

Peace in This World
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Air Dates: March 17 – 21, 2025

Day One

Work is only one element of our life that can bring stress. Marriage, children, family, health issues, and anything else we add into the mix of our days can make us anxious too.

Honestly, thinking about how to find peace from all of this can be yet one more thing we add to our mix. Is seeking fleeting peace only adding to your anxiety?

We can feel anxiety as we are waiting for this elusive moment for peace. Maybe you have even tried to plan it out. We experience anxiety in our waiting when our perceived outcome doesn't happen within the perceived time we have set in our mind. If you have blocked out a time for peace on your calendar each day and it keeps getting run over by life, I can imagine this can make you more anxious!

I have felt all of this. In fact, there was a large part of my professional and mom life that I told my husband I felt like I was wearing a high heel and a gym shoe at the same time. Try walking like this—a heel on one foot and a gym shoe on another—unbalanced, kind of messy, out of sorts! I was consumed by so many things and not turning to where I truly could find the peace I needed: Jesus.

Jesus promises us trouble here in this world. He knows we will be experiencing the feelings of being consumed, out of balance.

I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace (John 16:33).

Jesus is clear. In him I can have peace. I know this sounds silly, but when I think of the peace of Jesus that gives rest, I think of my most comfortable, fluffy house slippers. I am not fancy; I am not running anywhere. I am keeping a slow pace and finding rest.

Too often we are trying to plan our own peace when we need to be turning to Jesus. While some of the ways we seek peace in this world aren't "bad," they will never be a complete salve for the anxiety we feel.

Day Two

What do you turn to during times of stress? Some of the most common outlets for stress and anxiety in our world are related to addictions. These addictions can quickly become idols and can keep us further away from our true peace: Jesus Christ.

You know the addictions you or other struggle with—stress eating or drowning our sorrows in a glass of wine, a cocktail, you name it. Food and alcohol rank in the top of legal addictive substances. With work, access to these habits can increase. Maybe it is a consistent happy hour after work or meals with colleagues and customers. However, our long days, filled with anxieties, can be enough to drive us to these habits even when we are not engaging in them because of work. Culture has taught us that alcohol can help us have a good time and unwind from a long week. Food has become a little more

taboo with the diet culture, but eating fast food with low nutrition value can seem easy when you are balancing work and life.

Did you know alcohol can actually increase your levels of anxiety? There is research to read, but if you find yourself in a pattern of consuming alcohol to reduce anxiety, you are not doing yourself any favors. Considering the other health issues that can come from excessive drinking including cancer, you may want to reconsider this as a peace-giving habit.

Stress eating can also cause health issues including weight gain.

None of this is peaceful and life giving. Advice about food and alcohol in the Bible is mixed, but one thing is for sure. Anything that is a stumbling block or an idol standing in your way to your relationship with our ultimate peace—Jesus—is not a good thing!

Do not join those who drink too much wine or gorge themselves on meat, for drunkards and gluttons become poor, and drowsiness clothes them in rags (Proverbs 23: 20-21).

We must also be sober minded. 1 Peter 5:8 exhorts us to be watchful for the devil that prowls around like a roaring lion.

Talk about a peace stealer. Satan is the ultimate stealer of peace! If you and I are walking around salving our anxiety with alcohol, we will be prone to the attacks of the devil. My prayer today is that you rethink these habits and turn to Jesus!

Day Three

Does the busyness of your daily life make you feel like you should just get away? Perhaps it's a weekend away with friends or with your spouse. You want to recharge from the anxiety you feel in the daily grind of work and home.

I wasn't sure, but I had a hunch there would be articles about vacation anxiety. I was right. While the benefits of getting away include lowering stress, improving heart health, boosting creativity, strengthening relationships and keeping you healthy, it seems we need more rules of the road to take a good vacation these days.

Taking this time away can add anxiety—financial, the care of your children or pets, leaving projects at work, and countless others. The truth is none of the things that cause you daily anxiety will disappear. They will be there when you come back.

How can you incorporate the ultimate peace into your getaway, so it isn't just a runaway from your daily stress and anxiety? You know what I mean. How can you include Jesus in this time? How can you draw closer to Jesus in faith?

Jesus is a proponent of getting away.

"Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest." So they went away by themselves in a boat to a solitary place (Mark 6:31-32).

