

Anxiety

ANATOMY AND CURE



ROBERT W. KELLEMAN

The GOSPEL for REAL LIFE series

Most of us already know that anxiety includes trust issues in our relationship with Christ, but that often doesn't stop us from being anxious. Dr. Bob Kellemen gives the biblical anatomy of this basic truth with a concise but substantial consideration of how Christ stimulates trust from those he loves and what effect this trust has on the emotional life of a Christian.

—**Jeremy Pierre**, Assistant Professor of Biblical Counseling,
Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

So many trembling souls will thank God for the peace they will experience through reading this incredibly helpful booklet. I can't believe how good this is. I learned a ton about myself, about my Bible, about my God, and about how to help others. I feel calmer already!

—**David P. Murray**, Professor of Old Testament and Practical Theology, Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary

With trademark readability and applicability, Dr. Kellemen has given the church a robust and relational biblical resource to use in aiding anxious, fearful, and worried people through victory *in the midst of anxiety*. I look forward to using this focused booklet in my counseling ministry!

—**Jonathan Holmes**, Counseling Pastor, Parkside Church

Who doesn't experience fear and anxiety? I know I do. This booklet has put in one place key biblical principles for addressing these common human issues biblically, realistically, practically, and compassionately. I especially appreciated that the counsel given dealt both with the details of key passages of Scripture and with the theological big picture of who our Lord is in relationship to us and who we are to him. Sprinkled throughout are questions and assignments to challenge your thinking and your soul. It was helpful for me both as a

counselor and as one who needs to apply these truths myself. I know it will help you too.

—**Ernie Baker**, Professor of Biblical Counseling, The Master's College; NANC-certified Counselor

Dr. Bob Kellemen counseled my heart and renewed my mind in significant ways in this helpful, biblical look at the common struggle with anxiety. I will never view or war against my self-focused fear the same way again. Bob teaches us how to deal honestly with our emotions while calling us to a lifestyle of daily surrendering them to the mind of Christ. I recommend this biblical resource for all who struggle with fear as well as those who want to help others find victory in the fight.

—**Paul Tautges**, Pastor, Immanuel Bible Church; Author of *Counsel One Another*

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The GOSPEL for REAL LIFE series

Abuse: Finding Hope in Christ

Anxiety: Anatomy and Cure

Borderline Personality: A Scriptural Perspective

Cutting: A Healing Response

God's Attributes: Rest for Life's Struggles

Vulnerability: Blessing in the Beatitudes

Brad Hambrick, Series Editor

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ROBERT W. KELLEMAN



P U B L I S H I N G

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IN THE BEGINNING: CREATION—MOOD ORDER

Anxiety, fear, panic, phobias, stress—even those words create anxiety! Where does this set of distressing feelings come from?

My premise is simple: every dysfunctional, fallen emotion is a distortion of God’s original, pre-fall design. God intended for us to experience a mood that is the flip side of anxiety. If we are to understand the disorder of anxiety, we must first understand the order that sin has disordered. What normal, healthy, God-given process has become disturbed in anxiety?

Vigilance—Called to Sentry Duty

God placed Adam in the garden “to work it and take care of it” (Gen. 2:15). The KJV says “to dress it and to keep it.” The Hebrew word behind “take care of” and “keep” means “to guard, protect, keep safe, watch over, keep vigil.” God called Adam to be on sentry duty. To fulfill this calling, he created Adam (and us) with the mood or emotion of vigilance.

The root “vig” (in *vigil*, *vigilant*, and *vigor*) relates to a sentry. God built into our brains a sentry, a sentinel. Vigilance is the God-given emotion that urges us to act quickly in response to a threat. Vigilance is the proper, constructive concern for the well-being of others and for the advancement of God’s kingdom. Vigilance motivates us to implement “tend and befriend” behaviors.

Warriors or Worriers

This perspective was very helpful to Mike, a counselee I was mentoring. After looking at the passage in Genesis 2 and interacting about vigil, Mike responded,

That changes everything. Whenever I face a threat and respond with fear, I’m then attacked and overwhelmed by

shame. I feel so weak, so puny, when the feelings of fear arise. But now I can reshape how I respond to those initial feelings of fear. I can say, “Okay, this feeling is the God-sent, God-given warning sign to kick me into high gear, so I will spring into action on behalf of others in God’s power!” It won’t eliminate my anxiety, but it sure knocks out the shame.

Mike got it. Vigilance motivates us to be God’s warrior. Anxiety, the flip side of vigilance, attempts to cripple and disarm God’s warriors, turning us into worriers.

Applying the Gospel to Daily Life

- What difference could it make in your life if you saw anxiety as the flip side of vigilance?

