

# PEACE OF MIND

## 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.

## Week 3: Ways to Overcome Your Worries

### ICEBREAKER

What was one recent worry you overcame? (Ex. uncertainty, failure, health, etc.)

### INTRODUCTION

The bible tells us to "Rejoice in the Lord always.... Don't be anxious about anything" (*Philippians 4:4&6*) but how realistic is that in the world today? According to the American Psychiatric Association (APA), 37% Americans rated their mental health as fair or poor to heading into 2023. 90% of Americans believe that we are in a mental health crisis and you only have to go to the grocery store and look at the prices to face very real and practical anxiety. This week, we will look at anxiety and the three things it is telling you to do as you seek God's help to overcome your worries and find peace of mind.

## READ |

One reason to celebrate Jesus Christ as your Lord and savior is the fact He lived without sin his entire life. Then, facing death on the cross, He took on all our sins; past, present and future so we could be forgiven. When Jesus was awaiting His arrest and crucifixion in the Garden of Gethsemane, He was full of fear, anxiety and worry but He did not sin.

*And being in agony he (Jesus) **prayed more earnestly**; and his sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground. -Luke 22:44 (ESV)*

So, anxiety is not a sin, it is a signal, warning and alarm that something is not right and that you need to address an issue. When the alarm goes off it is telling us to take the problem to God. Biologically, it sends us into a "fight or flight" mode where our body and mind are prepared to react and save our life. The problem comes when we don't go to God, and stay in our worries instead of praying for help to address whatever we're worried about. So, Just like Jesus, when the alarm goes off, we need to go to God and turn our worries into prayers.

**How does it feel to know that anxiety is not a sin and that even Jesus dealt with worry? Discuss a time your anxiety about a situation was worse than the outcome. Do you think that you would have had more peace if you prayed and trusted God?**

## READ |

Our worry warning is telling us to do three things. The first is always prayer. Talk to the Prince of Peace about what's worrying you. Go to Him in prayer first because prayer is supernatural and breaks the chains and cycles of our worries. Then stay in prayer because it rewires our brain to better focus, trust and depend on Him.

*"So I say to you: Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened." -Luke 11:9-10 (NIV)*

God wants us cast our anxieties onto Him because he cares about us. When we choose to pray to Him in our worry and distress it touches His heart and shows our love for Him. When we are aligned with God in prayer, our faith can break the chains of anxiety.

God designed your brain to seek out patterns, so when you continue to pray in faith, it actually changes the chemistry of your brain to better seek and find the patterns of God in your life. Dr. Caroline Leaf, author of the book "Switch on Your Brain" found that 12 minutes of focused daily prayer over an 8-week period will distinctly change your brain.

**Discuss any situations or issues that are causing anxiety in your life. Do you believe that focused daily prayer over those things for 8 weeks can overcome your worries?**

## READ |

The next thing your anxiety alarm is alerting you to do *is pause and wait on Him*. We are called to do this by placing our hope and trust in him.

*"The Lord is good to those whose hope is in him, to the one who seeks him; it is good to wait quietly for the salvation of the Lord."* -Lamentations 3:25-26 (NIV)

The weeping prophet Jeremiah was no stranger to mental and emotional challenges as he struggled under the weight of the suffering that came from his prophetic calling. He understood, as we should try to understand, that sometimes we are called to endure our struggles and afflictions patiently and wait hopefully before the Lord for our salvation.

In our faith, we wait (place our hope and trust in him), even when we can't see Him. We wait because we know He cares about us and is working in all things for our good. He is refining us while we obediently obey Him and place our faith, hope and trust in Him.

