



WHEN I'M FEELING

A NEW HOPE WINDWARD SERIES

TIPS TO A SUCCESSFUL GROUP

- **BE COMFORTABLE WITH SILENCE.** Uncomfortable silences are bound to happen. It's okay! A long pause during a group discussion can be powerful. A *pause* gives space for quieter people to break into the conversation; silence allows people to figure out exactly what they would like to say.

When I'm feeling ANXIOUS!

ICEBREAKER

What is one of your superpowers and what is your kryptonite? What is something that really gets you going, that you're really good at, and what is something that stops you in your tracks?

INTRODUCTION

There are things in life that paralyze us. We just can't move! We say, "I'm feeling worried." But if you really want to get at the heart of what's underneath what scares us, it's anxiety. Fear and anxiety are related, but they are also very different. Fear sees a threat and reacts. If you see a snake, you jump! But anxiety imagines a threat and you can't move on. You get stuck. This week, we will find out the best way to move on from being anxious and afraid.

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Fear is a temporary response to an external stimulus. You encounter a danger, or something you think can hurt you. Then you either stand your ground or get out of the way. Once the danger has passed, the fear can go with it. But anxiety is different. Because it is an internalized emotion, it will linger.

Anxiety has been called a tidal wave of “What ifs?” You imagine a threat or a danger, and then multiply the result negatively. For instance, you hear about an accident on the freeway and then you become anxious about driving. You wonder, “What if I get in an accident on the freeway? What if it’s a pretty bad accident? What if I wreck my car just going to the store?” Over and over again, you build it up in your mind and since the danger never passes, that anxiety sticks with you.

The Bible has a lot to say about fear, worry, and anxiety. Take a look:

Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. Philippians 4:6 (NIV)

What Paul is not saying is “Don’t ever be anxious.” The word is written in a present/active tense, meaning an ongoing situation. In other words, Paul is telling us we don’t have to live with anxiety all the time.

God knows that you have anxiety. In fact, it’s very human. We all have anxiety from time to time, but it doesn’t have to be a part of your everyday life.

What external forces are most likely to give you fear? (Example, fear of heights, fear of being in a car accident) What internal circumstances are most likely to fill you with anxiety? (Example, imposter syndrome, fear of being abandoned)

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To fully understand how God wants us to respond to anxiety, let's back up a couple of verses. Read the following passage together:

Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!
Philippians 4:4 (NIV)

Notice it doesn't say rejoice in EVERYTHING. When we hear, "Rejoice always" we might think that's what God wants us to do. Have a bad day? Rejoice! Got a new car? Rejoice! Kids get into trouble? Rejoice!

But look at it again: Rejoice **in the Lord** always. In other words, no matter what happens, rejoice because of what God has done for you, what He is doing in you, and what He promises to do for you. What you believe specifically about God determines how you behave and deal with anxiety.

Think about a recent time you struggled with feelings of anxiety. How can taking the time to reflect about what you believe about God influence how you walk through it?

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God wants you to move from anxiety to peace. He's not upset or disappointed in you when you get anxious. He wants the best for you. And these verses will help you do just that. There are two big ideas that show us the way.

First, **Peace is found between the pillars of God's Goodness and God's Control.** Take a look at the next verse in the passage:

Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near.
Philippians 4:5 (NIV)

When we fully grasp that the Lord is near, it helps us understand these two pillars. First of all, the Lord is near us when we get anxious. Psalm 34:18 says that "*He is near to the brokenhearted.*" Anxiety represents a heart issue that can be mended by us reminding ourselves that God is always with us and His goodness follows us all the days of our lives. But there is another facet to the Lord's nearness. Ultimately He is in control.

Which pillar presents the biggest struggle for you – the belief that God is good or God is in control?

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The second big idea to help move us from anxiety to peace is **Peace is activated when our prayers move from general to specific.** Look at the last verse in the Amplified Bible Version:

Do not be anxious or worried about anything, but in everything [every circumstance and situation] by prayer and petition with thanksgiving, continue to make your [specific] requests known to God.
Philippians 4:6 (AMP)

Prayer, petition, and requests are synonyms. All 3 are words that were used in the original Greek language for prayer, but each is unique. Read over and share which stage you are currently in.

Prayer means our approach to God. It's acknowledging that He is capable of helping us. It's all about our posture before Him.

Petition means asking for His help.

Request means our specific appeal for help. The Lord knows what we need before we ask Him, but He encourages us to put it into words when we pray.

The point is, when we can turn our anxieties into prayers. But how? With thanksgiving. If you only turn to God for prayer without first thanking Him for what He's already done, you may end up fueling your fears even more. Prayer is also a way to fix our thoughts on things that are true, noble, right, pure, lovely, excellent, admirable, and praiseworthy. That is how we get our mind off the bad and onto the goodness of God.

Finally, after we've prayed, we need to put into practice God's word. What has He told you to do? Have you done it yet? That's when your peace will be complete.

When you feel anxious, is God the first person that you turn to for help? If not, where or what do you turn to?

WHAT WILL YOU DO?

Chances are you will be anxious sometime this week. You may even be anxious right now! When that happens, will you turn to the Lord and:

- Put yourself between the pillars of God's goodness and God's control,
- Turn your worries into prayers with thanksgiving?

ADDITIONAL ACTION STEPS:

Reading God's WORD daily re-patterns the way you think and transforms your mind. Take some time to do SOAP using the scriptures from this week's list on the next page.

CLOSE IN PRAYER

Father God, calm our anxious thoughts. Still our worried minds. Show grace to our fearful hearts. You know us better than we know ourselves. You have seen everything in our lives that bring us worry. Help us to overcome our anxieties and move towards Your peace. In Jesus' name, amen.



Find Time to READ God's WORD

Reading God's Word daily re-patterns the way you think & transforms your mind. Doing your daily devotions is an excellent way to record, process, & share what God is teaching you on a personal level. We do this using S.O.A.P.

- S - Scripture**
- O - Observation**
- A - Application**
- P - Prayer**

Here's an example:

S: *Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.' "*
--Matthew 4:4 (NIV)

O: Jesus said that we can't live on food alone. Our life is sustained through His Word.

A: Just as food is important to me, God's Word is even more because it will sustain me and give me the strength to live out my life.

P: Jesus, thank You for reminding me that I need Your Word to give me the wisdom & strength to follow You. Help me to make time to spend with You daily. In Jesus' name I pray, amen.

SCRIPTURES FOR S.O.A.P.

Day 1:

You, LORD, are the light that keeps me safe. I am not afraid of anyone. You protect me, and I have no fears.

--Psalm 27:1 (CEV)

Day 2:

For I hold you by your right hand— I, the LORD your God. And I say to you, "Don't be afraid. I am here to help you."

--Isaiah 41:13 (NLT)

Day 3:

"I am leaving you with a gift—peace of mind and heart. And the peace I give is a gift the world cannot give. So don't be troubled or afraid."

--John 14:27 (NLT)

Day 4:

For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but one of power, love, and sound judgment.

--2 Timothy 1:7 (CSB)

Day 5:

Let us be bold, then, and say, "The Lord is my Helper, I will not be afraid. What can anyone do to me?"

--Hebrews 13:6 (GNT)