



MOOD

MOOD TEACHING SERIES

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Lesson 2



Week 2: Anxiety



Bible: Philippians 4:6-7



Bottom Line:
God wants to give us a new perspective
about anxiety.

OPENING GAME

Supplies:

- A giant box of Legos (or other small items that would cause pain if stepped on)
- Masking tape (or a way to mark a path on the ground)
- Something to use as blindfolds for your number of contestants
- A prize for your winner (or all contestants) [NOTE: We gave the winner all the Legos from the floor ... but he had to pick them all up ... :)]
- A way to play intense music (something like <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GXFSK0ogeg4>)
- A way to show an image to your group – either in-person or virtual

OPENING GAME (In-Person Version) – Lego Firewalk

GAME PREP

- Mark a giant path (rectangle) on the floor of your space with masking tape, about 20' long and 5' wide if possible
- Scatter Legos all along the path

HOW TO PLAY THE GAME

For this game, you want to build the volunteers' anxiety throughout.

Do strobe-y stuff with your lights, play intense music, and be super dramatic as you say in your best Michael Buffer voice:

Ladies and gentlemen, tonight we will observe several brave contestants participate in one of the oldest tests of strength and toughness known to parents around the world...the Lego Firewalk!

[Show image ... play around with music and lights]

Our contestants will each put on a blindfold and attempt to walk the Lego Firewalk in the fastest time possible. The winner will receive _____ [whatever your prize is].

OPENING GAME

The rules are simple:

- 1) You must wear the blindfold properly at all times*
- 2) You must stay on the path at all times*
- 3) You must pick up your feet and put them down to take a step – no shuffling or sliding your feet.*

Do we have any brave souls who wish to compete in our challenge of fortitude this evening?

Play up the selection of every volunteer ... “Are you ready to endure the pain of the Lego firewalk?” ... “Are you sure you have what it takes to master the challenge of the Lego Firewalk?” ... etc.

Once you have your contestants, build intensity as much as possible as you blindfold them all. Try to get your group into it as much as possible. Line up your contestants, all blindfolded, and build up the intensity with lights and music and cheering crowds.

It's time for the Lego Firewalk!?!!

Have each contestant, one at a time, walk from one end of the path to the other. Make a big deal every time they step on a Lego.

Keep working the crowd. Celebrate each contestant, keep track of the times, and award a prize to the winner.

Good job everybody!

You may have noticed the lights and the music as we were getting ready to play the game.

Did it make you more excited? More stressed?

OPENING GAME

[Ask the contestants]

- The closer we got to game time, did your anxiety go up?
- Once I said GO, did your anxiety go up?

It's funny how anxiety works – no one was ever in any danger, but we get stressed by the excitement and the music and the challenge.

OPENING GAME (Online Version) – House Hunters

GAME PREP

- Pre-type the scavenger hunt list so you can copy/paste it into your chat window.
- Print a sign that says “GAME OVER” to hold up to let everyone know the game is over.

HOW TO PLAY THE GAME

Say

- *Today we're having an at-home scavenger hunt. You're going to be a House Hunter.*
- *In just a second, I'm going to post a list into the chat window of 10 items you need to go find, one-at-a-time, bring back to your screen, and line them up so everyone can see them.*
- *You can ONLY bring back one item at a time. Ready, set, go!*

Paste the list into your chat window and watch the fun begin!

When someone has all 10 items, show the “Game Over” sign on your screen until everyone comes back.

Congratulations to _____ for getting all 10 items the fastest!

OPENING GAME

[Make comments about specific students' efforts. "Good job Ashton, you had 9 items ... so close!" "Hey Zoe, that's a good-looking shoe you brought!" etc.]

Ask:

- How many of you didn't win because you don't have all of the items in your home? Or you didn't know where to find them? Did that stress you out?
- How many of you would see others with more items than you and get a little stressed?
- How many of you were worried you might get in a little trouble with your parents for dragging stuff all over the house? Did that stress you out?

