

Collide – Anxiety and Idolatry

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MAIN VERSES

[Matthew 6:25](#) · [Matthew 6:33](#) · [John 11:32](#) · [Mark 14:33](#) · [Philippians 4](#) · [Galatians 1:10](#) · [Jeremiah 31](#)

Do you ever find yourself searching for something bigger than you? For a community to be a part of? A place founded on truth and love. A place to worship the King of Kings, the Lord of Lords, and the Son of God. Welcome to Founded in Truth, where we're more than just a fellowship. We're a family. So welcome home. How are you guys today? Good, great. Everybody said good and great. Not one person in here said meh. Not one person in here was like, nah. Not one person in here was like, no, it stinks. Everybody's good and great. I have an honest question. Good and great. Okay. Amen. It's amazing.

It's Just How We Do Things

We do this thing in southern culture where we've turned an endearing phrase into something we love to do. We love to wear masks, and it's not like a bad thing, like we're hiding. It's just how we do things. When we greet people, we want to give the appearance that we're a hospitable people, that we're welcoming, that we really like you around us. That's the first impression as a culture that we want to give. We're really, really, really mad at someone and just upset. Even then, it's like, bless you. Bless your heart. And it's fascinating that we've taken a question that is so piercing and raw, and we've made it into a greeting, a common greeting. You walk down the street to a total stranger, and what do you say? Hey, how you doing? Good, how are you? If you have time to even respond, usually it's just passing people. That's how quick it happens. Good, and just keep walking.

It's almost awkward if you ask them, how are you doing, and they have to stop. Oh, I'm doing good. We done? We're done. Okay, go on your ways. Anybody know what I'm talking about? That's the vibe. And I love that when, as a culture—maybe this is just me—I love greeting strangers in the marketplace. In the marketplace, not in the first century—at Walmart and stuff. And I love to do it just to engage with other people because it's really good. As a person, I want to be someone who is good at talking and meeting with people. So strangers, hey, how you

doing? Or if they're looking at a magazine that has something on the front, I'll make a comment about it and engage.

The Mask We Wear

But it's fascinating because have you ever been out in public and someone caught you off guard by greeting you and saying hey? You're like, you don't want to be talked to. Or generally, you don't mind it, but you'd like to prepare for it. And has anyone ever been in a situation where someone's coming toward you smiling? In that brief moment, you know this person is going to do that southern thing that we all have to do, and they are going to ask me how I am. Anyone ever prepared that in their brain? And then you get a little bit anxious about it all at once, and they come up to you and they say, hey! And you respond, good, thank you! Just pour it out. A lady did this the other day when I was at an event, and I could watch her smile. She was sitting there: "Hey, good. Thank you." And I could tell in that moment she was like, "Ah, fail! Like, it's true."

And that's fascinating for me because it has to do with what we're talking about today—about how we emphasize the exterior as a default. We were taught to say good, to emphasize an exterior—what other people see—to make ourselves look good, I guess. And it's essentially showing a version of ourselves to people that's not necessarily transparent, just translucent. What tends to happen is that when we do this all the time—we try to put a mask on all the time, not just for social reasons or greetings and engagement—it becomes our default. It tends to become our default. Anybody know what I'm talking about? This mask is what I wear. I'm good to the outside all the time. When people say, "Hey, how you doing?" I say I'm great, even if I'm not great. Even if we're about to lose the house, even if I've lost a loved one, even if I've lost my job, it's great.

And that's fascinating to me because I would dare say that most of us in this room, most of us watching online, are not great right now. We might be good and we might be great in some aspects, but I would dare say many of us, surely because we're part of this culture that has trained us to think and do things a certain way, are not doing okay.

A Culture That Feeds Anxiety

And today I want to talk about fear and anxiety. And fear and anxiety are things that everyone has. And how many of you guys know that anxiety is a natural thing? It's a very natural thing. But unfortunately, not everyone who has this very natural, normal hormonal system—this

chemical response in their body called anxiety—lives in a culture that breeds, encourages, and feeds it the way ours does. We live in a society that trains us to chase things we can never obtain. And then when we can't get those things, we feel bad afterward. Anybody know what I'm talking about?

For example, we live in a culture that teaches us to chase their definition of sexual beauty. I know—that got deep real quick. It is what it is. Our culture trains us in that. It's in our television, our billboards, our magazines—not just TV shows and movies, but in our advertisements. It's incredible. Because if you want to be wanted, this is what you must achieve. If you want to be loved the way the world defines love, this is what you must become. You must be this size. You must weigh this much. You must have those eyebrows. Or if you want to be considered successful, what must you have? You must have that piece of paper from that institute, and therefore you must have that really good-paying job to get you some more symbols of success according to the world and the society we live in—which is the car. And it can't be that car. It must be this car. And you can live in a house, but it has to be more than this house if you really want to cross that threshold of what success looks like and what success is baiting us to run after in the culture that we live in.

Anybody ever been caught running after the things that this world says you need? How does it make you feel when you're chasing these things? It's a pretty big priority, at least in the culture that we're in. If you're not chasing these things, you are an abnormal person. And so it causes fear and anxiety that we've got to go, go, go, go, go. We have to push, push, push, push, push. We've got to work, work, work, work, work for this goal. And then what happens when we achieve the things that the world has told us we must have? Are we content? Does our anxiety finally resolve after all of this time? I can sit here at peace because I have everything that the culture and community and society around me has told me I need to be a grown, successful person. Anxiety doesn't tend to go away, does it? If anything, what happens? It multiplies. Why? Because now you're not anxious about not having it or getting it. Now you're anxious about losing it. It's fascinating how it's not simply you suffer from anxiety or she suffers from anxiety. Our culture is training us to be an anxious people.

