

SERMON TRANSCRIPT

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SPEAKER

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SERIES

Overwhelmed

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9

TITLE

Help, I'm Anxious

SCRIPTURE

Psalm 139



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Well, each and every one of us, we face burdens in life. And sometimes those burdens are at such size and that they threatened to bury us. They cause us to find words, to search for words that help us to describe what we feel. And sometimes we use the words I'm overwhelmed, I just feel so overwhelmed with what's in front of me. And what's interesting is it wasn't always this way. And the best news that I have is that it won't always be this way.

You see, in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. He created us in his image and we enjoyed a relationship with him and there was peace. There was no anxiety. There was no fear. There was no shame or guilt. There was no insecurity. There was no death. There was no sickness. There was no strife. There was no contention. There was peace.

And the Bible says that we sinned against God, there was this historical event called the fall where God looked and he gave instructions and we violated those instructions and it caused this tidal wave to sweep across the earth, the tidal wave the Bible calls brokenness. It affects every part of our life, our bodies, our minds, our hearts, our homes, our relationships, our institutions, our systems, our nations. It affects every one of us.

And this wave was so intense and so big, what happens is once it's swept, it generates future waves in every subsequent generation so that every new generation faces all of the same problems. Now, the Bible tells us that one day that won't be the case, that because of his great love for us, that he sent Jesus to this earth in order to rescue us and one day he's going to come again and he's going to restore life as it was always intended to be for those who have trusted in him, we will get to that in a moment.

But this tidal wave is what we feel. We would all look and say, "This world is broken. We're broken." We would all say that. And yet we would all confess that it breaks us a little bit differently, some physically, some emotionally, some mentally, and yet it breaks everybody. And what we want to look at today is a wave that is breaking millions, and it's the wave of anxiety.

So if you have a Bible with you, if you would turn with me to Psalm 139, we're going to read these verses from David. And as we turn there, let me just confess to you something I've said in the last two services and it's still real, is that I feel very small for the task. I feel in some ways like I'm seeking to cross an ocean in a little canoe. I recognize the complexity of anxiety.

I recognize there's all different causes and sources and I know that it's scalable. Some people they have small minor experiences with anxiety and for other people, it's absolutely devastating it's maybe devastating your life. I know I have 30 minutes in order to look at one passage, even though the Bible talks about it in so many different passages and so we want to continue to help after this moment.

But I would also say just as certainly as I feel humble and small for the task, I also feel incredibly hopeful and confident. And it's because of the unsinkability of our canoe, and that is the Bible. Hey, God, by his own son's death endorsed every word that we are about to read is inerrant, it's infallible, it is true, it's authoritative for our life and he wants to give us hope and help.

And so if your experience of anxiety more represents an occasional stream of tension that interrupts typical peace and joy and happiness or if your experience of anxiety is more like a raging river of recurring panic that threatens your resolve to even want to continue to live, I want to encourage you to take hope because Jesus is powerful and he wants to help. So let me pray for us and then we'll read.

Father in heaven we ask as we read these words, true words, your words that you would give us the gift of belief. I pray for those who are battling indifference and apathy right now, who wonder why they're even in the room. I pray that you would stoke in their heart just an intense interest in what you have written for us. And I pray for those who are beaten down with anxiety, I pray for those who are feeling hopeless, that they are never going to get over this battle, that it may overtake them, I just pray for your grace in their life to give them hope today. I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Psalm 139 starting in verse 1 says this, O Lord, you have searched me and known me. You know when I sit down and when I rise up, you discern my thoughts from afar. You search out my path and my lying down and are acquainted with all my ways. Even before a word is on my tongue, behold, O Lord, you know it all together. You hand me in before and behind and lay your hand upon me.

Such knowledge is too wonderful for me. It is high, I cannot attain it. Where shall I go from your spirit or where shall I flee from your presence? If I ascend to heaven, you are there. If I make my bed in Sheol, you are there. If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there your hand shall lead me and your right hand shall hold me.

If I say, surely, the darkness shall cover me in the light about me be night, even the darkness is not dark to you, the night is bright as the day for darkness is as light with you. For you formed my inward parts, you knitted me together in my mother's womb. I praise you for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works, my soul knows it very well. My frame was not hidden from you when I was being made in secret.

