

anxious for nothing

discussion guide for parents

Discussion Guide for Parents

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To accompany *Anxious for Nothing*
Young Readers Edition

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The child you love, the one who used to be so care-free, is experiencing anxiety.

If you're an adult who's known the weight of anxiety in your own life, you already understand a bit of what your child is experiencing. But maybe you've been able to move through the world mostly free of anxious thoughts. Whatever your experience, you can help your child learn to notice and deal with his or her anxious thoughts. And, specifically, you can encourage your child to experience relief by implementing the practices he or she is learning in *Anxious for Nothing*.

Engage by Helping Your Child Notice What Anxiety Looks Like

As you know, not all fears are bad. God designed our bodies to react to dangerous situations with fear responses in order to protect us. Some of the symptoms your child may be experiencing are a result of the body's natural "fight or flight" response to danger. When we face a real threat, the natural chemicals that are released in the body protect us by preparing us to deal with it. But a child who's wrestling with anxiety can experience this heightened response whether or not there's a real danger.¹ And that heightened response can interfere with healthy living.

During the earliest years of your child's life, you likely noticed the typical kinds of developmental fears faced by all children. At around nine months of age your baby, who'd learned to recognize familiar faces, might have felt stranger anxiety when a well-meaning stranger at the grocery store got too friendly. Or you noticed your toddler experiencing separation anxiety when you left him at the church nursery or at daycare. When your child was between three and six years old he might have feared what was unfamiliar or disorienting: the dark, thunder, "monsters," or scary dreams. This is the period when your child is learning to distinguish what is real and what is not. And it's why a costumed mascot at a basketball game might terrify her! All of these instincts—to "threats" that may or may not be real, that may or may not be truly dangerous—are natural and normal.

Yet as your child moves into the years preceding adolescence, she begins to become more aware of real-world dangers: natural disasters, the threat of intruders in the home, illness, death, and emergency drills at school. While you likely remember walking through fire or tornado drills with your third-grade classmates, many of our children today are being taught how to move quickly and safely if a shooter is in the school. Who wouldn't become a little rattled by that?

And as your child becomes more socially aware, focused on social acceptance from her peer group, she may feel more anxious about her place in that group and what could *threaten* her place in that group. All of these are natural worries. And for all kinds of reasons, some children will experience these anxieties, and others, to a lesser or greater degree.

There are a variety of reasons that some of our children may experience more anxiety than others. A child might be feeling pressure—internally or externally—to achieve. He might feel undone if he is facing an unknown, such as a new home or school. She might be anxious because she's worried about an unfamiliar social situation. Or a bully. Perhaps your child has lost someone or something he loves—to death, or divorce, or abandonment—and that loss has triggered

anxiety. And although we do everything we can to protect our children, those who experience abuse or violence, either as a victim or as a witness, are at risk for anxiety disorders.

Sometimes, though, we're just not able to point to a situational reality that's triggering anxiety in our children. In some of our families it may be *genetic*, being transmitted from generation to generation. And in some cases it's simply difficult to point to the root of the anxiety our children are experiencing.

Every child will experience a range of developmentally appropriate fears. But anxiety becomes problematic when it interferes with our children's functioning.

Read the Signs

Have you seen signs that your child is feeling anxious? Maybe your son has complained that he's having trouble sleeping at night. Or perhaps your daughter holds it together all day at school, and then falls apart the moment she gets home. Maybe he's been wanting to skip baseball practice more and more frequently. Or maybe she seems more moody and snaps at a younger sibling after scrolling through her friends' posts on social media. You're noticing clues that are signaling that something isn't quite right.

Whether or not he can articulate it, your child may be feeling anxious.

