

Anxiety

"Anxiety in the heart of a man weighs it down, but a good word makes it glad,"
Prov.12:25.

First, this proverb is not gender-specific. It is using the word "man" in a generic sense of a human being. Thus, the truth of it also equally applies to *women*. Second, we have a personal obligation to *"lay aside every encumbrance"* (or *"weight,"* KJV) that *inhibits* our *running* of *"the race set before us,"* Heb.12:1. So, we are not *helpless*, and do not have to remain *entangled/restricted* by the "weight" of anxiety for SOMEONE ELSE to assist us. Third, though the *"good word,"* in a general sense, may and often does come from someone else to make our heart *"glad,"* it assuredly also can come more specifically from: a) *"the precepts of the Lord, rejoicing the heart,"* Psalm 19:8; and, b) *"speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord,"* Eph.5:19. Consequently, *"the Scriptures"* provide *encouragement* and *hope* to dispel our anxieties (Rom.15:4) whether they are *read, taught, or sung*.

So, if **YOU** allow the *anxieties* of your heart to isolate you from:

- those who not only *want* to help but are also best situated to *encourage* you with the *"good word"* of God (*i.e.* your *local church brethren*);
- your personal discovery of and devotion to the *"good word"* of God which can *rejuvenate, replenish, and rejoice* your heart; and/or,
- *collective worship* (including but not limited to *singing praises* to God); then...

Your anxieties will *"weigh down"* your heart even further! Remember Jeremiah's warning *"that a man's way is not in himself,"* Jer.10:23. Thus, "soul searching" is only beneficial when we use God's word as the *"mirror"* for such self-examination, Jas.1:22-25. Spending too much time in one's own head is hurtful rather than helpful in that it typically only compounds the anxieties with additional frustrations. The "answers" to our anxieties are found *externally* in God's word, not *internally* in ourselves. When Jesus saw people who *"were like sheep without a shepherd"* (surely *anxious* and *confused!*), He *"began to teach them many things,"* Mk.6:34. He didn't tell them to spend a year "soul-searching" or "finding themselves," He taught them the Word of God.

What does this all mean? Phil.4:6 begins, *"Be anxious for nothing..."* Let that sink in for a moment. "Nothing" is not qualified or exempted with "except" or "unless." It means NO THING. Anxiety about ANY THING will "weigh down" the heart, cf. Prov.12:25. So what if our heart is "weighed down" with anxieties? In addition to the things mentioned above (going to *brethren* who can and will speak the "good word" to you, devoting yourself to hearing and heeding the Word of God, and worshipping collectively with the local congregation of God's people), note the rest of Phil.4:6, *"but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God."* Simply put, give your anxieties to God and then trust Him to handle the situations that produced them in His way (as opposed to *your way!*), and then LET THEM GO. Anxieties are not relieved by prayer alone. They are relieved when we pray and then **trust God** enough to let them go, knowing that He can and will handle the situation(s) in the way that is best. Such prayer must not only include "Thy will be done,

not mine,” we must mean it, and resolve ourselves to be OK with however God chooses to handle the situation. I hope this article is a “good word” that causes your heart weighed down with anxiety to rejoice. (Philip C. Strong; Southport Church of Christ; 7202 Madison Ave, Indianapolis, IN 46227; online at southportcofc.org)