Intricately woven in the depths of the earth, your eyes saw my unformed substance. In your book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me when as yet there was none of them. How precious to me are your thoughts O God? How vast is the sum of them? If I would count them, they are more than the sand. I awake and I am still with you. You'll notice a change of pace.

In verse 19, oh that you would slay the wicked O God. O men of blood, depart from me. They speak against you with malicious intent, your enemies take your name in vain. Do I not hate those who hate you, O Lord? And do I not loath those who rise up against you? I hate them with complete hatred, I count them my enemies. Search me O God and know my heart, try me and know my thoughts and see if there be any grievous way in me and lead me in the way everlasting.

There are three significant truths. I know there's many more than that, but there's three that I want to show you that outline this chapter, but they also provide for us a pattern of belief and thought and practice to fight for joy and peace when we feel so anxious. The first is the most dominant of all, and that is that God is sovereign over all.

We use that word sovereign oftentimes to think about a nation's power within its own borders. We say, "Well, they have sovereignty over the space on the earth." When the Bible speaks of the sovereignty of God, it's talking about God's unrivaled, unlimited authority in ruling all things, all people, all relationships, all causes and effects in order to bring them out according to the counsel of his perfect, mysterious will.

But sometimes when you open the Bible and he speaks of the sovereignty, his sovereignty, he tries to help break it down a little bit into more manageable pieces that help us understand his unlimited, unrivaled authority over all things. And he does that in our text in three different sections. You notice in verse 1 through 6, he's speaking that God is all knowing. Sometimes we say the word omniscient, he's all knowing.

And you notice just the breadth of his knowledge, of what David seeks to remind us. He says, "You search out my path and my lying down and are acquainted with all my ways." In other words, God knows our movements. He also knows our lack of movements. And not only does he know our movements, I want you to notice he knows the timing of our movements. You know when I sit down and when I rise.

And not only does he know the timing of our movements, he knows the motives of our movements. That's what he says, you discern my thoughts from afar. Now, pay attention to this word thoughts. There's two different words that are both translated thoughts in our chapter, and we'll get to one later, which is a different word. This word, it means purposes, inclinations, motivations. You know what I'm thinking about, what I want to do, you know the plans that I'm making, that's what he's saying here.

And so God knows our movements, he knows the timing of our movements and he knows the motives of all of our movements. And then he moves to our words. He says, not only does he know our words, he knows our words before we say them. Even before a word is on my tongue, behold, O Lord, you know it. Now, how can he know it? This is how, because he knows our heart.

Jesus said out of the overflow of the heart, the mouth speaks, it flows, right? And so the idea is this, is that God knows not only what you said, but he saw what you said coming. And the reason is because he knows what's in your heart and he knows what's in your heart is generating and moving and causing you to want to speak as you do. And so he not only knows our words, he knows where those words come from.

The complexity and the breadth of his knowledge is sometimes overwhelming, it was to David. He says, "It feels like I'm hemmed in. I would love to even think about the idea of, could I do something that you don't know about?" And he says, "No, I can't." This is one of the reasons why he's sovereign, he knows everything that's happening in all the lands all at the same time.

But not only is he all knowing, verse 7 through verse 12 says that he's all present or omnipresent. He says, "Where shall I go from your spirit? And where shall I flee from your presence?" Then he says, you know what? And he uses two extremes. He says heaven and Sheol, heaven, darkness, right? Up and down. Why he's saying this is because these are the bookends. In other words, he's saying there's simply nowhere. If I go to the highest peak, if I go to heaven, if I go to the lowest low, the grave and anywhere in between, you are there, I can't escape from your presence.

He even goes on, if you notice he uses this metaphor, he says, if I take the wings of the morning. This is the light of dawn. When it's all dark and suddenly the sun comes up and you see those rays of sun and because your eyes aren't fast enough, right? To actually move with the speed of light, you can't see how fast and how far they reach, but they reach all the way from where they began all the way to where our eyes can't even see.

And this is what he's saying, he goes, "If I could wake up in the morning and move at the speed of light and I could move from this side of the sea to that side of the sea, you would already be there when I arrive because you're everywhere." Now, you think about these two things and then we move into the third, and the third is that he is all powerful, he's omnipotent. He says, "You formed my parts, you knitted me together in my mother's womb. I'm wonderfully made."

