

How to live with (less) anxiety.

I really wanted to write about how to live “without” anxiety but I couldn’t figure it out. Anxiety is borrowing a little bit of tomorrow’s worries. I could not figure out how to banish those nagging feelings. But I have determined to try to “lessen” the negative impact of anxiety. It is not a New Year’s resolution but a life choice that I am trying as best to live. There are two kinds of anxiety; the ones we create for ourselves and the ones that just come to us.

Years ago, even before it was even necessary, I would get to the airport earlier than necessary. As much as I hate waiting around I hated the feeling of racing for planes getting to the door as they were closing. That was an anxiety I could do something with. Doing paperwork, tax forms etc. were areas that I had some control over the anxiety. Now, by eliminating those anxieties I had more time to concentrate on the anxieties I could do nothing about. And they are always with us.

Last week was a good/bad example of anxieties. To return to El Salvador we needed to have a covid test done within 72 hours of our flight. First anxiety was to get the test done. A friend was setting up an appointment for us and here it was Tuesday morning and the appointment had not been set. Finally, it was set for 3:30 that afternoon. Without the test the airline will not let you board. Barbara’s results came early the next morning. I waited for mine – and waited – and waited. I finally called Thursday morning (we were leaving Friday.) They didn’t come in the morning nor at noon but that afternoon they finally arrived. What do you do with that kind of anxiety?

The next morning on the way to the airport we were dropping our winter clothes off at our storage unit. As we came to the exit, it was blocked off for road work. Ugh! The next exit was a mile or two down the road to turn around and drive three miles back to turn around and go on the service road for another mile of two. Another feeling of anxiety. (Lessened a little bit by determination above to get to the airport early.) We had a nice two hour wait for our plane.

We get on our flight to go to Dallas to make our connection for El Salvador. The plane is loaded and we are backing away from the gate when the Capitan announces that the tower is delaying our departure for twenty or thirty minutes. This is going to cut down our connection time as we need to change terminals in Dallas. What do you do with that anxiety? I am watching the clock as we land in Dallas. We almost get to the gate when the Capitan announces that there is no gate agent to open the gateway but they were calling for somebody. Tick, tick, tick. More anxiety for someone who is trying to give up anxiety.

We finally get off the plane hop on the train to the next gate. (it does not move fast enough.) And we hurry to the gate. “You are not registered on this flight.” Says the agent. “Yes, they are.” says the other agent and we are the last to board. They changed out seats, then gave them away and then found us other seats. What would my life be like if I wasn’t trying to give up anxiety?

I can’t seem to lose anxiety and I am sure that you can’t either no matter how hard we try. So how do we deal with it? How do we lessen it?” Because our lives “are hid in Christ” our lives are not just our own but belong to Him. When I am prone to worry about whatever outcome is not going to go my way I have to be reminded that God is never surprised. If the Covid test did not come in time and we couldn’t fly would God be surprised? Or might He have another plan? If we missed our connection would God be surprised? Or might He have another plan? We exist in our time base, God exists in eternity. And often

God interrupts our times with His eternal purposes. The planes we might miss, the deadlines we don't make, the appointments we miss are certainly in His hands. Our challenge is to learn to relax in the knowledge that God sees the beginning from the end; He sees our "successes and failures" and he is never surprised.

As we go through our day, we need to commit those anxieties to Him who is never surprised while remembering not to borrow burdens from tomorrow nor to assume that even our good plans might not match what God is intending but has not shared with us yet. If I could only remember this my anxieties would be less as he tells us to throw our cares on Him.