IN THE GARDEN: THE FALL—MOOD DISORDER

I grew up with an alcoholic father. Sometimes my dad would come home drunk, be happy, and want to play catch in the front yard. Other times he would come home drunk and go ballistic if he saw us walking on the lawn.

I learned *always* to be on guard. I experienced hyper-vigilance, stuck vigilance.

Stuck Vigilance—Failing to Guard the Garden

Anxiety is vigilance that is out of control. You continually scan your environment, worried about the what-ifs of life. Anxiety is toxic scanning.

Anxiety is also vigilance that is trying to maintain control in a self-protective and self-sufficient way. Anxiety is vigilance minus faith in God.

God called Adam to guard the garden. Yet while the serpent tempted his wife, Adam stood right there with her (Gen. 3:6)

and did nothing. Failing to trust and obey God, Adam failed to guard the garden—he went off sentry duty.

Anxiety results in flight-or-fight behavior. After sinning, Adam evidenced both behaviors. He hid in the garden because he was afraid (Gen. 3:8–10)—the flight response. He also blamed his wife (Gen. 3:11–12)—the fight response.

The Family Tree of Anxiety

Vigilant faith, anxiety, and anger are cousins. Picture their family tree:

- Anger: the fight response to threat—attack (vigilante justice).

Here we take matters into our own hands, in our own power, for our own benefit. Notice that the angry tough guy is just as fearful and terrified as the anxious person—the response is just different.

- Anxiety: the flight response to threat—retreat (vigil without action).

Here we take our safety into our own hands. “If I worry enough, at least I feel as if I have some control.”

- Vigilance: the faith response to threat—befriend and tend, or engage and protect (vigorous response).

Here we place our safety and the safety of others in God’s hands, while we take a stand for his plan. It is befriending and tending to others, even when we feel threatened.

God says, “Be vigilant! Be alert! Take your stand, and having done all, stand firm!”

Anxiety says, “What if I can’t handle this? I have to run. I have to fight. I have to self-protect!” Anxiety is scanning without

standing. It is continual worry, a perpetual state of alarm, the constant startle reflex.

Anxiety is vigilance that does not turn us back to trust. Anxiety and anger involve vigilance without faith and without love. They are untrusting, nonrelational responses to threat.

Vigilance, on the other hand, is a trusting, relational response to threat. It relates to others by protecting the person being threatened. It relates to others by engaging, challenging, and confronting (not attacking) the person doing the threatening. It relates to God by trusting that what he calls us to do, he equips us to fulfill.

The Fear Factor

Where does fear fit into the anxiety equation? Fear is our response when we feel uncertain about our resources in the face of danger. We're assaulted by a force that overwhelms us. The threat drives us to face the fact that we're helpless and that ultimately our safety is out of our control. Fear compels us to face our neediness. Of course, the core question is, "Where do we turn?"

In anxiety, we turn to self instead of turning to God. Anxiety is fear without faith. It is vigilance run amok. We scan the horizon constantly, fearfully, but without ever taking action or responsibility and without clinging to God.

In vigilance, we turn to God. Through faith, we face the reality of our neediness by trusting in the unseen reality of a God who cares and controls.

Applying the Gospel to Daily Life

- When anxiety attacks, what is your typical response: fight, flight, or faith? Where do you think you learned this pattern of response?

"This booklet has put in one place key biblical principles for addressing a common human issue biblically, realistically, practically, and compassionately."

—ERNIE BAKER, Professor of Biblical Counseling, The Master's College; NANC-Certified Counselor

"Bob teaches us how to deal honestly with our emotions while calling us to a lifestyle of daily surrendering them to the mind of Christ."

—PAUL TAUTGES, Pastor, Immanuel Bible Church; Author of *Counsel One Another*

GOD'S PRESCRIPTION FOR VICTORY IN ANXIETY

Worry, doubt, and fear get the best of us all sometimes, and often there is no way to get rid of them. Anxiety, like any other negative emotion, is a twisted version of something positive from God; since we live in a fallen world, we may never have full victory over it.

However, Bob Kellemen proves that we *can* have victory *in* our anxiety—can learn how to use it when it strikes and avoid the temptation to sin. In this biblical study, he lays out a proper Christian view of anxiety, from creation to fall to redemption to consummation. Along the way, he helps us to apply the gospel to our daily lives and reclaim anxiety for what it should be—*vigilance* to motivate us to do God's work.

THE GOSPEL FOR REAL LIFE booklet series by the Association of Biblical Counselors (ABC) applies the timeless hope of Christ to the unique struggles of modern believers.

"The gospel isn't just an ethereal idea. It's not a philosophy and it's not static. It moves and shapes and transforms. I am grateful for ABC's work of letting the gospel bear it's weight on these real life sorrows and pains."

—MATT CHANDLER, Lead Pastor, The Village Church, Flower Mound, Texas

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