He goes on and he says, "Look, my frame was not hidden from you." And then he even says, in verse 15 and in verse 16, he says, "Look," he says, "I was woven in the womb." And not only woven, he actually moves on and he says that you saw my unformed parts. And then you want to talk about sovereignty and power, and this is what he says. He says, "All the days that were formed for me, every one of them were written in your book before one of them came to be."

You see, some of you think if I really go on a good diet and I exercise, I'll be able to live longer. And if you died in exercise, God is compensating for your diet and for your living. And when he knows you're going to die, you and I, we are not going to live a single day longer than he's already ordained on his earth. That's sovereignty. And what's interesting about these words, about how he knits us, you think about a baby in the womb, right?

When we see a baby in the womb and we see the complexity of what's happening there, God says, "I'm the one who knit that baby together. I'm the one who wove them together. I'm the one who formed and made this baby." But what's amazing about what he said is this, and this is the power of God, is he says that he saw our unformed parts. These are all formed parts Before there was anything, before the foundation of the earth, he knew you and then at his sovereign design and timing, he says, "Now that person will live." That's power and that's our God.

He has all knowledge, he's all present and he's all powerful. He tells us to give us peace. And the reason he does so is because isn't it true that when we are riddled with anxiety in that moment, we are unconscious to perhaps a truth we've never learned, or perhaps a truth we know, and that is in that moment, we're not thinking that God knows everything that's happening around us.

When we feel anxious, we're not thinking about the fact that he is next to us. When we're anxious, we're not thinking about the fact that God has all power. And so you combine those and you think about this, you have somebody who knows all causes and effects, you have someone who has all the power in the world and that someone is standing next to you and has formed you. Do you know what that provides? It provides poise and peace.

And so what he's saying is this, is that when we feel this anxiety and we live upon this anxiety in that moment, it's not that God is not these things and it's not that we don't know these things, it's that we are not applying these truths in that moment to our life. He is sovereign overall. Second thing I want you to see here is that life is anxious for us all, not always in the same scale, but it's a place that's full of anxiety.

Well, we have no idea exactly what the source was of David's stress, but it's very clear that he felt strongly because at verse 19 he says, "Slay the wicked. I hate them. I loathe those who rise up against you." And then I just love this. I don't know why, not love it, but I think it's funny is what I mean. I hate them with complete hatred. It's just so honest.

I love how the sloppy reactions of humans, Biblical characters to the stress that they felt are not sanitized within the scripture, but are written down exactly as they said them in order to show us that we're not alone. I mean, who has not watched the news, or maybe I should just say, I watch the news at times and I see injustice, I see lawlessness, I see these things that are happening. And my reaction is, "God, get them. That one right there, go ahead and take that one out." All right?

And this is exactly... it's like, "Slay the wicked. I hate them with complete hatred." We don't know exactly what was happening. Perhaps the evil that he saw with his eyes led him to despair the moral future of the country. Maybe he saw these leaders and they were in places of influence. Maybe they were priests in the temple. Maybe they were leaders in the marketplace. Maybe they were teachers in the school system. Maybe they were leaders in terms of creating laws and government.

We don't know exactly where these people were, but what we do know is that when he saw that stress in him, he became anxious, he became angry. But then I want you to notice he became more than angry. You see, in verse 23 he says, "Search me, O God, and know my heart, try me and know my thoughts." Now we're about to make a very important transition so pay attention real careful right here.

What he does is he says, "You know what? I see all of the evil, I see all these stressors that are out there," and then he pauses and he changes direction. This is what he says, he goes, "God, search my heart." Now, the word heart here, it literally means the center of operations. Sometimes we think of heart as that thing that beats and moves blood around our body, which is also true.

But oftentimes when the Bible talks about the heart it's speaking about the center of operations, the center of motives, the center of our passions, what we want to do. And so sometimes it's translated the word as soul. And this is why he asked God to search that part, the center of his operations, and this is why. He says, "Try me and know my thoughts." Now, earlier when we were in verse 2, and you also saw the same word in verse 17 when David's amazed at the thoughts of God, he switches words.

You see, the first two times in verse 2 and verse 17, when he uses the word thoughts, he uses the Hebrew word that literally means purposes or motivations of the heart, what I'm thinking about, what I'm dreaming about. But when he gets to this word in verse 23 and he writes thoughts, some of your Bible translations may say cares, or my anxious cares, literally what it means is disquieting thoughts or my anxiety.

