

Choose the Good Portion

Anxiety is on the rise, and its causes are numerous. When we look at Scripture, it's clear that other people and cultures struggled with anxiety too. So is this just the way it is? Or can God help us unwind our anxiety and experience Him in the middle of it?



INTRODUCTION

God is the source of our happiness and our blessings. We can unwind our anxiety by prioritizing our time with the Lord and meditating on all He provides for us. "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." –2 Corinthians 12:9

STARTER QUESTION

What are some things that made you anxious when you were younger, but don't make you anxious anymore? What are some things that did *not* make you anxious when you were younger, but *do* make you anxious now?

INTO THE WORD

1. Pastor Dave opens his sermon with the illustration of Mary and Martha and how each of these women are focused on different details as Jesus (and a crowd) visits Martha's home. He mentions the question Martha asks of Jesus, "Do you not care?" Can you think of Bible scriptures that remind us that God does care? For some examples, refer to 1 Peter 5:7, Psalm 55:16-18 and 22; Luke 12:22-31; and Psalm 23.
2. After reading Matthew 6:25-34, what can we conclude that Jesus thinks about anxiety? What do these verses say about our priorities?

APPLICATION

3. In his commentary on Luke 10:38-42, Matthew Henry states, "It does not become the disciples of Christ to affect *much serving* . . . what need is there of *much serving*, when much less will serve?" (emphases in original). Even if it is only realized in hindsight, what have you put too much effort into when you should have directed your attention somewhere else? What can we learn from the account of Martha and Mary about our role as servants of Christ?
4. What would it look like for you to prioritize Jesus and unwind anxiety? Making the Lord our portion and reorienting our life to prioritize our relationship with Jesus takes some intentional decisions. List a few practical ways to replace a worrisome thought or distraction with a choice to focus on God's promises, grace, mercy, and truths.

PRAYER

Lord, help me to remember that you are my portion and that my hope is in you. We know that it is very easy in life to have our priorities misplaced because we are distracted by so many choices. Help me to first get my priorities straight like Mary, and after that to take care of my responsibilities like Martha. I don't want to put you on the fringe. I ask for your help.

In Jesus' name I pray, Amen

SUGGESTED ANSWER GUIDE / MORE FOOD FOR THOUGHT FOR SELECTED QUESTIONS:

Starter Question:

Some people absolutely hated to clean their room when they were young, but now the very thought of a messy house sends them into a frenzy. Or perhaps, as a high-school student you quaked at the notion of delivering a presentation to a small class of your peers; but as an adult with a professional career, you now highly enjoy speaking to large audiences. It's interesting how our priorities change over time, and how the more we learn and experience, the more we see things differently. Unfortunately, this often causes regret and makes us wish we could have done things differently. Scripture has much to say about the things we should and should not be concerned about. Let's dig in . . .

Question 1:

As we go about our days and cope with full schedules, it can sometimes feel as though God may not notice all of the seemingly minor details we're juggling. However, it is encouraging to realize that as we study the Bible, He truly does care about what we see as the "big" and "small" parts of our lives (Matthew 6:25-34). The Lord uses everything together for our good, which includes the smallest parts of our days and lives (Romans 8:28 - 30). His Word, when applied to something as "trivial" as choosing when to schedule an event, never returns void (Isaiah 55:11). Mary chose the best portion by sitting down at Jesus' feet and listening to the Word. She knew the responsibilities of cooking and preparations were important, but she also knew that sitting at Jesus' feet was the main priority she should have been doing at that time.

Question 2:

Jesus makes it clear that we have nothing to fear. All of the lesser needs of life have already been met by the One who created us and loves us and knows how to take care of us. Having anxiety about worldly things is completely unnecessary, Jesus declares, because your Heavenly Father has promised to provide for you. And God never breaks His promises.

When we take our minds off things we don't need to worry about, we can more easily focus on that which God wants us to focus on most, namely our relationship with Him. Spending time in prayer. Singing songs of praise in our hearts. Meditating on Scripture. "Sitting at the Lord's feet". When we do these things out of genuine love for our Savior, Jesus will be our portion.

Question 3:

So often Christians pre-occupy themselves with doing "great works for the Lord," but we tend to forget that God wants us to rest in Him. We serve best when we come to Him quiet our souls, and listen for His voice to hear what He has to say. Only then can we go into the world and offer service that is truly pleasing to our Lord.

Question 4:

Prioritizing Jesus means that I stop whenever I am beginning to feel anxious to ask myself: Am I listening to Jesus' Word? Am I distracted by the many things I think I must do? Mary chose the best portion by sitting down at Jesus' feet and listening to the Word. She knew the responsibilities of cooking and preparations were important, but she also knew that sitting at Jesus' feet was the main priority she should have been doing at that time.

The Lord is my portion, says my soul, therefore I will hope in Him. (Lamentations 3:24)

This verse is a great reminder of how the Lord is with you in every detail of your life. Meditate on the Psalms and spend time in prayer, placing every detail of your life and all that each day may bring into His loving hands. Ask Him to remove distractions and the anxiety that these can cause. He cares for you and all that you are facing. He loves you and will provide all you need (Refer to 1 Peter 5:7 and Psalm 65.)