

# ANXIETY

MIND GAMES

WEEK 2 GROUP GUIDE | MESSAGE BY SHAWN JOHNSON

## START

To get things started, let's go around the circle and answer this question:

**Everyone has a situation, whether it is flying, public speaking, confrontation, small spaces, spiders, boats ... that brings some anxiety. What is your "situation" that makes you anxious?**

## SHARE

Welcome to our ongoing series entitled, "Mind Games."

Every day we experience an entire spectrum of God-given emotions. Think about your day so far, how many different emotions have you experienced? In a given day it is possible to feel happiness, frustration, sadness, joy, optimism, regret, anger, insecurity, fear and anxiety. It's fascinating, the roller coaster of emotions we can experience in just one day. There are many factors at play with our emotions. For instance, if we are tired or worn out, we might be more susceptible to be easily frustrated or angered. If we are feeling joyful and well-rested we might be more likely to be gracious and patient with others. Not always, but more likely.

Now if that wasn't complicated enough, let's add the powerful influence of our thought life. We all have a wide-range of thoughts that go through our brains and half the time we don't even understand where they are coming from. Some of us think the best in situations, while others of us tend to believe that the sky is falling and think the worst. Our thoughts are powerful and what we believe about God, yourself and other people are more important than you might think.

God tells us throughout scripture that we are loved, valuable and we are worth being pursued by a loving God. We can either think about the truth of what God says about us or we can believe the lies. In 2 Corinthians Paul tells us to literally, "...take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ." We don't let our thoughts push us around, but we can take control and make sure that those thoughts line up with the Word of God. If the thoughts you're having aren't true, we send them packing and cling to what God says is true, we make them obedient to Christ.

This week Shawn spoke about how God desires to give us peace if we are willing to cast our anxieties and worries on Him. God tells us in Proverbs 12:25 that “anxiety weighs down the heart.” It is a real issue. According to the Anxiety and Depression Association of America; anxiety cost the US more than \$42 billion a year and affects 40 million adults. So if you struggle with anxiety, you are **really** not alone. Anxiety doesn’t just affect your thought life, but can lead to physical symptoms and for some it can be debilitating. The good news is that God already knows this and speaks throughout scripture about it.

### **How do worry and anxiety affect your life?**

**Can you recall a time when you missed out on a great opportunity to do or experience something because of anxiety or worry?**

## **GROW**

Surely all of the greats found in the Bible didn’t struggle with anxiety, they were all pillars of strength, confidence and bravery, right? Wrong. What made these people great is that they trusted God, despite their fears; and God powerfully used them. But they felt overwhelmed and paralyzed at times by anxiety. Still not sure if you believe it? Let’s read for ourselves.

**Let’s take a look at Moses in Numbers 11:14-15, Elijah in 1 Kings 19:3-4, Jonah 4:3 and Paul in 2 Corinthians 1:8**

Are you worried that you are less of a Christian if you struggle with fear, anxiety or depression? You’re not! The burden is real, but so is a God who understands and talks about it in the Bible. This is why God tells us to “take captive every thought...” and make it obedient to Christ. We are to stop that thought at the front door and decide if it lines up with what God says is true. Maybe that anxious thought contradicts the promises of God. Then cast that worry to God and ask for him to take it from you.

**Let’s read Hebrews 12:14-16**

There are lots of other ways people mishandle anger like being sarcastic or outwardly tearing other people down. Whether exploding, bottling, using sarcasm, or tearing down others; none of these gets rid of anger. Worse; these reactions reinforce the behavior.

**In looking at Moses, Elijah, Jonah and Paul, to whom can you relate most?**

**Do you feel more encouraged to know that even the spiritual greats of the Bible felt the same as you at times?**

## **MOVE**

When dealing with anxiety, depression or fear, there are some practical steps we can take to respond the way God would want us to respond. Shawn outlined three things we can do.

**Do your part – Read James 4:17**

When stressful thoughts come, ask God if it is a ‘warning light’ to a heart issue. Do you need to ask forgiveness for something that is bothering you? Do you need to confess to a brother or sister in Christ some pattern of sin you know you have been hiding? The important thing is to ask God if the thought is condemnation from the enemy or is it a loving conviction from God that we need to take action. *(As Shawn mentioned, there is nothing*

*wrong with talking to a doctor about looking into temporarily taking anxiety medicine as you seek out a Christian counselor to help you identify the cause of your anxiety in the hopes of finding healing)*

**Cast away anxiety – Read 1 Peter 5:7, Philippians 4:6,7 and 1 Thess. 5:17**

We cast our anxiety on God through prayer; we talk to God about it. Now is the time to respond and cast our stress or troubling thoughts on God. We cast it upon God. What do we do when the worry comes back? We cast it again and again and pray without ceasing. Just keep giving it to God relentlessly.

**Thank God – Lets read once again Philippians 4:6,7**

In every situation, with thanksgiving, we are to present our requests to God. It seems counterintuitive, but in the midst of the situation and anxiety; let's remember to thank God for what you do have and for the blessings all around you. It's hard to be anxious when you are being thankful.

**Think about the anxiety you have been dealing with. Is there a step you have been skipping that you need to take?**

**Which of the scriptures we read are most pertinent to your situation right now?**

## PRAY

As a group, spend some time praying for each other, especially for the situations that people might be facing today. If you are in a co-ed group, consider breaking up into men and women's groups to talk more freely.

## TO GO.

**1 Peter 5:7**

Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you. A hot-tempered man stirs up strife, but he who is slow to anger quiets contention.