In other words, what's motivating David to write this down, give it to the choir master to be sung to all the people so that all the people who were also struggling can also be helped is this. He looked at the evil that's around and he said, "I have a theology. I have understanding of who you are and I know that's true, and yet this is what I see with my eyes. And when I look into my heart, I feel such disquieted anxiety that I'm asking you to address first by center of operations."

And this becomes so important. You see, we all face stress that whips up the waters of our thoughts and it creates anxiety. It creates these storms, the pace of life, loneliness of life, the problems of life, the people in our life, the jobs of our life, the leaders over our life, the sicknesses, things like COVID, policies and wearing mask or not wearing mask. When we look into the mirror and we see ourself aging, all of these things, they're all stressors.

And depending upon the level of that stress and our personal disposition, it can be absolutely overwhelming, which is why 40 million Americans today struggle with a chronic anxiety. It's why every generation in America over the last 100 years is three times more likely to struggle with chronic anxiety than their parents. It's why in 2019, when there was a world mental health survey that went to the whole world, they concluded the Americans are the most anxious people in the entire globe.

And then when they looked at America, they said the teenagers and the 20 year olds that are the most anxious people in America. Life is anxious for us all. It's sovereign over all, it's anxious for us all. And so what do we then do? And we're like, okay, what's our action plan, what's our game plan? Number three, our heart is to be examined before all. We all have stress, everything is out there.

And sometimes we live in such a pace that sometimes we feel stressed and we look at, we don't even know what the stressor is. When we get anxious, though, oftentimes what we do is we set our target upon the source of our stress. And so we say, "Okay, God, if you would just take out that, then I would feel better because that stress would be gone. And if you remove that person or remove that relationship or remove that boss or remove that leader, then suddenly what's going to happen is you're going to remove my anxiety."

And while we should seek righteous change in the world, what he's telling us here is we must target our heart. That's why it says in verse 23 and 24, search me, O God, and know my heart, try me and know my thoughts and see if there be any grievous way in me and lead me in the way of everlasting. Now, did you notice the shift? In verse 19 he said, oh that you would slay the wicked, now he's saying, search me. Do you see that?

That's really important because what's happening is David is taking responsibility for his anxiety. We know that our effort, our pursuit of joy is actually rightly directed when we stop blaming other people and instead start saying, "God, start here. My joy cannot wait, the complete renewal of the entire world." Listen, one day God is going to renew the world. In heaven, you will not have these stressors and you will not feel anxiety.

But let me tell you something, so long as you live here, it won't be fixed, it won't be fixed. Which is why if we spend all of our time and our pursuit for joy in fixing what's out there, I'm not saying we don't pursue righteous things in the world, but when it comes to our anxiety, if we don't say, "God, fix this first, just address my heart, my center of operations," we will be anxious for the rest of our life.

There is wisdom that's needed here. You see, there is a clinical anxiety that genuinely needs medical assistance, professional counseling, and many of us need that and I encourage you to pursue that. And if that's you and even if you pursue that, what I also want you to know is this, that whether you need that kind of help or not, is that we all need help in identifying a strategy of examining our heart for worrisome anxiety.

You see, worrisome anxiety is that anxiety that begins with stress and then it grows over time when our mind takes us from the real world to an imaginary world that's built on fear and worst case scenarios. And this is what we do, right? We have a little kid, all of a sudden he's in fourth grade and he fails his math test. And our mind can actually extrapolate a fearful end to where that person eventually fails out of schools, living in my basement and robbing banks in order to make money.

And sometimes we can actually then, in that anxiety in that false world, even go to God in prayer and say, “God, just help him not rob banks when he grows up.” Let me tell you something, God’s grace never functions in your imaginary world. His grace only functions in the real world. And so the strategy that he gives to us, right, is to reestablish reality, to pull us back into the real world where his grace is sufficient. So how do we do that?

First, when you feel anxious, keep praying, keep praying. You see, it is prayer that pulls us back to the real world where God is ruler. This is what he’s doing. Not only is Psalm 139, a prayer, it begins with simply reaffirming what he has studied in his Bible and said, “God, this is who you are. You’re sovereign. You know all things.”

You see, prayer reestablishes this reality, which is why Paul he says, “Look, if you want peace in your heart,” he says this, “Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your request be made known to God and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.” If you’re a king and you’re surrounded by your army, you feel poise. This word guard, it means to be surrounded.

