

May 17/18, 2025

**Worry and Anxiety**  
*Everyday Disciples Series*  
**Mark 6:30-52**  
Pastor Bryan Clark

Worry and anxiety are a very real part of many people's lives. I understand that. But here's the deal. If the only way you can have relief from that worry and anxiety is if everything in life is in order and it's smooth sailing, you stand no chance for relief because we live in a broken, fallen world. Jesus did not offer rest *from* the wilderness. He offered rest *in* the wilderness. That's what we want to talk about this morning. If you have a Bible, turn with us to the Gospel of Mark, Chapter 6.

So I think we understand people come in all shapes and sizes, with different personalities, different temperaments, different experiences, different stories, and all that comes together to make the person you are this morning. Some of us are pretty easy going; we just roll with life as it comes. But some of us are dominated by anxiety, fear, and worry. I understand that. I don't want to be insensitive to that; I don't want to be dismissive of that. But I also don't want you thinking that's just the way it is, "I can't do anything about it," because that's simply not true. Jesus, in the Sermon on the Mount, said, "*Do not worry.*" Paul, writing from a Roman prison cell, wrote, "*Be anxious for nothing.*" So, the reality is that we can learn and grow and get better as an everyday disciple of Jesus. When you read through both the Old and New Testament, God has a consistent pattern of giving us what we need to go through today, in order to prepare us for what we're going to go through tomorrow. Mark does a beautiful job of helping us understand that in Mark, chapter 6. I'm going to pick it up in verse 30. Jesus has sent his 12 disciples out; they have been on mission. They have just returned, and they're debriefing with Jesus. Verse 30:

**The apostles gathered together with Jesus; and they reported to Him all that they had done and taught. And He said to them, "Come away by yourselves to a secluded place and rest for a while." (For there were many people coming and going, and they did not even have time to eat.) They went away in the boat to a secluded place by themselves. (\*NASB, Mark 6:30-32)**

So they've come back; they're debriefing, and Jesus says to them, "**Come away by yourselves to a secluded place.**" The Greek word that's translated **secluded** is the typical Greek word for *desert* or *wilderness*. So, for example, when Matthew writes about Jesus' temptation in the wilderness, it's the exact same word. It's important to understand that what Jesus is saying is not, "Come away from the wilderness and find rest." What He actually is saying is, "We need to go into the wilderness, and there you'll find rest." It's beginning to set up what Mark clearly intends as a correlation of this story with what happened to the children of Israel in the wilderness so many years before. It is worth noting that this is the only time in Mark's Gospel that he ever refers to the 12 disciples as the **apostles**. So, you kind of get a sense this is going to be about them. Verse 33:

***The people saw them going, and many recognized them and ran there together on foot from all the cities, and got there ahead of them. When Jesus went ashore, He saw a large crowd, and He felt compassion for them because they were like sheep without a shepherd; and He began to teach them many things.*** (Vs. 33-34)

So, the crowd—and this is becoming a huge crowd—sees the boat, where it's headed, and on foot they get there ahead of the boat. The text says that Jesus saw them as **sheep without a shepherd**. Sheep are not bold animals. Sheep tend to be anxious and fearful. Sheep in the wilderness alone would be easy prey, would be vulnerable. So, sheep are very anxious without a shepherd. But that statement also connects us back to when Moses said of the children of Israel in the wilderness, “They are like *sheep without a shepherd*.” This was toward the end of Moses' life, so he appointed Joshua to be their shepherd going forward. We are reminded that the Greek version of the name Joshua is Jesus. So there's this connectivity beginning to build with the story of the children of Israel in the wilderness. Jesus is teaching them, but that's really not Mark's focus in this text. Verse 35:

**When it was already quite late, His disciples came to Him and said, “This place is desolate and it is already quite late; send them away so that they may go into the surrounding countryside and villages and buy themselves something to eat.” But He answered them, “You give them *something* to eat! And they said to Him, “Shall we go and spend two hundred denarii on bread and give them something to eat?”** (Vs. 35-37)

