How the Christian life Speaks into Anxiety for You and Your Family

David Sanders 4/10/20

Sermon Summary

David Sanders is a former pastor and now a counsellor with EAP Services Ltd – an "employee assistance program…to enhance staff wellbeing, development and performance".

In Mark Wallace's introduction of Northcross Church's Mental Awareness Month, he mentioned that 1 in 5 New Zealanders (including Christians) live with some form of depression. It is pertinent we look into the problem with a Christian perspective, which we will do for four weeks. Both the secular world and Christians need mental health guidance.

David stated that the Bible has many areas to restore mental and spiritual wellbeing. After all, if Satan can disrupt a human's equilibrium, he will. The simple reason is that we cannot cope – initially. **We will become whatever we focus on!**

God's purpose is all about getting us to see things differently. Anxiety in any number of forms is the number one problem humans are faced with. It immediately causes us to focus on ourselves. That is contrary to scripture: "Put on the full armour of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes" (Ephesians 6:11).

The first thing that happens when a problem breeds anxiety within us is that our belief changes to: "I can't handle this". The body translates this as **DANGER.** This is a loss of belief in yourself – the belief that you can protect yourself and that you will be okay. If you focus on **not** being okay, you will become exactly that.

Example: There is a mouse (rat, spider, cockroach) in the house. Are you okay or NOT okay? In times of trouble ("Don't panic, Mr. Mannering") your head must be your best friend; otherwise, it will listen to your emotions. Do you believe God is interested in your mental health? Understanding mental health problems is about **NOT** harming yourself and the people around you. God wants you to be an overcomer. He wants you to be wise and make good choices, not an unthinking fool (Proverbs 22:17- 24:34 is full of good advice.) **Remember – you become what you focus on**.

If you are troubled with anxiety, what is it that you believe in at that moment? And that belief – ask yourself, is it helpful for this moment? God's Word can build you up; it is designed to make you robust. God has designed your body to correct itself. If you seek negativity, your body will run down.

Our entertainment and news place too many anxiety-forming thoughts in our minds. Bullying likewise. When the bully comes to you, how do you react? You need to take control of your life. You do not need to be suffocated with the humiliation; otherwise you will fail.

How do you restore that? God says do not fear because He is with us (Isaiah 41:10). “Count it all joy” when we are challenged is part of the teaching in James (1:2).

What about children? Sometimes they exhibit fear in things they experience. The real problem must be discovered. Unlike an adult who can overcome their own anxieties by telling themselves it is okay to feel this way, it is more difficult with a child. Sympathy, gentleness and trust must be given by the adult; it cannot be brushed off with “Don’t be silly” or the like. Yet the answer to both adult and child is in the **okayness** of what they feel. However, the critical step is to work on ways to overcome the problem. Managing anxiety and stress is all about **knowing that you are okay** with the storm battering you. But how are you going to respond?

If what you are working on within your mind is NOT working, what then can you change that will work?

Figure out what you believe in. Christians: Is what God says in the Bible true? Are your problems really an opportunity for you to discover something new? How about rejoicing when these moments open to you. (See Philippians 4:4-7).

Family and culture are extremely important to children. Young people must learn that social media can be devastatingly negative to their perception of life.

One of life’s important teachings is that the loudest voice will dominate. Yes, listen to it if you must, but think of what is being said, and discuss it before you swallow it and get carried away with the mob’s culture.

NOTE: Some of David Sanders’ books on the subject of depression and mental health can be found on the church website under the **CARE** section.

A caveat to read before undertaking the questions.

The following is from the Psycom website:

If you ask someone to name two common mental health problems, chances are they will think of anxiety and depression. Despite the fact that they are commonly referenced in conversation, people still struggle sometimes to determine the difference between these two conditions. This is because many people with anxiety also develop depression and vice versa. Roughly 50% of people diagnosed with depression with also be diagnosed with an anxiety disorder. However, it’s important to get an accurate diagnosis in order to treat the correct conditions.

Many people with depression may experience what is known as “anxious distress” in addition to their low mood. People with anxious distress often feel tense, restless, and have trouble concentrating because they worry so much. They are deeply afraid that something bad is going to happen or that they might lose control of themselves. People who experience anxious distress with depression may be at higher risk for suicide or need more intensive treatment, so it is important to identify these symptoms along with the depression.

Above all, it’s important to remember to let a doctor or mental health professional evaluate you to see if your symptoms meet the criteria for a depressive disorder or an anxiety disorder.

Discussion Questions

1. Why should the church be focusing on mental health?

2. Have you ever suffered serious childhood anxiety or fear? Describe the situation. How was it resolved?

3. Do you think anxiety differs from depression? Explain.

4. Dave Sanders uses the term “okayness”. What do you understand by this term? How would you explain it?

5. God wants you to be an overcomer of any form of mental imbalance. Look at Proverbs 22:17 – 24:22. Pick out one verse that speaks to you on this matter. Explain why.

6. How have you managed anxieties that manifested during the Covid-19 outbreak?

7. How is the human body designed to correct itself? In times of trouble, how is your head your best friend or worst enemy? How can God’s Word make you more robust?

8. How can you help promote hope and health for the church?

Suggestion for prayer: Include in your prayer time any person you know who is suffering from severe anxiety or depression.