In other words, when we pray, what we’re doing is we’re saying, “God, I recognize that you’re there and I’m inviting you into the real world. Establish your supremacy once again over my mind when I think about these things.” And one of the things that we as a people don’t do very well is pray until we pray. We pray 10 seconds and then we say, “Oh, forget it. I still feel anxious.”

Sometimes what you need to do is you need a hard reset button like your phone where you say, “You know what? It’s not enough to hit the button, a little tap, it’s coming all the way off.” This is sometimes what you need, because if you don’t, what happens is this. If you pray like that and there’s no relief, what do you do? You find a secondary source. You go to pornography or endless entertainment or you go to a drug or you go to a bottle or you go to something else. And all you’re doing, you’re not dealing with your anxiety, you’re simply covering it.

What happens is this, is if you cover it long enough, it’s still there. And it just intensifies under the weight of all of the other problems that we’re heaping upon ourselves. And so let me encourage you to learn this, pray till you pray. Well, you say, “What does that mean?” It means pray until you know God is near and he’s re-established his piece of my life. What I have to do is I have to go walk.

When I get uptight, it happens frequently, I just say, “Tabatha. I’m not coming back until I feel right in my heart.” That doesn’t mean you don’t come back until everything in the world is fixed. It means that you don’t come back, at least in my case, you don’t stop praying until his sovereignty is so settled over my heart that I feel like I can breathe again.

Second thing I would encourage you to do is that when you feel anxious, keep running to scripture. When we resist anxiety, it's sort of like pulling a weed, which means that the hole must be replaced with something of greater density than what was removed. You notice what David leaned upon? It was the character of God. Most people, when they feel anxious, what do they do? They argue about God's character.

In other words, each one of us, we have to stand, it's like there's two pillars, right? Over here is our emotion, our stress, our anxiety, everything that's happening in our life and over here is where the Bible says it's true of God. And what happens a lot of times is because when we feel anxious, it feels more real, it feels truer than anything else about us is we stand on this and then we argue with ourself even about God's character. If I feel this way and these things happen, could God actually have all power?

And let me encourage you with this, learn to stand upon the character of God and not argue about it, but from it. I know God, you are real, I know you're sovereign. So how do I interpret what I'm experiencing on the basis of what I know is true about you? And the only way you can do that is to read the Bible in season and out and when you're anxious and when you're not.

You see, there's a lot of people and they feel really compelled to read the Bible when they're anxious. They're like, "Give me something, I just feel terrible." And suddenly they have nothing to lean upon because they've not fortified their tank during seasons of peace. And this is what David did, this is why we see in Psalm chapter 19, the Psalm that was also written by him. He says, "The law of the Lord is perfect. It revives the soul. And the testimony of the Lord is sure making wise the simple."

What it means is simply this is, is that our heart, your heart, it simply cannot lean on what your mind does not know. And so let me encourage you to get a Bible. Let me encourage you, in particular, if you're younger to get one with pages, one that doesn't zing when you get a text, right? Some of us we have so many notifications that we're like, "Hey, this is what I had for dinner," we post it. And all of a sudden like, "No, let me read my Bible."

And all of a sudden we're going through and all of a sudden somebody wants to respond to what we had for dinner last night and they're interrupting God speaking to your heart. Put the phone up and listen to your creator. If you don't have one, they make these ones, they have pages and words and they're really cool. And we have them, right? So if you don't have one, I know I'm joking, but seriously, if you don't have one, we have them.

Just go out to the welcome center when we're done and say, "You know what? The guy in there, the guy with the gray hair, he said he got Bibles around here," and they'll give you one. We want to be able to give you a Bible. Read that. The third thing is when feeling anxious, check your heart for anything grievous. You notice this is exactly what David asked? He says, "God, would you see if there'd be any grievous way in me?" That means wicked or it means hurtful.

Here's some things you can check for, check for sin in your life. Anxiety may not be due to sin. Meaning you can feel anxiety and have no unrepentant sin in your life. But let me tell you something. If you do have unrepentant sin in your life, you will feel anxiety. If you're having an affair and you're anxious about it, medicine and technique are not going to help, you need to repent.

Second thing you should check for is integrity. And by trying to manage two selves, instead of one, two accounts, one burner for my parents and one real one. You see, nobody can manage the public perception of two versions of themselves without forgetting which one is real, and that causes anxiety. Now, let me also encourage us to check for intake, intake.

