



Theme: Authentic Faith in a World of AI

“Finding Peace in an Anxious AI World”

Sermon preached by Jeff Huber, January 17-18, 2026

VIDEO **Sermon Starter**

SLIDE **“Finding Peace in an Anxious AI World”**

We began a new series of sermons last week on how we find authentic faith in a world filled with artificial intelligence and I shared with you my own experience of using AI when I had a cold and I was looking for whether it was a cold or a flu or COVID or something else. If you have ever experimented with using the AI version of your web browser or your search engine, then you will know that at the very bottom of most responses you find this sentence.

SLIDE **“AI responses may include mistakes.”**

After the sermon last week, I realized I misspoke when it came to one of the statistics I shared with you and so I realized that I probably need this line at the end of each one of my sermons.

SLIDE **“Pastor Jeff’s Sermons may include mistakes.”**

If you're wondering about the mistake I made it's when I listed the countries spending the most on artificial intelligence. Most of you were correct in that China is actually number 2 when it comes to spending on

artificial intelligence in 2025. The United Arab Emirates is second but it's in infrastructure spending for artificial intelligence, which is about the amount of money spent on things like data centers and physical computer centers. They also invested heavily in Africa and so I wasn't too far off, but it wasn't totally accurate so I apologize.

One of the things I have learned is that the world is changing rapidly and many of these statistics do seem to be changing almost daily because of the advances happening in artificial intelligence. What is clear, as I have been doing research and reading and listening for the past few months, is that artificial intelligence is here to stay and it is **going to dominate the world** in terms of our conversations over the next few years. I don't say this to **scare anyone** but simply to remind us of how fast the world is changing and how important it is for us as people of faith **not to bury our head in the sand** but instead ask what it means to be faithful during times of rapid change. This is why we're asking this basic question as part of this series of sermons.

SLIDE How can we have authentic faith in a world of artificial intelligence?

We began last week with some basic overview questions that I would encourage you to go back and watch or listen to because I don't want to spend lots of time on those today. Here is what we covered last week. We'll continue to touch on these questions as we go through each idea.

SLIDE (FLY IN)

- **What is artificial intelligence?**
- **What are the benefits and risks of AI?**
- **How is AI impacting the church?**
- **Does the Bible talk about AI?**
- **How do we live as followers of Jesus in a world of AI?**

In general, artificial intelligence is produced by humans in a way

that machines and computers **look like they are doing human work**. It is a system in a machine which stimulates human intelligence. AI comes in many different forms and is not just one thing but is many things and is becoming more diverse by the day. We talked last week about the **three different levels** which you may have heard about when it comes to artificial intelligence.

Core Categories

Modern AI is primarily classified by its scope and level of sophistication:

SLIDE **Artificial Narrow Intelligence (ANI):**

Also known as "**Weak AI**," these systems are designed to excel at a single, specific task (e.g., facial recognition, playing chess, or generating text). **All AI in use in 2026**, including advanced generative models, falls into this category.

Artificial General Intelligence (AGI): (fly in)

Often called "**Strong AI**," this refers to a theoretical system that could match or surpass human capabilities across virtually all cognitive tasks. While a goal for companies like OpenAI and Google DeepMind, AGI does not yet exist.

Artificial Superintelligence (ASI): (fly in)

A hypothetical form of AI that would significantly outperform the best human abilities across every domain, potentially possessing self-awareness beyond human control. *Some imagine this taking on Godlike qualities or attributes which will overpower human intelligence to serve its own purposes of control and worship.*

After last week's sermon, one of you sent me a podcast that had to do with artificial super intelligence. The title is a bit frightening. "**If Anyone Builds It, Everyone Dies: How Artificial Superintelligence Might Wipe Out Our Entire Species.**" The podcast is based on the book by Nate Soares who is the President of the Machine Intelligence Research

Institute (MIRI) and plays a central role in setting MIRI's vision and strategy. Soares has been working in the field for over a decade and is the author of a large body of technical and semi-technical writing on AI alignment, including foundational work on value learning, decision theory, and power-seeking incentives in smarter-than-human AIs. Prior to MIRI, Soares worked as an engineer at Google and Microsoft, as a research associate at the National Institute of Standards and Technology, and as a contractor for the US Department of Defense.

