

Anxiety and Work

Note: *Overview:* God created Adam & Eve and told them to “Be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth, and subdue it.” (Gen 1:28) In subduing the earth we bring shape and beauty to the world. We are meaning seeking creatures. As we live and move and have our being in the Lord our work sparks less anxiety.

Here are examples of issues that cause anxiety at work:

- Daily challenging work (rocket scientist)
- meeting deadlines
- relationships with coworkers
- managing staff
- long working hours
- having a demanding boss
- a workload that is overly high (e.g. resident in medical school)
- lack of direction on tasks
- unjust environment
- lack of control over the work environment
- low reward (not enough pay, benefits, etc.)

How do we move toward less anxiety at work?

Seeing work as way God provides for you instead of it being a way you provide for yourself/those you care about

“Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. “No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money.

“Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life? And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? Therefore do not be anxious, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. (Matt 6:19-21,24-33)

Disarm Consumerism/Materialism (it impacts our work focus/weight) and grow into generosity (it brings life).

We can be overextended financially, too dependent on goods to satisfy longings, too owned by what others have, etc. Often financial stress shuts down our experience of generosity and exacerbates the anxiety that comes from a life of selfishness.

- Those who weep or who rejoice or who buy things should not be absorbed by their weeping or their joy or their possessions. Those who use the things of the world should not become attached to them. For this world as we know it will soon pass away. (1 Cor 7:30-31)
- Instruct those who are rich in the present age not to be arrogant or to set their hope on the uncertainty of wealth, but on God, who richly provides us with all things to enjoy. Instruct them to do what is good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and willing to share. storing up treasure for themselves as a good foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of what is truly life. (1 Timothy 6:17-19)
- I have not coveted anyone's silver or gold or clothing. You yourselves know that I worked with my own hands to support myself and those who are with me. In every way I've shown you that it is necessary to help the weak by laboring like this and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, because he said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'" (Acts 20:33-35)

Grow Competence at work that has nothing to do with perfectionism but leads to connection to the Lord and the joy of a job well done.

We were designed to rule and subdue – to work in the world in a way that brought shape and beauty to our environment and made a difference that we felt. Putting time and effort into doing work well and enjoying its impact is a good thing.

- He shepherded them with a pure heart and guided them with his skillful hands. (Psalm 78:72)
- The Lord God took the man and placed him in the garden of Eden to work it and watch over it. (Genesis 2:15)
- Do you see a person skilled in his work? He will stand in the presence of kings. He will not stand in the presence of the unknown. (Prov 22:29)
- There is nothing better for a person than to eat, drink, and enjoy his work. I have seen that even this is from God's hand, because who can eat and who can enjoy life apart from him? (Ecc 2:24-25)

Recognize that comprised work performance that causes anxiety often grows out of fear (the drama in your mind) and is not a skill/ability problem.

We hide and blame to cover our fear. (I was afraid because I was naked....). Learning to name, confess and get help with your fear really changes your posture at work.

- The slacker craves, yet has nothing, but the diligent is fully satisfied. (Prov 13:4) (Slacker – think passivity)
- The slacker says, “There’s a lion outside! I’ll be killed in the public square!” (Prov 22:13)
- Immediately the man who had received five talents went, put them to work, and earned five more. In the same way the man with two earned two more. But the man who had received one talent went off, dug a hole in the ground, and hid his master’s money. “The man who had received one talent also approached and said, ‘Master, I know you. You’re a harsh man, reaping where you haven’t sown and gathering where you haven’t scattered seed. 25 So I was afraid and went off and hid your talent in the ground. See, you have what is yours.’ (Matthew 25:15-18, 24-25, CSB)

Disarm the secular/sacred split with work and see that in your work you work as unto the Lord and are building his kingdom.

How often do you think on the impact of your work and celebrate it?

- So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do everything for the glory of God. (1 Co 10:31)
- Work willingly at whatever you do, as though you were working for the Lord rather than for people. Remember that the Lord will give you an inheritance as your reward, and that the Master you are serving is Christ. (Colossians 3:23-24)
- Don’t work for the food that perishes but for the food that lasts for eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you, because God the Father has set his seal of approval on him.” (John 6:27, CSB)

Your relationship with the Lord and His Church Ought to Be Forming you into a more Discerning/Redemptive Relational Employee/Boss

Must be willing to accept and move through ongoing relational difficulty at work (e.g. leader of a team, mother). There must be growing relational maturity with the Lord and others to navigate work tensions.

- Since God chose you to be the holy people he loves, you must clothe yourselves with tenderhearted mercy, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. Make allowance for each other’s faults and forgive anyone who offends you. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others. Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds us all together in perfect harmony. And let the peace that comes from Christ rule in your hearts. For as members of one body you are called to live in peace. And always be thankful. (Colossians 3:12-15, NLT)

- Better is open rebuke than hidden love. Faithful are the wounds of a friend; profuse are the kisses of an enemy. One who is full loathes honey, but to one who is hungry everything bitter is sweet. (Prov 27:5-7)

Questions

1. What causes anxiety at work for you the most?
2. Do you see your work as a way God provides for you or that you provide for yourself? Is there a prayer you could write out that would help you move toward resting in your work as a gift from God?
3. Are you overburdened financially in a way that exacerbates work stress? Can you change this?
4. Do you practice generosity? If not are there ways you can move toward more?
5. Are you too performance driven at work or could you lean into your work in a way you became more proficient in what you do?
6. Can you name your fears at work? Do you see how it might hinder job performance? Can you think of ways to get help with your fears?
7. How often do you think on the impact of your work and celebrate it? Are there ways you could do this more?