

## Facing Giants: The Giants of Anxiety and Depression, 6/6/21

Thank Pastor Bill. Bring to a close- Giants of Anxiety and Depression, now I want to frame the scope of this sermon by differentiating it from my message on Mental Illness. While certainly related- today we will be using the terms anxiety and depression in less of a clinical way and more in the way that is part of the common human experience of worry and sadness- which may be mild and for a season, or might be more severe with longer seasons. For you it may be clinical, or brought on by a difficult circumstance you are in- either way I believe this message will be helpful for you.

If I asked you to raise your hands if you have experienced some anxiety or depression, my guess is that almost every hand would go up...some of you would need to put two hands up. David Powlison, talking of the common experience living in a broken world like ours says, "The amazing thing is that somehow not EVERYONE in the world is in a constant panic and deep despair. If, as is true, everything you love and everything you accomplish, everything you aspire to, will perish for sure, you ought to be anxious and depressed." Well that's uplifting. But it's true isn't it? We don't even have to get existential, we can just take an honest look and assessment of the world, especially after the kind of year we had- it could make anyone anxious and depressed. But Powlison doesn't leave us there because it's only half the story and it's not the good half. "The good news is that gospel enters into that reality like a key fitting perfectly into the lock."<sup>1</sup> And that really speaks to what we have attempted to do throughout this series. Get honest about the ugly reality of these giants in our lives and but also cast our eyes to the true source of help and hope in the Gospel of Jesus.

So here is where we are going to go today: **Definitions, Myth-Busting, Comfort in Christ**

### Definitions:

**Anxiety: a feeling of worry, nervousness, or unease, typically about an imminent event or something with an uncertain outcome.**<sup>2</sup>

Often accompanied by restlessness, trouble sleeping, irritability, difficulty concentrating. Range from mild to severe, some that may be aided by medical treatment. The **primary root of anxiety is fear**- unknown outcomes, losing something, lack of control, what others think.

**Depression: "A feeling of sadness, despondency or loss of interest."**<sup>3</sup> Often accompanied by loss of pleasure, change in appetite, fatigue, increased sleepiness. The **primary root of depression is hopelessness**- something lost, inability to overcome past, the future or a situation.

The truth is **that anxiety and depression are eating us for lunch**. Clinically- Anxiety affects 1 in 5 adults in the United States every year.<sup>4</sup> And one in six people will experience clinical depression

<sup>1</sup>David Powlison Talk from Bethel Seminary, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6Dnn9ePIIpM>

<sup>2</sup> Oxford Languages definition.

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.psychiatry.org/patients-families/depression/what-is-depression>

<sup>4</sup> <https://adaa.org/understanding-anxiety/facts-statistics>

at some time in their life, and that doesn't account for the non-clinical, run of the mill experiences. During the Pandemic I've seen from multiple sources that anxiety and depression has tripled and mental health practitioners I'm connected to have been overwhelmed by the volume of patients.<sup>5</sup> Our teens and young adults are experiencing exponentially more anxiety and depression than any other generation...it seems to be far more contagious than COVID.

### **Myth-Busting**

#### **Myth #1 Christian are exempt from anxiety and depression.**

Truth: It is part of the experience living in a broken world. It reveals that we have emotions, weakness and a profound need for God. We are in good company.

Sons of Korah: Psalm 88: V.3 *I am overwhelmed with troubles and my life draws near to death.*  
v.6 *You have put me in the lowest pit, in the darkest depths.*  
v.18 *You have taken from me friend and neighbor—darkness is my closest friend.*

David: Psalm 40:12 *For troubles without number surround me; my sins have overtaken me, and I cannot see. They are more than the hairs of my head, and my heart fails within me.*

Hannah: 1 Samuel 1 experiences depression, weeping and couldn't eat for many days, carrying the pain of infertility.

Paul: 2 Corinthians 1:8-9 *We were under great pressure, far beyond our ability to endure, so that we despaired of life itself. Indeed, we felt we had received the sentence of death.*

2 Corinthians 11:28 *And apart from other things there is the daily pressure upon me of my anxiety for all the churches.*

Jesus: Isaiah 53 Described as a man of sorrows, acquainted with Grief.

Garden of Gethsemane- Matthew 26, overwhelmed, sorrowful, troubled, sweating drops of blood, extreme panic attack.

Christianity is realistic. You can do everything right and still have periods of darkness. The very presence of these texts in Scripture tell you God understands and cares. God knows how men speak when they are desperate.<sup>6</sup> Share of my own experience with a panic attack.