Now, I would say from a leadership perspective, this is very reasonable. You have thousands of people in a very secluded place. It's getting dark; you better dismiss them so they can go to the villages and find something to eat. That makes good sense to me, but Jesus has something else in mind. He answered them, “**You give them something to eat.**” The **you** there is emphatic, “No, *you* do it,” to which they reply, (This is the Bryan version.) “**Really? Really, shall we go and spend two hundred denarii on bread and give them something to eat?**” It's a very disrespectful answer. These guys were tired; they were hungry. We're already told they hadn't had time to eat anything, and they hear what Jesus says, and they say, “*Really? (Two hundred denarii is about eight months' salary for an average worker in that day.) Really? Should we just reach into our big bag of money and come up with some food for these guys?*” They're pretty sarcastic.

**Jesus said to them, “How many loaves do you have? Go look.”**

I love the way that's worded. You can imagine when Jesus says, “All right, how many loaves do you have?” they're looking at each other like, “What? What is going on here,” like, “What is He talking about?” They're just looking at each other, and Jesus says to them, “**Go look.**” So they come back.

**And when they found out, they said, “Five and two fish.”** (Vs. 38)  
(Just enough lunch for one person.)

This does, again, remind me of Moses in the wilderness, when God told Moses to feed these people. Here's what Moses says.

*“The people among whom I am are six hundred thousand on foot! Yet You have said, ‘I will give them meat so that they may eat for a whole month.’ ‘Should flocks and herds be slaughtered for them to be sufficient for them? Or should all the fish of the sea be gathered together for them to be sufficient for them?’”* (It’s very similar sarcasm to that of the disciples. Here’s the key.) *And the Lord said to Moses, “Is the Lord’s power limited? Now you shall see whether My word will come true for you or not.”*

(Numbers 11:21-23)

(It’s kind of like God was saying to Moses, “Moses, do you know who I am? Do you really think this is a problem?”)

So, we’ve got **five loaves and two fish**.

**He commanded them all to sit down by groups on the green grass. They sat in groups of hundreds and fifties.** (Again, reminiscent of Moses dividing the people up into groups of hundreds and fifties in the wilderness). **And He took the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up toward heaven, He blessed *the food* and broke the loaves, and He kept giving *them* to the disciples to set before them.** (The grammar here is, “*He just kept breaking and breaking and breaking.*” The miracle was in the hand of Jesus. He just kept breaking and never ran out of bread.) **And He divided up the two fish among them all. They all ate, and were satisfied, and then they picked up twelve full baskets of the broken pieces and also the fish. And there were five thousand men who ate the loaves.** (Vs. 39-44)

So Jesus takes the five loaves, the two fish, and He just starts breaking them. The text doesn't say everybody got a little taste. It says **they all ate and were satisfied**. Each of the disciples has a basket. They go out and pick up the leftovers. There's a lot of discussion around the 12 baskets, but I think it's as practical as every disciple had a basket. Every one of them brought back a basket full of the leftovers. They couldn't miss it. They each had a basket. There was more leftover than what they started with. And Mark ends this part of the story by saying there were **5000 men**, which is how they counted in those days. Add to that women and children, and you have a huge group of people. You can't help but think about the children of Israel. They're hungry; they're grumbling; they're complaining, “Where are we going to find food? We're all going to die here.” And God provides manna from heaven, bread in the wilderness...as much as they could eat.

