

Jesus Wept: The Bible and Human Emotions

Divine Provision for Anxiety

Lesson #2 for January 8, 2011

Scriptures: Genesis 3:6-10; 15:1-3; John 14:1,2; Matthew 6:25-34; 18:3; Philippians 4:11,12.

1. This lesson is about fear, terror, anxiety, fright, worry, apprehension, insomnia, jitters, tension, headaches, fatigue, dizziness, palpitations, breathlessness, sweating, difficulty in concentrating, even hypervigilance. These are emotions that every one of us have probably experienced; and probably, we have all experienced their results.
2. What is it that makes you afraid? It has been said that the biggest fear of all is the fear of the unknown. When you know what to expect, the fear is less.
3. Interestingly enough, when we look in Scripture, we find a very interesting relationship between God and fear. Read Exodus 3:1-10; Joshua 5:13-15; Ezekiel 1:28-2:1; 3:23,24; 43:3; 44:4,5; Daniel 10:9-21; 8:17, and Revelation 1:17. Why was Moses afraid? Why did Ezekiel fall down in the presence of God? Compare John 15:15 and Exodus 20:18-20 which describes the children of Israel following the giving of the Ten Commandments. How should we understand the use of the word *fear* in Exodus 20:18-20 in the *KJV*? In this lesson it is suggested that we should draw near to God, and He will take care of us as a parent takes care of a small child. But, in Scripture we find that people were terrified when even an angel of God approached. Does reverence or awe become fear when the “object of fear” gets too close to us?
4. Read Genesis 3:6-10. Why were Adam and Eve afraid after they had eaten of the fruit? (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 57) Who taught them about fear? Where did they even get that word? Abram was afraid for his inheritance because he had no son. (Genesis 15:1-3)
5. There are many places in Scripture where we are told not to worry or be afraid. Psychologists tell us that anxiety and fear of what might happen is one of the most dangerous emotions for mental and physical health.
6. A medieval legend tells of the traveler who one night met Fear and Plague on their way to London where they expected to kill ten thousand people. The traveler asked Plague if he would do all the killing. “Oh no,” Plague answered. “I shall kill only a few hundred. My friend Fear will kill the rest.” (*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide*, p. 17)
7. While working in Africa, we learned that there are many poisonous snakes in that area. There are fewer nonpoisonous snakes than poisonous snakes. But, the nonpoisonous snakes are more common around people. So, more people die from the bites of nonpoisonous snake in Africa than from the bites of poisonous snakes. They simply die of fear!
8. What are the natural fears that we develop and then hopefully grow out of as we mature from infancy to childhood and then to adulthood? Those are the fear of going hungry, of loud noises, of animals, of darkness, of being alone, of problems at school, of separation, of being rejected by peers, of not being able to find a suitable life partner, of not finding the right job, of terrorist attacks, of contracting a chronic or fatal disease, and finally, of dying! Are these fears appropriate? Is it appropriate to be afraid of rattlesnakes? If your fear motivates you to take action and do something about the problem, is that a good fear—a good response to fear? Some people are afraid of heights; and so, they stay away from the edges of cliffs!
9. Medical science has learned that people not only have anxieties and fears, but those fears

and anxieties can be turned into serious medical problems through the so-called conversion reaction. People can become incapable of moving, or can develop ulcers, irritable bowel syndrome, a racing pulse, and all kinds of phobias. Some people become incapable of speaking when they are in front of a group of people.

