

Respond | 10 MINUTES

Review the outline for the video teaching and any notes you took. In the space below, write down your most significant takeaway from this session.

Pray | 10 MINUTES

End your time by praying together as a group, asking the Lord to help you commit all your worries to him. Ask if anyone has any prayer requests to share. Write those requests down in the space below so you and your group members can pray about them in the week ahead.

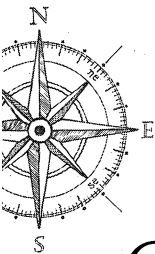
Name	Request
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____



SESSION THREE

Personal Study

As you discussed in your group time this week, worries come with life . . . but they don't have to control our lives. We can take our worries to Christ each day and trust that he will provide for us each day. As you explore this theme in this week's personal study, write down your responses to the questions in the spaces provided, as you will be given a few minutes to share your insights at the start of the next session if you are doing this study with others. If you are reading *In the Footsteps of the Savior* alongside this study, first review chapter 4 in the book.



- Day 1 -

OUR GREAT EMPATHIZER

Anxiety and other mental health issues are often stigmatized in our culture and in the church. Perhaps you've encountered some who will urge you to just pray away your struggles. Some may have judged you for not having enough faith because you're struggling with an anxiety disorder. But as you learned in this week's session, experiencing anxiety—even chronic and debilitating anxiety—doesn't make you a failure, and it doesn't mean you're not a Christian.

Jesus urged us not to worry, but that's not because he never worried himself. The Gospels reveal that he *did* worry. On the night before his crucifixion, we are told that he was in so much anguish over the events to come that "his sweat was like drops of blood" (Luke 22:44). Some have linked this description to a rare condition known as hematohidrosis, in which severe anxiety or depression can cause someone to secrete blood.¹²

So, not only did Jesus experience anxiety, but he also experienced it at the deepest and most intense level. This is the beautiful thing about Christ: he felt what we feel and experienced what we experience. This is why he could tell us not to worry about our lives—not because it was sinful to do so but because he knew what worry felt like. He knew how consuming it could be. He gave this instruction from a place of empathy, not condemnation.

Perhaps you have been judged for having an anxiety disorder or feeling crippled by your anxiety. Perhaps you have judged others for these same things. Anxiety and worry are unavoidable. These feelings are often upon us before we can stop them. But in Christ, we have a great empathizer for this type of pain. We have someone who knows exactly what it feels like, and because of this we can be sure we are never alone, even in our deepest anxiety.

READ | Luke 22:39–44

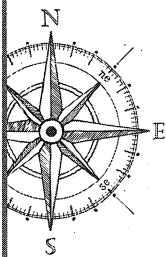
REFLECT

The cup that Jesus refers to in this passage is a likely a reference to the cup of judgment mentioned in Scripture (see Psalm 75:7-8). Jesus knew he was about to receive

the harshest judgment—the sins of the world—which would lead to him receiving the harshest punishment: crucifixion. How is Jesus' anxiety described in this passage?

2. What did Jesus do even after the angel appeared to him to strengthen him? What does this say about how worried he felt in that moment?
3. Think of a time you felt intense anxiety—a type of worry that has kept you up at night. What caused it? What did it feel like in your body and in your mind?
4. How does it feel to know that Jesus has felt that way too? How could this change the way you approach Jesus the next time you are in the throes of anxiety?

PRAY | Bring your worries before the Lord in prayer. Remember that Jesus has felt the way you feel. You can be honest with him. He isn't afraid of what you are feeling or what you are facing.



- Day 2 -

JUST GO TO GOD

How many times have you gone through your day worrying about something? You come up with every worst-case scenario. You plan for multiple outcomes and stress out about each one. When you get in bed at night, you're still worried. You are still ruminating on the thing causing your anxiety. At any point in your day, did you pause and ask God to help you?

This is what Paul urges us to do in Philippians 4:6: "Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God." By prayer and petition, we are to make our requests known to God in *every situation*. Some situations are beyond human help and understanding, but no situation is beyond divine intervention. When we are worried, all we have to do is ask God for what we need.

We can be specific in our requests. *God, the brakes on my car went out, and I don't have the money to fix it . . . please help. God, I'm going to college and I don't know anybody . . . please give me a friend. God, I am sick and don't know what to do next . . . point me to a kind, compassionate, and capable doctor.*

This is exactly what Mary, the mother of Jesus, did at the wedding at Cana. The host of the wedding had run out of wine. Now, we might be tempted to disregard this as not a big deal. After all, they had water to drink, and no one was going to go thirsty. But weddings in Jesus' time lasted for *seven days*. The bride and groom had invited as many people as possible, and they were expected to provide enough wine to last all seven days for every guest. If they ran it out, it was considered a major social faux pas that the community would never forget.¹³

Mary was trying to protect this family from humiliation. The stakes were high. But instead of panicking, she asked Jesus to help, and she trusted that he could.

READ | John 2:1-11

REFLECT

1. This was Jesus' first public miracle, as evidenced by the fact that he told his mother, "Why do you involve me? . . . My hour has not yet come" (verse 4). We don't know if

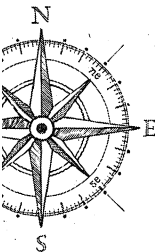
Mary had seen him perform other miracles, but it's clear that Jesus had not gone to this wedding intending to perform one there. Still, Mary seemed to know that Jesus could and *would* fix the problem. Why do you think she believed in him?