What are we putting into our mind? What are we downloading into our heart? You see, your heart, I mean, it's big. I mean, it can contain God. It's amazing God can come and actually... it's an amazing thing that he's given to us. But let me tell you something, your heart is not big enough to serve as both the bucket of the world's sludge and the temple of God's peace.

Some of us, we pray for peace while we're transitioning from one social media platform to another. Others of us pray for peace during the commercials of three hours of political commentary. My question is simply this, where is God supposed to put that peace? Check your intake and see if it's grievous or see if it's honorable. The last thing is this, is when you feel anxious, consider your way.

We all have one, a way. We have a way we're living, a path, there's priorities and guardrails and there's the real destination at the end of that way. Some of us, we choose the way of sin and that leads to everlasting shame. Some people in the world their way is religion, self-righteousness, which leads to everlasting awareness of falling short.

Some people their way is accumulation and ambition, which leads to everlasting regret that their kingdom passed away as soon as they did. David said, God lead me in the way everlasting. So he knew one day the Messiah would come. He knew that he would come and he would make all things new. And one day Jesus stood on this earth, and do you remember what Jesus said of himself? I am the way and the truth and the life, the everlasting way. No one comes to the father, except through me.

He came, he lived, he died, he rose in order to save those who believe. Some of us in this room and are listening right now, we feel anxiety because we're separated from God, and the only way back is to trust his son. So I urge you to admit that you need a savior, to repent of your thinking you can save yourself and to put your belief and trust in Jesus Christ. He will forgive you and he will save you.

And as a saved person, as a forgiven person, now, all of a sudden this God who is all power, now he's with us. And what does that do? It gives us poise, it gives us peace, it gives us somebody to help us fight our anxiety. Well, sometimes it's really good to have somebody testify to say, "You know what? The things that you've just

heard, they're real and they're true. These things have functioned and worked in my own life."

And so what I want to do right now is introduce you, Lindsey Chitwood is a dear sister here at Providence, she loves the Lord. And this is somebody who has battled anxiety in her life. She's joined by Joy Tanner who has helped her in just being there as a pro counselor, right? Just to help her think through what's happening, right? And so what we wanted to do is just to take a few moments at the end of our time, I'm going to ask them a few questions.

And as you can imagine, it's not lost on me that standing on stage in front of a lot of people is an anxious thing. And so I want to just encourage you to pray for each one of them, well, as they have their thoughts and as they share them. So Lindsey, if you would, share with us just briefly your life and your pathway as it relates to anxiety.

Lindsey

I think the thing with anxiety is it comes in all shapes and sizes. Sometimes it shows up for a moment, sometimes for a season, and sometimes it seems to take up space for our entire life. And for me the season of just anxiety of trying to control the circumstances in my life just continued on into the season of darkness and depression.

And in the middle of that, I remember standing on the edge of the ocean one night. It was super dark and there was just this dense fog. And my husband was out there with me, but I couldn't see him, I couldn't find him. I was completely disoriented. I knew there was light, but I couldn't see it. And all I could hear were the waves crashing over and over and over again. And it was the first time that I felt I could invite somebody in to what I was experiencing.

I would wake up in the morning with just this wave of anxious thoughts, of fear, trying to control circumstances, but also thoughts that I was unloved, that I was not worthy, that I had been forsaken. And so I would battle those thoughts all day and just had lost direction and had lost hope. And it was in that darkness that the Lord would bring in the light, the truth of who he was, the truth of his word that I had been putting in for years before that situation happened but I would rest in his truth and in his light.

Brian

That's great. So there's folks here who've said, "Yeah, that's what it feels like to me. I get that." And so when you think about what you did in that season, or maybe now, when you feel anxious, what's your two or three things in terms of here's what I would do myself and...

Lindsey

I think there's probably no shortage of podcasts and books out there that can fill our time and our minds. But I think the biggest place to start is Psalm 46:10, to be still and know that I am God, another translation is to see striving. And when we're in that darkness and in the fog, it's really hard to do anything and physically, mentally, spiritually, you are just trying to get through.

And the Lord calls us to rest in him and in his truth and to lean on his word. And so I think that's where we start. And as you seek tools, whether it's professional care or any other resource, the fog might start to lift, and in that time, you should lean into cultivating those anxious thoughts and finding the root cause of it and really pursuing the Lord in the midst of that.