The Snapshot We Share

Psychologists are just now realizing how damaging social media is. And I know everyone in here is like, oh, yes they are. Like, social media is bad. And, you know, if you don't use social media, maybe it's never been something that you've been attached to. It's like, yeah, that's horrible, this new trend coming in. And I'm a pretty big social media user. And it's fascinating because the

issue is not necessarily how much time people spend on social media. New technology comes about. Trends change. People are on their cell phones more now because it's newer technology. The holographic, whatever, next-generation device will be the next cell phone replacement. But the issue is what social media does—it invites you into a place where you get to take a snapshot of your life, a snapshot of the best things you have. The best life. The clean house when it's clean. The shiny car right after you wash it. Right? And you get to show that to the world as who you are. And it invites this community to show off the best of everything.

And what causes the anxiety? When you go on there and you don't realize that picture of that living room was taken literally five seconds after she finished vacuuming. It's trashed a minute later when her kids came in. That picture of their family sitting beside that tree and all of them have perfect smiles—that was after 300 takes, and dad had to change his shirt because the baby threw up on him. But you don't see that. You see, wow, that's perfect. Perfect. Wow, that's calm. Wow, they have peace in their home. That home-cooked meal is something that was a once-a-year thing. I wish I could make home-cooked meals every single night, but my life is...

You see what happens. Our culture teaches us to worry about those worldly things that never satisfy us. They never satisfy us because, like I said, the same anxiety that we put into acquiring these things is multiplied when we have them. Do you guys think celebrities commonly have public meltdowns and outbursts for no reason? Celebrities. How many of you guys, honestly, and I will raise my hand just to join you to make you feel better because I would never.

The Illusion of Security Through Money and Fame

How many of you would really like a lot of money? Just the zeros in your bank account growing. How many of you would like that? Wouldn't that be neat to wake up to in the morning? That'd be cool. Why? Because it might make my anxiety go away. In the world I live in, money solves everything. Money is a force of security in our culture, and it's something I'm affected by. I'm sure you are too.

How about being well known? Would it be nice to be well known? You go to Walmart and people recognize you. I don't know, some people might, some people not so much. Okay, what about Britney Spears? What happened to her? About 10 years ago, 25 years old, she had everything—the fame, the fortune, the top hits, the money to buy whatever she wanted. She had a meltdown, if you remember. Shaved her head, started beating a paparazzi car with an umbrella, busting it up. It was a pretty big deal. But she has everything. Ultimate celebrity status. Adele, Emma Stone, Paula Deen—they all admit to having anxiety attacks and taking

medication. John Mayer openly admits to carrying loose Xanax pills in his pockets everywhere he goes. He just admits it. He's like, yeah, in case I have a panic attack, I can go on with life. There's a great lesson to learn here. One that I believe Yeshua himself recognized in the culture he found himself in 2,000 years ago.

So today, we're going to continue the Sermon on the Mount into Matthew chapter 6. And we're going to speak about what this no-name rabbi from Nazareth who started this revolution 2,000 years ago teaches about keeping the Torah from the heart on the mount. And here's what he says in Matthew chapter 6, verse 25. He says this, and go ahead and turn to your Bible, flip to Matthew chapter 6. I want you to follow along.

"Therefore I Tell You, Do Not Be Anxious"

So he's speaking, continuing this teaching, and he says:

"Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat and what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on and wear. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds in the air. They neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns. They don't have a 401k. And yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not more valuable than they? And which of you, by being anxious, can even add a single hour to his span of life? And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies in the field, how they grow. They neither toil nor spin. Yet I tell you, even Solomon in his glory was not arrayed like one of these. But if God so clothed the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? Therefore do not be anxious, saying, What shall we eat? What shall we drink? What shall we wear? For the pagans, the Gentiles, seek after those things."

So now Yeshua says, "Don't be anxious." Easy. This is so easy to say. Yeah, and if we take this section of Scripture out of context, like so many have, we come up with this teaching from this rabbi's mouth that we are to fly through life without a care in the world. That nothing should cause worry or stress or anxiety at any level is sin. I was reading over a sermon two days ago about this, and it was fascinating. That's not what Scripture says.

Talk about something that'll make you anxious. I'm a sinner if I worry. Oh my goodness. Oh no, I can't do that. Oh, I'm worried about...

Don't worry about your life. Don't worry about feeding your family. Don't worry about the poor around you. Don't worry about your sick friend. Don't worry—just fly through. Hey, dude, don't worry. Let's just go bowling. And I'm going to assert that this is not what Yeshua is saying in

this section of Scripture. I'm going to submit that Yeshua's point in this Scripture is the same one he's been consistently teaching throughout his entire Sermon on the Mount. Essentially: not choosing to give your heart to the world, but to God instead. Not pledging your allegiance to a worldly kingdom, but pledging your full allegiance to a kingdom that is greater. A kingdom that offers more. A kingdom that offers peace and love and security. And a kingdom that drives you to represent the things that will change this world.

And I don't think Yeshua is telling you not to care about anything. Remember in chapter 5 of the Sermon on the Mount, Yeshua says it is not good for you to yield your heart to anger. It is not good to yield to lust. You cannot have two masters. Do not serve mammon. Do not give your heart away. Do not commit idolatry. He's not saying to give in to apathy either. Don't work. Don't have pursuits in your life.

The Reality of Anxiety

Anxiety is a very real human thing. Do you guys know that? It's not simply in your head. It's actually a full body experience, which is fascinating. Adrenal glands—huge part of that. Anxiety is a chemical manifestation that triggers the fight-or-flight response in your body. I don't think Yeshua is saying you'll never have a fight-or-flight moment in your life. Those things are really important. If you've ever had one, you know. It's kind of amazing when a car almost pulls out in front of you and you slam on your brakes. Everything slows down and you make a split-second decision to turn the wheel to miss them and go into the emergency lane. Anybody had a similar experience? Yeah, fight or flight. Guess what? You had some anxiety in that moment, and there's not a darn thing you could have done about it. It's your body working the way that God made it to work. Cortisol is an amazing thing. We'll talk about that later.