Some children are able to notice and name the fact that they're feeling anxious. And that's actually going to be really helpful as you and your child begin to seek solutions. But it's also possible that your child hasn't been able to say that she's anxious. Perhaps you, or your child's other parent, or a teacher, or coach are noticing behaviors that concern you. Dr. Claire McCarthy, Assistant Professor of Pediatrics at Harvard Medical School, invites parents to notice the signs of anxiety in children:

- Recurring fears and worries about routine parts of everyday life
- Changes in behavior, such as irritability
- Avoiding activities, school, or social interactions
- Dropping grades or school avoidance
- Trouble sleeping or concentrating
- Substance use or risky behaviors
- Chronic physical complaints, such as fatigue, headaches, or stomachaches²

If your child is anxious, he or she is not alone. A recent study estimates that 2 million American children and adolescents have a diagnosable anxiety disorder.³ While some of this may be due to stressful life events or your child's unique brain chemistry, we also know that children today are being exposed to unique pressures that those of us who were raised without cellphones and internet access escaped. Today, plugged-in kids are at risk of comparing themselves to the parade

of filtered images they see on social media. They learn about scary events in local and national news that make *adults* anxious.

Don't be fooled into thinking that because your child's worries are different than your own, they're not important. Although he likely doesn't fret over a potential job change, paying the mortgage, or choosing the right healthcare plan, he may be carrying a host of other weighty concerns. As your child is moving out of childhood and into adolescence, her increasing self-awareness means that she's thinking more about herself, her relationships, and the state of the world.

Self

- She may be anxious about the way she appears to others.
- He may feel pressure to make good grades.
- She might fixate about the future.
- He might worry that others will laugh at him.

Relationships

- He may be concerned about his friendships.
- She might fear making mistakes in front of peers.
- He may be concerned about his popularity, or social status, at school.
- She might fret over the health of loved ones.

World

- She might be worried about the social issues the country is facing.
- He might be concerned about challenges facing the environment.

Although we may like to think of childhood as a season of carefree bliss, our children may experience any combination of concerns that keep them from the freedom that we, and God, intend for them to enjoy.

What Helps and What Doesn't Help

Because we don't want our children to suffer, it can be tempting to either minimize their worries or jump too quickly to solutions. We want to make it better, right? But you serve your child well when you are able to honor and stay present to the concerns she bears. Here are a few best practices for staying present to your child and his worry:

Don't: Minimize

If your child is worried about whether or not kids at school will like his new haircut or whether or not she'll strike out at the plate, take those concerns seriously. Your child's worries are valid. Demonstrate that what matters to your child matters to you.

Don't: Try to "Fix"

While a solution to your child's concern might be obvious to you, resist the urge to try to problem solve or "fix" it. That's not what your child needs. When you rush to solutions, even with the best of intentions, your child may not feel seen, heard, or understood.

Do: Take an Interest

Show your child that you care about her experience by taking a genuine interest in her day, her friends, her joys, and her worries. Knowing that you care about all that she's facing helps your child feel understood and supported.

Do: Listen

Encourage your child to talk about what's bothering him. Sometimes just externalizing his worries by talking about them can help! And as your child shares, concentrate on listening well. Put your phone away; make eye contact; ask for details so that you understand clearly what she's communicating.

Do: Validate

When you validate your child's worry, when you acknowledge that her concerns are legitimate, you let her know that what matters to her matters to you and matters to God. Sometimes we're afraid to validate our children's concerns, for fear of reinforcing them. But acknowledging her concerns actually helps your child feel less alone.

This kind of validation might sound like:

- "That makes a lot of sense."
- "I can see why you're concerned about that."
- "I think that would bother me, too."
- "You're right, that *is* a problem."

When you validate your child's concern, she feels seen and heard.

Do: Model Healthy Solutions

As you already know, our kids are watching us! When you face your own stress, worries, and challenges, you can model confidence that problems can be faced and navigated well. While you don't have to embrace a blind Pollyanna optimism, you can acknowledge a worry, release it to God, and live in freedom.

So What Can I Do?

While we don't want to rush to quick fixes, there are ways that we can help our child face her worries and live well. For example, anxiety can be particularly slippery when a child can't identify its source. If your child is anxious about something, you can encourage him to identify exactly what it is that's troubling him. When he's able to identify what's bothering him, he can face it and deal with it. Sometimes a child can be helped simply by externalizing that concern and talking about it, or even by processing it alone in his journal. Once a worry, concern, or fear has been named, your child can deal with it.

