

8-SESSION BIBLE STUDY
WITH VIDEO ACCESS

SCARLET HILTIBIDAL

ANXIOUS



FIGHTING ANXIETY WITH
THE WORD OF GOD

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DEDICATION

For Kaye Geiger, who led me through Bible studies on her living room floor, who disciplined me without me knowing it by letting me come through the unlocked garage door, and who helped me laugh and cry and pray and learn.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Scarlet Hiltibidal is the author of *Afraid of All the Things* and *He Numbered the Pores on My Face*. She writes regular columns for *ParentLife Magazine* and devotionals for *She Reads Truth* and enjoys speaking to women around the country about the freedom and rest available in Jesus. Scarlet has a degree in biblical counseling and taught elementary school before she started writing. She and her husband live in Southern California where she loves signing with her three daughters, eating nachos by herself, writing for her friends, and studying stand-up comedy with a passion that should be reserved for more important pursuits.



session
One

INTRODUCTION— ANXIOUS TO BE HERE

I HAVE TOLD YOU
THESE THINGS SO THAT
**IN ME YOU MAY HAVE
PEACE.** YOU WILL HAVE
SUFFERING IN THIS WORLD.
BE COURAGEOUS! **I HAVE
CONQUERED THE WORLD.**

John 16:33





INTRODUCTION

We live in a broken, sad, scary place. There is plenty to be anxious about:

- dying;
- black holes;
- cancer;
- the fact that our phones have cameras on them that just sort of turn on sometimes;
- hurricanes;
- failing as a mom/friend/wife/employee/intermittent faster.

And the world is full of insufficient solutions for our anxiety:

- food;
- clothes;
- friends;
- medicine;
- hobbies;
- achievements;
- _____.

Here's the thing. Nothing really works every-moment-all-the-time-perfectly-and-forever, right? Have you gotten to that point? That point where the counselor's advice just doesn't seem to stop the mind spiral quickly enough? Your closet is full of clothes, but your heart is still full of worry? You get the promotion, win the award, and achieve the goal, but instead of the peace it promises, you only find more fears? The bottom of the queso cup appears alarmingly fast, and you're left asking yourself, maybe out loud, *AM I JUST MORE MESSED UP THAN EVERYONE ELSE?*

I've been in that place so many times. I've been a slave to my panic, planning and avoiding and doing everything I could to insulate myself from pain and discomfort. But none of it worked.

So I made my life quiet. Isolated. “Under control.”

I thought that would make me peaceful.

It didn't. Isolation and “control” might produce a quieter life, but peace isn't a quiet life; peace is a quiet soul. Peace is the gift of Jesus through the work of Jesus that we can have no matter what is going on in our living rooms or our in-boxes or our Instagram® feeds. The loudest of lives can't overwhelm the quiet that comes from Christ.

True peace comes when we learn to hold God's Word up to what worries us. There, we learn we can't fix ourselves; we can't protect ourselves. Instead, the Bible tells us we can rest, knowing Jesus walked into the broken, sad, scary place to rescue us and love us. He is the One who fixes. His is the only protection that matters.

When we fear the Lord rather than fearing the brokenness in our world, we can take hold of the perfect peace that is only available in Him.

The peace we are looking for is found in the already finished work of Christ (more on that later) revealed to us over and over again in God's Word, through prayer, and with our Christian community. When those of us who live with tornado awareness and constant cancer concern see the power of Jesus in the pages of the Bible, we can say with certainty, “The LORD is on my side; I will not fear. What can man do to me?” (Ps. 118:6, ESV).

WHERE ARE WE HEADED?

In this study, we'll look at different people in the Bible and what we can learn from them about anxiety. We'll discover how to live in freedom by clinging to God's Word and God's gospel in community and in prayer. This Bible study book will challenge you to study Scripture as you fight your worries. It will

help you put some spiritual disciplines in place that will aid you in keeping your eyes on the cross of Christ (even if you've just seen an article show up on your Facebook® feed about the real-life dangers of black holes).

HOW DO I USE THIS STUDY?

This study is meant to be used in a small group setting. You are welcome to do this book on your own, but the study is designed to be done with others. Fighting anxiety alone is a lot like fighting an army alone. Imagine walking onto a battlefield by yourself while surrounded by enemies with bigger guns and stronger muscles. Actually, don't imagine that. This is supposed to help you with your anxiety, not add to it.

