

WALKING ALONGSIDE THOSE STRUGGLING WITH ANXIETY

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ANXIETY:
THE
DEFINITION

If someone asked you what anxiety is,
how would you respond?

ANXIETY: THE DEFINITION AND PREVALENCE

Fear or apprehension at future events – real or perceived – that impacts body and heart.

- One of the world's most common mental health conditions (WHO)
- Women are almost twice as likely to be diagnosed with anxiety disorders as men
- Onset in adolescence common

ANXIETY: THE ROOTS

- Common struggle
- Embodied struggle
- Rooted in a broken world (Genesis 3)
 - Broken pasts (cf sociological model)
 - Broken bodies (cf medical model)
 - Broken desires



ANXIETY:
THE
EXPERIENCE

What does anxiety feel like?
Consider the physical, emotional,
relational and spiritual factors.


ANXIETY: THE SCOPE

- Generalised anxiety disorder
 - Panic disorder
 - Phobias eg agoraphobia or claustrophobia
 - Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)
 - Social anxiety disorder (social phobia)
- to name but a few

ANXIETY: THE ESCAPE

- Control
- Food
- Alcohol / drugs
- Sex / pornography
- Shopping
- Gaming / scrolling
- Over-activity

Often anxiety (suffering) lies beneath things that are often described as sin



ANXIETY:
THE
CHRISTIAN
STRUGGLE

Some would say (or at least assume) that Christians shouldn't struggle with anxiety. What might be the roots of such beliefs?

ANXIETY: THE SECULAR PRESCRIPTIONS

There is hope! General wisdom:

- Self-help (online relaxation, coping strategies)
- Talking therapy (often CBT)
- Medication (SSRIs, Benzodiazepines)
- Mindfulness

ANXIETY: A WORD ON
THE MINDFULNESS
REVOLUTION

- Buddhist roots – secular development
- Meditative processes
- Focus on the present (paying attention to breathing)
- Acceptance / curiosity about experience (noting thoughts and feelings but then setting aside)
- A problem of perception – a self with a solution

ANXIETY: SIMPLE PRACTICAL RESPONSES

- Breathing
- Grounding
- Resting
- Reprioritising
- Exercise
- Medication



CASE STUDY

Jess is 26, a young mum surviving on little sleep. She is living in a small flat with her husband and baby son and money is tight to the point that buying food can be hard. She has been a Christian for as long as she can remember but is finding prayer and Bible reading impossible. She feels life is out of control and abandoned by God. She cries frequently and regularly experiences panic. Often isolated, she can go for days without leaving the house.

What practical strategies might help her?



ANXIETY:
THE
EXPERIENCE

Much as these practical strategies are deeply useful, how are they inadequate on their own?

PREPARING TO
RESPOND
BIBLICALLY

There is even more hope! Special wisdom.

Ephesians 4

- God brings us together (v1-6)
- God gifts us (v7-11)
- Pastors teach us (v12)
- We serve one another (v12-13)
- By speaking the truth in love (v14-15)
- And we're all built up (v16)

LISTENING TO ANXIETY

- Listen to words
- Listen to emotions
- Listen to behaviour
- Ask open questions



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What questions might you ask?

LAMENT THE
CONTEXT OF
ANXIETY

Rediscovering lament:

- Call
- Complain
- Ask
- Commit

Every day there are reasons to praise.

Every day there are reasons to cry.

Scripture helps us do both.

PRAY THROUGH ANXIETY

- Prayers of release ... *“Please take this away ... “*
- Prayers of reliance ... *“Help me trust in you, Lord ... “*
- Prayers of repentance ... *“I’m sorry for those times when I’ve doubted you...“*
- Prayers of reorientation ... *“As I struggle, change me to be more like Jesus ... “*
- Prayers of resurrection ... *“Thank you, that one day I will be free ... “*

SPEAKING WISELY IN ANXIETY

Truth and lies

- God is with us ... he knows every facet of our pain (Ps 139)
- God is our Refuge ... we can go to him as we are (Ps 18)
- God is our Shepherd ... he is leading us through the fear (Ps 23)
- God is our Provider ... he gives us what we need each and every day (Ex 12)
- God is our King ... sovereign over our circumstances and bringing purpose to them (Gen 50)
- We can change ... we are not stuck (because the Spirit is at work)



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How is Jess forgetting who God is? And who she is? What truths might help her? How could you share those truths without sounding as if you are preaching at her?

WORDS THAT
REFINE – THE
BEAUTY OF CHANGE

Ephesians 4:22-24

- Take off our old self
- Have our minds transformed through God's word and work
- Put on our new self

One baby step at a time ...



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What might Jess take off and put on? Where might you start?

THE END POINT

- Freedom from anxiety?
- Changes in anxiety?
- Perseverance in anxiety?

In Christ – in community – in hope.

RESOURCES

www.bcuk.org

www.ccef.org

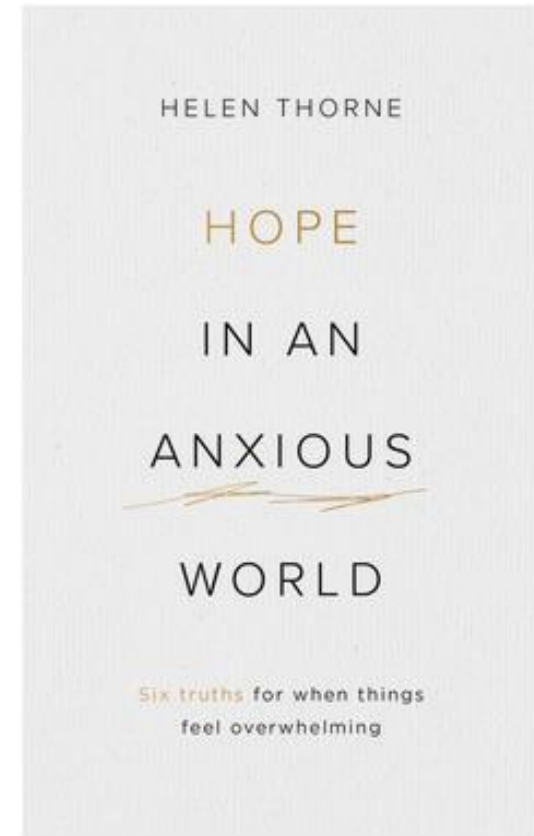
Running Scared, Ed Welch

Mirror, Mirror – Graham Beynon

Real Change – Andrew Nicholls and Helen Thorne

Hope in an Anxious World – Helen Thorne

5 Things to Pray for a Suffering Friend – Helen Thorne



Q&A