

HIGH POINT CHURCH LEADERSHIP RETREAT



The background image shows a coastal scene with a dirt path leading from the foreground towards the ocean. The path is flanked by dry, golden-brown grass and shrubs. In the distance, several wooden posts are visible, possibly remnants of a fence or a marker. The ocean is a deep blue, and the sky is not visible. The overall lighting suggests a warm, late afternoon or early morning setting.

Anxiety: An Opportunity

Growing in Spiritual Maturity in Ways that
Utilize & Counter Anxiety

Jill Reasa | Oaks Ministry Director

James 1:2-4

Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face **trials** of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces **perseverance**. Let **perseverance** finish its work so that you can be **mature** and complete, not lacking anything.

Anxiety provides a trial & an opportunity.

- **Anxiety** is a marker of a **trial**.
- Trials are opportunities to produce **perseverance**.
- The work of perseverance has the finishing effect of **spiritual maturity**.
- **Anxiety** is an opportunity to develop **spiritual maturity**.

James 1:2-4; Romans 5:3-5; 2 Timothy 1:9

James?

No, no... we don't go there. Just...

STOP IT

Bob Newhart

James:

A **vision** of embodied identity and maturity.

Our horizon line for maturity comes from the incarnate Christ and his Spirit embodied in us.

James *assumes* this.



But how do I “feel better”?

- “How do I feel better [now] so that I can experience God [later]?”
- Implied: “and be able to do what I ‘should’ do?”

INSTEAD

- Our feelings, needs, desires, and growth are HOW we experience God and become who we are.

Relationship with God forms to **maturity**. Relationship is where we *practice*.

Maturity

Maturity is grown when we practice maturity before we're ready—when we're still immature.

Maturity doesn't grow from knowledge.

It grows from practice.



“Remember Who You Are”



Mythology: Human and spiritual realities

- **Tragedy:** Core human experiences of suffering
- **Accuser:** The false reality created based on the suffering
- **The Anxious Reaction:** avoidance (living out of immaturity)
- **Hero:** Opportunity for truth and light by practicing maturity with courage
 - **Integrity:** Be who you are; who you are *meant* to be (a lion, a King)
 - **Security:** Presence of love (he lives *in you*)
 - **Humility:** See reality and reckon with its consequences (fear, destruction, and lies)

Fruits of Spiritual Maturity

- **Integrity**: Be one person in the face of shifting circumstances
- **Security**: We are loved by God and he is present WITH us, and so we don't have to prove our worth or strive to get what we need
- **Humility**: Right-sized perspective of oneself and reality, so that we can face reality instead of avoid it

Opportunities in the Face of Anxiety

- **Integrity**: Be one person in the face of shifting circumstances
- **Security**: We are loved by God and he is present WITH us, and so we don't have to prove our worth or strive to get what we need
- **Humility**: Right-sized perspective of oneself and reality, so that we can face reality instead of avoid it

Expect anxiety. And plan to seek freedom in response.

A coastal landscape with a path leading to the ocean. The path is flanked by dry, golden-brown grass and shrubs. Several wooden posts are planted in the ground along the path. The ocean is visible in the background under a clear sky.

Integrity

Anxiety gives us a double mind.

James 1:5-8

If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you. But **when you ask, you must believe and not doubt**, because the one who doubts is like the wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. That person **should not expect to receive anything from the Lord**. Such a person is **double-minded** and unstable in all they do.

Double-minded:

The person who asked is not the same person who receives.

- Need ever more information or results – shifting target
- Wishy-washy – not being sure, so that you're never disappointed
- Insincere – pivoting who you are in the moment to manage and control outcomes based on shifting circumstances or for human pursuit of fairness
- Looking back or forward – changing self based off of what *might* happen or what *did* happen.

**The double-minded person won't receive anything from the Lord...
*because they won't see it when he gives it.***

Integrity: “Remember who you are”

The person who asked is the same person who receives, and so is able to integrate the wisdom given to the trial presented.

- “What God has given me is enough” (Philippians 4:11 - 13)
- “What God has given me is a mysterious reality” (Ephesians 3:14 - 21)
- “What God has given me is just and good; I will delight in him” (Psalm 37)
- “What God has given in faith is more important than gaining more knowledge or certainty” (2 Timothy 3:7)

Apply who you know you are and who you want to become [maturity]
In the opportunity of an anxious response [immaturity]

A coastal landscape with a sandy path leading to the ocean. The path is flanked by dry, golden-brown grass and shrubs. Several wooden posts are driven into the sand, forming a simple fence. The ocean is visible in the background under a clear sky.

Security

Anxiety has a deeper root.

Insecurities: Deeper roots of anxiety

1. Social position and status
2. Sin and its consequences

Can you think of more?
These are just two represented in James.

Insecurities: Deeper roots of anxiety

1. Social position and status
2. Sin and its consequences

James 1:9-11

Believers in humble circumstances ought to take pride in their high position. But **the rich should take pride in their humiliation—since they will pass away like a wild flower.** For the sun rises with scorching heat and withers the plant; its blossom falls and its beauty is destroyed. In the same way, **the rich will fade away even while they go about their business.**

Insecurities: Deeper roots of anxiety

1. Social position and status
2. Sin and its consequences

James 1:13-15

When tempted, no one should say, "God is tempting me." For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; but each person is tempted when they are dragged away by their own evil desire and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.