Every person should have her own Bible study book, a Bible, a pen, and some snacks.¹ In this book, you'll find personal study that you can do individually and a memory verse that you can learn on your own (and review together as a group). Also, flip to pages 186–187 in the Appendix to keep some of my favorite on-the-go, anxiety-blasting Scriptures handy! Then, when you come together, you'll watch a video and discuss your answers from the week's work as a group. I hope this study helps you as you engage with Scripture personally, and I hope you can use your personal study and experiences to encourage the other people in your group when you meet together.

During the final session of this study, we'll dive into what God's Word says about fighting anxiety together—why it is important and how the body of Christ is so vital in our approach to combating the lies anxiety tells us.

So grab your five nearest neighbors. Or text your twelve closest coworkers. As a last resort, call your grandma and your sister and the lady that knows your order at the local Starbucks® and ask them to join you.

1. Snacks are not required but strongly recommended.

WHAT IF I NEED MORE THAN A BIBLE STUDY?

This study probably won't fix all your problems.

In 2004, Tim Keller preached a sermon called, "The Wounded Spirit." It had such an effect on me that I shared a good portion of it in the book I wrote about my personal fight with fear—*Afraid of All the Things*.

The thing is, I've been on anxiety pills. I've sat across from Christian psychiatrists while they offered big-word diagnoses to explain my particular version of anxiety.

I lived years feeling shame and fear over my mental weaknesses. I thought if my friends really knew how I struggled in my mind, they would reject me.

This sermon changed that for me. In it, Keller talked about different sources that might contribute to our woundedness and weakness. He didn't say, "Why are you so messed up? Just pray more!" He said, ". . . you know what the biblical answer is? It's complicated."²

That's what I want you to hear from me as you walk into this study. Your brain is complicated. Your anxiety could be rooted in an existential issue, or maybe for you, it's mostly physical. Maybe you have a bum thyroid. (I had mine taken out last year and the hormonal imbalance it causes can absolutely lead to anxiety and depression.) Maybe, as Proverbs 28:1 says, you flee "when no one pursues" (ESV) because you are intentionally walking in wickedness. In that case, a pill or a therapy session won't fix you like repentance will.

That's the driving message of Keller's sermon. There are many contributing factors. We must rely on prayer and God's Word, but we can do so while knowing that we might be dealing with physical sources or sin sources or emotional sources or existential (the BIG questions, like *What is life?*) sources. It's important to recognize these things as you fight your personal battle in your own personal way.

This study will not replace thyroid hormone medication or any other prescribed and necessary medication or weekly meetings with a Christian counselor or taking care of your health and well-being. Pursuing those outside resources, if and when needed, is wise and wonderful. Rather, this study is designed to help you, wherever you're at and whenever you're at it, to pursue Jesus in His Word, give you a better understanding of who He is, and learn how to set your mind on the things above (see Col. 3:2) and how to live your life consumed by the ultimate peace and joy of walking with Christ. If you find yourself needing a bit more support than this study offers, I encourage you to reach out to your local church or some trusted friends. I can look back on so many times in my own life that I needed help, and my Christian community, friends, and counselors definitely held me together during those times.

WILL IT ALWAYS BE THIS WAY?

About that "ultimate peace." I've never written from the stance of "I've overcome anxiety and so can you." If you're looking for ten easy steps, you won't find that here. In our broken world, it's a constant temptation to find a final fix. We hope to check the box and expect smooth sailing from then on. We will absolutely have smooth sailing someday. Just not in this world. The seas of this world have hurricanes. But the Lord has reminded me again and again, through His Word and His Spirit, that ultimate peace is our hope someday, but abundant life is available today.

Forever peace is coming, but present peace must be pursued.

We must learn to expect and accept the suffering Jesus promised us—"In this world you will have trouble . . ." (John 16:33, NIV)—all the while straining to see through all the sad and scary to the second half of the verse. There is Jesus, who tells us, ". . . take heart! I have overcome the world" (v. 33, NIV).

My hope is you'll walk into this study not looking for magic words that make fear disappear from your life forever but rather looking to and leaning on Jesus, who has already overcome everything that makes you anxious.

As you begin, give each member a Bible study book. Make sure to watch the video and go through the introductory material so everyone knows what to expect from this study. This week, you will complete the personal study for "Session Two: Anxious David." When you get back together next week, you will watch a video on Session Two and discuss your answers. As for this week, just watch the Session One video and use the discussion guide below to get to know one another.

