



Caring for the anxious

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Anxiety: a definition

A fear or apprehension of events – real or imagined – that does not promote wise action but rather, promotes a negative response in body and soul

Anxiety: the prevalence

In 2021 research suggested:

- 19% of Slovaks experienced symptoms of anxiety
- More common in women than men
- Most common in those in the 15-24 age group

Cast your mind around your congregation – how many are struggling?



Anxiety: the roots

- Things coming at us (our circumstances)
- Things happening in us (our biology)
- Things coming out of us (our decisions and desires)

Which aspect of anxiety might it be easy for you to overlook?

Anxiety: the experience

- Physical symptoms
- Emotional symptoms
- Relational impact
- Spiritual impact

Can you see the spiritual importance of helping people navigate anxiety?

Anxiety: the escape

- Control
- Food
- Alcohol / drugs
- Sex / pornography
- Shopping
- Gaming / scrolling
- Over-activity

Might you wonder if there is anxiety lying at the root of some sinful behaviours?

Anxiety: the Christian struggle

- A congregation full of people who look happy
- A Bible full of verses that say, "do not be anxious ... "
- An assumption that anxiety must mean weak faith

To what extent is your church a safe place to talk about anxiety? Is there a culture of sharing lives?

Anxiety: the secular prescriptions

- Self-help (online relaxation, coping strategies)
- Talking therapy (often CBT)
- Medication (SSRIs, Benzodiazepines)
- Mindfulness

To what extent is your congregation equipped to think about mindfulness?

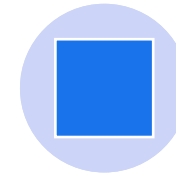
Anxiety: the practical strategies



Breathing



Grounding



Meditating



Resting



Reprioritising



Exercise



Journaling

Anxiety: the questions

- What does your anxiety feel like day to day?
- What things are you doing / trying to reduce your anxiety? To what extent do they help?
- What is driving your anxiety? What are you believing about yourself?
- Where is God? How do you think he views you? How are you turning to him?
- What one thing might we work on together ?

Anxiety: lament

It's hard to pray when anxious – often people get stuck at "please take the anxiety away"

- Call
- Complain
- Ask
- Commit

Crying out to God rather than crying into our pillow (Hosea 7:14)

Where might you be able to encourage prayer like this?

Anxiety: meditation

Pick a biblical image

- What does it look like?
- What does it feel like?
- Who else is there?
- What difference does it make?

Rock – refuge – wing etc

How can you lead people to connect the riches of Scripture to the realities of life?

Anxiety: the change

Ephesians 4:22-24

- Take off old self
 - Put on new self
 - As mind renewed
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- Like a wall – loosen one brick at a time

Anxiety: the truth and the lies

- I'm all alone ... God is present (Psalm 139)
- Everything is out of control ... God is sovereign (Genesis 50)
- I don't have what I need ... God is providing (Exodus 16)
- This is all my fault ... God is full of grace (look at the cross)
- Nothing will ever change ... God is leading you to perfection (Psalm 23)

Anxiety: the future

- Anxiety goes
- Anxiety reduces
- Anxiety stays but people persevere with Christ
- Church learn to love each other well

Until that day when anxiety is no more