One of the things your child is learning in *Anxious For Nothing* is how to choose calm over anxiety. Here's what a life of calm looks like:

1. C: Celebrate God

When we acknowledge who God is, we are relieved of trying to be God. God is in control and we are not.

2. A: Ask God for help.

Although there are circumstances we can't control, God is a faithful provider. Not only is God able to help us, but God *wants* to help us when we turn to Him.

3. L: Look on the bright side.

When we feel anxious, our vision can be laser focused on what we feel is going wrong. But choosing gratitude, by tipping our gaze to the goodness in our lives, can bring relief.

4. M: Meditate on good things.

We don't have to be victims of our anxious thoughts. We can choose to release harmful thoughts and choose to think on what is good, right, and true.

In addition to replacing negative thoughts with positive ones, there are a number of practical choices your child can make each day to vanquish anxiety and embrace the calm God has for her. In *Anxious for Nothing*, here's what your child is learning to choose:

Breathe

When you feel anxious, take five slow, deep breaths. Deep breathing can help your body relax.

Exercise

Moving your body produces a chemical in your brain that makes you feel happy.

Talk

Tell someone how you feel. Share your worries with a friend, parent, teacher, pastor, or therapist.

Eat Healthy

Your mind works best when your body is fed with good things.

Journal

Put your worries into words, and they will feel smaller.

Rest

Your mind needs as much rest as your body does. Get enough sleep and spend time doing things that make you feel calm.

Praying

Tell God how you're feeling, and ask Him for help. Trust Him to take care of your worry.

Whether you're meeting with your child to discuss *Anxious for Nothing*, watching a ball game on television, or driving to school, continue to discuss these healthy practices with your child. And you can also find creative ways to enjoy them together!

Practice Gratitude

Even as you honor your child's worries, validating her concerns, you can also consistently communicate to your child that she does not need to be a victim of anxiety. In addition to the healthy practices above, your child is learning that one of the healthy choices she can make is to practice *gratitude*.

One concrete way to express gratitude is by keeping a daily gratitude journal. Over the last few decades, researchers and popular self-help experts have learned what the ancient Psalmists figured out centuries ago: we experience satisfaction and joy when we give thanks.

And this isn't a fruitless exercise: it actually changes the way we feel! Those who use gratitude journals daily, listing all for which they are grateful, experience a measurable increase in happiness, optimism, satisfaction with life, and hope. And they also see a decrease in negative emotions and feelings of depression. As Christians we give thanks to the Father of Jesus as the Giver of all good gifts. And we experience relief from our worry when we do!

When Should We Seek More Help?

It's likely that with your loving attention, and the information and skills from *Anxious for Nothing*, your child will learn to notice and manage anxiety. But what if you don't see improvement? What if your child continues to suffer?

Some children will need extra support in dealing with their worries. If your child is plagued by

worry, or if your child's anxiety stands in the way of doing normal things, talk to your doctor about other interventions that might help.

If, with your support, your child can't cope with worries, your doctor may recommend therapy. A therapist can help your child deal with overwhelming feelings of worry, stress, and sadness. And a therapist may even lend support to your entire family. Therapy helps build healthy new thinking patterns, habits, and skills. If you haven't visited a therapist before, it may feel foreign at first. But, just like medical doctors, these skilled helpers can be used by God to help your child and your family.

You've Got This

If your child lives with anxiety, she is like a lot of other kids. But God's plan for each of our children is to live life that really is life (John 10:10). You bless your child as you recognize and honor her experience. And you serve your child as you encourage her to make healthy life-giving choices for gratitude, optimism, and hope. With your support and God's help, your child can thrive and flourish.

Anxious for Nothing Discussion Questions for Parents and Children

In this guide, we want to give you a thumbnail sketch of what your child is learning in each chapter and offer a few questions for discussion. This isn't school, so make it fun! Walk to a local hotspot for a fountain drink or chat on the swings at the park. Be inquisitive and listen well. When you take a genuine interest in your child's experience, he or she feels seen, known, and loved. And be willing to be vulnerable. When you are transparent about your own worries, and how God helps you with them, you make room for your child to do the same.