Brian

That's good. So what was it that actually led you to say, I need to reach out to somebody, in Joy?

Lindsey

I mean, in the fog and in darkness and isolation you can't survive alone. And so I did have various people in my life, but I really needed a professional to walk alongside me to help me get above water, to kind of break through the fog of those waves that were crashing over me. And I knew I needed somebody to walk alongside me.

Brian

That's great. So Joy, as you think about just how it's so scalable, there's some people who deal very... it's not a war in their life and then for other people it's just overwhelming. What would you say we should look for in terms of what we're facing to say, I need to go talk to somebody?

Joy

That anxiety for all of us from time to time can creep up. But when you get to the point of feeling discouraged, as Lindsey talked about the fog that she was in, that you're feeling discouraged, that you're not enjoying things in life that you once were and it's across kind of like your whole life, right? It's not just circumstantial.

And maybe even people in your life are noticing, what's going on? You just don't seem like yourself. And also, of course, as you mentioned in your sermon, when you're leaning into unhealthy coping skills like drugs and alcohol, obviously very short term fix, but then you're feeling guilty and shame on the other end of it and it's just very overwhelming.

Brian

As a larger family of faith, we all have the same call, at least one of them is to bear each other's burdens, right? And so when you think about as a church family, there's some who are in need of just each other. What things would you say for us as a church family that would sort of I guess help us think through how we would help

somebody through a hard season?

Joy

Community is everything when we're talking about mental health, it is invisible. Whereas physical illness is very visible too as mental illness is not. So people who are struggling with mental illness will tend to pull away, they might even push away. And so I would challenge you to pray for God to show you hurting people around you, and he will. Also in the same time being sure to care for yourself through self care so that you have a bucket to pour from.

And then I think outside of that, just hold on, let me make sure I wanted to get... oh, pursuing them, obviously with patience. Again, as they're going to push away, you do not need to have the solution to their problems, you shouldn't be, God is. And so just being willing to be there with them where they are and finally just practicing vulnerability. Because when you're able to do that in your small group and in your community, it encourages other people to do the same.

Brian

So last thing, Lindsey, what would you say to somebody who's sitting there thinking, "Man, is there really hope for me? It's been so long that I've seen that light." What would you say to them?

Lindsey

I think the beauty of Psalm 139 is that we see truth that God is with us in the lowest of lows and the highest of highs, and that's a promise that we can always lean on. All throughout scripture, we see God calling us out of hiding and out of isolation. And in that season of darkness, yes, we should hope for healing, we should pursue healing in whatever way we choose to do so and how he leads us, but truly our hope is that he loves us and we trust that God is good not because he might heal us, but because he is good in and of himself. And so we can rest in that. We see the Psalm and David praising God in the middle of suffering, and we should lean into that too.

Brian

That's great Lindsey. It takes a whole lot of courage to do just what they've done and so let's say thank you to them, particularly Lindsey. As I said several weeks now, one of the things that we hope to do in this series is simply to expose the brokenness that's so common around us. It's hard to do, to share and to say, "This is what I'm really having a hard time with."

But as a family, that's what we want to do. And so what I'm going to do now is to pray. For those who like Lindsey or like myself that battle anxiety in life, we know that's so common in our church family. And then there's a lot of counselors at Providence that work all over the city like Joy. And I think it's important for us to pray for them as well. So if you would, let's bow, let's pray.

Father in heaven, we thank you that you love us, we thank you that you care for us, we thank you that you know us through and through. We thank you you've ordained our days even before one of them came to be, we thank you for the privilege to wake up and to live in your world and we thank you for Jesus who makes life worth living. I pray for those who are feeling so low, that their world feels so dark because of anxiety.

I pray father that you would give them hope and peace and strength. I pray that you would give them friends. I pray that you would connect them to people of peace, people of help. I pray father that you would give them courage to come and talk. I ask father that you would help. God for those who feel like it's never going to get better, God would you infiltrate their heart with the light peace?

And I pray for those counselors who are among us, God, would you give them wisdom, give them empathy, give them endurance? Lord, we know work is hard and yet it's so important. And so I pray father for every counselor, God, that you would give grace and strength. I pray for us as a church family that we would be a place that it's okay to be broken, a place where we truly love and help each other through life. So thank you so much for this time, we sing to you now out of a full heart. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.



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