10. How does God try to deal with human fears? He promised to protect us. (Psalm 23:4; 34:7) Through Scripture He has given us good advice. (Proverbs 1:33) He promised to be with us; so, we need not fear. (Haggai 2:5) He even suggested that, at times, we may suffer for doing what is right; but He suggested we should be happy about that. (1 Peter 3:14)
11. In 1 John 4:8,16, the apostle John tells us that “God is love.” Then, in 1 John 4:18,19, he said that while fear has to do with punishment, love drives out all fear. What is the relationship between love and fear? Why are fear and love contrasted in these verses? Paul seemed to have almost no fear.
12. Are there legitimate, rational fears that we need to be aware of? Was Jesus ever afraid? Why was He so pained whenever He saw sin taking place? (DA 88.1)
13. Peter suggested that we should leave all our worries with God. (1 Peter 5:7) How do you do that? Many of our fears and anxieties result from things which we perceive to be out of our control. Do we believe that God is able to control them? Is it possible for us to trust Him? Can we put those things into God’s hands? What if you lose your job when you have a family to support?
14. Small children can learn to implicitly trust their parents. Why is it so much more difficult for adults to implicitly trust others? Is it easy to trust God? Adults learn that not everyone can be trusted? We try to teach children the same lesson.
15. Even while in a Roman prison awaiting release, Paul wrote to the Philippians suggesting that he was content with whatever his situation was. (Philippians 4:11,12) How was that possible?
16. Much of what we worry about and are afraid of is still in the future. It is still unknown. Would we worry less if we had more information about the future? Or, if God gave us a few glimpses of the future, would it just give us more things to worry about?
17. There are numerous examples in Bible times when people trusted God, and He solved their problems. Moses told the children of Israel to trust God because He would lead them. (Deuteronomy 31:8) Jehoshaphat prayed to God asking for His assistance against the powerful enemies who were coming against the nation. As the people went out praying to God, God turned their enemies against each other; and the victory was won. Jesus Himself told us that terrible things would be coming, but we should not be afraid. (Matthew 24; Mark 13; Luke 21, especially vs. 9) What did Jesus mean when He said, “Peace is what I leave with you; it is my own peace that I give you”? (John 14:27, GNB) What was Jesus’ peace?
18. Virtually none of us would suggest that God is incapable of dealing with our worst worries or fears. So, why don’t we trust Him? Are we afraid that even though He can, He will not? Are we afraid that He might surprise us, giving us answers that we do not like?
19. In Matthew 18:3, Jesus suggested that we need to be like little children. In what way or ways do we need to be like little children? Do little children exhibit real faith and trust? Or, just gullibility? Is it safe for children to accept favors from strangers? When Satan shows up at the end of this world’s history, the Bible says that he will deceive all except the very elect. (Matthew 24:24) At that time, will we need more than a gullible child’s trust? Why did Paul

suggest that we need to grow up? (Ephesians 4:11-16; Hebrews 5:14-6:3) Children trust their parents. Do we need to trust God like that? One of the most important characteristics of a child is his capacity to grow. Is that what God is recommending?

20. Perhaps, the single most outstanding and clearest example of the irrationality of fear is found in Numbers 13 & 14. Numbers 13 starts out suggesting that God told Moses to send the 12 spies into Canaan. Didn't God know what the result of sending in those spies would be? But, Deuteronomy 1:22 says that it was actually the people's idea! Which of those two verses is correct? Can we fit them together?
21. Review Israel's experience. (Exodus 1-19) They had been born into slavery—working very hard for someone else's benefit. Then came Moses. The plagues followed. Finally, they were delivered from Egypt on Passover night. They fled and miraculously were delivered through the Red Sea. They sang the song of Moses's deliverance. They were led to Mount Sinai. There, they had a direct encounter with God. There was thunder and lightning, earthquakes, and an incredible demonstration of God's power. They were given the Ten Commandments and instructed to build the tabernacle. After a year at the foot of Mount Sinai carrying out all of these commands of God and being fed every day with angels' food, they were instructed to leave for Canaan.
22. A few days later they arrived at Kadesh Barnea. Forty days later when the spies returned and gave their report, there was panic. First, they wanted to go back to Egypt; but then, when they were condemned to die in the wilderness, they insisted on going up into the land of Canaan where they suffered a terrible defeat. Then, over the next forty years, the entire adult population died in the wilderness. What are we supposed to learn from that story? After observing firsthand many of the miraculous actions of God, why did they panic when the 10 spies suggested that they would face giants? Did they stop to ask whether or not God could take care of the giants? Was there anything rational about going back to Egypt? Was there anything rational about going up into the land of Canaan without God's help?
23. Did they stop to consider the fact that the 12 spies had wandered for 40 days through the land and had returned safely with that wonderful fruit? How many of them got a taste of that fruit? Other than the spies, had any of them seen a single giant Canaanite? Why was it so easy for them to blame God and assume that they would die at the hand of those giants? Why did they refuse to believe that God could take care of them? How often do we mess up God's plans for us?
24. Why do you think God reacted the way He did? What kind of disease do you think came over the 10 spies? The children of Israel had already fought the Amalekites; and with God's help, they were victorious. As far as we know, of the adult population, only Caleb and Joshua survived to enter the land of Canaan. Were there other faithful, God-fearing people in the crowd who died because of the sins of others? As we know, Caleb and Joshua were blessed in incredible ways.
25. The disciples had spent many months with Jesus. They were all hoping to be leaders in the new government which they expected to see set up. Then, Jesus took them to the upper room. Taking the role of a servant, washing their feet, He announced to them that He was leaving. Try to imagine what emotions came over them at that point. Only a short time before that, they had been arguing about who would be greatest in the kingdom. Jesus told them that they would all run away, that one of them would betray Him, and that one of them would deny

