Series Road Map: Possible title: In My Head;

Series Overview: Students are experiencing all time high anxiety and depression, but few people are talking about issues in a healthy way. We’re talking about how to get out of our heads and into God’s plan for a better life. We’re talking about 1-Being transformed, 2-Anxiety, 3-Depression/Suicide, 4-Soul Health, and 5-Spiritual Warfare.

Week Overview:

Outline:

Grab the Room (Intro):

Tension (what’s the struggle): Anxiety hits many teenagers, and it feels isolating

Text: Philippians 4:4-7; Matthew 14: 26-33

THP: Anxiety is a trigger to trust

Supporting Points: What if you didn’t have to get rocked by waves but you could be a rock of stability?

Application (call to action):

-Memorize a “Muscle Memory verse”

-Worship

Message Series: Mental Health

Message Title: Anxiety

Key: [Media] Scripture Slides

Intro

Intro

Welcome to week 2 of “In My Head.” My hope is that you learn to have open conversations about your internal world and feel normal to talk about what’s going on inside of you.

Today, we’re going to talk about anxiety. Just to preface, this is not going to be everything you need to know about anxiety because there are so many different types of anxiety…but, this WILL still be helpful for everyone. I also realize that there are people who struggle with anxiety as it relates to a feeling, and some people are genuinely diagnosed with a chemical imbalance in their brain that creates anxiety, and you need to take medication to cope.

This message is hopefully helpful, but it’s also not meant to be a fix in exchange for medication. If you are on medication, use this as a supplement to your prescription, and for everyone else, we’re going to see how God can speak to your anxiety. And when I talk about anxiety, or maybe you have anxiety, this is often what people think of when they think of anxiety…. Students react to anxiety videos…

People often think of someone who is SO afraid everything, someone who just worries a lot, someone who is the kid who is afraid of their own shadow or terrified of spiders. Maybe people even think anxiety is kind of a made up excuse and that you’re not actually feeling anxious and they tell you it’s just in your head and that you need to get over it ….

And while there are plenty of people who say they are anxious because it’s kinda trendy to claim anxiety these days….it seems like everyone has an emotional support pet flying these days. Luckily, I haven’t had to be on the plane with too many other pets, but some people take this too far….there have been people who snuck their pigs, ponies, ducks, and even a turkey on a plane as an emotional support pet… I think some people take this WAY too far.

But seriously, there are plenty of people who legitimately struggle with this. For many, anxiety is much more than worry, anxiety can be crippling and give you such tunnel vision into your own worry that you don’t know how to move forward.

And honestly, sometimes it doesn’t always look as extreme. For me, anxiety looks like a number of things….

[talk about how/what you do when you are anxious] I remember in high school, I was super anxious about assignments. I was a chronic procrastinator not because I was a bad student…in fact, it’s because I took school really seriously. I was afraid of not doing my best, and the anxiety of doing a good job actually shut me down completely, and I couldn’t work up the energy and focus to get ahead on a project until the night before. The anxiety level of doing a good job suddenly got passed by the anxiety of the fact that the project was due tomorrow suddenly gave me a boost of focus. Maybe you’re in the same boat.

And sometimes anxiety just totally hijacks my focus/emotions. Some days, it can seem like all too much…I can become anxious about my future. I become anxious about if I’ll say the right thing to certain people. I get anxious about if my IG post will land, or I’ll get anxious about what other people will think. Even now, I get anxious before I preach…after hundreds of times of doing this, I still feel the emotion and I can struggle with anxiety.

I share all that to let you know that you’re not alone in your anxiety.

Tension

In fact, according to one study, About 31% of U.S. adolescents meet the criteria for a diagnosable anxiety disorder by age 18. In this room, there are more people than we realize that are struggling. Even the people who look like they have it all together may struggle with this internally, but they’ve just gotten better at masking it than the rest of us.

Anxiety is isolating, though…it has a way of making you feel like you’re the only one feeling the pressure, and you don’t know who to tell because you don’t know if they’ll actually get it.

