

Bringing Our Anxious Thoughts To God

A guide for parents and leaders to help enrich the faith of our young people in seasons of anxiety



The purpose of this resource is to equip parents and leaders to help enrich the faith of our young people in seasons of anxiety. In the guide, you will be invited to learn about general anxiety, read verses full of comfort and hope, and learn tools to help guide our young people to bring their anxious thoughts to God in prayer.

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An Introduction to Anxiety

According to Australian Psychological Society, "Anxiety is a natural and usually short-lived reaction to a stressful situation, associated with feelings of worry, nervousness or apprehension." For some people, however, anxiety can be persistent and disrupt the quality of daily life.

Individuals who've experienced the tides of anxiety might express it through terms like "anxious", "stressed", "uptight", "nervous", "wrecked", "worried", "tense", or "hassled."

Anxiety primarily stems from perceived threats in our surroundings and can manifest in a spectrum of intensity, ranging from mild unease to downright terrifying panic attacks.

Certain anxiety symptoms are prevalent among young people, such as fretting over the opinions of others, dreading social scenarios, and grappling with past mistakes.



Anxiety can show in a variety of ways including:

- **Physical** – Pounding heart, chest pain, body aches, dry mouth, shortness of breath, blushing, pins and needles, hot flushes, inability to sit still, a churning stomach, and diarrhoea.
- **Psychological** – Racing thoughts, mental fog, difficulty focusing, memory lapses, uncertainty, perplexity, intense dreams, fear, worry, irritability, impatience, anger, and the sensation of being on edge.
- **Behavioural** – Avoidance of certain situations, compulsive behaviours, discomfort in social settings, disrupted sleep patterns, heightened alcohol and substance consumption.

Note -

If you are or someone you know is experiencing these symptom, we encourage you to make an appointment to see your GP. They will assess you, check whether there is an underlying medical condition, and help you access appropriate help.

The symptoms of anxiety I experience include:

When do you first remember having these symptoms? Can you predict when you might experience them?

How long does it take for the symptoms to pass?



Helpful Resources

Headspace - www.headspace.com

This website helps young people create life-changing habits to support their mental health.

NSW Mental Health Line - 1800 011 511 | www.health.nsw.gov.au

The Mental Health Line is a statewide phone service which links people with NSW Health mental health services.

Lifeline - 13 11 14 | www.lifeline.org.au

Lifeline is a 24 hour crisis support and suicide prevention services for those experiencing emotional distress.

Brave - brave-online.com

This website is an interactive, evidence-based, cognitive behavioural therapy program for the prevention of anxiety in young people.

Beyond Blue - beyondblue.org.au

This website provides questionnaires to allow self-assessment of anxiety and depression for teenagers.

Christ Church - christchurch.com.au

This website contains a directory of Christian Counsellors in the resource section. The list can be found at the bottom of the page.

Scriptures for the Anxious

Deuteronomy 33:27

The eternal God is your refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms. He will drive out your enemies before you, saying, 'Destroy them!'

Psalms 55:22

Cast your cares on the Lord and he will sustain you; he will never let the righteous be shaken.

Isaiah 41:10

So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.

1 Peter 5:7

Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.

Matthew 6:25

Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes?



Philippians 4:4–8

Note -

Scripture assumes that we will be afraid and anxious at times. It isn't sinful to worry or be afraid. What's important is where and who we go to. God can be trusted and wants to help us. When God urges us not to be anxious in Philippians 4:6, he is saying, do not be afraid my child, your Father is near, and I care for you and will give you peace as you cast your anxieties on me.

4 Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! 5 Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. 6 Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. 7 And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. 8 Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.



Bringing our Anxious Thoughts to God

Worry and anxiety often have a way of gripping our minds, leading us to dwell on negative or worrisome thoughts. But we are not left without support.

The prayerful contemplation of God's word provides nourishing, Christ-centred thoughts that can bolster our faith in times of anxiety, transforming our restlessness into restfulness .

Paul says, "And we all, who with unveiled faces *contemplate* the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit." (2 Corinthians 3:18)

The Greek word for "contemplate" here is *katoptrizō*, which means to "gaze", "behold", or to even "look closely." The invitation is to fix our eyes - including our thoughts and feelings - on Jesus.

The more we gaze at Jesus, the more we become like him in our actions and thoughts. The state of his beautiful heart then intersects with our troubled hearts, transforming them into hearts that image themselves after him.

Biblical Contemplation

Consider the "Lectio Divina" method of contemplation to look closely at Jesus and treasure his word in our hearts:

LECTIO (READING)

Select a short passage from the Bible. Read the passage slowly and attentively multiple times, allowing the words to sink in and paying attention to any words or phrases that resonate with you.

MEDITATIO (MEDITATION)

Ponder on the passage you have read. Reflect on its meaning, symbolism, and implications for your life. Consider how the words may speak to your current circumstances.

ORATIO (PRAYER)

Respond to the the Bible through prayer. Engage in a conversation with God based on the insights and emotions stirred by the passage. Offer your thoughts, feelings, questions, and intentions to God.

CONTEMPLATIO (CONTEMPLATION)

Enjoy the presence of God and be still in quiet contemplation. Read for any further insights, inspirations, or messages that God may stir up in your heart through his Word.

ACTIO (ACTION)

Consider how you can apply the insights gained to your daily life. Determine any actions, changes, or commitments you feel called to make based on your interaction with the Bible.

Praying Scripture

We invite you to also pray through passages like Philippians 4:4-8, asking God to comfort your weary heart. Below are some simple steps to inspire your prayers.

REJOICE IN THE LORD'S SOVEREIGNTY (v4)

Paul advises us to start by rejoicing, as anxiety often stems from feeling overwhelmed. Embrace the invitation to trust your Heavenly Father with your life, family, and future.

REALISE THAT GOD IS NEAR (v5)

You may feel alone. You may think you are alone. But you are not, for God is nearby through faith in Christ. Remembering his presence helps to calm our anxiety.

BRING YOUR REQUESTS TO GOD (v6)

In every moment of the day we can turn to the God who hears and responds to our prayers. Consider choosing prayer over despair, for the path to peace is paved with many requests to God.

RECOGNISE THE GOODNESS OF GOD (v6-7)

Gratitude is being mindful of all the blessings in life from God, and expressing thanks for them. Counter anxious thoughts with grateful ones directed toward God to help cultivate a peaceful heart.

DELIBERATELY REPLACE YOUR THOUGHTS (v8)

Anxiety and worry tend to take over our minds so that we ruminate on the same negative thoughts over and over. Cultivate joy in Christ by contemplating on things that are instead true, noble, right, pure, lovely, and admirable.



What encouraged you as you reflected on the Word of God?

What did you learn about God and his character?

Consider writing a prayer to express your heart to God.

Father of Comfort,

Lord give me grace to
let loose all things, and
to leave all things with
you. Lord, bear me up
when I am falling,
support me when weak,
uphold me against all
my enemies, carry me
safe through a life of
grace here. And, finally,
bring me home to your
glory, to behold you,
and dwell with you
forever, amen.

Robert Hawker



Closing Comments

In addition to bringing our anxieties before God in prayer, it's important we make healthy daily choices that contribute to having good mental health such as:

- Consistent sleep
- Eating a healthy diet
- Exercising regularly
- Walking in nature
- Connecting with others in person
- Limiting social media use
- Watching caffeine intake
- Checking our self talk

In everything, remember God is near, and may his grace and peace in Christ be with you as we encourage each other to bring our anxieties to him.

Jesse Baker,
Youth & Families Minister



Christ Church Youth