Him three times. (John 13; Matthew 26:17-35; Mark 14:22-31; Luke 22:14-34)

26. How are we supposed to deal with anxiety and fear? Psychologists teach us relaxation techniques—even breathing techniques—to help us calm down; but, the greatest relaxation technique is to learn to trust in our heavenly Father. The psalmist told us that it is always better to trust in the Lord. (Psalm 118:8,9) Haven't we had enough experiences with God to realize that He can be trusted?
27. In Matthew 6:25-34, Jesus gave us some very specific instructions about dealing with fear and worry. His logic is impeccable. God cares for the little birds and the animals. He decorates the simple flowers of the field more gloriously than any of us will ever be decorated. And yet, somehow, we think we need to worry!
28. Winston Churchill once said, "I remember the story of the old man who said on his deathbed that he had a lot of trouble in his life, most of which had never happened."—http://www.saidwhat.co.uk/quotes/political/winston_churchill. He also said, "Those who don't learn from history are doomed to repeat it." Is that something we should worry about?
29. So, many of our worries are based on fear of things that never actually happen. We tend to raise a lot of "What if?" questions. Studies have shown that the typical anxieties are as follows:
 1. Fifty percent of events that will never happen.
 2. Twenty-five percent of occurrences in the past that cannot be changed.
 3. Ten percent about unconfirmed criticism by others.
 4. Ten percent about health (much of it apprehensive).
 5. Five percent about real problems that will be faced.
30. How can we learn to trust in Jesus? Trust is not a natural behavior. It is not genetically inherited. It has to be learned. How can we learn to trust God more fully? How can we learn to trust Him not only for the little things but also for the big things? Think back over your life, and try to remember the times when God has answered your worries or your fears in miraculous ways. Don't we believe that He could do it again?
31. "It is not work that kills; it is worry. The only way to avoid worry is to take every trouble to Christ. Let us not look on the dark side. Let us cultivate cheerfulness of spirit."—Ellen G. White, *Lt 208*, 1903; *Mind, Character, and Personality*, p. 466; *3MR* 368.1.
32. How often are our worries and fears a result of our own previous wrongdoing? Jacob was in great distress and worry when preparing to meet Esau. (Genesis 32:7) Joseph's brothers were terrified when he suddenly announced who he was. (Genesis 45:3) Was David terrified when he found out that Bathsheba was pregnant? How often do our fears become self-fulfilling prophecies?
33. Those who believe in the larger-view, trust, healing view of the plan of salvation will realize that trusting God is the ultimate result of our Christian lives. A relationship with God is what it is all about.

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