2. Look at the way Jesus fixed the problem. He went above and beyond what was needed to solve the crisis. What does tell you about how he is able to work in your life?

3. Take a moment to make a list of some of the things that are causing you anxiety right now. Have you asked Jesus for what you need? Why or why not?

4. Use your imagination for a moment. What are some ways that Jesus could provide for you above and beyond in this anxiety-inducing situation?

PRAY | Spend your prayer time asking Jesus for *exactly* what you need in this situation. Be specific and believe that he will come thorough and provide whatever you need.



- Day 3 -

FAITH AND ANXIETY

We feel anxiety about our physical lives. We worry about money, health, food, and shelter. We feel anxiety about our emotional lives. We worry about friendships, relationships, and finding love. But there are also times when we feel anxiety about our spiritual lives. For some of us, our faith can actually be the cause of our anxiety. We worry if we are doing enough. We worry about past sin. We worry about salvation. We worry that we're not enough, even for God.

Spiritual anxiety can be some of the most intense kinds of anxiety. We're guessing at what God wants us to do, always unsure and always afraid that we will take the wrong step or make the wrong move. The fear of suffering for eternity, the fear of falling short of God's love, the fear that we've gone too far to be redeemed . . . this can cause anxiety for a lifetime.

Jesus did not spread a message of needing to be enough or do enough. In fact, his words to his followers were just the opposite. As the apostle Paul would later write, "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, *and* all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus" (Romans 23-24, emphasis added). Don't forget the *and*.

When we have spiritual anxiety, it's because we're focusing on the "fallen short" part. We *have* sinned. But in Christ, that's not the end of the story. The end of the story is this: we are all "justified freely by his grace." The justification is free. There's nothing we can do to earn it. We *aren't* enough, but that's okay, because Jesus is enough. Anxiety caused by faith is not of God because he did not send his Son to spread a message of fear. He sent his Son to set us free.

READ | Romans 8:31-39

REFLECT

1. Paul had established many churches in the Mediterranean region, but evidently not the ones in Rome. He was planning on visiting the Christians there on his way to

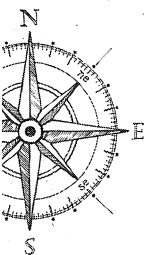
taking the gospel to Spain, and it is likely he wrote this letter in advance of that trip to outline his presentation of the gospel. He wanted the believers in Rome to understand God's grace and that he was *for* them. How can you likewise know that God is for you?

2. Paul writes that God did not spare even the life of his own Son when it came to his plan for salvation. What does Paul conclude in this about the love of God? How does this prove his point that there is absolutely *nothing* that can separate us from God's love?

3. What kind of anxiety about your faith have you experienced in the past? What kind of spiritual anxiety do you feel today?

4. What have you believed could separate you from God's love? Why did you believe this? How does this passage give you hope in the face of that belief today?

PRAY | Spend your prayer time declaring Romans 8:37-39. Declare that nothing can separate you from God's love. Challenge any anxiety you've felt over that possibility with this passage.



- Day 4 -

FEAR OF THE FUTURE

While life offers us plenty of reasons to worry and feel anxious, perhaps nothing creates more anxiety for us than an unknown future. The unknown just makes us uncomfortable. We feel out of control when we don't know what's next or can't imagine the next step.

Maybe at some point you felt certain about your future and where you were headed, but then something happened that pulled the rug out from under your plans. Maybe you now have a big decision to make, and you want to make the right one, but there's no crystal ball before you and you don't know how to decide. Everyone faces an unknown future. You might think you know what is coming . . . but the reality is that no one really does.

The disciples felt this way. Jesus tried to tell them about his future. He tried to tell them that he would be leaving them one day. But they didn't understand. They didn't want to lose their friend. They didn't know where he was going, even when he tried to explain it to them. And they felt anxiety as a result. Where was Christ going? What would they do without him?

Even though they were uncertain, Jesus was not. He knew where he was going, and he knew the disciples would be reunited with him one day. He knows this about our future as well. He knows where we are headed. He knows that we will be reunited with him one day.

It's not our job to know every step of our own journeys. It's our job to trust that Jesus does know the way. He knows the plans that he has for us. He knows that we will ultimately be in his Father's house with him. He knows all this because he has prepared a place for us there.

READ | John 13:33–14:3

REFLECT

Jesus spoke these words to his disciples as they shared the Passover meal together the night before his crucifixion. When he said, "I will be with you only a little longer"

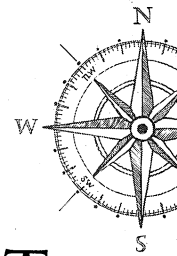
(verse 33), he knew that in just a few short hours events would start to unfold that would lead to his death—and change the disciples' futures forever. Think about Peter's response to Jesus' words. How do you think he felt hearing Jesus say this?

2. What assurances does Jesus offer in this passage? List or underline each one.

3. What questions do you have for Jesus about your future?

4. Which of the assurances in this passage do you need most today? Why?

PRAY | Jesus said, "I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am" (verse 3). Jesus' presence is peace and comfort. So, during your prayer time today, enter into Jesus' presence. Sit with him. Let him whisper words of peace and comfort over you.



Day 5

CATCH UP AND REFLECT

Use this time to go back and complete any study and reflection questions from previous days this week that you weren't able to finish. Make a note below of any revelations you've had and reflect on any growth or personal insights you've gained.

Spend the next two days reading chapter 8 of *In the Footsteps of the Savior*. Use the space below to record anything in the chapters that stands out to you or encourages you.