WATCH

Write down any thoughts, verses, or things you want to remember as you watch the video for Session One of *Anxious*.

DISCUSS

Share names, family information, favorite restaurants, educational/vocational backgrounds, and current favorite things.

Do you struggle with anxiety? What does that battle look like in your life today?

Have you seen anxiety affect others in your community? Explain.

What are some ways you have tried to fight anxiety in the past? What helped? What didn't?

What are you hoping to take away from this study at the end of the eight weeks?

PRAY

As a group, take turns sharing prayer requests and figuring out how you want to pray for one another throughout the week. Maybe someone wants to take notes and send out a weekly email. Maybe you could all write your requests in a notebook. Find out what works for your group and make sure you have a way to touch base throughout the week. Close in prayer.

MANY SAY ABOUT ME,
“THERE IS NO HELP FOR
HIM IN GOD.” *SELAH*.
BUT YOU, LORD, ARE
A SHIELD AROUND ME,
MY GLORY, AND THE ONE
WHO LIFTS UP MY HEAD.

Psalm 3:2-3





DAY ONE

PRETEND INSANITY

1 Samuel 21:10-15 and Psalm 34

I have a lot of great conversations with myself while boiling water. When I'm doing tedious household things, my mind tends to wander to hypothetical relational problems. *What if there's assigned seating at my step cousin's baby shower in two months, and what if her former roommate/friend is there and we're seated right next to each other, and what if she asks if our kids can get together for a playdate, which should be no big deal, and I guess the normal answer is "Sure!," but last time our kids got together, her kids taught my kids how to break into a car and start it with a bobby pin. So what am I going to say if she asks about that playdate? Maybe I just shouldn't go to the baby shower.*

I'm exaggerating, but please tell me I'm not the only one who practices conversations for uncomfortable scenarios that don't actually exist yet.

Check one.

- You're the only one who does this.**
- You too? This is exactly why I don't boil water.**

It sounds crazy when I think about it, but that's what my brain does. Sometimes I'm afraid of people and the potential problems that come with people, and I think I can conversation-practice my way to peace. Let's see what David did when he was worried about potential relational conflict.

Read 1 Samuel 21:10-15. How did David act in the face of a threat to his safety? Write any observations in the space below.

Today, in 1 Samuel, we read about when David was so afraid of how King Achish might treat him that he pretended to be a crazy person. Pretty brilliant, right? It is amazing how our worries can lead us to behave. Maybe you tend

to get tense and angry when you feel anxious about how others think about you or what they might say or do to you. Maybe you get defensive. Maybe you, like David, behave in ways that will scare people away. I mean, lion- and giant-slaying King David, of God's own heart, literally scribbled and drooled. Or maybe you isolate and put your phone on airplane mode so the texts and expectations can just stop for one minute, please!

How do you tend to struggle when it comes to relational anxiety?

Read Psalm 34.

Psalm 34 was actually written by David about this very time in his life—when he pretended to be a crazy person in the presence of Abimelech (probably the same guy mentioned earlier as “King Achish” in 1 Sam. 21:10-15).¹ David clearly knew what it was like to be anxious when he wrote this psalm.

Now let's focus on verses 1-4 of Psalm 34 for a second. How would you describe David's posture as he shared this message?

Sometimes, when I'm afraid, I forget how to pray. I forget how to think like a daughter of God. I panic and don't know what to say.

What do your prayers to the Lord sound like when you're stuck in a panic?

In verse 4, David said he “sought the LORD.” Read the verse again and write what the Lord did as a result.

What do you think it means to seek the Lord?

What does verse 5 say is a result of looking to God?

When was the last time you felt joyful and void of shame? What was your relationship with God like at that time?

Read verse 8 from the CSB translation online. What emotion does the Bible say people who take refuge in God have?

On a scale of 1 to 10, how "happy" does your heart feel right now? (If you looked it up in a different translation, you may have seen the word *blessed*.) What do you think would move you closer to a 10?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Not too happy.

The happiest.

Take the next few minutes to think about what it means to take refuge in the Lord. What are some things you find refuge in, apart from the Lord? What do you need to cut from your life or add to it to help you seek Him when you feel anxious?

In verse 11, David talked about teaching "the fear of the LORD." Fear is not a bad thing when it is focused on our Father. It's when we fear the wrong things that we feel anxiety.