But just like sexual desire—when we spoke about that Jesus and sex teaching, sexual desire is something else that God gave us. And when it becomes disordered and utilized outside its intended scope, anxiety too can turn into something destructive. And I looked up the statistics. When I say that anxiety can turn into something destructive, I know roughly how many people in this room understand exactly what I'm saying.

You guys know that Yeshua worried and had anxiety? Oh yeah. I'm waiting for the email to pop up on my phone right now because I said that. Yeshua had worry and anxiety a couple of times in the biblical narrative as recorded by his disciples.

When Lazarus Died

When Lazarus died, he saw Mary in pain and mourning—the women mourning—and he cried. But that's not the same as having anxiety. [John 11:32](#). When Jesus saw her weeping and the Jews who had come along with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in the spirit and troubled. "Where have you laid him?" he asked. "Come and see, Lord," they replied. And then the shortest verse in the Bible is "Jesus wept." Troubled, deeply stirred—there was anxiety.

How about in the garden? Was his worry here self-directed or was it externally directed towards others? It says that he saw everybody mourning. I would petition that he was worried about other people—that he was sad to see this gut-wrenching experience for them.

But in the garden, we see something different. Garden of Gethsemane. Yeshua did have anxiety in the garden before he was crucified. That's exactly why he was sweating blood. "God, Father, if there's any way at all. I know it's about to happen. The fullness of the sin and transgression and rebellion against your kingdom is going to come upon me. I am going to bear the weight. I am going to die. It's going to be horrible because it has to be for your love to be fully revealed to the world. Father, but if there's any other way, here's the cup. Please take it. Take it."

That was self-directed. He was worried about himself. Huge lesson here.

[Mark 14:33](#). It says, "He took Peter and James and John along with him, and he began to be deeply distressed and troubled." This is right before his weeping began. Deeply distressed and troubled. Here Yeshua has anxiety for himself. But the lesson that we learn here is: what did he do with it? He goes into prayer, and he gives his fear to God. He takes his fear and takes it directly to his Father.

And it's fascinating because everything that was about to happen to him—everything. He goes into prayer. He gives it to his Father. It's the same thing that Paul says in [Philippians 4](#): Supplication and prayer. Don't be anxious. If things are going to happen, go into prayer. Go into prayer.

From Anxiety to Prayer

That worry and anxiety and breaking-down moment that Yeshua had, that fight-or-flight moment in the garden—notice that you cannot see one ounce of that the next day when he's on the cross. It didn't show at all. Why? Because he was teaching us what to do. You give it to God. You go into prayer. That's not a last resort. That's a first response. You go into prayer.

And so, I would assert that the question is not: How do we not worry? Should we worry? Do we worry? The question really comes down to: What do you do with your worry and where is

your worry directed? This is what Yeshua is auditing. And here Yeshua is speaking to an audience on a hillside in Galilee who literally may have been worried about what clothes they were going to wear that morning as they came up the mount.

The Same Anxiety

We're going to hear this guy, this new rabbi with a fulfilling interpretation of Torah teaching on the mountainside. Very, very, very likely some of them were wondering what shirt they were going to have to wear. And I dare say that none of us got up this morning and were worried about not having clothing to wear to services. I dare say. And Yeshua is applying this teaching to a group that does not have anything, but look how in our society, even with us here today, the same thing applies to us who have everything.

Now, some of us here may cringe a little bit when I say you have everything. I don't have everything. I struggle with things. Okay, let me put it this way. If your income in the United States is \$10,000 a year, you are richer than 84% of the 6 billion people who live on this earth currently. But it's fascinating because he's addressing anxiety of people who have nothing, and yet we still have the same effect of the same anxiety even though we have much. More likely you were not worried today if you had a shirt to wear to services. You were more likely worrying about if the clothing that you had was in style or trendy to show up at services today. I dare say at least a handful, probably not all of us, just a handful of you had some anxiety this morning about verse 25: "I therefore tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat, what you will drink, nor your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing?"

See, in Yeshua's day, this was a very literal circumstance. God, if you don't help me right now, I'm going to starve to death. And today we have the same, if not greater, anxiety, but not with how little food we have, it's with how much we have. Isn't that twisted? Isn't that amazing? In a very negative kind of way. We have the same anxiety. A huge part of our culture is driven by anxiety regarding food and dieting, which translates to image, which translates to vanity. It is what it is. Which translates to the idolatry that this world offers for us to worship. Why are you obsessing about your body? Why are you overwhelmed with anxiety about your body and how it looks? "Is not your life more than food?"—this is what Yeshua says. And you, as a created being and image bearer of God, are more than what you eat.

The sadness here—the sadness here in the overtones of what Yeshua is saying—is that being healthy is a great pursuit. It is. But this is not the pursuit that drives our culture. Being healthy

is not a pursuit that drives the culture that we live in. The sadness here is that millions of men and women are plagued with how disgusting they are when they look in the mirror. And they say horrible things to themselves when they look in the mirror because the world says that they should be something else and look like something else and achieve some other status. But yet they're perfect in the way that God made them. It is desirable to be appealing and attractive to others. It's a very big desire for us. But this is driven by a very broken pursuit. And it's driven by the need to be loved by a world that does not care about you. We're not talking about health. This is the broken love that our world offers to us. And here Yeshua is essentially saying, if you are anxious about the vanity of keeping up with the culture that never gives peace and commitment back to you, you will never arrive. You will never arrive. And you will give your heart and you will give your health away to a god that is not real, who does not love you, and who will let you down. Worse—worse, you will fail to live as the fully human image of God that God himself created you to be because you've given your heart to another pursuit.