You know the feeling of coming and going—days of no leisure and nothing to eat! We have all had these days.

Knowing Jesus invited his disciples to recharge, you can be encouraged he wants this for you too. Be mindful of how you consider this time. It isn't an escape, but it can be a time to rest and be in God's

Word. If you are spending the time to get away, make sure it is time spent reconnecting with your peace, Jesus.

The only real escape for us in this world is Jesus. Abiding with Christ can give us a foretaste of the glory we will have in heaven. We know in heaven Jesus has prepared a space for us, and the Father's house has many rooms. One of the descriptors I love is in Revelation 4:6.

... in front of the throne there was what looked like a sea of glass, clear as crystal (Revelation 4:6).

If you have ever been near still and serene water, you will know why this is so striking. It feels so calm. I am in awe knowing heaven has a sea of glass that I can enjoy for eternity.

Day Four

Media that we take with us anytime and anywhere is causing anxiety. The dings for emails, texts, and calls can make it hard to shut off and unplug. But what about when you are using social media to try to reduce stress and anxiety.

Is it the next binge-worthy show? Is it reels on Facebook or Instagram? While social media can help reduce anxiety by providing people with an outlet to connect, it can also cause further anxiety by causing active comparisons to others or a need to engage constantly because of a fear of missing out on what others are doing. Watching cute videos of animals or some fun comedy can surely make me laugh, and I know laughter is one way I can reduce my stress levels. Noted benefits of laughter are relaxing the body, boosting the immune system, triggering the release of endorphins, protecting the heart, and burning calories. And God loves us to laugh!

Our mouths were filled with laughter, our tongues with songs of joy (Psalm 126: 2).

I have spent some time talking about the pros and cons of social media and faith. Overall, the access people have to resources like the Bible or faith-based media at their fingertips is a good thing. There are countless ways to access aggregated sermons and to look up Bible verses quickly. In fact, when you look up Bible verses for anxiety, one of the results that pops up is 30 encouraging Bible verses to overcome worry and anxiety. This is helpful!

I would say engaging in faith-based media and resources on your mobile device can be stress and anxiety reducing because it is drawing you closer to your ultimate peacekeeper—Jesus!

The challenge is staying on this path and avoiding the countless other distractions like texts, email dings, what so and so has posted about their vacation, or even worse, commenting on something out of haste or reaction. Sometimes the thing that causes us anxiety is what someone is posting on social media. In haste and anxiety, you may be tempted to reply. Can I encourage you to hit the pause button?

You will keep in perfect peace those whose minds are steadfast, because they trust in you. Trust in the Lord forever, for the Lord, the Lord himself, is the Rock eternal (Isaiah 26:3-4).

Keep your mind on the Lord, and he will give you perfect peace.

Day Five

As we wrap up talking about some of the worldly ways we try to calm our anxiety that typically don't work, I want to address the fine line of talking it out with a friend verses gossip. I admit, sometimes talking to a close friend about something that is causing anxiety is helpful. Do you ever feel like this verse:

Do not be misled: Bad company corrupts good character (1 Corinthians 15:33).

These days I am very selective about who I seek counsel from. First and foremost, I look for fellow Christ-followers. I saw a note today that said, "The best kind of friend is a praying friend." Seeking this kind of community is essential to keeping us close to our peacekeeper Jesus.

After all, the bible tells us that,

The way of fools seems right to them, but the wise listen to advice (Proverbs 12:15).

I want to be sure the advice I am seeking from others is based in biblical truth. Proverbs 15:22 states *Plans fail for lack of counsel, but with many advisers they succeed.*

I have spent time focusing on how to build this bench of advisers and dear friends I can count on when I need an ear.

Carefully discerning how I work through some of the things that cause anxiety can also be important. I want to be mindful that my talk doesn't turn into gossip. Shared friends and relationships can sometimes lead to hurt feelings. If I am ever needing advice within a shared friend group, I always make sure I am seeking it outside of that group of friends. When you find yourself naming names and bringing up things that maybe aren't kind, make sure your intentions are headed in the right direction. Are you talking about it just to vent or gossip, or are you seeking wise counsel to help you work through this stressor?

Back to that phrase, "The best kind of friend is a praying friend." Another one you may have heard is, "Have you prayed about it as much as you have talked about it."

Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God (Philippians 4:6).

Having a confidant to pray with you about what is making you anxious can surely be a help.