

soul talk

the gift of the gray

day 1 - read psalm 42:11a

Healthy people don't experience anxiety? Strong Christians do not go through gray seasons of melancholy? Have you ever considered that anxiety is a normal reaction to the pressures of life? Do you feel guilty when you're anxious or depressed? Have you ever tried to talk yourself out of your feelings? What events in your life have triggered anxious feelings within you? What did you do with those feelings? Do you deny or ignore them, distract yourself, medicate, push harder, blame others? Can you believe it's ok to experience seasons of melancholy?

day 2 - read psalm 6:1-7

David wrote many of the Psalms before he was king and as he spent much of his youth on the run for his life. "How long, O Lord?" may resonate with you as well. Oftentimes, our society tries to fast track our anxiety or grief. In addition, we have enough options to distract us from facing anxiety head on. Addictions often begin as a way to cope with anxiety and inevitably dig us deeper into a pit. "How long?" can easily turn into overwhelming anxiety and deep depression.

Take an inventory of your life to see how anxiety is impacting you. Which of the following list has affected you in the past year? (For a more comprehensive gauge, you can look up the Holmes and Rahe Scale online.) Keep in mind, the purpose of the inventory isn't to make you anxious about your anxiety, it's simply an indicator of where you're at. If you've been impacted by several things this past year, you have a right to be anxious. *It's normal.* Giving yourself permission to have anxiety and melancholy can be a great relief and can free you from the anxiety loop.

Uncertainty	Past Pain—PTS
Change	Failure
Loss	Success
Relationship Conflict	(Reward of Success)
Busyness	The Straw
Family of Origin	- A Seeming Little Thing
(Learned Behavior)	

day 3 - read mark 14:32-42; luke 22:39-46

Think about the melancholy myths from your outline. Which of these do you believe or have you believed in the past? Which bother you? Based on these scriptures, what would Jesus have said about these myths?

anxiety & melancholy myths

- ~ Anxiety is a sin
- ~ There is nothing to fear
- ~ A Christian should live without anxiety
- ~ There is nothing I can do to overcome anxiety

days 4&5 - read ps 77:1-12

Journal your thoughts on this passage. Think about the raw honesty of what was written here. What does this honesty tell you about God? What parts of this scripture speak to the truths about anxiety and melancholy? What can you say to your soul about the events of your life? What can you talk to God about?

How can anxiety be seen as a gift? Where do you see God's presence in your struggle? What role do you think anxiety may be playing in your own life? What can you say to your soul about your feelings? Spend some time talking to God about where you're at on your journey with anxiety and what you've learned this week. It's ok if you ramble a bit. Honesty is more important than clarity right now.

anxiety & melancholy truths

- ~ Anxiety is a gift from God
- ~ God is with us in a dangerous world
- ~ Anxiety has a role in our life
- ~ We can talk to our souls and our souls can talk to God

next steps - further reading

Prayer – Richard Foster

The Good and Beautiful Life – James Bryan Smith

Invitation to Solitude and Silence:

Experiencing God's Transforming Presence – Ruth H. Barton