Mark is very clear in this moment that Jesus is identifying Himself as Yahweh, the God of the wilderness that fed thousands of the children of Israel manna from heaven and is the same God now in human flesh standing before them, feeding them bread in the wilderness. This is what I would refer to as a low-risk miracle. What I mean by that is, “If Jesus couldn't pull it off, the worst-case scenario is they all go home hungry and will go on with their lives.” Verse 45:

**Immediately Jesus made His disciples get into the boat and go ahead of *Him* to the other side to Bethsaida, while He Himself was sending the crowd away. After bidding them farewell, He left for the mountain to pray. When it was evening, the boat was**

**in the middle of the sea, and He was alone on the land. Seeing them straining at the oars, for the wind was against them, at about the fourth watch of the night He came to them, walking on the sea; and He intended to pass by them.** (Vs. 45-48)

So Mark says, *immediately He gets His disciples in a boat, and sends them on their way. Jesus dismisses the crowd and goes to the mountain to pray.* Some time passes and He realizes that the sea has become extremely difficult, and the disciples were making no progress. It's worth remembering these men were not novices on the sea. A number of them were professional fishermen. They made their living on the sea. They knew what they were doing, but the wind had come up and they were unable to make any progress. The **fourth watch** is from three in the morning to six in the morning, so we're just going to call it the middle of the night. It's dark. Jesus can see they're making no progress, so He just walks on the sea. Who does that? God does! That's who does that. So, He's walking to them, and Mark says **He intended to pass by them.** That's a rather odd thing to say. What does Mark mean by that?

There's quite a bit of discussion around that phrase, but I think what makes the most sense is to understand that simple Greek phrase is used in the Septuagint again and again, the Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament, for what we refer to as theophanies in the Old Testament. A theophany was a time when the God of the universe took on human flesh in order to appear to someone. Jesus had just fed 5000 plus people with five loaves and two fish. He sees the disciples struggling on the sea. Their anxiety, their fear, their worry is increasing, so He's thinking, "I'm just going to walk by them and remind them, 'Hey, it's Me. In case you missed it, I just fed 5000 people with five loaves and two fish. You can trust Me; I've got this thing. You don't need to be anxious and worry.'"

**But when they saw Him walking on the sea, they supposed that it was a ghost, and cried out; for they all saw Him and they were terrified.** (You can't blame them for that. It's the middle of the night, and here comes some guy walking on the sea. It would be terrifying.) **But immediately He spoke with them, and said, "Take courage; It is I, do not be afraid."** (Vs. 49-50)

That phrase translated, **It is I** is literally in the Greek I AM. There's a number of occasions in the Gospel where Jesus identifies Himself as the great I AM of the Old Testament, the One who appeared to Moses in the burning bush. And Moses said, "Hey, what's your name?" And God's answer was, *I AM*. Jesus was not saying, "Hey, it's your buddy, Jesus, who did this; who did you think it was?" What He's saying is, "I AM the great I AM that spoke out of the burning bush, that was with my children in Israel, that is now among you in human flesh. I've got this. Trust Me. You don't need to be filled with anxiety and worry and fear." That's what He's saying.

**Then He got into the boat with them, and the wind stopped; and they were utterly astonished,** (Mark is the only one of the gospel writers that makes this observation) **for they had not gained any insight from the *incident of the loaves, but their heart was hardened.*** (Vs. 51-52)

What Mark is saying is that only a matter of hours before, Jesus took five loaves and two fish, and he fed 5000 plus people. This is God in the flesh! This is Yahweh from the Old Testament now before you in human flesh! You can trust Him! He demonstrated who He is in a low-risk miracle, so you would be prepared to trust Him when the seas become stormy and it's high-risk. "I've got this. You can trust Me." But they hadn't got it. They missed it.

The idea of a **hardened heart** consistently refers to times when God makes Himself abundantly clear to someone. At that moment, you either have to recognize this is God and surrender to that or deny what you just saw. And each time you choose not to believe it your heart gets a little bit harder. You're going to be less likely to believe it the next time. Jesus just clearly demonstrated who He is to them with the feeding of the 5000, in order to prepare them to trust Him when things got really serious out on the stormy sea. You can't help but think of the children of Israel. God never asks us to step into blind faith. Over and over again He reveals Himself, that we might trust Him.

