

LIFE IN AN ANXIOUS WORLD

SMALL GROUP | FAITH IN AN ANXIOUS WORLD

LEADER REFLECTION

Anxiety can affect all of us—yes, even students. This first session introduces the idea that feeling nervous, worried, or stressed is something everyone experiences, and it's okay to talk about it.

By naming our feelings and understanding what anxiety is, students can learn healthy ways to handle it. More importantly, we want them to know that Jesus is with them in every moment—even the anxious ones.

In Mark 6 and Mark 4, we see stories where Jesus' friends are scared in the middle of storms. But Jesus doesn't walk away—he stays close and helps calm the chaos. That's what Jesus still does for us today.

BIG IDEA

Anxiety exists. That's okay. Together, we're learning to notice it, name it, and bring it to Jesus.

LEADER TIP

The intention of this content is to move through it in order to allow introduction of new ideas, reflection and practice.

Consider practicing the “Daily Replay” (adapted from the Prayer of Examen) on your own. It’s a great way to slow down and notice where God is present in your own life.

Leader Tip: Use apps like Reimagining the Examen or Examen by FULLER Studio to guide your personal prayer time.

SUPPLIES

- Post-it Notes
- Blank paper and pens/pencils per studentHand-out page x1 per student
- Hand-out page x1 per student
- Bible or printed story (Mark 6:45-51 and Mark 4:35-41)



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INTRODUCTION

Say: Today we're starting a four-week series about life in an anxious world. That's just a fancy way of saying we're talking about what it feels like to be nervous, scared, or overwhelmed—and what to do about it. We all feel anxious sometimes. And that's okay.

We're going to look at two stories in the Bible where even Jesus' friends were scared—and we see how Jesus showed up.

QUESTIONS AS STUDENTS ARRIVE

"We have new discussions for today! Trust me and let's see what we can learn about ourselves and each other."

1. What does 'anxiety' mean to you?
2. What's your "anxiety level" today—low, medium, or high?
3. From this list, which things have you experienced recently?
 - School or grades
 - Friend drama
 - Family stress
 - Bullying
 - Big changes (moving, loss)
 - Feeling alone
4. What happens in your body when you feel anxious? (e.g., heart races, stomach hurts, feel frozen)
5. What helps you calm down when you're upset?
6. What do you think your anxiety might be trying to tell you?
7. Where do you see God at work in your life?

BIBLE STORY #1

Mark 6:45–51 (Jesus Walks on Water)

Read aloud or show the story with images.

Ask:

- What did you notice?
- Why were the disciples afraid?
- What did Jesus do?

Say: Jesus saw his friends struggling. He didn't ignore them—he walked to them and got in the boat. He didn't make the storm go away first. He joined them in the middle of it. That's what Jesus does for us too.

Slide: "Jesus steps into the unsteady boat."



BIBLE STORY #2

Mark 4:35-41 (Jesus Calms the Storm)

Ask:

- What happened in this story?
- How did the disciples act?
- What did Jesus do?

Say: Just like before, the disciples were afraid. But Jesus calmed the storm and asked them to have faith. These stories show us that Jesus is calm in our chaos. He brings peace.

Slide: "What's unusual about Jesus' words or actions?"

WHAT'S MAKING YOUR BOAT WOBBLE?

Hand out paper and pencils.

Say: Take 2 minutes to write or draw about anything that's been making your life feel unsteady. You won't have to share it unless you want to.

Examples: stress about school, friendship troubles, family stuff, big feelings.

Let students work quietly.

Say: We all feel anxiety sometimes. That "nervous stomach" or fast heartbeat is your body saying, "Pay attention!" Let's ask: What could God be showing us in those feelings?

Slide: "Where is God at work in your anxiety?"

HEALTHY VS UNHEALTHY COPING STRATEGIES

Say: When we feel anxious, we all try to make it stop. But some ways help—and some don't.

Unhealthy strategies:

- Avoiding everyone
- Yelling or being mean
- Hurting ourselves or others

Healthy strategies:

- Praying
- Talking to a trusted adult
- Journaling or drawing
- Breathing slowly

Ask:

- What helps you feel calmer when you're upset?
- Who helps you when things feel hard?

Slide: "Coping strategies = everything we do to deal with stress."



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MEMORY VERSE

Let's listen to this promise from the Bible

"Come to me, all you who are struggling hard and carrying heavy loads, and I will give you rest." —
Matthew 11:28-29

LEADER-LED PRAYER TEACHING

Say: Today we're going to learn a really special kind of prayer. It's called the Daily Replay. It helps us talk to God at the end of the day and think about what happened. It's kind of like replaying a movie in your mind—but with Jesus right beside you.

