this. When you take your anxieties to the Lord, are you lightened? See, I think you have a good feel, and look, this isn't make-believe. When a true Christian goes out before the Lord and prays and their heart is full of all manner of cares and burdens and anxieties, and you take those and you cast them on the Lord, if I have a burden on my back; if I'm carrying a couple 40 pound bags or 80 pound bags of concrete, and I cast those on somebody else, I feel it. I'm lightened. The thing that all these verses said is a recurring theme.

I kept looking at this Greek word in the adjective form and in the noun form and I just kept going through them all today and just looking at them and looking at them. And it jumped out at me - this idea of pressure, this idea of weight, this idea of these things being a burden. They weigh the heart down. I know this, if you're told to cast all your anxieties upon the Lord because He cares for you - I know this, that if you actually cast a burden on Him, it's no longer on you.

And I know this. I know the reality of having such heavy cares. Throughout my life, there have been times I have such cares about my children or such cares about the church - individuals in the church - and you go and pray, and it's just like, yes, I can go forward now because I've unloaded that. I still feel the anxiety; I still have a concern, but the Lord had promised. He's promised to help. He's promised to be One Who answers prayer. He's promised to do all manner of things. And I know He cares. And I know He's working everything for good for His people. And I know that He loves this church far more than I do. (incomplete thought) And this is one of the things you want to ask.

Because I'll guarantee you this, if you try to pray, you attempt to pray, you're full of these anxieties, you're having panic attacks and whatever other thing, and you seek to go to the Lord, and it doesn't help and it doesn't do anything, you don't feel light; you don't feel helped; you don't feel that weight, that pressure lifted, then I would say there's something wrong. Because casting those burdens on Him should be a reality. And if we're carrying anxieties, we should be able to unload them there. And if that's not happening; if you're not feeling that freedom and that lightening and that weight and that pressure being relieved, then you're not really casting your cares on Him. So that's key. I think that's so key to examining your prayer life there. (incomplete thought) It's because the Septuagint doesn't use the same Greek word there. That's why I didn't find that proverb, but that's very helpful because it's basically saying the same thing. (unintelligible) Lifting up your heart. That's what happens when you feel the weight come off. And I can tell you, see, I like to pray out in these fields over here, but I can tell you, there's been times I've gone out that door heavy, and I've come back in that door a lighter man. Now sometimes may not as light as I would like to have been lightened, but definitely many times much lighter. (unintelligible) I would not put a weight to it.

How about this? I put this one: Can we rejoice, sleep, play? What I was thinking about here is again, this weighed down thing, but think about it. Here's Paul with all these anxieties. And yet, when he was in Philippi and he got thrown in jail, what did he and Silas do? They sang. What did Paul say to the Philippian church when he told them they need to be not anxious? Take

everything to God in prayer - what did he say to them? Just right in those verses? In Philippians 4. Rejoice in the Lord. And again, I say, rejoice. Sleep. (incomplete thought) Think about it. Herod just puts James to death. And then he sees it pleases the Jews, so what does he do? He goes out and captures Peter. Have you ever thought about Peter when he was there in jail and the angel came? Do you know what the angel did? Did he find Peter wide awake, fretting that he was going to die tomorrow, wringing his hands? Anybody remember what he did? He kicked him. He kicked him. He was sound asleep. You ever think about that? Here's Peter in prison. He knows full well his close friend, used to be partner in business - in the fishing business back there on the Sea of Galilee - is dead. One of the close comrades! One of the Twelve! He's the first one and he's dead. They're just barely into the book of Acts! And now he's been caught. He's been caught. He's in prison. Well, Herod did it to James. And Peter's sound asleep. So I would ask you this, can you take your anxieties to the Lord and put those on Him?

What was the guy's name? Maybe it will come to me as I'm telling the story. Anybody remember the evangelist who was evangelizing people after the Titanic went down? I can't think of it right off. Yeah, there was one that drowned. But there was another guy. There was a guy who was in the water in the North Atlantic. It's in the dark. And he found a board, and he was holding on to it. And he was able to get his body on top of the board. And he said, "Lord, there's no sense both of us staying awake. So I think I'm going to go to sleep." And he slept on that board. And this guy was rescued. There was a guy that was the last convert of... maybe his name was Brown. But he went to sleep.

I remember one of these last times that maybe two or three years back, Ryan Fullerton was at the Denton conference with us, and we were talking just about trials that we'd gone through in the church. And Ryan said - I think I was telling him about the number of things that we were dealing with at a certain time. And he said, yeah, he said, isn't it amazing? He said I was saying this to our elders the other day. He was telling his elders, we can be dealing with five major problems in the church. He said, any one of which when we were young pastors would have just traumatized us. He says now we can experience five problems of that magnitude and still go home and play with our children. This is what I'm talking about when I'm talking about: can we rejoice? Can we sleep? Can we play? You see, can you take your anxieties - people that are suffering panic attacks and they just want to curl up in a fetal position, that's not what we're talking about here. We're talking about taking your fears, taking your cares, and being able to cast them on the Lord to the place where you can actually play with your children, and you can actually sleep soundly, and you can actually rejoice in the Lord. You can go to church and you can sing the songs and you can be lifted up to glory. Yes, there's still burdens there. But you're able to unload them. This is critical.