So, with the children of Israel, God sent 10 clear plagues to demonstrate His power and presence to them. God put a pillar of cloud by day and fire by night before them, so they could not possibly miss the presence of God with them, leading them. They get to the Red Sea, and God miraculously parts the Sea, and they cross on dry land. There could be no doubt of the power and presence in the lives of these people, yet three days later, they're thirsty and they grumble and say, "Where is God? He doesn't love us. He doesn't care. He's not going to do anything. We wish we were back in Egypt." What is with these people? How could you miss that three days later? How could you not get it?

It's the same thing that's happening here. "I just fed 5000 people with five loaves and two fish, and each of you held a basket full of the leftovers. You couldn't have missed it. And in a matter of hours, you're out on the sea, and the sea is getting rough, and for whatever reason, you don't trust Me, and you're full of fear and anxiety and worry." How can you not get it? Clearly Mark wants us to see these two stories together to understand God has His ways of teaching us, and instructing us, and revealing Himself to us today in order to prepare us for what's coming tomorrow.

Many people, many Christians struggle with fear and anxiety and worry. I understand that. I'm not trying to be insensitive to that, but the reality is we can grow. We can do better. Think of it this way. When you have a certain health issue you're dealing with, there are things you can do that make the situation better. With things like rest, like diet, like exercise, you can actually improve your physical condition. It's very similar then, spiritually. If you struggle from anxiety and worry, there are very clear things you can do: disciplines...habits to grow and to get better in this area. So, I want to mention three simple practical things you can do.

**Number one:** you must **Know the truth**...you must know the truth! This is the whole point of Mark telling these stories. The disciples needed to learn the truth about who Jesus was, what Jesus could do in order to trust Him in their hour of need. But, if you don't know who He is, if you don't know what He's promised, how can you trust Him? We need to know the truth. This is especially

concerning when all of the research is showing that we as American Christians are in a crisis of biblical illiteracy. It is shocking how much Christians don't know is in their Bible. Like, “How can you trust Him if you don't know who He is?” “How can you trust Him if you don't know what He's promised you?” “How can you get relief from that anxiety and that fear, if you don't know what God has said?”

Our friends at the Bible Engagement Center have done a tremendous amount of research on this, and what they have found is those Christians who engage the Word of God four times a week or more live significantly different lives than those Christians who don't. As a matter of fact, they even have a category called *Emotional Resiliency*, and what they have found is that Christians who engage the word four times or more per week do much better, are far more emotionally resilient than those who don't. This isn't just some pastor talking. This is a volume of research that indicates knowing the truth can help you with your anxiety and worry.

It's a curious thing to me that so many Christians don't hesitate to spend the time and money to go to a therapist—and I'm not criticizing that—but seem so uninterested in what God has to say. So the first thing is: we must **know the Truth**. Think of it like this. When we gather on the weekend, that's one Bible engagement. If you're in a Life Group or a Bible study, that's two Bible engagements. You only need two more during the week to see significant growth improvement in this area of anxiety and worry in your life.

**Number two: We need to Remember.** This is a repeated word for the children of Israel in the wilderness. Remember...you've got to remember...you've got to remember...you can't forget who God is...you can't forget what God promised. We need to **remember**. Apparently, God thinks we have a habit of forgetting. “I just fed 5000 people with a few loaves and fish...hello? Why do you not remember that? It's only been a couple of hours ago.” You need to remember. Before the children of Israel left Egypt, God instituted Passover. The text is very clear. Why did He do that? In order that you might remember...remember who God is...remember what God did for you this night.

