



Anxiety, Fear, and Discipline

I REMEMBER one Sunday night coming back from NET University. I felt horrible: Russ had just talked about how campus and singles need to do more to build up the church, my schedule was so packed I couldn't give myself fully to anything, and any new task I was given sparked immediate fear about getting everything done. I was anxious, fearful, on the verge of tears. Then I had a prayer that changed my life and felt like I truly learned to cast my anxieties on God (1 Peter 5:7).

Through these three short studies, I pray you will gain God's perspective on anxiety, fear, and discipline.

A · N · X · I · E · T · Y

*So my spirit grows faint within me;
my heart within me is dismayed.*

PSALM 143:4

READ Psalm 143 and think about what David is feeling. Think about times when you've been anxious recently. Examine those emotions in detail—really think about it (Proverbs 20:5). What do you find?

*When I said, "My foot is slipping,"
your love, O LORD, supported me.*

*When anxiety was great within me,
your consolation brought joy to my soul.*

PSALM 94:18, 19

*If you falter in times of trouble,
how small is your strength!*

PROVERBS 24:10

When I'm anxious, one of the things I feel is a desire to be consoled. People seek consolation in things stronger than themselves, things that are sure. What force do you seek consolation in? God intends us to be consoled by how we are viewed in his eyes, what we believe about our relationship with him. Going through emotional challenges has really taught me the importance of belief, and I think God understands this power, which is why he chose belief as the force to save us (John 3:16).

Take some time to discern your beliefs about what *God thinks of you*? When I was in Atlanta, I heard a sister share about the security she got from realizing that God thought she was cute. She was expressing how we all just want to be valued, loved.

*Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not
one of them will fall to the ground apart from
the will of your Father. And even the very
hairs of your head are all numbered. So don't be
afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows.*

MATTHEW 10:29–31

God values you. You can trust God to take care of you (2 Peter 2:9)—for a long time, he's had that plan for you (Zechariah 10). That knowledge is strength enough to keep you from faltering (Proverbs 24:10).



F · E · A · R

“What are you doing here, Elijah?”

1 KINGS 19:9B

FEAR IS UNCOMFORTABLE, but to me, that’s bearable. Fear is shameful, but other people’s opinions are fickle. What I really can’t stand is the knowledge that fear prevents me from experiencing what God has planned for me, a life to the full (John 10:10).

Read 1 Samuel 19:1–18. Sometimes it’s shocking to me how Elijah could take on the prophets of Baal, with only God to help him, and yet flee at the first sign of mortal danger. When we fail to understand that God has plans to use us, he is equally shocked. He says to Gideon in Judges 6:14, “Am I not sending you,” and to Elijah, “What are you doing here?” We have even less of an excuse than Gideon and Elijah—after all, we have a whole book full of examples they didn’t have!

Do you see a man skilled in his work?

He will serve before kings;

He will not serve before obscure men.

PROVERBS 22:29

When building the first temple, God chose specific people with specific skills to do specific jobs (Exodus 35:30). God has chosen you in the same way. Read what happens to the fearful servant who is too afraid to risk failure in order to do great things for Jesus: Matthew 25:14–30. You’re a skilled worker and that’s why God allows you to work for him in the ministry; it’s probably even why you have the challenges you have—so you can overcome them and bring glory to God (John 3:21) and not be overcome by them.

*The sluggard says, “There is a lion in the road,
a fierce lion roaming the streets!”*

PROVERBS 26:13

Is there really a lion in the streets? What are you really afraid of? We have many fears, but if we honestly examined them from an outside perspective, we’d find many are without reason. For example, I’ve had periods where it was difficult to focus at work, which brought on fears of being too dumb to be in the Ph.D. program. Those fears paralyzed me, preventing me from even attempting difficult problems. In the end, that fear was just unfounded.

Do you believe you can do the things God has asked you to do? Think about Colossians 1:29. Do you think you lack anything (2 Peter 2:3, James 1:4)? Remember, “according to your faith...”



D · I · S · C · I · P · L · I · N · E

*May the favor of the Lord our God rest upon us;
establish the work of our hands for us—
yes, establish the work of our hands*
PSALM 90:17

THE KEY TO DISCIPLINE is often the one thing missing from studies on discipline—you tell someone you're stressed, your life is falling apart, etc., and they proceed to grill you about your sleeping habits, whether you keep a To-Do list, and push scriptures at you like Proverbs 6:6–11. These are all well and good, wise even; yet wisdom can't be gained from changing your sleeping habits or trying really hard to stay focused. Wisdom comes from God (James 1:5) and perhaps He is the most pivotal part of wisdom (Proverbs 1:7).

That's what's missing from most studies on discipline: God. It's God who enables you to accomplish tasks (Psalm 90:17), and "apart from him you can do nothing" (John 15:5). It's true that the first engineering project failed for lack of organization (Genesis 11), but it was God who introduced confusion. His will is always done (Psalm 127:1, 2; Proverbs 16:9), so if his will is for you to accomplish the tasks set before you, you will.

Pray through Psalm 90. Do you entreat God, as Moses did, to "establish the work of your hands" on a daily basis?

Read Matthew 9:27–31. Do you have a faithful or a fearful attitude about the tasks you have? Think about godly discipline as we discuss two often-missed aspects of discipline (you can find more conventional tips on how to make your life more effective on your own time).

1. **Rest.** Read Matthew 8:24; Genesis 2:2, 3; and finally Psalm 127:1, 2. What connotation do you have of the word "rest?" Is it negative? What's God's connotation? Why does he use it as a blessing? Are you getting enough rest, enough "down time?"
2. **Prioritize.** Meditate on Proverbs 21:5. Before immediately thinking about yourself and what this scripture means about you, consider what it means about God. What's your view of God—does he create plans and follow through or fritter arbitrarily between tasks? Now think about you: are your tasks organized? Planned? Do you often forget things? Start one thing only to switch to another and leave the first undone? *Decide* to be like God today—diligent not hasty.

In addition to these tips, pick *just one* of the oft-quoted discipline-enhancing activities (To-Do lists, etc.) in which you've been delinquent recently. Choose to be faithful about doing that activity and follow through, knowing that God's will is behind you.

