

Anxiety is the emotional 'weight' of fear.

1. Common themes in the Experience of Anxiety:

- Anxiety is a form of *fear*, and it has many different expressions
 - it is universal, but not universally the same .
 - scale from uneasiness to nervousness to panic
- As a form of fear, anxiety is an *emotional indicator* that we perceive the threat of losing something we love
 - Anxiety doesn't happen *to* you, but is a response *from* you.
 - We love people, things, reputation, security etc....
- Anxiety is a *heart response* to external conditions. Those conditions are important to consider in overcoming fear.
 - Our context impacts our response. Think of the difference between a 19yr old and a 90 yr old if a) the cost of heating goes up or b) the wifi goes down for a week.
 - Our anxiety is always located in the future, but is greatly impacted by:
 - **past** (eg trauma, memory of similar situations, shame)
 - **present** (eg circumstances eg money, health, relationships, present trouble)
 - **future** (eg how things 'should' be, wider political/world issues, desires/hopes that may or may not be fulfilled)
- Anxiety is not the same as worry, although it often leads there, and worry is not the same as concern
 - worry is an action, a choice to pursue anxious thoughts.
 - worry=the attempt to have a greater degree of control through your own vigilance
 - concern is a right perception of fear. Paul expresses his concern for people/churches
 - the direction is important (towards self or towards God)
 - IF can lead us to ourselves (if this happens then I need to.....)
 - BECAUSE can lead us to the Lord (because this has/will happen I shall ask the Lord...)

2. The Bible speaks to our anxiety:

- ▶ **An anxious heart needs to remember that God has always ministered to his people in the midst of fear.** (Psalm 27)
 - *Who is the God David is crying out to?*
 - *What is David's fear? Is it real?*
 - *What does his heart need to do? (v8)*
- ▶ **An anxious heart is desperately wanting something. Jesus demonstrates how to trust the Father with what we are most scared of losing** (Luke 12:22-34)
 - *How are v22 v34 linked?*
 - *How could we paraphrase v31?*

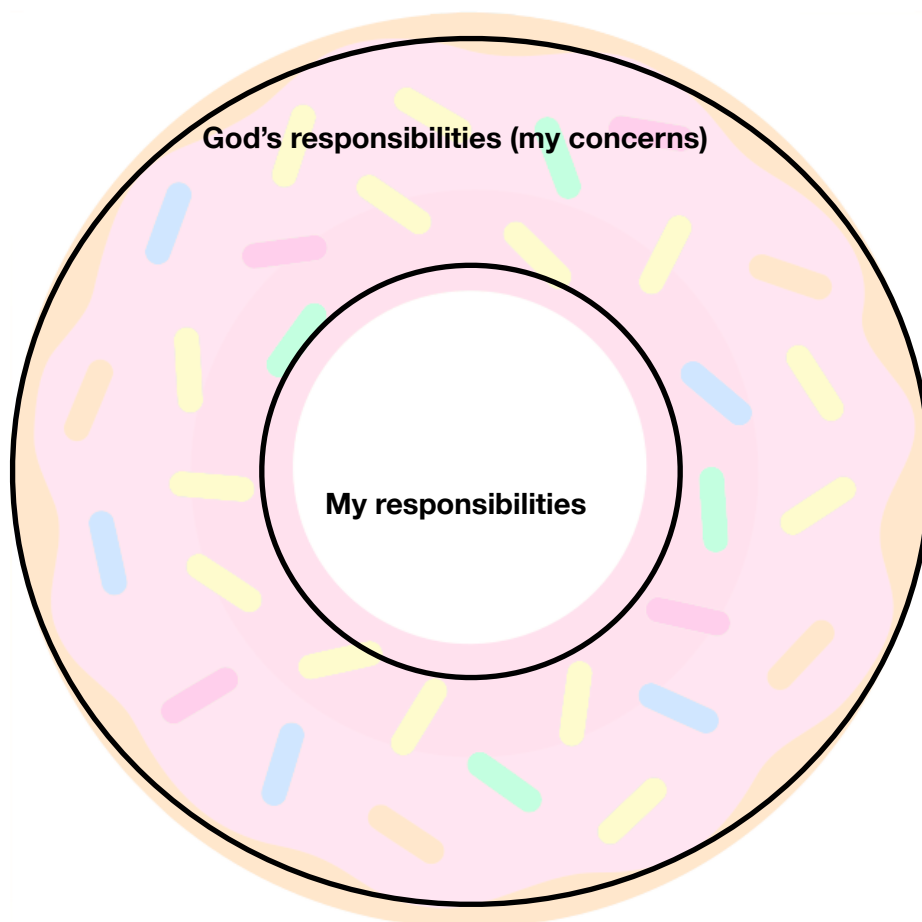
- ▶ **An anxious heart needs the broader perspective of God's presence to see threats properly** (Phil 4:4-9)
 - *Where is the Lord?*
 - *What will guard our hearts?*

- ▶ **An anxious heart needs to humbly acknowledge that God is God** (1 Peter 5:6-7)
 - *How do we humble ourselves? (ESV is more helpful here).*
 - *How is God described in 2 different ways?*
 - *What difference does that make?*

3. How do we respond in faith in our anxiety?

- Fear and anxiety can become a platform of worship, the catalyst to drive us towards the goodness and graciousness of God.
 - Feeling fear is not sinful. We can experience fear faithfully .
 - recognising threat is not the same as NOT having faith. 'Courage' is recognising something as more important than the fear.
 - Fear can lead us to SIN or to TRUST/WORSHIP
 - We need to learn to perceive our circumstances through WHO GOD IS.
 - We lose the ability to perceive well if the threat is exaggerated or imminent.
 - Anxiety can become the "background music of the soul", and we lose the ability to feel other appropriate emotions.

"Donut worry" (or the circle of responsibility)



- Where are the things you are anxious about? What is your responsibility? What is God's?
 - our primary responsibilities are to love God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength, and to love our neighbour as ourselves. This will include having concern for others, or care for situations, but does not include worry, or anxiety.
 - Anxiety happens when we take things that are God's responsibility, and make them our own responsibility.
 - Faith is placing our fear with the Lord who is both GOOD and ABLE to meet our fears
- Talk with someone (why not meet for coffee and donuts?!)

With acknowledgements to Dr Jeremy Pierre (the handout), and Paul Tripp (the original 'circle of care' diagram, from Instruments in the Redeemer's Hands.)