GRAPHIC Artificial Superintelligence Podcast

Clearly this idea of artificial intelligence and eventually becoming super intelligent is causing anxiety for many of us. I had more than one older person on the way out of worship last week say, **“I’m glad I’m going to die soon so I don’t have to worry about this stuff!”**

That's one way to look at it, but only if we don't care about our kids or grandkids or the next generation. Every one of us needs to be aware of what is happening in our world to the best of our ability, then learn how to respond and encourage others in that response. That's why last week we talked about these four things that we can do as people of faith as we navigate this current world that feels anxious and out of control.

SLIDE How do we live in an AI world? (fly in)

- **Read the Bible more and screens less.**
- **Seek wisdom from Scripture, God’s Spirit, and godly companions.**
- **Invite God to help you discern truth from lies.**
- **Patiently wait on God rather than seek quick results generated by AI.**

SLIDE

- **Make relationship with God and others primary, using AI to supplement.**

We're gonna focus on this last one today as it is a relationship with God and with other humans that is meant to bring us a sense of peace amid the anxiety created by AI. What we know is that anxiety, worry, fear and stress are intertwined, and they take a toll on our bodies. The Bible gives us ways to deal with all these things, and it is the same advice for each of these feelings and experiences.

I want to start up front by recognizing that this is a very simple sermon. It is not complicated and not rocket science. This does not require a Master of Divinity degree or deep Bible knowledge to figure out how to share this with you.

SLIDE Fear and Worry

Let's start by looking at fear and worry. You know that all animals have a self-preservation instinct. We have a mechanism inside of us which is supposed to make us worry about things that we should be worried about. This is important and it is a way that animals know that there is danger. All animals have an instinct to fight or to flee when there is danger or something to be worried about or to be afraid of.

The fight or flight instinct is a gift from God. All fear is not bad. There are times that we should be afraid. When there is danger, we need our instinct to tell us to be wary of. There is a splash of chemicals on your brain which sends electrical responses to the rest of your body, so you are prepared for whatever danger lies ahead. Several months ago, I was lying in bed, and I heard a noise in the kitchen, and it startled me awake. I was sure there was someone in the house and as I was listening and lying there, I found my heart beating very fast and very hard. I can hear it in my ears, and it feels like it is going to jump out of my chest. I am anxious and I am concerned. Should I call 911? What do I do?

GRAPHIC Jack on bed

GRAPHIC Jasper 1

GRAPHIC Jasper 2

Finally, I did what most of you may have done. I woke up my wife and said, "Tami, go and see who's there!" I didn't really do that. Instead, I asked my dog Jack, and he just looked at me like I was crazy for waking him up. He gave me that look which said, "**I'll get up if it's REALLY a problem. Go back to sleep. Unless we are going for a walk!**" Our little dog Jasper just sleeps through it all because he's only 6 pounds!

GRAPHIC Sleeping Joseph

Instead, I grabbed the sleeping Saint Joseph that sits on my nightstand and I tiptoed downstairs. I flipped on the light and who should I see but a mouse up on the countertops preparing food for his family! Ok, that's AI generated. You can tell because he's smiling. I think I surprised the mouse more than me because his flee instinct kicked in when he saw me standing there with a heavy object in my hand. He jumped off the counter and scurried out of sight under the cabinets!

GRAPHIC AI Generated Mouse in Kitchen

I had a fear mechanism which had triggered an appropriate response if there was a thief in the house. The challenge of course is that the part of our brain which does this doesn't always know when there is a real threat or not. That response didn't know if it was a thief or a chef mouse in the kitchen. More than that, that instinct sometimes imagines things that are not really there. This good gift of God sometimes gets distorted or gets hyperactive.

It happens when we are children because we don't really know to be afraid of many things when we are young, but then we are trained by our families and our parents to be afraid of some things. That is good when we teach our children to be afraid of running out in the street in front of cars, or of climbing up on the roof, or to be afraid of the hot stove. But once we start learning how to fear things that are real, we begin to start making things up in our minds that we are afraid of and our imagination takes over.

GRAPHIC AI Generated Haunted House

When I was a little boy, I began to imagine that there was a monster that lived down the street in a mysterious house that none of the kids in our neighborhood would enter. It was Old Man Filer's house. I still remember his name. The kids in the neighborhood made up stories about him. One day my friend Chris told me that he would come out at night and hide in our closets and I believed him. I was terrified that Old Man Filer was living in my closet at night. I imagined him hiding in my closet waiting until I fell asleep. I couldn't decide if it was better to go to sleep with the closet open or the closet closed. Yes, that also is an AI generated haunted house, and not Old Man Filer's!