CHAPTER 1:

The Cloud of Anxiety

Healthy fear protects us from bad things. If we see a rattle snake on the ground nearby, healthy fear tells us to run! But *anxiety* causes us to ask, "What if?" A person with anxiety might feel anxious being outside because, "*What if there's a snake?*" Healthy fear protects us from real dangers and anxiety makes us think there's a danger when there really isn't. And although we can't control how we feel, but we can control how we respond to our feelings.

1. Understand Helpful Fear and Unhelpful Anxiety

As you think about the difference between healthy fear and anxiety, discuss with your child the differences between the two.

- What are healthy fears that keep us safe?
- And what kinds of worries keep us stressed?

2. Notice How Anxiety is Impacting Your Child

Open up an ongoing dialogue by asking your child what anxiety looks like for him. If your child has trouble identifying how she experiences anxiety, these clues that she was invited to reflect on might help:

- My stomach hurts before I take a test or before another big event.
- I have trouble sleeping because I can't stop thinking about a fear or problem.
- My grades at school have dropped, and I feel distracted in class.
- When I get home from school, I feel angry at my parents or my siblings, and I don't know why.
- I feel worried about things I didn't used to worry about.
- I get out of breath even though I haven't been exercising.

3. Pray

Don't worry about finding all the right fancy words to pray. Instead, recognize God as a trustworthy Shepherd who cares and entrust your child and her worries to God.

CHAPTER 2:

Tent of Faith

We all go through storms in life, and when we do, we need a safe place to run to. And we have that safe place, that safe Person, in God. So our emotions don't have to depend on our circumstances. In fact, the apostle Paul was actually in prison when he wrote, "Be full of joy in the Lord always" (Philippians 4:4). Isn't that something?!

We tend to worry about things we can't control: climate change, complex social issues, and maybe even the shape of our nose! When we wish we had control of something in our lives but we don't, we start to feel anxious. Thankfully, the Bible points you and your child to the One to whom we can release our cares. Paul promises, "God's peace, which is so great we cannot understand it, will keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:7). When we can't control things, we can rest assured that God can.

1. Explore Your Child's Fears

Ask your child what is bothering her today. If she struggles to identify what's troubling her today, here are some possibilities to have in your back pocket.

- Her future?
- Grades?
- Appearance?
- Health of loved ones?
- Making mistakes in front of peers?
- Being laughed at?
- Friends?
- World problems?
- The environment?
- Popularity?

2. Acknowledge Stormy Seasons

Invite your child to notice that some *seasons* are trickier than others. Explore these questions with your child, welcoming her to answer and sharing your own responses as well.

- Are you in a stormy season right now? What storm feels big to you right now?
- Have you had a stormy season in the past? What was it?

CHAPTER 3:

Celebrate God's Mercy

When we've done something wrong, we often feel guilt. But when we feel like we *are* bad—or we don't measure up, or we're not enough, or we don't deserve good things—we experience a feeling called shame. Sometimes it's because of something we've done and sometimes it's the result of something someone else said to us or did to us. And shame can make us feel anxious, when we feel like we have to do something extra to become enough.

When Adam and Eve ate the fruit God told them not to eat, they felt shame. And when they heard God coming, they tried to hide. When we feel shame we might want to hide under a bed or in a closet. But we also might try to distract ourselves with television, video games, or surfing the web. We might even tell ourselves lies: I'm dumb. I'm ugly. I'm not smart. I'm not funny.

God wants to free us from shame.

1. Discuss Shame

- Ask your child if she's felt "shame" before. Has she ever felt as though she wasn't good enough? (Smart enough? Pretty enough? Popular enough? Athletic enough?)
- And did she do anything special to try to become enough?

2. Choose What is Most True

Shame lies about who we are. Help your child to recognize the lying voice in his head and to replace lies with what is more true. The examples below show you how. Sometimes what is most true will be an actual Scripture verse; other times it won't. But the truth will always resonate with what we know to be true from Scripture.

