

INTRO

- Why do you think levels of anxiety amongst young people in particular are on the rise?
- What kinds of situations or issues cause you to worry or feel anxious?
- Can anxiety ever be good for us?

Anxiety is not a modern problem. Prov 12:25 says, "Anxiety in a man's heart weighs him down...". Anxiety and worry affect us all to varying degrees. There are "good levels" of anxiety we call concerns. It's appropriate to have concern for people & things you care about. Then there are "bad levels" of anxiety that show over concern or even obsession, often based on a distorted perspective.

According to Jesus (Mt 6:25-34), anxiety is the fruit of a deeper root: mistrust or unbelief in God which, in turn, leads to sinful activity.

How can we deal with our anxiety?

READ

Psalm 61

REFLECT

The Psalms in general are the prayer and song book of God's people. Over one third of the psalms are laments (expressions of grief, sorrow, complaint, frustration etc).

Qu: how do the psalms encourage us to have emotional honesty before God and one another?

Qu: some people believe lamenting before God is inappropriate or 'unspiritual'. What do you think?

TALK TO YOUR GOD ABOUT YOUR HEART

"...when my heart is faint (overwhelmed)."

Qu: Do you regularly talk to God about what overwhelms you? Does it make a difference? Discuss.

"Lead me to the rock that is higher than I..."

'Lead me' speaks of humility and surrender. We acknowledge that our safety and security must ultimately rest in the Rock that is higher than us.

Qu: when anxious, what are the "rocks" we/you often turn to instead of God?

TALK TO YOUR HEART ABOUT YOUR GOD

Did you know speaking to yourself is biblical? For example,

Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you in turmoil within me? Hope in God; for I shall again praise him, my salvation and my God.

(Ps 42:5).

We fight anxieties (and fight is a good word to describe the engagement needed), by fighting *against* unbelief and fighting *for* trust in God.

Qu: how does speaking God's word to our hearts help to combat anxiety and deepen trust in God?

If anxiety is what it feels like to mistrust God, peace is what it feels like to trust in God. Peace is a disposition of the heart, not a set of circumstances. Your God deeply cares for you:

Cast all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you. (1 Peter 5:7)

RESPOND

- What was most challenging/encouraging you learnt in this discussion?
- How will you apply what you learnt?

PRAY

- In light of 1 Peter 5:7, spend some time bringing cares and concerns to God. Then, pray out loud together Isaiah 41:10.