Maybe one more. Did you notice in the parable of the soils, it actually says - yes, the fruit doesn't mature, but did you see what's actually choked? It chokes the Word. So here's the thing that I would ask you. If you have anxieties, if you have cares, you want to know if they're good or bad? Do those anxieties choke the Word? What does that mean? This is the Word. You know what, you're living with healthy anxieties if you really care, you're concerned about your

holiness. You hate the sin in your life. You hate falls. You hate coming short of Christlikeness. You've got concerns. You think about it. There's anxieties. You have anxieties about people because you love people. You care about people. You want to see people make it. You don't want to see people perish. You have people in your life that you've invested in. You want to see them succeed. You want to see them please the Lord. You're invested in that. Here's the thing, do your cares choke what's in here? Or do they fuel what's in here? You see, the bad cares choke the Word. If your big concern all the time is, "oh no, I need a better car." "Oh no, what about the TV?" (incomplete thought) Yes, my air conditioning was out last week, but if that's all your living about - the cares of the world. Where you're so caught up with the air conditioning, and the car, and you're caught up with money, and you're caught up with retirement, and you're caught up with your shoes, and you're caught up with what the Smith's have next door, and you're caught up with your lawn, and you're caught up with the garden, and you're caught up with the trees, and you're caught up with your stuff and your hobbies, and you're just so consumed. Or even if you're caught up with people, you're caught up with your kids, you're caught up with what you're going to eat for the next meal. You're just so caught up with these things that you know what? You don't really live for other people.

Think about the Word. I was hungry and you fed Me. But you're so concerned about your own bank account and your own shirts that you wear and your own belt and your own purse and your own everything. The cares of this world. Oh no, what am I going to do for college? What am I going to do for a job? And you're so caught up in your stuff that you never have time to love somebody else. You don't have time to invest in other people. You know, if you're really anxious about somebody - James was just telling me about somebody he and his wife have chosen to care for in another place. If you choose to invest in people's lives, you're thinking about their needs. You're thinking about how to give to them. You're thinking about how I can help. You see, that's what judgment day - Jesus says as much as you did it unto one of the least of these. What did they do? You don't visit people in prison unless you're thinking about those. I mean, I don't know, how many of you think about Johannes on a regular basis? I know he's not there because he's preaching Christ, but he professes to be a Christian. You know, if you think, you feel sighs... if you feel warm, fuzzy feelings, but you never meet people's needs, that's no different than you can watch a movie that's a sad story, and weep tears. You know what that is? That's just sentimentality. There's no love in that. That isn't the kind of anxiety. Look, bad anxieties choke the Word. Good anxieties do the Word. In fact, good anxieties fuel the commandments of Scripture. When you care about people and it produces anxieties, like Timothy cared about the Philippians, Paul cared about the churches. You know what that does? That fuels the Scriptures. It causes us to all the more embrace them and not be hearers only, deceiving your own selves, but to be doers. Oh, I guarantee, true and undefiled religion before the Lord is to visit the widow and the orphan in their afflictions. We have people - their Christian life is just trying not to sin. They're just trying to survive, not falling into drugs, not falling into alcohol, not falling back into prostitution, not falling into pornography. They're just trying to survive.

Look, if your anxieties stop there, that's not good. The good anxieties in Scripture is when you care about people and it produces fruit and it doesn't choke the Word. It's consistent with keeping the Word. You care. You care and you invest your life. You care and you share the Gospel. You care and you give. Good anxiety is an outflow of love and love gives. And people who give, people who are anxious - why would somebody be anxious? When Paul says he's got this anxiety for the churches, you know what it means? He's thinking about them all the time. You know, we're thinking about new elders. I'll tell you, that's what you want. You want men who are going to be anxious about you. That's a good thing. I mean, if you find out, wow, don't you want somebody like Timothy? He doesn't mind his own things; He minds the things of Christ, and I have no one else like him, and he's anxious. Wouldn't you like to be able to say that about all the elders at our church? That we're anxious for every single one of you? God give us more of that anxiety. There is a good anxiety in Scripture. Something desperately to be sought. We want that anxiety. As parents, we want it. As elders, we want it. As Christians, we want it. Anybody want to add anything to that?

(from the room) Could it be said that bad anxiety tends to be more selfish and good anxiety tends to be more selfless?

Tim: Yes, definitely. The good anxiety is definitely a love-motivated thing where it seems like the bad anxieties turn away from Christ, they turn away from the Lord, they turn away from others and they bring the focus to us, even if it's idolatry. There's lots of people that get really anxious over family members. They're just afraid. They can't trust the Lord. They're afraid something's going to happen to my family member. Somebody's going to kill my child. Somebody's going to rape my child. There are people that just can't trust the Lord with those things. There, the thing has stopped being love because it doesn't trust the Lord. Anything that doesn't trust the Lord is not good no matter what kind of spin you're putting on it because if you're not trusting the Lord, and you're just freaking out in a frenzy over - oh, I just can't trust the Lord with this and so I'm worried all the time. Well, that's bad because you're not trusting the Lord. You're not seeing the Lord for Who He is. You're not casting your care on Him. It may seem like it's love, but what it really is is idolatry. You've made a god out of those children. And you're not willing to trust the true God to take care of them.