Jesus transitioned those elements into the elements of communion. And what did He say? “**Do this, (what?) in remembrance of me.**” “Hey, don't ever forget this is what I did for you.” The Psalms and the Prophets say it over and over again. “Remember...remember...remember. When we gather like this to worship on the weekend, yes, we are singing praises to God, but we're also singing to one another, reminding one another, “This is who God is; this is what God has promised; this is what God can do for us.” That's why it's so important to have a regular rhythm of worship, because it continually reminds us, “This is what's true. You don't need to be so anxious; you don't need to be so worried; you don't need to be so fearful. This is who God is. This is what God has promised.” We just remind one another of that.

When I think of faith, when I think of believing God tells the truth and remembering, I think of it like a well. And in your hour of need, when you drop that bucket into the well, how deep is your well to draw from? If the only thing you have to draw from is your own personal experiences,

you're going to have a really shallow well. That's clearly not deep enough. That's why it's important that we listen to what God is doing in the lives of our family members, and our friends, and the people in our Life Group. We need to listen to those testimonies and realize God is at work, and He's doing things in people's lives. And deep in the well, when we gather like this to worship, we have life-change stories—so videos of things that God is doing in the lives of the people here—in order to remind us that God is at work in order to deepen the well. He was faithful to these people...He was faithful to this person...He'll be faithful to me.

We have two thousand years of church history. We have hundreds of biographies that can remind us, “Hey, God has been faithful for two thousand years to His church.” The more I understand that, the more it deepens my well. And of course we have the Scripture...God at work in the lives of His people for thousands of years. So, if God has been faithful to His people for thousands of years, He's got a clear track record of faithfulness. What would cause you to think He's not going to be faithful to you today? All this deepens our well. We have more to draw from. Number one, ***Know the truth.*** Number two, ***Remember.***

**Number three: Practice thanksgiving.** This is something I started doing in my own life as a discipline years ago, when I started seeing how often this comes up in the Scriptures—the importance of giving thanks—because every time I'm thankful, I'm *rehearsing* the goodness of God. I'm *rehearsing* God's faithfulness. I'm *remembering* again, all the ways I see God's goodness in my life, a regular habit of thanksgiving. I think we tend to take way too much for granted. There are things every day that we should be thankful for, to see the goodness of God in our lives. For most of us, on our bad days we live better than most people in the world live on their best days. We just miss it. We tend to dwell on the negative. We may have a long list of things that are good in our life, but we have this negative thing and we dwell on it all day, every day. Practicing thanksgiving tends to help us regain some perspective. There's a ton of things every day I have to be thankful for. Yes, I wish ‘this’ was different, but I can't lose perspective that I also have so much to be thankful for.

Research today shows 91% of what we worry about never comes to pass, so 91% is just wasted energy. Of the 9% that does happen, 80% of that turns out better than expected. So much time spent in anxiety and worry over things ultimately that never happen. Practicing a discipline of thanksgiving helps us regain some perspective, and to see the goodness of God in my life in so many ways every day. If you struggle with anxiety...with fear...with worry, three simple disciplines: **Know the truth...Remember...Practice thanksgiving.** We can grow. We can do better as an *Everyday Disciple of Jesus.*

*Our Father, we're thankful this morning for who You are. Lord, I know there are people in this auditorium this morning going through some very difficult circumstances. Lord, remind them again today that You are enough. You're faithful. You're good, and that in their hour of need, when the wind is blowing and the waves are tossing the boat back and forth, You're enough. Lord, may we trust You as everyday disciples of Jesus, in whose name we pray, Amen.*

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## Getting Started

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Transition into group discussion.

- 1) Open group discussion with prayer. Here are a few potential prayer items:
  - a. For the Spirit of God to lead you in truth
  - b. For the fruit of the Spirit to be cultivated in your lives
  - c. For grace to hear and apply what the Spirit says to you
- 2) Choose someone to read the passage aloud for the group or read them as you come to them in the questions.