Maybe you’re in this room and it took a lot for you to even show up because you have social anxiety, and being around people is so overwhelming for you. Maybe you had something traumatic happen, and you’re always on alert for something that will trigger you. Maybe you have performance anxiety, and you put so much pressure on yourself to be the best in school or sports. Or, maybe you have another clinical diagnosis, and you get physical symptoms of feeling anxious and you’re not sure how to control it.

Truth

**Anxiety can be overwhelming but God can be healing.** I love that God knew that we would struggle with this and gave us some ways to cope with the pressures of this world. God’s Word is so practical, and it speaks to everything that a person could experience and struggle with, including mental health.

So, turn with me in your Bibles to Philippians 4:4-7 “Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, ‘Rejoice.’ Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”

When I feel anxious, the first thing I think is not how much I can rejoice or praise God. So many times, God is a last resort when we start to feel anxious, but what if God was our first move. Instead of seeing anxiety as a trigger to panic, what if anxiety was a trigger to pray and turn to God? Anxiety is a trigger to trust.

Hear me in this…if you have an anxiety disorder, I’m not just trying to say “trust God and everything will be okay” because sometimes, it’s not always that easy You may still need the meds…but, turning your trust to God will also help.

Scripture says to pray about everything with thanksgiving. And I think it’s important to remember to be thankful to God in prayer because honestly, sometimes my prayers are really just me worrying to God. [pause here]

Maybe you’ve prayed a prayer like this [read something like this panicked and quickly] “God, I feel out of control. Help me feel better and take away the worry and help me not feel anxious. Amen.” Which is a step in the right direction, but when we thank God, we recognize that He is powerful, and we realize that God has made a way for us to come to Him, and He is more powerful than any anxiety and problem we could experience.

And the result of praying to God is peace. What would your life look like if you had more peace? What would it feel like to wake up each morning, and instead of feelings of panic or anxiety, what if you prayed and you felt peace? What if before a test, you prayed for God’s comfort to come over you?...I know most of your prayers before a test are usually “Dear Lord, please help me to remember all the material I just crammed into my brain an hour ago, so please help me pass.”…but rarely do we pray for peace.

Or if anything traumatic comes up or you find yourself in a loop of anxious thinking, what would it be like to stop [pause here] exhale your anxiety [breathe out] and inhale peace [breath in]… exhale anxiety…and inhale peace. Because with God, your external world doesn’t have to be peaceful for you to feel peace. We often think once our external world is okay, my internal world will be okay.

Let me tell you, there will always be issues in our external world, so if we wait for this to happen, you will always be waiting for peace. But, God made a way for your internal world to be rock solid, and even when your world starts to spin out of control, He said come to Him, and He can give you peace. He can calm the anxiety. He can calm your storm…

It reminds me of the story when Peter, one of Jesus’s disciples walked on water. Jesus had just done the miracle of feeding 5000 people where he multiplied 7 loaves of bread and a few fish to feed 5000, and his disciples witnessed this miracle. After this, the disciples went out on a boat, and Jesus stayed on shore so that he could pray…we see Jesus pull an incredible party trick next as He starts walking on the water out to them. Check it out.

Shortly before dawn Jesus went out to them, walking on the lake. 26 When the disciples saw him walking on the lake, they were terrified. “It’s a ghost,” they said, and cried out in fear. But Jesus immediately said to them: “Take courage! It is I. Don’t be afraid.” “Lord, if it’s you,” Peter replied, “tell me to come to you on the water.” “Come,” he said.

Then Peter got down out of the boat, walked on the water and came toward Jesus. 30 But when he saw the wind, he was afraid and, beginning to sink, cried out, “Lord, save me!”

31 Immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught him. “You of little faith,” he said, “why did you doubt?” And when they climbed into the boat, the wind died down. 33 Then those who were in the boat worshiped him, saying, “Truly you are the Son of God.”