What does God's Word say the fear of the Lord leads to? Look up the following verses and write the answer beside them.

Psalm 25:14 _____

Psalm 33:8 _____

Proverbs 9:10 _____

Proverbs 14:26 _____

Proverbs 14:27 _____

Proverbs 19:23 _____

Proverbs 22:4 _____

Luke 1:50 _____

When we fear the Lord, we gain. When we fear the Lord, it is easier not to worry about the things the Lord has already defeated. When we fear the Lord, we remember He is our shield and protector.

Read Psalm 34:9.

When we fear the Lord, what do we lack?

What are some misplaced fears you have right now? How does the work of Jesus impact those worries?

I'm not into war movies or battle-y things in general, but the idea of being shielded sounds awesome to me. If I could just be shielded, at all times, from danger, from conflict, from sadness—my heart longs for that. When I'm doing the boiling-water-conversing thing I told you about, what I'm really doing is trying to prepare and protect myself. David's interpersonal conflicts were much more murder-y than mine tend to be, but it's convicting and inspiring to me that he sought protection and refuge in the Lord.

Close out this time asking God to help you rest in the reality that He is eternally shielding you from the things that would harm your soul.



DAY TWO

DOEG IS NOT COOL

1 samuel 22 and psalm 27

I sat in a therapist's office last week and used my fifty allotted minutes to detail every relational conflict I could recall being involved in for the past fifteen years. My counselor wanted to know what my goal was—why I was seeking counseling and why I wanted to talk about closed-door conflicts from years past.

I said, "I feel haunted by my relational failures. I feel shame over the times I felt misunderstood. I just want to feel peace even though there are people from my past who might not think happy thoughts when they think of me."

Sometimes, I feel trapped by anxieties, stuck with thoughts of those I've been at odds with at one point or another. Maybe I've not had the same kinds of enemies, who carried swords and sought to kill, that David had, but I've had people who weren't for me. To one degree or another, we've all experienced enemies. It sure can feel like you have an enemy when you lose a friend. It sure can feel like an enemy when things don't go as planned and you're walking through a divorce you never thought would happen, or when, yet again, an attempt to reconcile with an estranged family member ends in tears.

Enemies. No matter what form of conflict they bring to our lives, what do we do with them, and how can we find peace?

I'm really encouraged when I read about how David responded in prayer over his enemies. We're going to take a look at a psalm he wrote that theologian Charles Spurgeon thought was likely about a particular enemy of his named Doeg.² But first, let's get a little background on Doeg and how his life intersected with David's.

Read 1 Samuel 22 and answer the following:

What did Doeg tell Saul about what he witnessed between David and Ahimelech?

What did Saul command be done to Ahimelech and his priests for protecting David? Who carried out Saul's command?

Psalm 52 was written by David about the whole Doeg ordeal. It's definitely worth a read. But the Psalm I want you to open up to and focus on is Psalm 27. Though uncertain, Spurgeon believed David wrote this Psalm about Doeg as well.³ And regardless of the motive, it is a powerful song for those of us who struggle with anxieties about enemies.

Read Psalm 27.

Write out the first phrase of each sentence in Psalm 27:1. Also, write out the two questions David posed in this verse.

David asked whom he should fear and whom he should dread, but he answered those questions even while asking them. What is the answer?

When the LORD is your light, salvation and stronghold, there is nothing else to fear. "LORD," or Jehovah, is the proper name of the one and only God of the universe. LORD means "The Existing One."⁴ That means God doesn't just exist, but that He must exist. The LORD is the One from whom everything else that exists gets its existence. We may have enemies, but we also have the LORD. The ENT office receptionist who said you talked too fast, or the hurricane headed toward your coast, or even the hotdog you are scared to eat because your esophagus seems to be hotdog-shaped—everything and everyone is at the mercy of The Existing One. Your enemies are never more powerful than your LORD.

He is the stronghold of our lives. He is our light and our salvation. He is our source of true protection. We don't get to finish reading this page in this book without Him giving us the breath in our lungs, the sight in our eyes, and the clarity of our minds to do it.

What are some things/people/situations you sometimes fear rather than fearing the Lord?

Now back to Psalm 27. Reread verses 1-4. How do these verses help you get your mind off of your enemies and onto Jesus?