## Study Questions *(Suggested time: 40 min)*

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1. **What resonated with you from Bryan's sermon about worry and anxiety?**
  
2. Whether you tend to be an anxious worry-er or not, we all experience feelings of anxiety and worry in our lives from time to time. **Have feelings of worry or anxiety played a large role in your walk with God?**

**When we think about our relationship with God, why are worry and anxiety important topics for us to consider?**

3. Pastor Bryan gave a great analogy about how, we as individuals might have a shallow well of memories of God's faithfulness to draw on if we only learn from our own experiences. But as a church family we can collectively have a deep well. **Would you describe your life as having a deep well to draw from, or do you still have a relatively shallow well only of times when God has been faithful to you? How can you deepen your well?**

One of the reasons we gather every weekend to worship together is to be encouraged and reminded of God's goodness. **How can you as a life group continue to encourage each other and remind one another of God's goodness throughout the week?**

4. Pastor Bryan explained that Jesus feeding the 5000 is a call back to Exodus when God provided manna in the wilderness. **What was the connection between these accounts that Bryan drew?**

The provision of the manna was supposed to teach the Israelites that God could provide for them.  
**Do you have any moments, stories, or reminders in your life of God providing for you?**

5. In Mark 6:52, we're told, "for they had not gained any insight from the incident of the loaves, but their heart was hardened." Pastor Bryan explained that a hardened heart means that God has done something in your life, and it's up to you to respond to it. The disciples had experienced the miracle of God working through Jesus to feed 5000+ people, yet their heart was hardened. **Has there been a time when God moved in your life and you responded to Him with a hardened heart?**

**What about a time when you responded with a softened heart?**

**What do you think determines whether we respond with a hard or soft heart to God?**

**What can we do to try and make sure that we always have a soft heart towards God?**

## Personal Spiritual Exercises

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Just like physical exercises help strengthen and stretch our bodies for healthy living, these spiritual exercises are meant to move us spiritually in ways that may be new so we might experience inner growth. Since God longs for us to experience Him with our whole selves—mind, body, spirit—we invite you along each week to strengthen your souls with suggestions and prompts.

**Scripture Focus:** Matthew 6:25-34 is perhaps the most famous piece of Scripture that directly deals with worry or anxiety, but that doesn't make it any less powerful. Read this passage and spend time really reflecting on the questions Jesus' asks in these verses. Ask yourself if you truly believe the answers in your heart or if you just know what the right answer is.

**Prayer Focus:** There are many different things in our lives that can cause us to worry, or things for us to be anxious about. Think about what commonly causes both of these in your life and spend some time talking to God about them. Then, every time you feel worry or anxiety over that thing during your week, give it up to God in prayer. If you want a prayer you can use this excerpt from the book, *Psalms in 30 Days*:

*"I will sing to the Lord, for He is highly exalted  
He has thrown the horse and its rider into the sea  
The Lord is my strength and my song; He has become my salvation.  
This is my God, and I will praise Him,  
my father's God and I will exalt Him.  
The Lord is a warrior; The Lord is His name.  
Lord, your right hand is glorious in power.  
Lord, your right hand shattered the enemy  
Lord, who is like you among the gods?  
Who is like you, glorious in holiness, revered with praises, performing wonders?  
With your faithful love, you will lead the people you have redeemed;  
You will guide them to your holy dwelling with your strength  
You will bring them in and plant them on the mountain of your possession;  
Lord, you have prepared the place for your dwelling;  
Lord, your hands have established the sanctuary.  
The Lord will reign forever and ever!*

### **Prayer** (Suggested time: 20 min)

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A significant part of "coming together" is being open and honest with our lives. Sitting in a group of people for prayer may be new or it may be familiar to you. If you would rather not pray aloud when it is your turn, feel free to pray silently and then say "Amen" aloud signaling the next person in the group to pray. Whether or not you choose to verbalize your prayer, everyone is a participant in sharing this time before God together. Take a few moments to prepare a prayer request. What did the message, working through the above questions or the discussion cause you to notice about your own relationship with Jesus? Would you be willing to share your prayer request with the group?