Where Is Your Heart?

Do you see how very quickly anxiety and idolatry begin to merge together? Where your heart is, that is what you will be loyal to. That is where your treasure will be. That is what your worship will be. If you have everything that you want, you're worried about losing it. If you don't have everything that you want, you're worried about having it. And this cycle will distort your very pursuits in life. Yeshua is establishing once again the same thing he said throughout the entire Sermon on the Mount. Chapter 5 is all about what keeping the Torah, like a [Jeremiah 31](#) person, looks like—what keeping the Torah from your heart looks like. And now he's diving deeper into relationships and how you exist in this world as an ambassador of God. Where is your heart? Where is your heart? What are you giving it over to?

Anxiety disorders affect officially about 20% of adults in the United States. Approximately 40 million to 42 million people, according to the National Institute of Mental Health. But the estimate is much higher than that, probably closer to 30 or even 40 percent, because how many of you guys have ever been stressed in your life? Okay, don't raise your hands for the next question. How many of you guys actually went to a doctor about it and was like, yeah, life's stressful right now, and then he diagnoses you with some type of anxiety disorder because it's gotten so bad that it is actually carving new pathways in your brain, and it's just a cycle that keeps getting worse and worse, and then he puts a code in a computer, and then that gets registered to the National Institute of Mental Health surveys. Many people don't go to doctors

and are never diagnosed and live with something like this without having the tools to combat it. Probably 30 to 40% of people who suffer from severe anxiety. About half. About half of us.

Most of Which Never Happened

A famous French philosopher from the 1500s, Michel de Montaigne, once said that my life has been filled with terrible misfortune. Terrible misfortune. Most of which never happened. If you're giggling, you've just given yourself away, because you know. You know. You know. My life has been so consumed with misfortune. Oh, and most of it never even happened.

Research at Cornell University in Ithaca, New York studied people over an extended period of time and found that 85%—there are little subcategories, but 85%—of what this group of people worried about never happened. Can anybody relate to that? Have you ever gotten so torn up? Okay, let's say your boss passes you in the hallway. You're under a lot of stress. He says, hey, I need to see you in my office in about 15 minutes, and walks away.

Instantly, in a culture like ours that fuels our pursuits with anxiety, what's your first thought? Oh, I'm about to get a raise, right? No, because that doesn't cause anxiety. That causes excitement. What are you thinking? I'm going to get in trouble. I wonder if it was like that report that I messed up two weeks ago. He said everything was fine, but maybe it's not. Maybe it went to administration and the big boss found out and maybe I'm making too much because I've been here for over five years and they need to refresh and maybe they're going to fire me to hire someone in. This is the excuse they've been looking for. And maybe I'm going to go home and have to tell my wife that I got fired, and my kids are going to ask me tomorrow why I'm at home and not at work, and then we're going to lose the house, and then my wife's going to leave me, and she's going to take the kids because now I don't have a job, and then I'm going to be living under a bridge, or out on the streets. I don't know what's going to happen. Anybody ever done something like that? Yeah, I know hands aren't being raised. This is something I've struggled with. I go to worst-case scenario by default. It's the culture that we're raised in.

The Reality

And then you walk into the office, you knock on the door, you're timid. Maybe if you're like me, if you're anxious, you don't want to sit down because that's like a permanence. You can't just run away. So you stand at the door, ready and defensive, and the boss is like, please have a seat. So you sit down and your boss says, hey, by the way, you're doing a great job in those reports that you handed me a couple weeks ago. We're opening up a new position, and I argued that we

didn't need the new position. Actually, it's not that much work. You're already doing the work. So what I'd like for you to do is bump up your work about 10% to 15% a week. It would save us from hiring a new full-time employee, and I'd like to give you a raise of \$10,000 a year to do it.

85% of the anxiety that you have is about things that never come to fruition. 79% of that group stated that for the 15% of worries that actually happened, they handled them a lot better than they thought they would. Let's say you do get in trouble, but it's not nearly as bad as it was supposed to. It did happen, but you handled it fine and you're good. That's roughly 95% to 97%. When you combine those numbers, it's roughly 97% of your worries that either don't happen or you handle better than expected. You worry about things that you shouldn't. 97% of the time.

Why is that a big deal? What is Yeshua's number one focus on the Sermon on the Mount that we've explored over the past two months now?

The Kingdom is Here

What's his one thing that he's teaching? The kingdom. The kingdom. What about it? That the kingdom is manifesting where? Far from now? Right now. Is it far away? No, it's right here. It's here among you now. The kingdom is here. How can you be a part of the mission of being an ambassador of the king, King Yeshua, and his kingdom when you are spending 97% of your energy worrying about stuff that has nothing to do with your role as an ambassador of God's kingdom? 97% of your passion and anxiety, worry, energy, directed at something that has nothing to do with your role as an ambassador of God's kingdom. When you put it that way, does it seem like serving two masters is something that we could do very, very, very quickly without realizing it?

Stop Wasting Your Life

Yeshua is saying, stop wasting your life being focused on things that do not matter. Yeshua is not surprised that most of us here today have some form of anxiety issues. Could be mild, could be not. He's not surprised. He wasn't surprised when the Galileans sitting on the side of the mountain were anxious—whether they're going to eat or what kind of clothes they're going to put on or whatever. He wasn't surprised at that either. What he's trying to reveal to you is you are wasting your life worrying about things that you as a Christian ought not waste your life worrying about because there's a lot of work to be done. And you're not available to do that work if you're preoccupied with every single fear and anxiety that this world is training you, training you to rehearse in your head over and over and over again.

