The Problem of Anxiety:

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Seeing God’s Presence in a

Threatening World

**An Introductory Scenario**

1. **Common Themes in the Experience of Anxiety**

* **Anxiety is a form of fear, and it has many different expressions.**
* **As a form of fear, anxiety is an emotional indicator that we perceive the threat of losing something we love.**
* **Anxiety is not the same thing as worry, though it often leads there.**
* **Anxiety is a heart response *to* external conditions. Those conditions are important to consider in overcoming fear.**

1. **Relevant Themes in Scripture for the Experience of Anxiety**

* **An anxious heart needs to be reminded that fear has always been part of the experience of God’s people, and God delights in ministering to them (Psalm 27).**
* **An anxious heart is desperately wanting something. Jesus demonstrates how to trust the Father with what we are most scared of losing (Luke 12:22-34).**
* **An anxious heart needs the broader perspective of God’s presence to see threats properly (Phil 4:4-9).**
* **An anxious heart needs to humbly acknowledge that God is God (1 Peter 5:6-7)**

1. **Living by Faith When Experiencing Anxiety**

What should we do then when we are caught in a cycle of worry?

* Acknowledge that you are feeling fear about something and directing your mental energies to it.
  + Thinking
    - What is threatening about this situation/person?
    - How often do you think about it? What triggers you thinking about it?
    - How is God involved with this situation/person?
  + Feelings/Desires
    - Describe the pressure you feel regarding the situation/person.
    - How often, and how strong, would you say those feelings are?
    - What do you think you are wanting regarding the situation/person?
    - Is there a sense in which you have placed too much hope in a good outcome?
  + Behavior
    - How do you act when feeling threatened? Think about attitudes as well as actions.
    - How do your actions reinforce the fear or anxiety?
    - Do significant people in your life notice these? What do they say?
* Identify what you are scared of losing.
  + What are you so scared of losing that you can’t imagine your life without it? Are you willing to call God good and wise even if he were to take it away? Do you trust that he would be gracious to you even without that object?
  + In other words, what specifically are you treasuring more than the promised presence of God?
* Talk to God about whether that thing really is the source of life or not. Remember what he says is truly life. The wealth of Jesus Christ, which is yours by faith, is under no threat from anywhere. Remember also his relationship to your need. He is the Provider who knows what’s best, when it’s best.
  + When you do not have the strength to break out of your anxiety, will you acknowledge that even then Jesus will minister to you? That he can find you in your anxiety?
* Do something else. Seeking first the Kingdom means moving toward some task, some relationship where you work for God’s purposes. Worry usually thrives either in paralysis and inactivity or the wrong kind of frenzied activity.

1. **Concluding Thoughts on How God Uses Anxiety**