

GO DEEPER

use these questions for further study

Do you see anxiety as a problem in our world? Where? Do you see it as a problem in your own life? If so, how?

Read Philippians 4:4-8 - How do you respond to the command to not be anxious? Does this feel realistic? What about Jesus' command in Mtt 6:25-34?

Read 1Kings 19:1-18 - Notice all the ways God provides for Elijah's physical needs (food, drink, sleep, touch, quiet, etc.).

Do you tend to think of anxiety and fear as purely mental, or do you recognize the physical components of them as well?

Why does this matter?

Does focusing on physical realities feel "unspiritual" to you?

Why or why not?

Why is it important to tend to our physical bodies as part of our spiritual growth and whole-life discipleship in following Jesus?

Choose an embodied anxiety-reducing practice below to focus on.

Eat - Sugary foods & drinks and simple carbs send us on an emotional roller-coaster as our blood sugar spikes and crashes. Caffeine and alcohol alter our moods. High salt and heavily processed foods can increase blood sugar and trigger anxiety. What dietary changes can you make to reduce these foods and increase complex carbs, lean proteins, healthy fats, and more fiber? Take time to pray before, after, and during meals. Remember that God made your body and that our bodies are temples for the Holy Spirit of God.

Sleep - God didn't create us to be limitless machines. God invented sleep and commanded sabbath rest for his people. Physical exhaustion leads to mental decline, emotional instability, constrained thinking, and anxiety. How can you take practical steps to improve your sleep? (Hint: turn off screens, limit caffeine, avoid bright lights, change your schedule, exercise, etc.). Incorporate prayers of thanksgiving into your nighttime routine, focusing on the blessings of God.

Breath - God created us with a built-in anxiety reducer . . . our breath! Breathing is connected to the parasympathetic nervous system. Deep breaths with long slow exhales reduce your heart-rate, lower blood pressure, and signal the brain to calm down and feel safe. Practice taking 3 deep breaths with slow exhales and notice how your body and mind respond. Throughout your day if you notice yourself getting anxious pause and take 3 deep breaths. Then remain still and say a short prayer inviting the Holy Spirit to help you see things in a new way.

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