The Bible, the Old and New Testaments alike, are about the work of Jesus. When we read the first four verses of this psalm, as Christians living after the resurrection, we can see Jesus as the ultimate fulfillment of David's hope and the ultimate reason our enemies shouldn't cause anxieties. Through the work of Christ on the cross, we have received salvation forever. At the cross,

our greatest enemies stumbled and fell. We can be confident, as David was, because we have a Jehovah who is also our Rescuer and proves our enemies are no match for Him. See “Becoming a Christian” on page 184 in the Appendix for more information about the Christian faith and how to commit to being a Christ-follower.

What was David wanting and asking of the Lord in verse 4?

What other verses can you think of that remind you that the God whose power dwarfs enemies like Doeg and Satan and everyone else is also whom we should most desire and whom we can most be satisfied in?

Our Lord, the conqueror of enemies, isn't just “The Existing One.” He is our good Father and the giver of joy.

Copy the following verses below each of them:

For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear. Instead, you received the Spirit of adoption, by whom we cry out, “*Abba*, Father!”

ROMANS 8:15

You reveal the path of life to me; in your presence is abundant joy; at your right hand are eternal pleasures.

PSALM 16:11

When you're stuck worrying about your enemies, are you able to worship? If you can, get alone in this moment and sing God one of your favorite songs of praise.

If you don't feel like you can worship, and I know sometimes this happens to us, would you consider taking a moment to write an honest prayer to God below? Or reaching out to a trusted Christian friend with your struggle? God wants to know the truth of what's happening in your heart and mind and so does your faith family.

The last verse in Psalm 27 says, "Wait for the LORD; be strong, and let your heart be courageous. Wait for the LORD" (v. 14). The word *wait*, in the original Hebrew, means "to wait, look for, hope, expect."⁵ When we look for, hope in, and expect our God to come through, we can be people of courage, even those of us (Hi!) who tend to lean more into worry.

What are some ways you can "Wait for the LORD" as you battle your fear of people?

God is able to shield us from pain because He went to the cross and took the pain. There is now no barrier between us. In Christ, there is a shield for us who trust Him. He is on our side. He is our defender. We don't need every human in the world to understand us when the God who made us and knows us—our best parts and the very worst ones—loves us that much.

At the end of the therapy session I mentioned earlier, my counselor helped me realize I was longing to tie up a bunch of loose, frayed ends in a world where not everything can have beauty and closure. Some things remain unfinished, unsaid, unheard, untied, unraveled. But see, we have a Shield. Not to protect us from all pain, but to protect us from pain that lasts forever. God is the only relational being who can love us perfectly and forgive us fully, and He does. The more I meditate on that, I know my eternity ends finished, tied, heard, and beautifully held together. Then it is easier for me to make peace with today's loose ends.

Close out this time asking the Lord to help you feel forever peace in a world that's lacking it.



DAY THREE

WHEN PRAYER TIME WAS THE WORST

Psalm 61

When I was nineteen, I was a hostess at a local restaurant known for its great salads. I started dating my husband who was a church planter/worship pastor and quickly left the great salad place to join the small church staff as the administrative assistant.

I'm embarrassed to admit this, but my least favorite part of our staff meetings was the prayer time.

Once a week, we'd all sit on the floor in our pastor's office and take turns praying. I'd listen to our pastor pray, then my husband, then the youth pastor, and, at that point, my heart would be beating out of my chest.

I hated prayer time.

Of course I understood the value of staff prayer. And of course I wanted to talk to God. But all I could think about while sitting in that little warehouse office space was what my words would show the other people in that office about how unspiritual I was. I wasn't in the prayer time to worship and to seek the Lord on behalf of the people we were serving together. I just hoped to say something that would garner a "Yes, Lord" or a nice, dramatic "Mmmm" from someone else in the room. I worried my prayers wouldn't seem potent enough for the people listening. But David modeled for us that prayer isn't something to worry about; rather, it is a weapon we can use against our worries.

Psalm 61 records one of David's prayers. It was definitely not the kind of prayer that might be said under duress in a church warehouse office space. David's prayer is earnest and needy and beautiful.

Scholars believe this psalm was written after David had come to the throne and was likely when his son, Absalom, was rebelling against him (which you can read about in 2 Sam. 15–18).⁶ It was certainly a time when anxiety would be understandable.

Read Psalm 61:1-4 and reflect on David’s tone with the Lord. Do you approach the Lord similarly?