Insecurities: Deeper roots of anxiety

Core Fear: "I am alone"

- I am abandoned by God.
- He doesn't see me.
- He doesn't delight in me.
- He might not show up in my moment of need.
- What if it's a trick?

Security: “He lives in you”

1. Social position and status: I am already loved and delighted in, I don't have anything to prove.
2. Sin and its consequences: God is with me and provides what I need. I don't need to strive to get for myself what I need or desire.

James 1:12

Blessed is the one who perseveres under trial because, having stood the test, that person will receive **the crown of life** that the Lord has promised to **those who love him**.

Security: “He lives in you”

1. Social position and status: I am already loved and delighted in. I don't have anything to prove.
2. Sin and its consequences: God is with me and provides what I need. I don't need to strive to get for myself what I need or desire.

James 1:16-18

Don't be deceived, my dear brothers and sisters. **Every good and perfect gift is from above**, coming down from the **Father** of the heavenly lights, **who does not change** like shifting shadows. **He chose to give us birth through the word of truth**, that we might become a kind of first fruits of all he created.

Security:

- We are loved by God.
- He has already given and promised a position of belonging, glory and honor.
- He is a Father who provides and protects.

Having security helps us face our fear: it is part of wisdom God gives us...

...that we won't receive if we're controlling instead of trusting.

1 John 4:18

There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear.

Psalms 23

Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me, your rod and your staff, they comfort me.

Security is *present* love.

A coastal landscape with a path leading to the ocean. The path is flanked by dry, golden-brown grass and shrubs. Several wooden posts are planted in the ground along the path. The ocean is visible in the background under a clear sky.

Humility

Anxiety reveals our default reactions.

Default Reactions:

- Our default reactions are humiliating and exposing.
- Our default reactions (driven by anxiety) reveal underlying emotions.
- Our underlying emotions reveal our assumptions of reality.

James 1:19-20

My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, because human anger does not produce the righteousness that God desires.



Biblical Theology of Anger:

- Ezekiel 8
- John 2

Emotions:

Our emotions are tuned to our reality — they aren't reality themselves.

They are tuned to either our flesh or our godliness.

Fear
Anger
Shame
Jealousy
Envy



Oaks Podcast Episode:
Processing Anger

Humility

- Our default reactions are humiliating and exposing.
- The Gospel turns the humiliation of our exposure into humility to reckon with reality and reconcile with God and others.

James 1:21

Therefore, get rid of all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent and **humbly accept the word** planted in you, which can save you.



Biblical Theology of the Word:

- Jeremiah 31:33 - 34
- John 1:1-5
- 1 John 1:1-4

A coastal landscape with a sandy path leading to the ocean. The path is flanked by dry, golden-brown grass and shrubs. Several wooden posts are driven into the sand, forming a simple fence. The ocean is visible in the background under a clear sky.

Jesus

Is the Word made flesh who transforms
trials into an opportunities.

Jesus: The Word made Flesh Who Made His Dwelling Among Us

He is a *Person*.

He is the *relationship* in which we practice maturity, and with whom we become mature.

He is the *vision* of maturity that we look to.

He is our *identity* that develops maturity dwelling within us by his Spirit.

James 1:22-25

Do not merely listen to the word [**knowledge**], and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says [**practice**]. Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like someone who looks at his face in a mirror and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. But whoever looks intently into the perfect law [**vision of maturity**] that gives freedom, and continues in it—not forgetting what they have heard, but doing it—they will be blessed in what they do.

What you do reveals *who you are*.

Blessing

1. You will receive who you are in the Lord
2. When you have dwelled in the love of the Lord
3. And trusted in the Word who can save you enough to face reality

1. Integrity

2. Security

3. Humility

The fruit of maturity is the blessing.

A photograph of a coastal landscape. In the foreground, there is a path made of dry, golden-brown grass and low-lying shrubs. The path leads towards the ocean in the background. The ocean is a deep blue with gentle waves. The sky is not visible. The overall lighting is warm, suggesting late afternoon or early morning. The text "Practice" is overlaid in the center in a large, white, sans-serif font. Below it, the subtitle "Anxiety as an Opportunity to Experience God and Remember Who You Are" is also overlaid in a smaller, white, sans-serif font.

Practice

Anxiety as an Opportunity
to Experience God
and Remember Who You Are

Identify & Process Anxiety (p. 15)

1. Identify the triggered state
2. Identify the feelings
3. Identify the external triggers
4. Identify the internal root
5. Identify and choose a response

A scenic coastal landscape featuring a sandy path that leads from the foreground towards the ocean. The path is flanked by dense, golden-brown coastal vegetation, including tall grasses and shrubs. Several vertical wooden posts are planted in the ground along the path and near the water's edge, possibly serving as a fence or markers. The ocean is visible in the background, with gentle waves under a clear sky. The overall lighting suggests a warm, late afternoon or early morning setting.

Q&A