[Galatians 1:10](#), he says—he says, pause, nails it. "Am I now trying to win the approval of human beings or of God?" Where's your heart going? Why is your heart going that direction? Am I trying to please people? Am I trying to please the world around me? If I were still trying to please people, I would not be a servant of Christ because you can't be both. Yeshua just taught this sermon. He's just taught this like in the last paragraph of chapter 6. You cannot give yourself to two masters. You cannot serve, pursue, and give your heart to the world and still be a servant of Messiah. This could be the vanity of pursuing the praise of the world, or it could be the vanity of being a narcissist and having those self-driven tendencies and agendas. It's all vanity, vanity, vanity.

Look at the Birds

Look here, here's what Yeshua says. He says this: Look at the birds. So Yeshua, when he was talking about loving your neighbor, right, loving your enemies, and we're like, why? And he starts going like, because of the weather. What about the weather? Because the rain comes and gets everybody wet. What does that mean? It's like God allows rain to come on everybody. God allows the sun to shine on everybody. Yeshua has a tendency to look at God's good creation to tell us about God's will and God's agenda and God's mission for the world and God's character. And so he's doing it once again. He's saying, look at the birds of the air. Can you imagine him saying this? He's talking about having this serious discussion with it. Don't worry about these things. What do you mean? Don't worry about these things. Hey, look at the bird. Look at the birds in the air. They neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, yet your heavenly Father feeds them.

Solomon had some clothes, and Solomon's temple was magnificent that he built. And the palace that he built was amazing. And the armory surrounding Judea was fantastically built. It was incredible. But they don't have nothing on the tulip. Did you see the tulip bloom this morning? Oh, what glory of God. She was just such a poet here. But if God so clothed the grass of the fields, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you? Or you have little faith? You have little faith.

So Yeshua's making the point, looking around at God's creation. He's not teaching that birds don't worry. Birds do worry. Anyone ever had a pet bird? They seem annoying, but birds get flustered very quickly. They worry about that neighborhood cat. Birds have worries. They worry about people who come too close to their nests. Anyone ever been swooped by a robin in spring? That bird had their adrenal glands or whatever they got kicked in, cortisol and a bunch

of other stuff was released, and that bird didn't have to choose between fight or flight. They did both towards you. Bird had anxiety. You got too close.

Yeshua's not teaching that birds don't starve to death. Birds die. They fly under your window, dead. Some of them die of starvation, disease. What is Yeshua saying here? Yeshua's showing us the birds, and he's saying, look. God created the birds for a purpose, with instincts. And look at how these birds are doing the thing that God created them to do. They're doing exactly what God created them to do, intended them to do.

The Bird's Instinct, Not Its Worry

The birds don't wake up and replay the fear of starving to death over and over and over and over in their heads to start their day. Even if they're hungry, they wake up and they sing, and they chirp in the morning, and they sing these beautiful songs, because that's instinct, and that's exactly what God created them to do. They don't sit in their nest and allow the cortisol to soak their brains and freeze them in a moment of anxiety and just sit there in frozen fear to fly out of the nest. What am I going to do? The bird jumps out of the nest, and they go looking for the worm.

When they fly around looking for the worm, they don't say, wow, I just can't believe one of my feathers fell out of my wing. Now I look like such a cheese ball with one little thing here, and everyone's going to make fun of me. And maybe I should go get a worm over here so I can avoid all the other ones over there. If I could just lose these three ounces, I would just look slim. Cardinal Secret just released their annual water bird catalog, and I do not look like the swans in there. Birds don't worry about this. They don't think these things. They do what they do. They do what they do.

Birds wake up. Sometimes they starve. Sometimes they die. Sometimes they get eaten by the cat. But their pursuit is driven by the instincts that God gave them, the model and the agenda that God put in them as his creation. Their agenda is to be a bird without worrying about anything else. I'm fascinated. I'm listening to an audiobook right now that was recommended to me. It's by Robert Sapolsky. I bought it and started listening to it, thinking it was just going to be a little three or four-hour audiobook. It's called *Why Zebras Don't Get Ulcers*.

Stress Will Kill You

To my surprise, this is a 17-hour audiobook. There was an astrophysicist who did that big old long TV series called *Cosmos*. His audiobook is like 14 hours. *Why Zebras Don't Get Ulcers*, 17

hours long. So I'm listening to it and it's fascinating. It's fascinating. It's called *Why Zebras Don't Get Ulcers: The Acclaimed Guide to Stress, Stress-Related Diagnosis and Coping*. It's a very fascinating book. It takes a look at the origins of when we discovered the damage that stress does to our bodies. I was enlightened: stress will kill you. Okay, I mean, because, you know, your heart beats faster or something. No, it ain't got nothing to do with your heart. It'll kill you. Stress will kill you. It will kill you.

And he talks about a professor by the name of Hans Selye, or Selle, or Selye, Hans Selye, in the 1930s. And he was the one that discovered that stress can kill you. And what happened was one of his peers—an up-and-coming professor—had to make a big break. He needed to start writing dissertations and papers and assertions and essays and theories. And his peer extracted some kind of an ovarian extract, right? And he was going on and on about this new discovery that he's going to use with this, yada, yada.

The Rat Experiments

So Hans says, well, hey, let me do a follow-up and do the tests on it. I got rats. I got lots of rats. I don't know what to do with them, but I'll stick them in. We'll see what happens. So he takes these extracts, and he starts sticking these rats, right? Because that's what we do is science. It's great. See what happens to the rats. Document it. And he realized after a couple months, the rats had peptic ulcers, stomach ulcers. The rats had enlarged adrenal glands, and their immune system, the cells, it was just shredding. They were falling apart. The rats were dying. He's like, man, this extract stuff seems dangerous, but I should do my due diligence, and I'll get another set of rats, and I will inject them with saline.

