



Overcoming Fear

Choosing Courage
in the Age of Anxiety

Courage Over Control

Matthew 6:25-34

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Jessica Gracewski

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Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes? Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life? And why do you worry about clothes? See how the flowers of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith? So do not worry, saying, “What shall we eat?” or “What shall we drink?” or “What shall we

wear?" For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

Anxiety was once described to me as the feeling of being rendered powerless, but feeling responsible. Anxiety can often breed scarcity.

Anxiety and control's intent is to paralyze and immobilize us.

We see Jesus' non-anxious presence has the power to remove our anxiety and need for control - and our invitation is to be courageous in faith and follow Jesus.

5 Characteristics of Anxious Societies

1. Reactivity
2. Herding
3. Blame Displacement

"Perhaps the most outstanding example of blame displacement in chronically anxious America is what has come to be called anti-incumbency, the tendency of voters to reject whoever is in office almost irrespective of their political party affiliation. This flailing at the political winds amounts to a collective irresponsibility on the part of voters seeking magical, quick-fix answers to a complex range of problems of existence. Instead of focusing on their own response to the challenges of change, these voters find fault in their political stars. And this is not just a political phenomenon; it is occurring with regard to coaches, educators, CEOs, and clergy, not to mention marriage partners and parents."

- Edwin Freidman, *Failure of Nerve*

4. Quick-Fix Mentality

5. Poorly Defined Leadership

All of these are present in our world today and are signs of anxiety ridden spaces. With these characteristics present, Friedman tells us that the only way to stop this self perpetuating cycle of anxiety is to inject into the middle of it a non-anxious presence.

This formula for success is more **maturity**, not more data; **perseverance**, not technique; and **ownership**, not solely empathy.

Instead of us perpetuating this chronic anxiety, perhaps what we need, what our church needs, what our families, workplaces and what our **city** needs is **you** and **me** and **others** to step right into the middle of this cycle and be **this** type of non-anxious presence.

Jesus is this kind of non-anxious presence for us and for the world.

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God's character emboldens our confidence to take the huge steps of faith to step in and bring that non anxious presence.

5 Things to Cultivate a Non-Anxious Presence

1. Posture

“Jesus saw himself as an apprentice to his Father in his work. He was not working on his own. Whatever he did was something he had seen his Father working at. So we ask ourselves: Am I following Jesus in my own way of working? Is all the work I am doing in keeping with what the Father is doing and how he is doing it? Do I know what the Father is doing in the lives of people around me who are affected by my work?”

- Alan Fadling, *An Unhurried Life*

2. Rest

3. Dependence

4. Loyalty

5. Mystery

Jesus, we take comfort in the fact that you assured us of two things. Presence and promise. Jesus you are with us. We do not have to fear, or be anxious or control the outcome. Jesus you tell us to not fear and you know

there is nothing good that comes from worrying - it won't add a single hour to our lives. Jesus, you see our value. Jesus, we trust that you know what we need. Thank you for your non-anxious presence. Help us to imitate you to bring this to those that need a life of calm, free, peaceful, confident and unhurried pace of life. Amen.