For any children who are worshiping today, you need to know that there are no monsters living under your bed or in your closet. They do not exist and they are figments of our imagination, but when I was that young boy, I was terrified and really scared. Somebody suggested that I put a lock on my closet or take the doors off and empty it out. That may have worked, but all I know is that I was scared. There are not really monsters and our parents try to teach us this. Sometimes a nightlight helps or looking at wonderful pictures before you go to bed. The thing I'm going to teach you at the end of the sermon is what is helpful for adults and even children who are four or five years old and will help alleviate our fear and anxiety.

But even when we grow up there are still monsters under our bed or in our closet. There are things that we become terrified of that will happen. There are voices all around us telling us what we should be afraid of. We have 24-hour news that we get on our smart phones, and we hear about one little thing that happened in one part of the world, and we begin to imagine that he could happen to us. Even though it only happened to one person in the country of 700 million, we begin to imagine it could happen to us. We get terrified and sometimes we freeze and are paralyzed by our fear. We get that repeatedly every day.

Then we listen to talk radio or commentary which we mistakenly call "news" on the television. Whether we are on the left or on the right,

those voices are telling us what we should be afraid of and they try and hook us to buy boxes of freeze-dried food and bottled water for our new bomb shelter they convinced us to build for when the robots take over!

The message is clear. The Earth is going to hell in a handbasket according to many commentators because of the people who happen to be in charge now, or the people that used to be in charge then, or the people that WILL be in charge. We are conditioned to be afraid of things that have not even happened yet!

Yes, there may be things that we have legitimate fears about, but we have no control over most of them and yet we still stew over them. We often entertain ourselves with those thoughts. It seems like every other movie is about zombies or killer robots or the end of the world. Many of us like to be scared out of our wits, and then we wonder why we're anxious all the time, filled with worry and fear.

We go to the movies, or we watch a television show, and we find ourselves morbidly drawn to something that describes the destruction of humanity or some strange and hideous crime. We get worried about asteroids and global warming and global cooling and aliens and plagues and apes taking over the world. We have message after message which tells us we should be afraid, really, afraid. Geena Davis maybe put it best with her iconic line in the 80's horror film, "The Fly."

VIDEO Geena Davis in The Fly - Be afraid, be very afraid!

GRAPHIC Be Afraid – Be Very Afraid

On top of that there is the normal stuff that we are afraid of. We have a fear of being rejected. We have a fear of failure. We fear what is going to happen to our retirement. Will it even be there by the time that we need it? We fear what happens in the stock market each day. We fear if our children will be okay when they go to school or when they go off to college or live on their own for the first time. All these things leave our natural fear mechanism in a hyper-drive mode.

GRAPHIC**Generalized Anxiety Disorders or Panic Attacks**

There are some people whose early warning system never shuts down. It is always telling them that there is something to be afraid of. We talk about that as generalized anxiety disorder or panic attacks. Right now, there are 60 million Americans who take anxiety reducing drugs. That is about 22% of the population. Some of you in this congregation struggle with panic and anxiety. You may have showed up at the emergency room because your heart is going crazy and you are certain that you are dying of a heart attack. Your hands maybe get sweaty when you are in a large group. There are many other physiological experiences that you have and that maybe you are having even now as I describe these things. Some of you have shared your experiences with me.

One woman said, *"My obsession with worrying makes me preoccupied and unable to enjoy the simplest moments of my life. Most of my anxiety comes from worries—something bad is going to happen to my family or myself. I worry about my kids and what would happen to them if something happened to me. That worry leads me to think that every cough, sore muscle, or headache is the cancer that is going to kill me and take away my family. My obsession with worrying about bad things makes me so preoccupied that I become irritable. I yell at my kids, and I miss great moments with my family and friends because my mind won't stop racing."*

She then put in bold this last line which summarizes this sermon series and why we're doing it.

SLIDE

I am not a person who feels like I am out of control, at least not in the day-to-day things that happen. But I am living a mentally out-of-control life and now there is this artificial intelligence stuff...how are we supposed to live!

This is where many of us find ourselves. We are living a mentally out-of-control life. While we might not have clinical anxiety or panic

attacks, we certainly know fear.