Think about this. Peter had just witnessed Jesus perform a miracle where He fed 5000 people…you’d think He would have a little more faith than this, right? But it says Peter saw the wind, and He began to sink. Doesn’t anxiety have a tendency to make us forget everything that’s happened, and all of a sudden, the panic we’re in is suddenly the strongest thing we feel?

And then, we feel ourselves sinking…. Anxiety was a trigger to panic, and it allowed doubt into Peter’s mind. Have you ever noticed how it’s hard to trust God and be anxious at the same time? [pause here] What if Peter didn’t see his anxiety as a trigger to panic and doubt, but his anxiety was a trigger to trust Jesus!

Notice, it says that Peter saw the wind. But, you can’t actually “see” wind. No, I’m sure what he saw was the effects of the wind on the waves. If you’ve ever seen heavy wind on a lake or an ocean, the waves can get really big really fast. It’s easy to walk through life when things are good, but when a wave hits you, how fast do you feel like you’re sinking? How fast do you lose focus? If you’re like me, and if you’re like Peter…it can often be faster than you’d like to admit.

Maybe you feel like Peter. You feel like you want to accomplish big things, but you have this anxiety from the problems and the waves the world throws at you,… sometimes, you just feel like you’re drowning. Maybe you’ve sold yourself short, and you think, because of my anxiety, I will never accomplish anything big. Let me tell you, that is such a lie.

Peter often gets a bad rap for walking on water and then sinking, but Peter was one of Jesus’s chosen few. Out of the 12 disciples, Jesus spent the most time with Peter, James, and John. Why did Jesus choose Peter? I think it’s because Peter KNEW he needed Jesus. He KNEW there was no way he could go throughout life without the peace and presence of Jesus. Peter understood this! In fact, Jesus didn’t see Peter as a worrier or someone filled with anxiety, but He saw Peter as a Rock. Jesus tells Peter “you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church.”

What would your life didn’t look like you getting rocked by waves, but what if you too, could be a rock of stability because you are grounded with the Truth and presence of God. It happened for Peter, and it can happen for you.

Application

But in order to be a rock, you have to have a solid foundation. You need to know what God’s Words says. When anxiety comes at you, it can feel a little like this…

**Illustration Options: 1 Ask a student to come on stage. You can pick an athlete who has good hand eye coordination just to prove a point…ask the student to catch the ping pong ball/tennis balls you throw at him. You can either do rapid fire to see how many he can catch or just throw a TON at him at once to catch him off guard and surprise him and the crowd.**

**Option two: This includes the entire crowd and helps all of them feel the surprise effect…you can have a bucket of candy on stage, and throw the bucket of candy onto the crowd. They will all be caught off guard and most will get hit by the candy…kind of a fun way to show that we are unprepared/caught off guard by life if we aren’t ready.**

It’s overwhelming, you’re caught off guard, and your first move is a little awkward…but what’s your next move? Because imagine they just keep coming? [have another bucket of candy and throw it/or throw another bunch of ping pong balls at your volunteer] Logical thinking doesn’t kick in, and you’re not thinking about how God can help you.

Instead, when something comes at you, it should feel something like this….muscle memory video

MLB pitchers react to line drives at them and they catch it

Instead of being caught off guard, it was instinctual. It had been practiced so many times before, that instinct took over and instead of recoiling, muscle memory took over.

Last week, we talked about new paths being formed. We can travel the same paths we’ve been traveling or we can be transformed by forming new patterns.

Maybe a new pattern you can form is scripture memorization. When you feel anxious, what will be the muscle memory verse that you pull on to react to the waves thrown at you? What’s the verse that instead of recoiling, you fight back and this verse is in you so instinctually that your gut reaction is to remember and recite this verse rather than recoil in anxiety.

Let me tell you, this isn’t a verse that you try to research in the middle of the storm…this is a verse you need to know before the storm hits so that when anxiety does trigger you, you are triggered to pray the scripture. Anxiety is a trigger to trust.