It's funny how anxiety works. We're not getting any prizes for winning, but we get stressed by the excitement and the challenge and the experience.

TEACH

Welcome to Lesson Two of our series, “Mood,” where we’re talking about how to manage our emotions in a healthy and Godly way.

Last week we defined “emotion” as a natural, instinctive state of mind deriving from one’s circumstances, mood, or relationships with others.

Emotions are “natural states of mind,” meaning they happen to all of us as we live life, and they connect all parts of our life: what’s happening, how we feel, and our relationships with people.

Our emotions are powerful, and they can be a gift to help us fully experience life, or they can make a mess in our circumstances, mood, and relationships.

Then we ended last week by looking at a story about Jesus from **Luke 22**.

The Bible has four books that talk about Jesus’ life on earth – Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

They’re called the “gospels,” and they’re the first four books in the New Testament.

In our story last week, we learned that experiencing emotions is a part of being human; Jesus experienced emotions, so it’s okay for us to experience emotions, too.

And there’s no such thing as bad emotions, only bad responses.

This week we’re focusing on the emotion of anxiety.

All of us experience anxiety in different ways, and a lot of that has to do with our personality type – how we’re wired.

Some people naturally experience less anxiety; some people naturally experience more anxiety.

By the time we’re done tonight, you’ll know that both of those are okay, and you’ll have a plan for dealing with anxiety in your life, no matter what it looks like.

Would someone read **Luke 22:39-46** for the group?

[I LOVE having students read from the Bible. If it doesn’t work for your group, feel free to read it yourself or have another adult read it.]

As you listen to this passage, try to identify phrases that reveal that Jesus was experiencing anxiety at this moment.

³⁹Then, accompanied by the disciples, Jesus left the upstairs room and went as usual to the Mount of Olives. ⁴⁰There he told them, “Pray that you will not give in to temptation.” ⁴¹He walked away, about a stone’s throw, and knelt down and prayed,⁴² “Father, if you are willing, please take this cup of suffering away from me. Yet

I want your will to be done, not mine.” ⁴³ Then an angel from heaven appeared and strengthened him.

⁴⁴ He prayed more fervently, and he was in such agony of spirit that his sweat fell to the ground like great drops of blood. ⁴⁵ At last he stood up again and returned to the disciples, only to find them asleep, exhausted from grief. ⁴⁶ “Why are you sleeping?” he asked them. “Get up and pray, so that you will not give in to temptation.” Luke 22:39-46 (NLT)

How does Jesus appear to be experiencing anxiety in this passage?

[Give appropriate time for students to respond, encouraging them for sharing their thoughts.]

Did you notice in verse 44 that Jesus' sweat was like drops of blood?

There's actually a medical condition called *hematohidrosis*, where you can be under such emotional anxiety that your body gets so tense that your capillaries burst, and it looks like you're sweating blood.

When Luke writes that Jesus was in “agony of spirit” and sweating blood, it seems pretty clear that Jesus was anxious.

How could He not be? He knew what the next week of His life would contain.

Jesus was in the midst of a major crisis, and He was anxious.

How many of you are surprised to hear that Jesus was anxious?

Why are we surprised to hear that?

[Interact with students' answers.]

I think the main reason this surprises us is that we have some unhealthy assumptions.

We think, “I'm stressed out, so something must be wrong with my brain.”

We think, “If I were healthy, I wouldn't ever be anxious.”

We think, “If I struggle with anxiety, I must be broken.”

But you're not broken; the world is broken.

Something isn't wrong with your brain; something is wrong with the world!

I'm not saying we don't have brokenness, but that's not why you experience anxiety.

Earlier we read from the gospel of Luke, but another of Jesus' disciples – John – also wrote a gospel.

In **John 16**, Jesus takes a whole chapter to tell His disciples that they should always have hope, even in hard times, because He would always be with them.

He ends the chapter with a word of warning and a word of hope.

Would someone read Jesus' words from **John 16:33** out loud?