This prayer helps us:

- Remember the good things
- Notice when something felt hard or stressful
- Ask God for help
- Feel God's peace, even when things feel wobbly

Leader Tip: Invite students to draw pictures or write short words for each step on a piece of paper. If time allows, let them share what part of the prayer felt most meaningful.



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We're going to go through each step together:

Step 1: Be Still

Sit quietly. Let's all take three deep breaths together. Breathe in... hold it... breathe out... (repeat). Say: God, I know You are here with me right now. Help me feel Your peace.

Step 2: Be Thankful

Ask: What is something good that happened today? It could be something small—like a fun game, a good meal, or a kind word. Say: God, thank You for this good thing.

Step 3: Notice Your Feelings

Ask: Was there a time today that felt hard or stressful? When did you feel nervous, sad, or frustrated? Say: God, this part of my day was hard. Thank You for being with me even then.

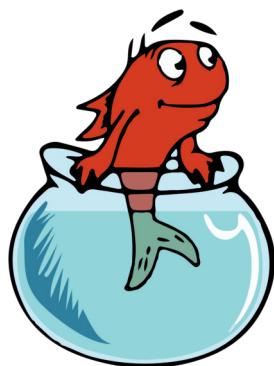
Step 4: Forgive and Be Forgiven

Ask: Is there something you wish you didn't do or say? Is there someone you're mad at or someone you need to forgive? Say: God, please forgive me and help me forgive others.

Step 5: Look Ahead

Ask: What do you want help with tomorrow? What are you hoping for? Say: God, please help me tomorrow. Thank You for loving me no matter what.

Once students have finished writing, they can either share their images/words in partners, or keep it to themselves if they'd prefer.



What do you think it would look like to be with someone during their storm even if we can't make it go away?

Has any one ever stood with you through a 'storm' and what did that feel like?

TALK TO SOMEONE YOU TRUST: GROW YOUR CIRCLE

This week, we want you to try talking to an adult you trust. This could be a parent, grandparent, coach, teacher, or leader.

Ask if you can meet up and say something like:

"At K2K, we're learning how to talk about our feelings and stress. You're someone I trust. Can we talk sometime this week about that?"

FOUR THINGS TO DO TOGETHER:

1. Share a few things that have made you feel nervous or anxious lately.
2. Ask your adult what helps them when they feel worried.
3. Pray together (if you feel comfortable).
4. Ask if you can talk to them again when you need someone to listen.

THE DAILY REPLAY: HOME REMINDER

Share the hand out with your student and consider inserting it into their binders.

You know your students best; how can we do our best to have this seen at home, or at least arrive at home today?

Be sure to mention the take-home sheet to parents as they sign out.



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TAKE HOME

Come to me, all you who are struggling hard and carrying heavy loads, and I will give you rest. Put on my yoke, and learn from me. I'm gentle and humble. And you will find rest for yourselves. Matthew 11:28-29

THE DAILY REPLAY: HOME REMINDER

You can talk to God about your day anytime and anywhere! Even before bed. This prayer is a great way to do that.

Here are 5 things YOU can include in your prayers as you talk to God this week.

1. Be Still

Find a quiet place. Take a few deep breaths. Remember God is with you right now.

2. Say Thank You

Think of one good thing that happened today. You can thank God for it!

3. Notice Feelings

Was there a moment today when something felt hard or scary? You can talk to God about it.

4. Forgive and Be Forgiven

Did you do something that hurt someone? Are you mad at anyone? You can ask God to help you forgive and be kind.

5. Ask for Help

Is there something you're worried about tomorrow? You can ask God to be with you and help you.

TALK TO SOMEONE YOU TRUST: GROW YOUR CIRCLE

This week, we want you to try talking to an adult you trust. This could be a parent, grandparent, coach, teacher, or leader. Ask if you can meet up in-person or on the phone and say something like:

“At K2K, we’re learning how to talk about our feelings and stress.
You’re someone I trust. Can we talk sometime about that?”

FOUR THINGS TO DO TOGETHER:

1. Share a few things that have made you feel nervous or anxious lately.
2. Ask your adult what helps them when they feel worried.
3. Pray together (if you feel comfortable).
4. Ask if you can talk to them again when you need someone to listen.

Write down who you met with and what they shared that helped you:

I met with:

On this date:

At this place:

Helpful things they said:

