



## WILLOW CREEK COMMUNITY CHURCH MESSAGE TRANSCRIPT

# FLOW, PART 5: ANXIETY, Part 1

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*Anxiety is so spiritually toxic that the command to not be afraid or anxious or fearful is the most frequently repeated command in the Bible. Anxiety cuts us off from the flow of the Spirit like almost nothing else. It robs us of joy and paralyzes our ability to trust God. Biblical peace—what we experience when living in the flow of the Holy Spirit—is the settled conviction at the core of our being that all things are in God’s hands; therefore, we can live free of burden, worry, and fear. Those living with uncontrolled anxiety mistakenly think they deserve the punishment or pain of a prolonged string of anxiety-producing thoughts or they live under the illusion that worry enhances the control factor. Anxiety can keep us from saying yes to God’s callings on our lives. We need to learn to cast our anxiety on God and choose peace.*

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Tonight we're talking about anxiety. I want to be very, very clear about this. We're not engaging in a general talk on how to manage stress better so that your life can be more pleasant. That's not what this is about. Anxiety is so spiritually toxic that the command to not be afraid or anxious or fearful is, in fact, the most frequently repeated command in the Bible. It is issued more often than any other single commandment. And there's a reason for that. The reason is, I think, that anxiety cuts you off from this flow of the Spirit like almost nothing else.

Think about this: Worry robs me of joy. It makes me more self-preoccupied and less attentive or loving to other people. It makes temptations look attractive, because I want to do anything that will help me escape this inner pain. It erodes my ability to feel grateful. It increases my irritability. It destroys my appetite for growth.

Anxiety will poison our relationships as a church, as a community, because when I'm anxious, my focus is on me. I can't really love you. And maybe worst of all, anxiety paralyzes my ability to trust God. When you study the Bible, more than any other factor, fear or anxiety is what keeps people from saying yes to God. God calls people. God challenges people. More than anything else, anxiety is what causes them to say no. That's why God so often says, Don't be afraid.

Now, this anxiety is the direct opposite of what we experience when we're in the flow of the Spirit. The Bible calls us to put off this faith-defeating, flow-stopping anxiety. I want us to look together at what we're to put on in its place. Let's look at just a few passages from Scripture.

*Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus (Philippians 4:6-7).*

In Psalm 4:8 the psalmist says, *I will lie down and sleep in peace, for you alone, O Lord, make me dwell in safety.*

And then in John 14:27, Jesus says in his final teaching with his disciples: *Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.*

The truth is we live in a world where anxiety is so epidemic that we don't even realize how deeply we carry it in our bodies. I'd like you to take just a moment and take a deep breath. Just take a really deep breath. And as you breathe it out, hand over to God all the tension and weight you've been carrying around. Let's try it again together, just for a moment.

You see, this peace, the peace that the biblical writers talk about, is much deeper than just self-help techniques to reduce stress. Biblical peace is the settled conviction that goes right down to the core of your being, to your belly, that all things are in God's hands and, therefore, all things will be well. Peace is the settled conviction at the core of your being that ultimately, all things are in God's hands and, therefore, all things will be well and, therefore, you can live free of burden, worry and fear.