When I read those first two verses, it struck me that David was pretty direct. He was so serious. He didn’t say a bunch of words out of tradition or compulsion, as I did in the church office and still sometimes do today, but rather, he talked to God like he was talking to a real person.

Spurgeon noted that David’s tone “was in terrible earnest.” Then he said, “Pharisees may rest in their prayers; true believers are eager for an answer to them: ritualists may be satisfied when they have, ‘said or sung’ their litanies . . . but living children of God will never rest till their supplications have entered the ears of the Lord God of Sabaoth.”⁷

Take a minute to read that over again. That convicted me so hard. I don’t want to be a person who worriedly chants religious phrases in order to feel satisfied or make other people think I’m holy. I want to know and speak to the living God. Don’t you?

Verse 2 says, “I call to you from the ends of the earth when my heart is without strength.”

During seasons of anxiety or fear, we can approach the Lord in prayer and find Him to be a “refuge” and “rock” and “strong tower” as David described Him in verses 2-3. But anxiety often keeps us from that. It keeps us stuck in our own loop of fears—whether they are, *What will this church staff think of*

my prayer? or What will happen if my husband loses his job? or What is this lump under my arm?

What's your first course of action when feeling anxious? Is it prayer? Is it TikTok®? Is it chips and queso?

Reread Psalm 61:4.

How do you think it helped David to pray this while dealing with exile?

Have you ever found comfort in your eternal destination while dealing with right-now suffering? What made that possible for you?

I just love verse 4. In fact, I think it is worthy of a nice “Mmmmmm.” In that verse, we witness David doing the most wonderful and biblical thing, which I imagine crushed the anxiety he was facing. He, as Colossians 3:2 tells us to do, “set [his mind] on things above, not on earthly things.”

In the following space, write down some right-now anxiety-inducing things in your life. And beside each one, find a Bible verse that helps you “Set your mind on things above” in regard to that struggle.

Now, read Psalm 61:5-8. Notice the change of tone.

Commentary writer Matthew Henry said, "David, in this psalm, as in many others, begins with a sad heart, but concludes with an air of pleasantness—begins with prayers and tears, but ends with songs of praise."⁸

That is so beautiful to me because I've experienced it. We can look at David's prayer in Psalm 61 and model our own anxious prayers after it. We can speak to the Lord directly and earnestly without pretense. We can set our minds on the eternal hope He offers, and we can conclude our prayers experiencing real peace, real hope, and real communion with the Father who loves us.

Below, write a prayer from your own heart and try to model it after Psalm 61. Be honest, reflect on eternity, and praise the Lord who is bigger than your worries!



DAY FOUR

CHASED AND HECKLED

2 samuel 16:5-14 and psalm 3

The heading for Psalm 3 in the CSB translation says, “Confidence in Troubled Times.” When do you feel confident? Do you usually feel confident in “troubled times”?

My answer is certainly NO. When we lost our first baby in an ectopic pregnancy, I barely left my bed for months. When we adopted our middle daughter, who appeared to have significant physical and cognitive developmental delays, I barely left my bed for days. I’ve often buried myself under blankets in troubled times.

How do you usually react when times are troublesome?

Before we get any further, I want to say that making space to grieve is important. And we can turn toward God, even in our grief. He wants to sit with us in it, to carry us in it. All clear? Great. Back to Psalm 3.

The Bible tells us this was “A psalm of David when he fled from his son Absalom.” You may remember from yesterday’s study that this is the same time period scholars believe David penned Psalm 61.⁹

The events that led to the writing of this psalm are found in 2 Samuel 15–18 when David was betrayed by Absalom and others in his life. Absalom was leading a rebellion against his dad, the king. People who were at one time

his friends turned against him. It was an undoubtedly troubled time in the life of David. It was, what some theologians might call, a “where’s my blanket” moment.

Read 2 Samuel 16:5-14. Now, let’s look more closely at verses 5-8. Who was Shimei, and what was he doing?

Read verses 11 and 12 again. What emotion do you pick up on from David? How did his response reflect a trust in the God of justice?

In verses 13 and 14, David moved on down the road, going his way while Shimei went on cursing him. Then it says, David “refreshed himself” (v. 14, ESV). It’s really crazy to me that David was able to experience peace given his circumstances. Remember—he was on the run from his own son! His son, who should have been in his corner. And then, he was being heckled by this Shimei guy. And somehow, “he refreshed himself.” There’s no way unless God was helping him, right?