The Bible recognizes that we humans can get disconnected from God, from others, and from ourselves, and one solution it gives us to deal with anxiety is Sabbath. Sabbath is about rest and renewal, which allows us to remember who we are and whose we are. When we take Sabbath, that means that one day in seven we stop doing all the things that draw upon our energy or drain us, and we do the things instead which renew us and gives us strength.

SLIDE Sabbath = Rest, Renewal and Remembering

Part of what we do is gather for worship. Part of what we do is to read Scripture. Part of what we do is gather with friends. What we do on our Sabbath is to find things that are fun and that are renewing and gives us energy to meet the demands that are placed upon us each day. Sabbath also includes taking a break from our phones and electronic devices.

GRAPHIC Sabbath box

GRAPHIC Emotionally Healthy Spirituality Day by Day Devotion

As a congregation, we read through the book, "Practicing the Way," which was about being with Jesus. They recommend something like this Sabbath box which has a place to put your phones and candles to make the beginning of your time away. I also recommend this devotional book on Emotional Healthy Spirituality which recommends we take time every morning, afternoon, and evening, to pause. These things help with our anxiety as we center our lives on a relationship with a living God.

Underneath all of that there is one final answer that the Scripture gives us to dealing with worry and anxiety in our lives. If you struggle with chronic anxiety, then we may need to talk with a psychiatrist or psychologist. We may need to be on medication for a while to help you move beyond that. We may need a life coach or a counselor. We may need to exercise and eat better. We may need to get more sleep. All

those things are important in helping you deal with fear, anxiety, and worry.

But let me share with you the one biblical answer which is underneath each of these. In the biblical times, King David didn't have access to a psychiatrist or prescribed medications. Jesus didn't have a life coach or counselor who was helping him in the garden of Gethsemane when he was preparing for the anxiety of facing his own death. Starting from the very beginning of the Bible in Genesis until the last book of Revelation, there was one common answer which was given. We already know this, but today I want to encourage us to think about how we might live into it. **It is not the only answer, but it is the foundational answer.** It is the most common phrase found in your Bible. We hear God saying through the biblical authors repeatedly these words.

SLIDE

We know we shouldn't be afraid, but we need to know why. Why should we not be afraid? Eight times Jesus makes reference to the great Commandments. Do you remember what they are? "Love God with all of your heart, soul, mind and strength and love your neighbor as you love yourself." Do you know how many times he tells his disciples to not be afraid? 25 times he tells them, "Do not be afraid."

That's great but we still need a reason why we shouldn't be afraid. It's not enough just to be told not to be afraid but we need the answer to this question, **“Why?”** The interesting thing is that in almost every situation, God tells us why we don't need to be afraid. Isaiah 41:10 is a powerful example of this. God speaks through the prophet Isaiah to the children of Israel when he says these words.

BIBLE

¹⁰ Don't be afraid, for I am with you. Don't be discouraged, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you. I will hold you up with my victorious right hand.

“Don't be afraid because I am with you.” This is the common refrain in the Scriptures. God says, “I will never leave you nor forsake you. Do not be afraid because I am walking by your side. I am as near as the air that you breathe.”

God does not say, **“Hey, don't worry about it...be happy!** Just pray and I will make it all better with the snap of my fingers. I will just take care of it, and it won't be a problem, so don't you worry your pretty little head.” **Let's remember those last words in that text about victory.** We talked about this last week, that as followers of Jesus we believe the victory has already been won. **We don't need to be afraid of the future because we believe God holds the future.** God says to the prophet Isaiah in 43:2 these words.

BIBLE

2 When you go through deep waters, I will be with you. When you go through rivers of difficulty, you will not drown. When you walk through the fire of oppression, you will not be burned up; the flames will not consume you.

God doesn't say that he is going to keep us from going through the fires or the deep waters or the rivers of difficulty or the challenges of AI. God says that WHEN we walk through them, God will be with us. It is not a matter of **“if” but “when,”** and when we go through the floods and the fire God says, **“I will be with you. Do not be afraid.”** God says that in some way, **“I will guide you and comfort you and carry you. In the end I will redeem everything that you walk through so trust me.”**

It is not a promise that nothing bad is going to happen in our lives or in our world. It is not a promise that nothing bad will happen to our children. Every single day I entrust my children to God. I literally know they belonged to God before they came into my life and they will be God's long after I am gone. When I dropped them off each day at school, I would say a little prayer when they got out of the car. It might be a prayer you begin to use.