[Again, I love having students read, but if it doesn't work for your group, have you or another adult read.]

"I have told you all this so that you may have peace in me. Here on earth you will have many trials and sorrows. But take heart, because I have overcome the world." John 16:33 (NLT)

You experience anxiety because the world is broken.

Hatred, bitterness, unforgiveness, selfishness – all those things reveal that the world is broken.

Jesus knew this, so He warned his followers that they would have troubles – trials and sorrows.

Then He gives them some hope. He has overcome the world.

Jesus doesn't say that we won't experience trouble. He says trouble won't have the last word because He has overcome it.

So even though Jesus was experiencing anxiety about the crucifixion while He was praying that night, He knew that His death wasn't the end of the story.

Jesus experienced anxiety, and He faced it and dealt with it.

So how do we do this?

Paul was a follower of Jesus who traveled around starting churches.

Once things got going, Paul would go to another town and start all over.

Often, he would send letters back to those places to encourage them.

One of these letters was written to the church in Philippi, and in the Bible it's the book of Philippians.

Would someone read **Philippians 4:6-7** out loud?

[Again, I love having students read, but if it doesn't work for your group, have you or another adult read.]

⁶Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done. ⁷Then you will experience God's peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus. Philippians 4:6-7 (NLT)

When Paul says "don't worry about anything," he's saying don't get consumed by your anxious thoughts about anything.

He's not saying to literally not worry. That's impossible.

He's saying when you experience anxiety, you should ask God to help you deal with it because God wants to help you deal with anxiety.

Paul tells us how to deal with it.

First, pray about it.

Talk to God...cry to God...share all your anxious thoughts with God.

Jesus experienced anxiety, so we know it's not a sin to be anxious.

God loves us, and there's nothing to be ashamed of for being anxious, so there's no reason to not tell God everything we're thinking and feeling that is causing stress.

Second, tell God what you need.

Last week we read **Hebrews 4**, which said we should approach God boldly.

When you're experiencing anxiety, tell God what you need...be specific.

Do you need God to help your mind stop racing?

Do you need God to help your thoughts not be so negative?

Do you need God to help you trust him more?

Tell him whatever you need.

Third, thank God for what He's done.

Honestly, I think this is the key: gratitude.

When we tell God, "Thank You," we're saying, "God, you've been good to me in the past, and I know that you'll be good to me in the future, so I trust that you'll be good to me right now."

When we express gratitude, we shift our focus from what's **wrong** to what's **right**.

When we tell God, "Thank You," we're making sure that we don't allow our circumstances to control us or consume us, and we give all the power of whatever's causing us anxiety back to God – who's the rightful owner.

And when we allow our perspective to change like this – prayer, asking God, and thanking God – we're leaning into Jesus' words of hope that even though we will experience troubles, He has overcome the world.

I love how *The Message Bible* translates **Philippians 4:6-7**:

⁶Don't fret or worry. Instead of worrying, pray. Let petitions and praises shape your worries into prayers, letting God know your concerns. ⁷Before you know it, a sense of God's wholeness, everything coming together for good, will come and settle you down. It's wonderful what happens when Christ displaces worry at the center of your life. Philippians 4:6-7 (The Message)

Go have a great small group, and we'll see you next week.

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What is the most stressed you've ever been?
2. On a scale of 1 (never stressed) to 10 (always stressed), how anxious of a person do you think you are?
3. On a scale of 1 (hardly any) to 10 (a boatload), how much does anxiety affect your life daily?
4. What are some things that usually cause you anxiety?
5. What are some things that all our worries have in common?
6. How do you typically deal with worry in your life? How well does it work?
7. On a scale of 1 (not very) to 10 (totally), how confident are you that our three simple steps will help you deal with your anxiety in a healthy way?
8. What are some things you feel when you're overwhelmed by worry? What are some things you need when you're overwhelmed by worry?
9. Why does Jesus want us to not be consumed by anxiety and worry?
10. What does it look like to put this lesson into practice in your life this week?