**Do you find it easy to place your hope and trust in God while you wait on Him to provide? Why or why not? What are some things you can do to focus on God while you wait for Him to provide? (Ex. Fast, daily devotions, fellowship, consume more christian media, etc.)**

## READ |

The final thing to do when stress signals your need to check in with God is to *praise Him*. We praise Him for the victories He has already provided and for the battles He is fighting for us now. So, first you *pray for Him* to break the chains of your worry, then you *wait for Him*, as scripture teaches *"The Lord will fight for you; you need only to be still"* (Exodus 14:14). Finally, *praise Him* in faith for His victory in overcoming your worry.

*"The Lord is my strength and my defense; he has become my salvation. He is my God, and I will praise him, my father's God, and I will exalt him."* -Exodus 15:2 (NIV)

The Song of Moses (Exodus 15:1-18) is a great example of praise in gratitude for the victories God had provided and in faith for victories He had yet to bring. Similarly, when you praise God and claim victory over the worries that are stealing your peace of mind, you can receive the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, and guards your heart and your mind in Christ Jesus (Philippians 4:7).

**Do you think praising God for how He has helped you in the past and will help you in the future will calm your worries? Think about how God has helped you through a problem in the past and share with the group. (Ex. He helped you with a previous work, financial, health, or relational problem that had you worried)**

## READ |

As Christmas approaches, it is the perfect time to check in with friends and family who are far from God and desperately need the peace of mind that God provides. The sad truth is they may never experience God's peace unless they are invited to get to know the Prince of Peace. Even if you are working through your own struggles, you can still be a beacon of hope to help bring more people to Christ. God doesn't need us to be in perfect peace to use us for His perfect plans and purposes. He just needs us to be willing vessels to share the gospel by inviting them to church.

*"How can they believe in him if they have not heard his message? How can they hear if no one tells them the Good News?"*  
--Romans 10:14 (NIV)

God instructs us to lead others to hear the Good News. In a world filled with bad news, people need the Good News more than ever. Invite people you know to hear the Good News at our Christmas services. Let Him stretch your faith as you rely on His strength to prayerfully invite, purposefully pause and powerfully praise God for working through your worry to bring those He has called through you to meet Christ this Christmas.

**Discuss who you will prayerfully invite this Christmas season. What can you apply from this weeks lesson to help you overcome any worry about your invitations?**

## WHAT WILL YOU DO?

This week, look honestly at the stress and anxiety levels in your life to see if there are any worry warnings you need to bring to God. If so, it is time to **pray**, it is time to **pause** (put your hope and trust in God), and it is time to **praise God** for helping you through your struggles. Think about friends, family and coworkers who need Jesus. Pray for them and invite them to attend a Christmas service with you. Overcome any worry associated with your invitations by applying your takeaways from this lesson.

- Read additional scriptures and feed your mind, heart and soul with God's word. We have provided SCRIPTURES on the next page for you to do your daily devotions.

## CLOSE IN PRAYER:

Almighty God, thank You for giving me Your son Jesus to show me the path of righteousness and the truth that my anxiety and worry is not a sin but a signal from my brain, telling me that I need to pray, pause and praise you. Guide me in my struggles to go to You first in prayer. Allow my prayers to break the cycles of doubt, discouragement or despair. Let me pause in Your presence and trust that You are fighting my battles for me. Hear me praise Your name, Your power and Your glory as I proclaim Your victory over my worry. Move mightily through me this season to invite and inspire others to come to You for help, hope and healing this Christmas. In Jesus' name, amen.



## Make Time to be in 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:**

*Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*  
--Philippians 4:6-7 (NIV)

### **Day 2:**

*He withdrew about a stone's throw beyond them, knelt down and prayed, "Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done."*  
--Luke 22:41-42 (NIV)

### **Day 3:**

*"but those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint."*  
--Isaiah 40:31 (NIV)

### **Day 4:**

*"Yes, my soul, find rest in God; my hope comes from him."*  
--Psalm 62:5 (NIV)

### **Day 5:**

*"I love you, Lord, my strength. The Lord is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer; my God is my rock, in whom I take refuge, my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold."*  
--Psalm 18:1-2 (NIV)