So he starts injecting these other rats with saline. A couple months later, saline solution, harmless. Opens them up, peptic ulcers, enlarged adrenal glands, and the immune system was falling apart, just frail. This is not caused by my friend's extract. Hans was not an animal kind of guy. Hans didn't know how to hold a mouse, a rat. He'd pick them up, try to stick them, stick their paw, stick them. He'd drop the rats on the floor. Traumatized, they'd scurry away. Oh, I've got to pick you up. Running around the office chasing them, getting the broom, sweeping them all day long. Hans didn't know what to do with a rat.

I've been stressing these rats out quite a much the past couple of months. So he has one last experiment he does. He goes to the roof in the middle of winter. He throws a bunch of rats in a cage up there.

The Rat Study and the Reality of Stress

Can't get out. He goes to the boiler room. It's really hot. He throws a bunch of rats in there. Can't get out. Then in his office, he intentionally keeps rats in a nice climate and atmosphere, but he forces exercise on them and surgical procedures. Very anxious lifestyle. Guess which rats had peptic ulcers and large adrenal glands and immune systems that were so frail, just falling apart. Because they were all forced into environments that caused exaggerated and constant stress.

A word that had just started to get used to describe what we call stress. Stress is actually a physics term. Anxiety. Fascinating. And when we discover from this research what stress does to our body, we discover something that became known as general adaptation syndrome, what we call the stress response now. In a wide variety of circumstances, your body will respond to stress and stressors. The term is taken from physics. When stressors activate your body, your adrenal glands begin pumping out those hormones, specifically cortisol, and they begin soaking your brain. When this happens for an extended amount of time—it's only supposed to happen for 20, 30 minutes at a time, enough for you to get away—you get sick. It's not just that your heart races. You're going to have heart failure. You get sick. Your body goes into self-destruct mode. Stress will and does kill you.

Giving Your Life Away to Anxiety

And Yeshua is trying to teach you this: that you are literally giving your life away for nothing. You are giving your health and longevity away to another God and another kingdom instead of giving it to the supreme God and his kingdom.

And guys, I'm one of you. I live in this culture. It's a fight. Some things you don't get stressed out about. You got that. But then there's these triggers. Triggers. High anxiety. Being a father of a toddler. Russell and I were driving out of my driveway today. I looked at him and we got in the car. I started backing out and I slammed on the brakes and I opened the door. I said, hold on. Put it in park. I walked around to the back of my car to make sure my toddler hadn't opened the front door, somehow managed to get down the stairs and behind my car before I backed out of the driveway. That's something I got to deal with because I looked away for two seconds and something could have happened. Anxiety. Senseless—there's no way he could have made it there.

The Bait of Conspiracies

I'm here with you to try to understand how I can overcome the bait that our culture gives us. And I find it amazing because we, among Christian and Messianic fellowships, guys, we love conspiracies, don't we? Don't we love some good conspiracies? Oh, man. We love worrying about some unknown group of people controlling the world or some government conspiracy that's trying to poison us that is completely outside of our control and should not be a part of our focus as part of God's kingdom.

How I know that this is unhealthy is because in the first century, if Christian believers were concerned with the Roman empire strapping chemical sprayers on horse chariots and spraying people with aluminum, they would have intensified their aggression regarding the gospel. It would have been even more radical than what it was. But it wouldn't have been directed toward the Roman empire. The conspiracy that chariots have sprayers mounted underneath wheel bearings, that chariot drivers are all part of a big conspiracy—they wouldn't be concerned about that. They wouldn't be concerned about that if that were true. They'd be concerned about this: alright, we need to spread the good news of the gospel and hope that no matter what happens in this world right here and now, Jesus won. We need to get that message out now.

Natural Health as an Idol

We also love natural stuff, don't we? We love it. Scrape my knee, go into the house, you know, some Neosporin? No, no. Only lavender touches this body. We love oil stuff. We're a doTERRA home ourselves. Hashtag smell test. So stupid. Sorry. But what's amazing is we love healthy stuff. We are this crunchy granola. That's the phrase, right?

But what's amazing is when this type of lifestyle breeds fear of modern medicine. When this type of lifestyle begins to cause disruptions in your focus from day to day, when it becomes an idol in one's life, when I say that, I mean this type of lifestyle becomes something that we give our heart and all of our anxiety to, which fuels anxiety and stress in our lives as a result, thus distracting us from the mission that God's called us to be focused on and sold out for with all of our heart. We have to eat healthy. I'm not talking about that. I'm talking about beyond any type of sensible scope.

When this type of lifestyle has us worried about GMOs, when we really have no idea what the term truly means other than what truthnaturalnews.com says, whether or not that non-organic apple that I ate is going to give me cancer. True story. Whether or not there's a safe ingredient that's been approved and is government-regulated, but it's an ingredient that is part of some

herbicides in farming communities and it's in some of our foods. Gosh, it's going to cause brain dysfunction.

Is this corn on the cob on my plate going to disrupt my DNA because it was grown in a specific state? I saw a YouTube video about it. They said all corn grown from this state. Guys, I'm going to tell you something right now. You will die sooner than someone who drinks soda every single day and is not overwhelming their life with constant fear and anxiety of the world around them. You will not live. It's not going to happen. Yeah, but I'm eating healthy. And your body is falling apart. Parts of your body are working overtime right now, and it is poison to you.

Can't I just get some non-GMO anxiety? No. It doesn't quite work like that, guys. It does not work like that. If you're so absorbed with worry and anxiety about conspiracy theories and what is going to happen next, what could happen, guys—the news is baiting you and making you an addict of fear. You are being baited with a drug of fear.