SLIDE “God, I give my children to you. I entrust them to you so please be with them.”

I don't think that means they will not be picked on at school sometimes. I don't think it means they will never struggle with schoolwork or with getting along with teachers. I don't think it will keep them from falling on the playground and hurting themselves. I have buried a child, and I have buried enough children who were sick whose parents prayed every day for their kids, to know that is not what this sort of prayer means. I have buried enough teenagers whose parents have prayed for them every day that I know it is not what that means when I pray for them.

What I believe that it means is that no matter what happens in their lives, I know that God will not let them go. God will hold their hands like I did when they were little so they wouldn't be afraid. Somehow, God is going to take even the difficult and tragic and tough things in life, and he will redeem them and bring something good from them. I am entrusting them to God. I'm counting on the fact that even if the worst thing should happen to my children God still has a hold of them and he will let them go, because it will NOT be the last thing.

That's what God is promising in the Scriptures. David finds this reality of great comfort in the Scriptures. Many times, he is dealing with high anxiety, sometimes running for his life and hiding from people trying to kill him. But then he says things like this in Psalm 55:22.

BIBLE

“Give your burdens to the Lord, and he will take care of you. He will not permit the godly to slip and fall.”

I realize what many of you are thinking. “David could say that because he was the King of Israel. Things always went well for him, but I am no King or Queen and I don't have all the luxuries that he had.” If that is what you think then you may not know David's story. Psalm 55 begins

with these words.

BIBLE

**¹ Listen to my prayer, O God.
Do not ignore my cry for help!**

**² Please listen and answer me,
for I am overwhelmed by my troubles.**

**³ My enemies shout at me,
making loud and wicked threats.
They bring trouble on me
and angrily hunt me down.**

**⁴ My heart pounds in my chest.
The terror of death assaults me.**

**⁵ Fear and trembling overwhelm me,
and I can't stop shaking.**

**⁶ Oh, that I had wings like a dove;
then I would fly away and rest!**

**⁷ I would fly far away
to the quiet of the wilderness. *Interlude***

**⁸ How quickly I would escape—
far from this wild storm of hatred.**

After David has laid before God all his worries and anxieties at the beginning of this Psalm, then by the end he is able to say, “**Give your burdens to the Lord, and he will take care of you.**” It doesn't say that we will be spared anxiety or worry, but it does say that God will sustain us if we turn to him. We find this pattern often in the Psalms. Psalm 56, the very next one, begins with these two verses.

BIBLE

**¹ O God, have mercy on me,
for people are hounding me.
My foes attack me all day long.**

² I am constantly hounded by those who slander me,

and many are boldly attacking me.

When these Psalms were written down, they were attached to different times of David's life. This one was written when David was fleeing for his life from King Saul. David is not the King yet, but he is a soldier and King Saul is jealous and threatened by David, so he seeks to kill David. There is no place that is safe for David to go, not even his hometown. The King wants to kill him, and he has done nothing wrong except be the one that God said will be the next king. He is innocent and yet the King wants to kill him.

I don't know if you have ever had death threats against you, but when I was serving as a youth pastor in Colorado Springs the juvenile judge in El Paso County was a member of our church and help with the youth ministry. She used to have the youth group come to her courtroom and she would have them sit in the defendant's box. She then would have them led away in shackles to get across the point that they would never want to be in her courtroom. I had a few kids who were having brushes with the law and that moment straightened them out in a hurry! She also shared that she had numerous death threats against her over the course of her career as a judge. She talked about being terrified of that experience and looking over her shoulder constantly.

I found myself thinking about David's story of fearing for his life this week because one of the fears about Artificial Superintelligence is that robots will become smarter than us. We may go from being the ones in charge to being the hunted. I got this cartoon this past week from one of you with a person pounding on their computer yelling, "C'mon you stupid thing, work!" Then the next image is of the computer pounding on the person as they dig their own grave shouting the same thing.

GRAPHIC Cartoon - Cmon You Stupid Thing Work

David has a price on his head when he writes Psalm 56. He must flee his own homeland and go to the land of his enemies, the Philistines. While he is in the Philistines territory he must act like a lunatic or a

madman because the Philistines don't like him either, but they will stay away from him if he acts crazy. In this setting where David is surrounded by enemies in the East and the West and the North and South, he asked God for help because his enemies want to trample him. Talk about fear and anxiety—David was living in that moment. But David goes on to say in Psalm 56.

