

Anxiety & Trust

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ANXIETY & TRUST

Can I be honest with you? I'm scared. I wake up every morning wondering if this will be the day when I start to feel sick. Being completely transparent here; I've been battling anxiety for the past couple years. When I say anxiety, I don't mean regular, everyday stress, such as traffic, or making it to work on time. I mean a general fear of the world. The best way I've been able to explain it to myself is that the world feels unsafe to me. What has gotten me through the daily feeling of dread and quickened breaths is acknowledging that the thoughts are in my head, and the world, out there, is actually safe.

And then coronavirus happened. I woke up, and the world instantly became unsafe. And everything changed! Suddenly, going outside, which always felt scary for me, now had a "real" sense of danger. What makes this more challenging is that I am a Christian. For many, the idea that someone can have anxiety and be a Christian doesn't add up. Some days, I feel like I'm not "Christian enough" because I'm scared of the big, bad world. I imagine that others who deal with anxiety feel this way as well.

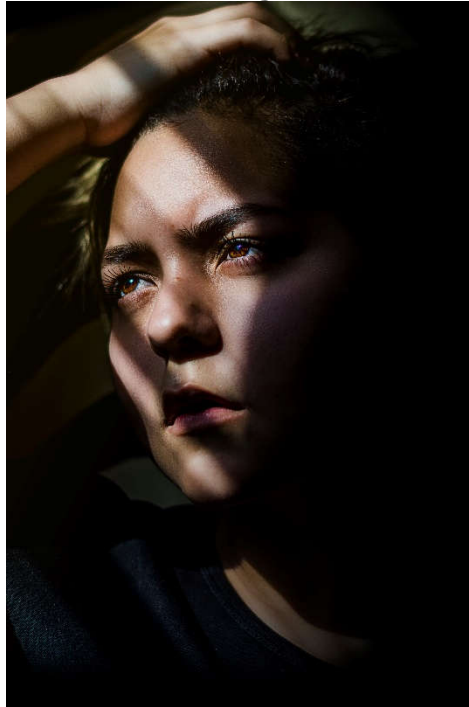
So, what does this look like for me on a daily basis, as someone who loves Jesus? It means a lot of time talking to God and being honest about my fears. It looks like some deep, but faithless prayers throughout my day, asking for calm. In the midst of this current global pandemic, it looks like me scribbling my prayers in a notebook, being real with my thoughts to God.

The thing is, the Bible knew that we would have anxious thoughts and that the world would be unsafe. Some believe that's why the phrase "*Fear not*" is used 365 times in the Bible – some say, there's a

fear-not command for every day of the year. In fact, Jesus tells us that we will have trouble in this world but that he is with us in the midst of those troubles ([John 16:33](#)). That we are to trust him, even when it's not clear that the answer will be what we're looking for. I believe that for many, coronavirus is revealing what trust in our relationship with God really looks like.

So how do we get through each day with the heightened anxiety that we may all be feeling right now?

As I pondered that question, I was reminded of something that I learned during my time as a



competitive figure skater. During training, especially leading up to competition, my sports psychologist and coach would remind me to focus on what I could control. I couldn't control what the judges would think of me, if the event was running on time, or what the other skaters were doing. As a figure skater, what I could control was my training, my mental state, and my own elements (to a certain extent). Basically, I did my part, and the rest was up to God.

What can we control during this time, and what do we need to let go? For me, I've learned that I can't control how this virus is going to spread. I can't control the news, or how the government will respond. I can't control how people practice physical distancing, or how the future is going to unfold. But I **can** control how I practice physical distancing and stay home. I **can** control how much of the news I watch or read, how much sleep I get, how I move through my days - by exercising, and eating healthy. I **can** also control how I support those in my circle during this time - a friend reminded me that for many, this is the hardest thing that most people have had to face in their lifetime. I **can** also draw on my "training", on past difficulties that I have gone through which have all equipped me to handle this current challenge. I **can** lean on my support system of friends, family and my church community. The rest is up to God.

Easier said than done, I know! As a Type A perfectionist with anxiety, I KNOW how hard this is in reality. Right now, each time I think about planning my week, I take a step back and pray first; the uncertainty of this crisis is causing me to put [Proverbs 16:9](#) into action, which talks about how we make our plans but it's God who actually turns those plans into reality. Maybe this is a lesson I needed to learn a long time ago, maybe you do too. For the first time, I'm taking things one day at a time, and it's a strange feeling.

Hoping not to sound like one of those annoying Instagram Influencers (who are apparently making many feel that they're not doing enough), may I encourage you to try to find something you can learn during this period. Personally, I want to accept the lessons God may be imparting to me during this season. I continue to pray for the virus to be stopped in its tracks and for God to keep us all safe. But how he responds, is not up to me, which honestly, is probably a good thing.

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