

*Jacob's Well***Lesson Title:** Mental Health—Anxiety

**Key Concept:** Brokenness is the reason for many mental health struggles that we were not created to deal with. Anxiety can take control of your life, but the one in control should be God.

**Scriptures:**

Give all your worries and cares to God, for he cares about you. . . . So after you have suffered a little while, he will restore, support, and strengthen you, and he will place you on a firm foundation.

(1 Peter 5:7, 10 *New Living Translation*)

<sup>6</sup> Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done. <sup>7</sup> Then 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 *New Living Translation*)

**Context Scriptures:** 1 Peter 5:7–11; Genesis 2, Proverbs 3:5–6; Matthew 6:25–34; John 3:16; Romans 7:15–25; Romans 8:1; Romans 8:28; 2 Corinthians 12:9

**Lesson Thoughts:**

Anxiety is an intense worry focused on future or unfounded threats. Unlike reasonable fears, which are present and based in reality, anxiety comes from our lack of control and fear of the future. Anxiety is often characterized by unmanageable worried thoughts, fast breathing, tense muscles, panic attacks, and more. If not managed with healthy coping mechanisms, anxiety can take control of our lives.

Humans were not made to worry. In God's original plan, we were perfect and provided for in the garden. We didn't have to worry about how we would feed our families, whether others would like us, or how we would face the unknown. But now, instead of a perfect garden, we are born into a broken world. It's

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impossible not to worry about whether we are going to be okay, but our worries, valid or invalid, can get out of control and take over as anxiety.

Just like sin and every other imperfection, we are told to give anxiety and control to God. We aren't strong enough to carry our anxiety, and we aren't supposed to be, but God is. When we release control and give our anxiety to someone higher, it no longer binds us, and our relationship with God grows stronger. Our safety in life is not supposed to rely on our ability to be in control, but on a savior who knows all and is all.

It's easy to say, "give up control and anxiety," but for some people, that's impossible to do even once. The Bible is clear that even as we try to fight sin, we will not conquer it in this lifetime. Anxiety is the same way. While some people might be able to overcome anxiety in an instant, many others will battle it their whole lives. This should not leave us hopeless or condemned. God is the only one who can condemn us, and he has chosen not to.

Anxiety clouds our perception of reality, urging us to take control of our lives. But God calls us to trust him even through our fears, and he promises to guard our hearts and minds. We need not worry about tomorrow, not because bad things won't happen, but because God is in control and he loves us.

**Discussion Questions:**

- 1) Have you struggled with anxiety or worry? If so, in what circumstances?
- 2) Do you fear giving up control? Why?
- 3) What helps you when you're worried or anxious?
- 4) What are some habits you use to control your life? Are they healthy?
- 5) Has God ever used your flaws for good? How?

**Next Lesson:** Self-Worth

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**Notes and Reflections**

- 1) Often when we are in an anxious state, it is already too late to prepare for it. Deep breathing has been shown to help with bodily responses to anxiety. Practice deep breathing during calm moments so you are prepared for stressful situations.
  - Slowly inhale through your nose for 4 seconds
  - Hold for 4 seconds
  - Slowly exhale through your mouth for 4 seconds
  - Hold for 4 seconds
  - Repeat
- 2) Listen to these songs that relate to anxiety: "Breath by Breath" by Lydia Laird, "Out of My Hand" by Jeremy Camp, and "As I Am" by Hannah Kerr.
- 3) If your anxiety is unmanageable, reach out to a licensed counselor and don't feel ashamed. Everyone needs help.

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**Notes and Reflections, cont.**