BIBLE

**³ But when I am afraid,
I will put my trust in you.**

BIBLE

**⁸ You keep track of all my sorrows.
You have collected all my tears in your bottle.
You have recorded each one in your book.**

**⁹ My enemies will retreat when I call to you for help.
This I know: God is on my side!**

**¹⁰ I praise God for what he has promised;
yes, I praise the Lord for what he has promised.**

**¹¹ I trust in God, so why should I be afraid?
What can mere mortals do to me?**

This last verse is our memory verse for this week.

BIBLE

**¹³ For you have rescued me from death;
you have kept my feet from slipping.
So now I can walk in your presence, O God,
in your life-giving light.**

There are many things we can do to deal with anxiety and panic and fear, but underneath all those, the biblical answer is that God is with us. God will sustain us, so we cast our burden upon him. God will walk with us, and God will take even the tragedies and the difficulties and the painful things and the things we are terrified of and use them and

somehow redeem them. God will not let you go.

We hear that when Jesus is in the garden of Gethsemane on the night before he was put to death on the cross. He was about to be arrested when he went to the garden. No doubt there was anguish and fear that had been building throughout that entire week. The Gospels say that Jesus throws himself to the ground. One of the Gospels tells us that he perspires drops of blood and he cries out to God, “Father, please take this cup from me. I don't want to have to walk through this.”

But Jesus knows that trusting in God and even praying to God doesn't necessarily mean all our prayers will be answered in the way that we want them to be. This is an instant of the prayers of Jesus not being answered. Jesus himself was not delivered the way he had prayed but the end of his prayer captures the ultimate trust in God when he says:

SLIDE “*Yet not my will, but thy will be done.*”

Jesus knew that God would sustain him and walk with him. God would take the tragedy and the pain and use it to redeem all of humanity and bring about the salvation of all of creation.

The apostle Paul is in a prison cell in Rome writing to the church at Philippi. It is a passage of Scripture that many have memorized, and this letter is known as the Epistle of Joy. Paul is in prison awaiting news as to whether he will be executed or set free. He is on death row, and he is not certain if he will be pardoned or not. In the context of that he writes this letter of joy that expresses how he finds joy amid an anxiety filled moment. These words give to us an idea of how we might find peace in the face of uncertainty, adversity and perhaps even death. Philippians 4 reads:

BIBLE

⁴Always be full of joy in the Lord. I say it again—rejoice! ⁵Let everyone see that you are considerate in all you do. Remember, the Lord is coming soon.

⁶ Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done. ⁷ Then you will experience God's peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus.

SLIDE Prayer and Thanksgiving

I love the fact that Paul, first and foremost, reminds them that God is nearby. This is why we don't have to worry, because God is nearby. When we cast our burdens upon the Lord, God will sustain us. Paul is reiterating what we read in the Psalms. When we do that, Paul says, do it with Thanksgiving and give thanks to God amid our adversity. I love that line because it reminds us that when we focus on the things we are thankful for, even amid adversity and worry, it takes our mind off the stress and that thing we are afraid of when we focus on those things we are grateful for. **This is why we gave you journals** this past week, to write out your prayers and the things for which we thankful. This can bring us peace, no matter the level of anxiety. Remember that **Paul is WRITING these letters and that movement of his hand** changes him to a person of joy.

When we lay all of this in God's hands, we find his peace that will sustain us. Not only will the peace sustain us, but that peace will guard our hearts and minds as we live in Christ Jesus. One of the places where we see fear and anxiety come together is when we are unemployed. Last week we talked about one of the risks and fears around AI is that it will replace our job and our income. Several members in our congregation have experienced unemployment for months at a time. This is what some of them have shared about that experience in emails they have sent to me over the years.

When I was out of work for a year, I kept a "Give it to the Lord" Journal. I wrote down all my anxieties and all my fears every day. When I would start to be afraid, I would open my Journal I began

to keep and write those things down and give them to God. Then I would close the book and when I closed the book it was as if I was saying, "Lord, I give it to you." The very act of writing down and closing the book allowed me to let go of it for a time. Then, when I started to be afraid again, I would open my journal and write in it once more, "Lord, here are the things that I am afraid of, and this is what I am worried about." I would close the book and once more would feel like God had heard me and I can let go of those worries and fears. That brought me so much peace.