The Fear Addiction

And when the news or con artists on TV or YouTube tell you the most absurd things just to get you scared, it puts you in a place where anxiety is created and becomes recurring and prolonged in your life. Those stressors don't stop. They're activated. And it puts you in a place where it's making you sick. And then one of them—true story—tells you that there's a non-alien tainted vitamin set that he'll sell you that will keep your brain clear from the chemtrails. Literally profiting off your fear and anxiety. This is the culture that you live in and that you are a member of.

If you're hooked on doom and gloom prophecies, your heart is distracted from being an ambassador of God's kingdom. You have chosen your master. Your heart is being distracted from showing forth the love and the peace and the patience that gives hope of a king. And this king has declared on the cross that we have nothing to fear in this world. Are you giving your heart away?

Clinical Anxiety Is Physical

I also want to say because there are good-willed people out there that end up being destroyed through ignorance—I've done it before. Clinical anxiety is a physical diagnosis. It is not just in your head. It's physically in your head. When we live in a culture that teaches us to become anxious about all kinds of things and stresses, we carve paths just like we do with lust, with

fear and anxiety. We carve new paths, literal carvings in our brain pathways. So that fear and anxiety, that trigger can come over and over and over again.

You ever met someone that cannot stop worrying? You just tell them they've come to a place in their life where it will not stop. It will not stop. And you tell them, listen, just calm down. And they look at you and they're like, you don't understand. It is a very real, very physical thing that happens. And there are tools to combat it.

Sometimes people go to the doctor. Sometimes people take medication for depression and anxiety. If you currently take medication for anxiety or depression, do not ever let someone who is not a doctor—that means an MD or DO behind their name—tell you to stop taking the medication and sniff lavender. Do not. Medication is not a cure. It's a tool. It's a tool to help you put your hands back on the wheel of the ship that is out of control, that has been allowed to go out of control, so that you can start the process of getting your brain back to normal. It is a tool. It's real. And many people, many people in our culture have come to that point in their life. And it's okay. And thank God that they're making the steps to get a hold of it.

When Fear Hurts Others

Sometimes we tend to hurt people because of our fear. I was at a conference two or three years ago. A friend of mine who had a table there, it was made known publicly that his nephew, who was two or two and a half years old, had cancer, a very aggressive form of cancer. And chemotherapy is like, this is how we fix this. And he was going through a journey of chemotherapy. He's strong. He's alive today, healthy. It's amazing. It's an amazing testimony of God's good graciousness and strength and courage.

Anxiety Out of Control

But there were actually two ladies who came up and they said to him, chemotherapy is dangerous, right? He looks at them because he works in a hospital. He's like, mm-hmm, it's dangerous. And that frankincense oil that we peddle and profit off selling in a pyramid-style company kills cancer, right? You know it kills cancer. Chemotherapy is really bad for him, but we can sell you some frankincense oil that will cure that cancer. He's rubbing it all over him. That's what they should be giving the child instead of chemotherapy. Chemotherapy is very dangerous. You know what else is really dangerous? Aggressive stages of cancer, very dangerous.

I love some oils. I use this rose ointment oil. It's a blend ointment thing. I think Mary Catherine got it for me. I use it for my diabetic sites and sores from pricking my fingers all the time. It's amazing. Lavender is great. Frankincense is amazing for sores and stuff. Stuff works. I mean, I don't know how. It's like magic. Stuff works. It's great. I fully support it. But those are examples of how anxiety looks like when it's out of control.

Why Zebras Don't Get Ulcers

Sapolsky, in his book, *The Zebra Book*, it's amazing. It's very educational. I love it. He speaks of how zebras don't get ulcers because they don't have prolonged anxiety. Who knew? I summed up the first quarter of the book for you right there. Who knew?

Zebras don't. When a lion pops out, their hormones kick in and they have two choices to make. They can run away or they can get eaten. Right then and there is the time to worry about which decision is going to be best for my longevity in this nice open field of Africa. They are not worrying when they wake up if they're going to be fast enough in case they encounter a lion today. They're not grazing out in the field thinking, man, I haven't worked out in a while. If that lion comes out right now, I'm not going to make it. I need to go to the gym every morning. I need to get into racquetball. I need to get my cardio. Zebras aren't worried about that.

Zebras are not hoarding whatever they find. Zebras eat hay, right? Grass, grass. Horses eat hay, same thing. I don't know. These animals don't take the food that they find and start hoarding it in an underground cellar beside the tree that they nestle behind at night. They're not like sharpening their teeth and keeping an array of weapons for these lions. They're just being what God created them to be within the scope that he created them to be. They're not worried about it. When something happens, they need to address it. They live by instincts. And they live with the mission and pursuit that God himself has assigned them to live.

Made to Be Image Bearers

Guys, as human beings, we were destined to live in pursuit of the mission and agenda that God has assigned us to live. You were meant to be a fully human being focused on God's good creation and revealing God's kingdom to the world around you. Your mission in life is to be an image bearer. When people see you, they should see God's character. They should see Yeshua. They should see God's love, justice, kindness, peace, patience. They should see that.

You can't be a spokesperson and a campaigner for the kingdom if you're sitting at home frozen, wondering when the government takeover, NWO is going to pop out of the ground and nuke

everybody or something. It's impossible. It does not work. That's energy given to something else. It's a heart that's been given to something else. It's emotions, passion that is given to something else. Something that I would dare say pushes back the kingdom of God. Ask me how I know. Ask me how I know.

