

# **Lifting the LID**

## **Bible Study exploring God's heart for mental health**

### **Session 3: Stressed to the MAX**

Cast all your **anxiety** on Him because He cares for you. 1 Peter 5:7

**Session Objective:** This week we are looking at a feeling that everyone has experienced - anxiety. We will be finding out what anxiety is and ways that we can reduce our own anxiety, as well as support others.

#### ***Bible study – Luke 24:13-35: Travelers to Emmaus***

- a. How do you imagine the two companions were feeling?
- b. Have you ever felt like this?
- c. How does Jesus interact with the travelers?
- d. What can we learn from Jesus' approach to these two men?

**Background:** The companions on the road to Emmaus may dealt with anxiety & despair. They'd built their hopes on Jesus but were now disappointed that He didn't appear to be all they'd dreamt of. Had they made the biggest mistake of their lives? Did they feel as if they'd just watched their whole world, their hopes and dreams, just crumble away?

Jesus' approach to these two men is fascinating. We see him literally walking alongside them, asking them questions – letting them speak, really listening to understand their pain. At any point in the journey, He could have revealed His glory, dispelling all their doubts. But instead He chooses to start by listening. Then Jesus gently meets them where they are at – taking the time to explain the scriptures to them – helping them see things from another perspective. When we interact with people, do we take the time to walk alongside them? To meet them where they are, with all their questions and heartbreaks?

#### **Learn it Up – Intro to Anxiety**

***What makes you anxious?*** Everyone gets anxious from time to time

1) \_\_\_\_\_ 2) \_\_\_\_\_ 3) \_\_\_\_\_

**What is anxiety?**

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Anxiety Defined - Anxiety is a vital emotion, warning us of possible risks or problems. It keeps us from making bad decisions or judgements – but it's also the emotion most commonly linked with emotional and mental health problems. Think of it as a bit like the body's smoke alarm – it warns us that something significant may be about to happen.

**What does anxiety feel like? Feelings may include:**

- Racing heart
- Sweating
- Dry mouth
- Stomach cramps
- Insomnia
- Irritability
- Exhaustion
- Pins and needles
- Clamminess
- Chills and perhaps hot flashes
- Muscle tension, aches and pains
- Hyperventilating or difficulty breathing
- Dizziness and feeling faint
- Inability to concentrate
- Chest pains and other symptoms like those of a heart attack

Although these symptoms are unpleasant, they will not harm us: We won't faint, collapse, have a heart attack or die. However, experiencing these feelings on a regular basis can be extremely disruptive to day-to-day life. When we experience anxiety, our body is preparing to respond to a risk or an emergency:

- Breathing and heart rates speed up
- Adrenalin is released into the bloodstream
- The nervous system is on 'red alert'
- Muscles tense up

This is fantastic news if we are in real physical danger that demands a real 'fight or flight' response. But in our modern lives, that is rarely the case, leaving our bodies prepared for a physical reaction which we have no real outlet for.

**General Anxiety Disorder Defined:** Excessive anxiety and worry (apprehensive expectation), occurring more days than not for at least 6 months, about a number of events or activities (such as work or school performance). *DSM 5*

**Anxiety Disorders Defined:** a group of mental disorders characterized by significant feelings of anxiety and fear. Anxiety is a worry about future events, and fear is a reaction to current events. These feelings may cause physical symptoms, such as a fast heart rate and shakiness.

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#### **Can anxiety be treated?**

Anxiety disorders are best treated with a combination of approaches that address the different aspects of anxiety: the thought patterns respond very well to cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT), a talking therapy that helps people change how they think about situations, and the physical symptoms can be controlled and limited by relaxation techniques.

Medication can work well alongside other therapies, particularly reducing obsessional (round and round) thoughts, or helping people concentrate or function normally.

- ➔ There are simple things that anyone can do to reduce their anxiety levels:
- **Take a time-out.** Practice yoga, listen to music, meditate, get a massage, or learn relaxation techniques. Stepping back and clear your head.
  - **Eat well-balanced meals.** Do not skip any meals. Do keep healthful, energy-boosting snacks on hand.
  - **Limit alcohol and caffeine,** which can aggravate anxiety and trigger panic attacks.
  - **Get enough sleep.** When stressed, your body needs additional sleep & rest.
  - **Exercise daily** to help you feel good and maintain your health.
  - **Take deep breaths.** Inhale and exhale slowly.
  - **Count to 10 slowly.** Repeat, and count to 20 if necessary.
  - **Do your best.** Instead of aiming for perfection, which isn't possible, be proud of however close you get.
  - **Accept that you cannot control everything.** Put your stress in perspective: Is it really as bad as you think?
  - **Welcome humor.** A good laugh goes a long way. Movies, Videos, Music etc.
  - **Maintain a positive attitude.** Replace negative with positive thoughts.
  - **Get involved.** Volunteer or find another way to be active in your community, which can create support and gives you a break from stress.
  - **Learn what triggers your anxiety.** Figure and find out the things causing.
  - **Talk to someone.** Tell friends and family you're feeling overwhelmed and let them know how they can help you. Talk to a professional for help.

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**What about your ways of dealing with Anxiety/Stress?**

- Your FIVE:
- 1)
- 2)
- 3)
- 4)
- 5)

**What about faith?** – See the 30 Scriptures relating to Anxiety Handout

Faith can be a big support for those struggling with anxiety, because it gives a bigger perspective and reminds us that God is in control. Times of prayer can help calm nerves, focus the mind and limit panic or waves of anxiety. Remember, however, that recovering from anxiety problems is not as simple as just being told 'do not fear'. Those suffering will often require expert help as well as the support they get from their faith and church.

**'Jesus then said to them, "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or about your body, or what you will wear."' Luke 12:22**

Closing Prayer:

Lord Jesus Christ, who for love of our souls entered the deep darkness of the cross; we pray that your love may surround all who are in darkness of great mental distress and who find it difficult to pray for themselves. May they know that darkness and light are both alike to you and that you have promised never to fail them or forsake them. We ask it in your name's sake. Amen

**See the Additional Handouts to the Session:**

Stats on Anxiety Disorders in US

Types of Anxiety Disorders

30 Scriptures relating to Anxiety