Here is another testimony.

I found the following helpful with worry and anxiety. The first thing is prayer. Instead of waking and going to sleep with anxious thoughts I would wake up and try to be in prayer the moment I awoke so I was thinking about God to begin today. The last thought of the day wouldn't be what I was worried about but instead I would give God thanks in prayer. Then my dreams were about my prayers and not the things I was worried about.

And another wrote...

In addition to prayer, I served in the community at the soup kitchen and God gave me new perspective and raised my spirits to care for others instead of being focused on my problems. I had a small group in the church that sustained me and carried me when I couldn't walk any further. Of course, it was also knowing that the worst thing in my life would never be the last thing.

We find that all these things that were just mentioned are tools and disciplines to help us be able to trust in God. If you are wondering how you can trust in God when things get tough, let me give you a couple of suggestions.

SLIDE Journaling Prayer and Thanks

First, we pray and when we pray, we say certain things in our

prayers that reaffirm our faith. David and Paul both affirm their faith in the prayers that we heard in Scripture and when they say it out loud and write it down, they begin to feel it. John Wesley who was the founder of Methodism used to say to his pastors this truth.

SLIDE *Preach faith until you have it.*

Somehow, in the very act of preaching about faith and praying about it and writing it down you find that trust in God begins to well up inside of your heart. We can read through the Scriptures and be encouraged. There were a lot of things I didn't get done this week and I found myself preparing for this sermon and being a bit anxious myself. I began to read some of the passages that we have read so far, and I started to feel God's presence and God's peace as I read the Scriptures.

SLIDE **Reading Scriptures and Worship**

When we gather for worship, we sing songs together. When we sing the songs, many of which are simply Scripture put to music, we can find faith welling up inside of us. When we hear the Word proclaimed in worship, it can touch our hearts. All these things can help us remember who we are, and that we were made by God to be loved by God. That allows us to put our trust in God. Our circumstances might tend to make us afraid or anxious or worried, but we can choose how we want to focus our hearts and our minds and our souls during those circumstances.

A young man went to see his doctor for his annual physical. After they had done blood work, the doctor called him back to the office and the young man figured that he had high cholesterol, or there was some other minor issue in his work up that needed to be addressed with more exercise. After all, he had put on a bit of weight this year and he figured it was no big deal.

But when he met with the doctor, he was told that his blood work pointed to a very rare disease for which there was no treatment and no cure. In essence it would be a death sentence if he had this disease. He left the doctor's office, and he went to his family's Christmas party and

when he arrived his family could tell there was something wrong. He said, *"I felt this fear gripping me. I was terrified and I felt every muscle in my body was aching when I arrived at the house. I looked at my family, and I looked at my children, and I thought that I would not see them grow up and my heart ached. My mind raced ahead to the kind of treatment they could try but I probably wouldn't survive. I began to think about all the things that I wouldn't see or experience."*

He was frozen and paralyzed by his fear. The terrible thing was that the doctor had ordered a test that would give them a definitive answer, but he wouldn't get the results for three weeks! The worst part is the in between time, where you can dream up all the worst-case scenarios. You can deal with things if you know exactly what it is, but when you are not certain it makes things even worse and it exacerbates the fear.

He began to find some peace by going to worship and by saying prayers and by serving others. Three weeks passed and he finally got the results. He does have the disease, but it is a form that is treatable. He walked through this hell for three weeks and then he gets tremendous relief from a brush with death. I was thinking about that young man and all the worries and anxiety we have about AI because we can do some things, like he saw the doctor and got some tests done, but there is much over which we have no control.

Yes, we should work so that the AI risks like job losses, affects to the environment and the power grid, fake videos and damaging algorithms are minimized. But we also do not need to work ourselves in a frenzy so that we live in a constant state of fear or anxiety.