Maybe you want to commit this verse to memory: do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”

It doesn’t have to be, but it might be enough to settle you to focus and right-size the problem… it doesn’t mean that because you memorize a verse, your anxiety attacks will go away...but you’re anxiety attack may go from 30 minutes to ten It doesn’t mean you won’t ever feel anxious...but the feeling might not be as strong. Memorizing scripture will help you.

The brain can only focus on one thing at a time. All of you who say you can multi-task are lying…you’re actually really good and doing an okay job at a couple of things, but even then, you’re just switching from one task at a time. Think about what this could do for your focus.

When things get thrown at you, it feels like so many things at a time…so honestly, it all just gets overwhelming, and we don’t know what to do and it just kinda hits us.

But, what if instead of being overwhelmed at the many things thrown at us, we focus on one thing, and that’s God. When you’re focused on scripture, you take the focus off of the problem and you focus on the solution.

And one of the best things for anxiety is this: worship. Now, I don’t often feel like worshipping when I feel anxious, but it works. Because when you worship, you are declaring the Truth of who God is, and the Truth of God does not depend on your external circumstance or your internal feelings [pause here].

The Truth of God being the giver of Peace does not depend on there being peace around me. The Truth of God being a comforter does not depend on if others are comforting me. The Truth of God being redeemer does not depend on whether or not my situation has been redeemed.

Anxiety is a trigger to put your trust in God through worship. Anxiety says “my problems and my emotions are near and powerful.” Worship says, “my God is near and powerful.” And we shift our focus from our problems to our God. If we can only focus on one thing, what are you focusing on? [pause here].

God is always constant, and He is not dependent on how I feel at the time. We don’t have to FEEL peaceful in order to worship. Sometimes, we have to put action before the feeling, especially when we’re anxious. And God, in His goodness, reaches down, and he pulls us up from the waves coming over our heads when we feel like we’re drowning in our anxiety, just as He did for Peter.

And He doesn’t just pick up Peter, but He said he could be rock-solid. By focusing on God, you too can be rock solid through prayer, having that muscle memory verse, and worship.

So, instead of just talking about this, we’re going to have a response time for you to focus on God’s words, to pray, and to worship. You might be going through something right now, you might go through something soon, but no matter where you are, we all need more of God.

Inspiration

Isn’t it incredible that God can change us? You may have struggled with anxiety for a long time, but you don’t always have to have the struggle you are having now. You may be taking medication now, and who knows, maybe someday, you might not have to take it…but even if not, keep taking the medicine. God put amazing doctors in place to help cure chemical imbalances.

But, we must not exchange a physical treatment for a spiritual sickness. We have a tendency to focus on the winds and the waves, but God’s focus is always on you. You may feel lost, overwhelmed, crushed, but God sees you, He can overcome your feelings of anxiety, and He has already crushed the enemy, Satan. Romans 16:20 says “The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet.” Whatever you are going through, God can give you victory so that you can stand above what towered over you.

1 Peter 5:7 says that you can Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you…. God cares about you, and He can handle your anxiety! He cares about the little things and the things that shake you…He cares, and he wants to help!

Psalm 29:11 says The LORD gives strength to his people; the LORD blesses his people with peace…. You don’t have to just get over your anxiety, but God gives Strength and peace! You can have strength and peace in this chaotic world!

And ultimately, Jesus came to conquer all things. In Isaiah 9: 6 it says For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace…. Jesu came to this earth and one of His names is the Prince of Peace. He is the one in charge of giving out peace, and God can conquer your anxiety. Don’t let anxiety get the best of your story, but let the Prince of Peace rule in your life and crush anxiety!

With God, our lives don’t have to be rocked by the waves, but we can have a solid rock, a solid foundation because God is steady and constant. So, no matter where you are tonight, would you pray, focus on God’s Words, and worship so that we can re-focus on God and see that even though our problems may feel near and powerful, our God is in fact near and powerful.

Let’s sing.

**Sing PEACE by Hillsong Young and Free or watch video**