The Lilies Don't Worry

The lilies—it's a generic word in Greek for many different flowers—are gorgeous. And every single day, the sun comes out and the flowers, they open up to receive the sunlight. The tulip does not spend all night wondering if the sun's going to come out tomorrow. I don't know. I heard that the sun's not going to come out tomorrow. What if it doesn't come out tomorrow? Then we're not going to get the photons we need. Okay? But it might come out the next day. What if it doesn't? You don't know. What if it doesn't? Then we're going to starve to death. Then we're going to die. Then we're going to wilt. And it's going to be awful. Then we're going to die this slow, agonizing death.

The lilies don't do that. They don't. They are completely dependent on God to meet their every need in an environment that they do not have control over. Do we believe in the providence of God or don't we? Flowers don't go to the marketplace trying to find the dress that's going to make them more attractive when they pop out of the ground tomorrow. It just doesn't happen.

And yet, and yet, one traveler coming from Galilee to Jerusalem may step off the path. One step. The donkey carrying the cart, the wheels go off the track. All over. All over. That flower lived the life exactly that God intended it to live. Doing the work that God intended it to do. And it was fully focused and manifest fully in that agenda for its life.

Yeshua's Hard Words About the Kingdom

Yeshua's words are tough. They're tough. Yeshua wants his followers to be truly present here, now in this moment, right here, right now, working at this present task, celebrating the goodness of God now. You're here today? Praise God! Praise God for the goodness that he has shown to you today. Yeah, but I might not live tomorrow or the day after, the day after. You might not. That step off the path, that wheel might come. Yeah, there's a time to live, time to die. It's biblical. You wasting today not fulfilling the celebration of God's goodness is not going to change that wheel coming. It's difficult.

We have quite the battle in the culture that we live in. Many times, many times, what our hearts go to, anxiety, can be used as almost like a barometer for who one's God is. This is who you've

decided to give it all to. That should be convicting because it sure is with me. Therefore, do not be anxious. Saying, what shall we drink? What shall we wear? For the pagans? Everybody say, pagans! The pagans seek after these things, and your heavenly Father knows what you need, everything that you need.

But seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself, sufficient for today and its own trouble. Tackle what you have control over today.

So Yeshua is revealing to us the source of the gravitational pull of his teaching about anxiety. The mission, the gospel, the kingdom. This is what everything is revolving around. And he's saying that if your pursuit is the world, Nicholas Wright said it best, if your pursuit is the world, the moths will take it from you in your hands. But if your pursuit is for God, then you will have everything that you need of the world added into your life.

This is the teaching of this rabbi 2,000 years ago. Yeshua speaking to his disciples then on that mount, and he's speaking to his disciples here today. And he's asking, do you value life more than the kingdom and righteousness? And worship team, you guys can...

Yeshua isn't encouraging his disciples to be reckless, which is what these verses are typically portrayed as. He's calling them to follow him and to see that following him, or in our own text, seeking first the kingdom and righteousness reshapes what you value most in your life. Reshapes what sets off those adrenal glands, reshapes the priorities and what you give your heart to. He invites you, follow me and just see what happens. See what happens. Follow me fully.

More Than Survival

Money matters. Money matters, especially to get things done in a capitalistic world, right? Provisions, they matter. Food, water, clothing, I mean, they're kind of survival pieces. They matter. But matter is not the same as worship. Matter is not the same as worship. These things matter. But the kingdom matters more. And this is the consistent push on the Sermon on the Mount. Everything revolves around this.

And God knows you, and God knows what you need. God's provision is supreme. He knows exactly what you need here today. And God is taking care of you. And God has created you to live as his image bearers, living the life that is fully immersed and focused on him. That's what he's created you to do. Do not worry about tomorrow. You're not going to be able to manipulate God's providence. The pagans think that. Don't do as the pagans do.

God has placed you here and now to live here and now. God has given you a mission and it is to be reborn in the sense of his love through Yeshua. And you live out what that means to be fully human to the world. So I don't know what's going on in your life today. You are likely in the same boat that I am, being born into a culture where worry and fear fuels your motivations towards the things that do not matter in your life.

Yeshua is inviting you to realize something. And he's inviting you to realize that God loves you and God is taking care of you. Don't give your heart away. His providence is supreme and you cannot add a single moment to your life that he has not ordained.

The Antidote

Follow Yeshua's example. When you have these bouts of anxiety about things that you cannot control, not your last resort, your first response is to go to prayer and hand that fear over to the Father. Share it with the Father right then and there. That is the antidote for anxiety.

So please stand as we conclude services. We're going to conclude services the same way that we entered in and that's through worship. And I love that. And so if, do we have a prayer team today?

Receive Prayer

Guys, we have a prayer team over here. If you've never realized just how much your heart carries the weight of stress and anxiety, I invite you to come receive prayer. This is what we're here to do as a community. Our prayer team is off to the side here, and you will find someone who can and will support you and lift you up before God. You'll likely find someone you can pray alongside who can look at you and say, "me too." I invite you to take advantage of that. Let's pray together.

A Prayer for Our Hearts

Alvina Malkinu, our Father, our King, Father, we thank you for this time together. And we ask, Father, that you would reveal to us today where our hearts are. What focuses have we allowed to engulf our lives? What are we giving up by allowing our hearts to be overtaken by the things of this world, whatever those may be? Show us today, Father. Speak to us as your people. Guide us and give us wisdom. In the name of Yeshua. Shalom.

I'm Matthew Vandrells and I hope you enjoyed this message. Founded in Truth exists to cultivate a fellowship of image bearers that live the redeemed life only Yeshua can give. If this ministry has been a blessing to you, we would love to hear from you. Send us an email through the contact form on our website and tell us how God has used this ministry to edify your faith and relationship with Him. If you'd like to see more messages like this one, subscribe to our YouTube channel by clicking [here](#). If you'd like to donate to this ministry and be a part of what God is doing through it, you can donate through our online giving portal [here](#). We thank you for your continued support, and we look forward to next time. Shalom.

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