When we have that brush with death, we learn a great deal about ourselves and about where we find peace during that anxiety. This young man had received a devotional guide from a friend, and he began to read the prayers and Scriptures each day. He found the beginning of peace. He felt like God was speaking to him and saying a word to him each day, reminding him that God was present and near. He learned that when

anxiety attacks begin in situations like that, and they do often, to focus on God. When he found his heart racing and his palms getting sweaty, he would simply say under his breath:

SLIDE ***"I trust you Jesus. Help me Jesus to feel you right now."***

We call those "breath prayers" which are short little prayers you can say quickly under your breath. You might have to say than 20 times a day when you feel that fear or anxiety or you feel stressed out. You can simply say, ***"Help me Jesus. I trust in you Jesus. Be with me now God."***

He would pray quietly and calm would return and the pain would subside. This plus the love and comfort from his wife and from his kids and from his church friends brought him peace. There were people praying for him from a distance that he had not seen in years, and all these things were blessings. He found peace in those moments during the fear and adversity.

His wife told him that after that brush with death, he became a different person. He became more loving and caring. He was more compassionate and more appreciative of everyday things. God not only sustained him through those moments, but **God also used the anxiety and the fear to change his heart** and to change his soul and to change his character.

What he experienced was exactly what Paul and David expressed experiencing. All through Scripture there is a message that comes to us repeatedly about times of anxiety and fear. It is simply this.

SLIDE ***"Do not be afraid for I am with you. I will sustain you."***

This is not a silver bullet, and it is not complicated. It doesn't take a master's degree to figure this out. It simply takes practicing the things that allow us to experience peace and to know God's presence and then to trust in that with all our heart. This is Dr. Martin Luther King weekend, and he said this about fear.

SLIDE

"Normal fear protects us; abnormal fear paralyzes us." He explained that while normal fear motivates self-preservation and improvement, chronic, neurotic fear (abnormal fear) becomes destructive..."

SLIDE

...and the goal isn't to eliminate all fear but to master the unhealthy kind through love, faith, and courage, turning it into a useful servant rather than a ruinous master. –Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

When I feel stressed, one of the things I like to do is sing praise songs and hymns. One of the songs that I like to sing is a song that was written by Amy Grant several years ago. I have sung this song at funerals for young people, and I sang this song at the bedside of young man who was clinging to life after car accident.

Doug was unconscious and the CAT scan revealed massive bleeding in his brain. The family was trying to decide the next course of action and the youth group had gathered with me in the emergency room. In that moment I felt God speak to me that we should sing this song as we sat around Doug's bedside. The strange part is that several of the youth had the same thought at the same moment because we sang this song in youth group almost every week. We sang it hoping that he would hear the words and we sang for his parents and his brother. The words go like this.

SLIDE

***We believe in God and we all need Jesus,
Cause life is hard and it might not get easier.
But don't be afraid, to know who you are,
And don't be afraid to show it.***

SLIDE

***If you believe in God, if you say you need Jesus.
He'll be where you are, and he never will leave you.
Sing to me now, words that are true,***

so all in this place can know it.

SLIDE

*We believe in God and we all need Jesus.
We believe in God and we all need Jesus.
Sing to me now, words that are true,
so all in this place can know it.*

SLIDE

We believe in God and we all need Jesus.

This is God's word to us, from the book of Genesis to the book of Revelation that, "I will walk with you. I will never leave you nor forsake you. I will sustain you." So, we trust in that. This allowed David to say, ***"But when I am afraid, I will put my trust in you."***

Would you bow in prayer with me?

SLIDE Prayer

While your heads are bowed and your eyes are closed I would like to invite you to make this your prayer quietly under your breath. I'll say a line and you can repeat quietly after me if you feel so moved.

God I trust in you.

Help me not to be afraid.

I trust that you are with me.

I trust that you will sustain me.

I trust that you will bring good from evil.

I trust you with my family and my friends.

I trust you with my health.

I trust you with my future.

I trust you with my life.

Help me not to be afraid.

In your name, Amen.

January 17-18, 2026 Order

- 1.** David welcomes people.
- 2.** Song: “The Love of God”
- 3.** Song: “Morning by Morning”
- 4.** Jeff welcomes people:
 - a.** QR Code and Connect Card
 - b.** Invite people to greet each other, however comfortable and be seated.
- 5.** Jeff Introduces announcement video
- 6.** Announcement Video
- 7.** Sermon
- 8.** Prayer
- 9.** Meditation Moments
- 10.** Offering (Bibles, Journals, and Devotionals)
- 11.** Song: “Great are You Lord”
- 12.** Caring Ministers have Bibles and Journals
- 13.** Welcome Center and Wesley Commons
- 14.** Closing Prayer