Now, flip to Psalm 3 and read the whole chapter. Take a closer look at verses 1 and 2.

I wonder if his “refreshing himself” was similar to the prayer we find in Psalm 3?

In Psalm 3:3, David called God his shield, his glory, and the lifter of his head. Below, next to these powerful names for God, explain how these terms were refreshing for David in his time of trouble and how they might be of help to you.

SHIELD	
GLORY	
LIFTER OF MY HEAD	

God is our protector (shield). Nothing can get to us without first getting through God. God is our source of significance (glory). We can fight anxiety knowing the things we worry about could never truly jeopardize the value we have because we are approved by God through Jesus. God is the lifter of our heads. God is the one who leads us to look up from our sorrows and worries and reminds us we can have joy and hope through our friendship with Him.

Which of these three descriptions of God's work in our lives means the most to you right now? Why?

Take another look at verses 5-6.

In these verses, David slept. It can be hard to sleep when you feel anxious (even if you rarely leave your bed). I love the idea of praying psalms like this one when your mind and body aren't cooperating.

Revisiting verses 7-8, what words or phrases show that God is for you in these verses?

How do you need God to fight for you right now as you battle anxiety and troubled times?

Close your time today thanking God for saving you and blessing you. Thank Him for rising up, in Jesus, to strike the enemies of sin and death and failure and fear. You belong to Him, and He has overcome. Ask Him to help you see Him as your shield, glory, and hope. Ask Him to help you sleep and not be afraid.



DAY FIVE

SHEPHERD AND SHIELD

Psalm 23

In Psalm 23:1, David wrote, “The LORD is my shepherd; I have what I need.”

I have what I need. What if we really believed that?

Oftentimes when I’m anxious, my worry is rooted in feeling like I’m lacking something. My mind tells me, *If I just had this . . . or If that circumstance would just line up the right way . . . THEN, I’d have what I need.*

What is it, right now, that your mind is telling you that you need to have peace?

Read Psalm 23.

Look at verse 2 and highlight the phrase “he leads.”

I heard an illustration from Elisabeth Elliot about Psalm 23 in which she talked about getting lost in the car and needing directions. Updating her example a little, imagine using your iPhone GPS to get somewhere, but then, while you are traveling, your phone dies, and you don’t have your charger.

Maybe you pull over and ask someone how to get to where you’re going, and he/she starts giving you a long, detailed, confusing explanation. But then imagine how you would exhale if someone were to simply drive ahead of you and lead the way. Elliot said, “. . . isn’t it a relief if somebody just says, ‘Follow me.’”¹⁰

There's no doubt that an anxious mind complicates a simple thing. Sure, we've all got complicated, painful relationships. Sure, we're juggling lots of responsibilities and wearing lots of hats and dealing with lots of incoming problems. And of course, you, if you were really smart, might be building a tornado shelter right now. But let's just remember this truest of true things. We are sheep, and we have a Good Shepherd who loves us and who leads us.

Read the following verses and write down the phrase Jesus kept saying to His people: Matthew 16:24; Mark 1:17; Mark 10:21; Luke 5:27.

When we think about the role of a shepherd, we remember that a shepherd takes care of his sheep, provides for them, leads them, and protects them.

What are some examples from your own life of when your Good Shepherd has taken care of, provided, led, and/or protected you?

Psalm 23:4 in the CSB translation uses the phrase, "darkest valley," but I love the imagery used in the ESV translation—"valley of the shadow of death." I used to think of that phrase as reflective of the very worst horrors life has to offer—things like disease and abuse. But, truly, this whole life is the "valley of the shadow of death," right? We are all dying every day. Some days are filled with pleasantries, and some days are filled with pain, but we live every moment in the shadow of death.

Even though we are all walking toward death, we can "fear no evil" (v. 4, ESV). Why?

Verse 6 refers to the day we will dwell in the house of the Lord. Is there a home you love to visit? Maybe it is your childhood home? Or maybe your own childhood home was filled with dysfunction, but every time you visited that one aunt or grandma or that one friend, you were met with warmth and food and comfort and love?

Describe that setting in the space below.

All week, we've been looking at David. There's so much of his life we didn't have time to cover. Have you ever heard about the time he was a scrawny young boy who slayed the giant, Goliath, with a sling, some stones, and without physical armor (1 Sam. 17)? Or, you know, that time he sinned against Bathsheba and then had her husband killed (2 Sam. 11–12)? I mean . . . David lived a *life*.

