

VIDEO #2 Script
Tuesday, March 17th, 2020

I have been trying to stay at home for the past few days, but today I took a short trip to the local grocery store to shop for just a few items.

While I was there, I encountered a member of our church who was also grocery shopping. We exchanged greetings by asking each other how we were doing. When I offered my standard reply, that I was doing “just fine,” something did not feel right about that. I made a note to myself that later I should give this more consideration.

Once I arrived back home, I began to reflect upon how I was really doing. I had already made the observation that recently I had been more impatient than usual, and my temper had a shorter than normal fuse. I had also caught myself in a couple of situations where I was acting unnecessarily selfish and had been slow to consider the needs of my family.

Then I remembered how earlier this morning I had been trying to take care of some routine household tasks, paying a few bills, organizing my desk, the normal kinds of chores we all have. But rather than actually getting anything done, I was instead jumping from one task to the next without ever finishing anything. I could not keep my focus on what I was trying to accomplish.

Thinking about all of that, suddenly I was able to connect some dots I had earlier overlooked. I recognized how all of these behaviors are, for me, signs that I am feeling anxious, a little nervous, restless and apprehensive.

The more I thought about it, the more it made sense. A week ago, I was preparing for last Sunday's worship service. Today, I'm not sure when our congregation will be able to gather again.

A week ago, I was scheduling various meetings I was planning to attend. Today, all of the activities that had been on my calendar have been indefinitely postponed.

A week ago, the aisles at the grocery store were fully stocked. When I bought groceries today, there were some bare shelves.

Though we all exhibit anxiety in our own unique ways, can you identify with what I'm describing? Are you aware of your own feelings of worry and stress?

If so, it only makes sense. A lot has changed in the past few days. A lot has swiftly become uncertain.

I want to encourage us all to accept the fact that it is reasonable for us to feel some anxiety regarding the Corona virus pandemic we are experiencing. There is no need for us to try to pretend we haven't been affected by this.

I also want to encourage us to take some simple, practical steps so that we can better manage our stress and avoid inappropriately directing our angst towards others.

For example, every once in a while take a deep breath and initiate a quick self-inventory of how your day is going. Is there something in particular that you are finding challenging? Would it be helpful for you to take a short break and spend a few moments doing something you enjoy?

Drink plenty of water. Our bodies are most efficient and resistant to illness when they are well hydrated.

And rather than reaching for that candy bar, how about treating yourself to some fruit? The initial sugar rush is wonderful, but the eventual fall can increase depression.

I hope these suggestions doesn't sound juvenile. These are some of the tools I try to utilize when I begin to feel I am under pressure.

Another suggestion I will make is to reduce your anxiety by spending some time reading the Psalms. There are 150 you can choose from.

Perhaps you are particularly fond of the 23rd Psalm, "The Lord is my shepherd I shall not want..."

Or Psalm 100, "Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth. Worship the Lord with gladness, come into God's presence with singing..."

One of my favorites is Psalm 130, “My soul waits for the Lord more than watchmen wait for the morning, more than watchmen wait for the morning.”

Read through the Psalm line by line, listening for God’s Word of comfort, love, and grace. If a verse particularly speaks to you, repeat it. There is no rush.

Perhaps you want to randomly choose a Psalm. That’s ok, too. But remember, not all of the Psalms were written to provide comfort. Some of the Psalms were intended to express the angst of the Babylonian exile, such as these bitter verses directed at God in Psalm 44: “You have rejected us. You have made us like sheep for slaughter, you have made us the taunt of our neighbors, the derision and scorn of those around us...”

I will end with one final suggestion. Be sure to continue to spend time in prayer and meditation. This will be the subject of the next video I post, which I hope will be available within a couple of days.

In the meantime, you are invited to raise any questions or make any comments you might have about what I’ve said. It remains important that we continue to be in conversation with each other. Through our dialog, let us continually remind each other that God cares for us, and that God is present for us.