#### **Myth #2 Anxiety and Depression should be avoided at all costs.**

Truth: Face your anxiety and depression because there is purpose in it. Now I don't want to retread the ground I've already been down in The Giant of Unfulfilled Longings. So I will keep it brief. Our society has a tendency to avoid our emotions. If you feel sad- self-medicate, go on a vacation, drown yourself in work. Whatever you need to do to avoid the feelings. But what

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.kff.org/coronavirus-covid-19/issue-brief/the-implications-of-covid-19-for-mental-health-and-substance-use/>

<sup>6</sup> Derek Kidner quote, unknown location.

Scripture teaches us in Job, Psalms, the example of Paul is that dark times are a great teacher, are the best place to become a person of greatness and experience next level growth. My example from panic attack.

### **Myth #3 I will always feel like this.**

Truth: There is a season for everything. Dark times come in waves, you may have periods of intensity and other times of peace, there is light at the end of the tunnel. *Psalm 30:5 Weeping may endure for the night, but joy comes in the morning.*

### **Jesus Carries our burdens that create Anxiety and Depression**

#### **Jesus will carry your existential burdens that create anxiety and depression.**

Every human being needs to answer 4 existential questions: Who am I? Why am I here? Who cares about me? What will happen when I die? A great deal of our anxiety and depression comes from wrestling with these questions. And this was true in Jesus' day.

In Matthew 11 that we saw on the screen- Jesus talks about a Yoke. A Yoke- is a harness[Picture]- it was placed on the oxen for order, purpose and ownership. Jesus was using this illustration to say everyone has a yoke- everyone looks to something to give them order, purpose, feeling owned by someone to answer these existential questions. And Jesus contrasts his yoke with the yoke of the religious teachers of the day. The religious leaders' yoke was religious performance. "Who you are is how you perform morally." This was the burden that the people were carrying- now wonder they were anxious and depressed...How can I possibly live up to all these moral expectations. Some of you are carrying that yoke- You believe that who you are is defined by your performance in one way or another. How you perform as a husband or wife, parent. Parent's expectations of you, or how you achieve in sports, school, what kind of job you have, your society media performance. And you feel the yoke around your shoulders and experience that anxiety and depression.

There is another yoke- the yoke of secular humanism today: Self-actualization "Who you are is how you feel." It starts with a premise, there is no God, no moral absolutes. We are an accidental collection of space goop. We cease to exist after we die. So you define your own life. Just live your life based on whatever you feel inside. You are left to answer these existential questions yourself. If I'm supposed to just look inside to find all these answers? Oh God help us all...we aren't going to find it. Anxiety and Depression...

But what Jesus is doing here is in Matthew 11 is offering a third yoke- A third way to find order, purpose and ownership. What does Jesus say- Matthew 11:28-30

*<sup>28</sup> Then Jesus said, "Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest.*

*<sup>29</sup> Take my yoke upon you. Let me teach you, because I am humble and gentle at heart, and you will find rest for your souls.*

*<sup>30</sup> For my yoke is easy to bear, and the burden I give you is light."*

The Yoke of Jesus is his life- "Who you are is defined by your relationship with me." We are defined by Jesus' performance- lived perfect, died substitute, carried our burdens for us to the cross. In other words, Jesus is saying his yoke is a non-yoke. His burden is a non-burden. There is real rest from the existential anxiety and depression because Jesus answers all 4 existential questions. Who am I? Defined by my creator and redeemer who made me in his image. Who cares about me? You are loved by the only one whose opinion ultimately matters. Why am I here? To make God's glory shine through who he uniquely created you and the plans he has for you. What will happen to me when I die? You will experience the truest and deepest love and fulfillment forever and ever with the creator and lover of your soul. Like Woody in Toy Story- we all need our owner to stamp His name on our soul to know who we are.

Jesus will carry your circumstantial burdens that create anxiety and depression. We are dealing with grief? A struggle with parenting? Finances? A destructive habit? A health issue? Fear? Jesus will carry it with you and for you.

Hebrews 4:15-16

*<sup>15</sup> For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.*

*<sup>16</sup> Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.*

Some of us have a "waving relationship" with Jesus. Do you know what I mean by that? Like the Truman Show- Good morning! And if I don't see you, afternoon, good evening and goodnight." I have neighbors like that. I know maybe their names, some family members, maybe what they do for a living but that's about it. Now imagine the next time you see your neighbor you ask for money and a place to stay and maybe their left kidney. How would you even go about doing that? Jesus wants a relationship with us- he knocks on the door and wants to get to know us. But many of us have a waving relationship with him. Sure we know some things about him. We greet him in a prayer at dinner, we sing some songs about him on Sunday. But we haven't met him in the depths of our souls, where he truly lives and can be found.

Prayer and reflection:

What Giants am I facing right now?

What myths am I tempted to believe?

What truth is Jesus whispering?

What burdens do I need to cast onto Jesus right now?

Prayer Response, connection card. Communion

Resources: Tuesday Conversation on Anxiety and Depression with Barbara Shafer  
Stephen Ministry