He had lots of great days and lots of bad ones. Based on his life events, he likely experienced the anxiety of being the victim and the anxiety of being the bad guy. But he was a bad guy with faith in a good God. He was often a bad guy whose prayer life demonstrated that he sought forgiveness and protection, not through an earthly shield (not even when fighting a giant) but an eternal One. God protected David from his fears and from following his sin to destruction. God guarded and guided His child through all kinds of circumstances we can hardly imagine.

Now skip over to the New Testament and read about when God, the Good Shepherd, was walking the earth in flesh. Read John 10:1-11. What did Jesus call Himself in verse 7?

What did Jesus call Himself in verse 11?

Look at Psalm 23 and read through it again, but every time you see the phrases “the LORD” or “He,” say, “Jesus.”

Jesus is my shepherd;
I have what I need.
Jesus lets me lie down in green pastures;
Jesus leads me beside quiet waters.
Jesus renews my life;
Jesus leads me along the right paths
for his name’s sake.
Even when I go through the darkest valley,
I fear no danger,
for Jesus is with me;
Jesus’ rod and his staff—they comfort me.

Jesus prepares a table before me
in the presence of my enemies;
Jesus anoints my head with oil;
my cup overflows.
Only goodness and faithful love will pursue me
all the days of my life,
and I will dwell in the house of Jesus
as long as I live.

Here’s the thing. Because of Jesus, we have access to the Shepherd. Because of Jesus, we have access to safety and satisfaction. Because of Jesus, we are sheep who don’t need to be afraid of the lingering wolves in our lives. He leads us. He loves us. He is with us.

We are like David in that we fail, but Jesus doesn’t. We worry, but Jesus understands. Jesus knows this world is broken, sad, and scary. But when we hold up what we are anxious about next to the good news of the gospel, we

see that we actually can rest because He has already handled everything on our behalf. We are His, and He has won, is winning, and will win forever. It's not a onetime thing. It's an everyday opportunity to sit at His feet and in His Word, to claim His promises, think on His help, and believe in His power.

What can you do this week to remember the truth—that Jesus, your Shepherd, is with you—loving you, comforting you, leading you, holding you, and protecting you?

This past week, you completed the Session Two personal study in your books. If you weren't able to do so, no big deal! You can still follow along with the questions, be involved in the discussion, and watch the video. When you are ready to begin, open up your time in prayer and push play on Video Two for Session Two.

WATCH

Write down any thoughts, verses, or things you want to remember as you watch the video for Session Two of *Anxious*.

FROM THIS WEEK'S STUDY

As a group, review this week's memory verse.

Many say about me,
"There is no help for
him in God." *Selah*.
But you, LORD, are
a shield around me,
my glory, and the one
who lifts up my head.

PSALM 3:2-3

REVIEW SESSION TWO PERSONAL STUDY

From Day One: In Psalm 34:11, David talked about teaching "the fear of the LORD." What are some things we learned that the fear of the Lord leads to (include your favorite references from the chart on p. 21)?

From Day Two: Which Bible verses remind you that the God whose power dwarfs enemies like Doeg and Satan and everyone else is also whom we should most desire and whom we can be most satisfied in?

From Day Three: Do you approach the Lord similarly to the way David did in Psalm 61:1-4?

What's your first course of action when feeling anxious? Is it prayer? Is it TikTok®? Is it chips and queso?

From Day Four: Which of these three descriptions of God's work in our lives means the most to you right now? Why?

From Day Five: What are some examples from your own life of when your Good Shepherd has taken care of, provided, led, and/or protected you?

DISCUSS

What is the most interesting thing you worried about this week? 😊

What have we learned about who God is through our look at some of the anxiety-inducing events in David's life?

How have David's prayers helped you?

When David was fleeing from Absalom, he prayed, "But you, LORD, are a shield around me" (Ps. 3:3a). Share about a time in your life when the Lord was your shield.

Back in Day One, we looked at verses all over the Bible that show us what happens when we fear the Lord. Which of these benefits resonates with you? If you're comfortable doing so, share a testimony of that experience in your group.

PRAY

Take turns sharing anxieties you're dealing with right now and have your group talk about how the gospel speaks to those worries. Spend the remainder of your time in prayer for each other.



