

# A Word on Wednesday from Pastor Tonia

## “Anxiety and Endurance” 1/31/24

*When anxiety was great within me, your consolation brought me joy. (Psalm 94:19)*

God has much to say about how we face those random things which cause us anxiety. We are not to let the difficulties we face throw us off track or cause us to leave the God we love. There is a purpose for the rough patches. Just as a tumbler polishes a rock, as heat and pressure creates a diamond, as the crucible forms a Marine.

“If something is wrong, fix it now, but train yourself not to worry. Worry fixes nothing.” wrote Ernest Hemingway. Very stoic. A way to live. A way to practice living well. A goal to strive for. A goal to achieve. Do the next thing now, instead of losing sleep over it. Instead of growing frustrated, angry, depressed. Let go of worry and face the challenge. God is with you and He’s got this. He will never leave you.

Do You trust God? Do you have the ability, to go forth into this unknown. Has God equipped you for what He has called you to do? Even though you’re a bit scared, unsure, wishing you didn’t have to, step forward into this new adventure. Fear is not the boss. God has got this, and He has got you. You are safe in God’s hands. He is with you in this.

Life is full of change and unknowns. If you’re going to move forward, you realize this and must decide if you’re going to live life or crawl through it in fear. In I Peter we read, “Cast all your anxiety on God because He cares for you,” (1 Peter 5:7)

We can’t live in fear, it is not our boss, it is not a comfortable place to live. We don’t know what tomorrow holds, but we know who holds tomorrow. In James we read, “Come now, you who say, ‘Today or tomorrow we will go into such and such a town and spend a year there and trade and make a profit’— yet you do not know what tomorrow will bring. (Jms 4:13-14)

Bad things happen. The Stoic, Seneca, wisely tells us to make our plan, but “In the meantime, cling tooth and nail to the following rule: not to give in to adversity, not to trust prosperity, and always take full note of fortune’s habit of behaving just as she pleases. Whatever you have been expecting comes as less of a shock.”

We plan for the best and prepare for the worst. When we make plans, hearing God’s laughter, we plan for the event to be the best it can be, we arrange what we see in our mind, perfection. But what if? Is there a plan in place if the weather changes? If not enough people show? If too many people show? We have lots of little plan B’s in place. So we are ready for whatever.

As trials, failure, rejection, abandonment, wanderings come upon us, in our clear thinking heart we know; as Pastor Alistair Begg said, “Endurance is a key indicator of spiritual fitness.” “God uses the encouragement of the Scriptures, the hope of our ultimate salvation in glory; and the trials, God either sends or allows, produce endurance and perseverance,” author Jerry Bridges reminds us. These are truths to hold on to as we think, “I can’t do this.” “Why did this happen.” “How could God do this to me.” “I can’t endure anymore.” We all get to this place sometime in our lives. Some of us seem to live here. This place of can I, I can’t, will I, how can I? Is worry the boss or is God? Can we stand? Will we let this polish us and form us into who God created us to be? Will others perceive our endurance comes from Someone beyond ourselves.

Everybody has a story, what did that person endure which made them into the person you admire? What do tough times do to our faith? Is worry the boss or do we believe God’s got this? Can the anxiety we face bring us joy as we endure and grow, as we learn and move forward. How do we look at the trials we face? Do we feel anger, like we have been turned out to the wolves? Or can we say, “I can’t wait to see what God got for me now.”

## **Please pray with me:**

Creating God, help us to look at our lives, at what is happening to us, to our church, our community, to the world You so love, and see everything You do or allow brings us closer to You. Through what comes our way, teach us to see You more clearly, to love You more dearly, and to follow You more nearly. Help us to endure, to be who You created us to be and to walk in joy.

**Amen.**