- If you believe, "I'm not good enough," choose to believe the truth: "He will help me" (Isaiah 41:10).
- If you believe, "I don't belong," choose to believe the truth: "I am His child" (1 John 3:1).
- If you believe, "I'm a bad person," choose to believe the truth: "He will forgive me" (1 John 1:9).

3. Focus on What is Most True

This week your child was asked to write five things she likes about herself! Ask her to share those five things. If she hasn't yet done it, make room for her to identify what she likes about herself.

CHAPTER 4:

Be Full of Joy Always

The amygdalae, almond-shaped parts of the brain located behind the forehead, sounds an alarm whenever we are in danger. It's the warning system that helps us react quickly if a fly ball is going to hit us in the head or a speeding car is going to hit us.

Have you ever entered a house with an alarm system, and no one knew how to disable it? The system is meant to protect us, but it can feel pretty stressful if we can't figure out how to turn it off. The same is true of our amygdalae. Even if your amygdalae wants to work overtime and shout at you, you have the power to quiet it down.

1. Review the Week

Might your child have an overactive amygdalae? Ask your child to share which of these feelings he's experienced since the last time you met together to discuss *Anxious for Nothing*:

- stomachache
- difficulty breathing
- heart racing
- headache
- sweating when still
- difficulty falling asleep
- trouble focusing
- forgetting things
- feeling tense or jumpy
- imagining disasters

2. Turn it Around

Your amygdalae doesn't have to be the boss of you. Joseph in the Old Testament—whose brothers really threw him under the bus—didn't let his circumstances determine his mood or his destiny, saying, "You meant to hurt me, but God turned your evil into good to save the lives of many people" (Genesis 50:20). Those are important words: "You meant to hurt me, *but God...*"

Notice what's troubling you, and turn it around like Joseph did:

My parents are getting a divorce, but God cares about me and is a good father.

My grandmother is sick, but God knows this and He loves my grandmother.

I'm failing English class, but God is with me even when I fail.

Invite your child to externalize the worry in her head—divorce, illness, academics, or others—and welcome him to script his own “But God...” to notice how God is helping.

CHAPTER 5:

Contagious Calm

Have you ever been around a person who's really calm and peaceful? Even if you're having a bad day, just being in their presence can help you to chill out. It's the type of person who makes you feel calm in the face of something that usually makes you feel anxious. You catch their contagious calm.

The opposite is also true. When others are amped up being stressed about something—like the new boss being rumored to be a tyrant, who's going to get fired, or even how stressful traffic has become—you might catch their contagious stress!

1. Spread the Contagious Calm

What's cool about contagious calm and contagious stress is that you get to choose which one you'll spread! Ask your child:

- Can you think of a situation where those around you are spreading stress and anxiety?
- And how might you step in to offer the contagious presence of calm? What would you say?

2. Measure the Need and the Supply

In the midst of a hungry crowd of thousands, who Jesus had been teaching, there didn't seem to be enough bread to feed everyone. That's good reason to be anxious, right? We can experience this overwhelm when we look around and feel hopeless about "all this work I have to do" or "all these fights" or "all these illnesses."

What's sort of funny is that even though Jesus had performed a bunch of miracles, his disciples didn't even think to ask him for help! They learned what is just as true for us today: What we cannot do, Christ does!

Make room for you and your child to pause to ask God to help your child with worries.

CHAPTER 6:

Prayer, Not Despair

God, who is merciful and powerful and near, wants us to bring our needs to Him when we feel anxious. He longs to comfort us. In his letter to the early church in Philippi, Paul tells followers of Jesus that they should ask God for everything they need. *Everything!* That means help working out an argument with a friend, concerns about an assignment at work or a test at school, and even the upcoming performance review or ball game we might be worried about. The Bible assures us that God cares about all that stuff.

Sometimes we're quick to pray for the big things that we know God cares about: people who are hurting, a nation at war, or those who are hungry. But even when we're bold to pray about the big stuff we might be slower to pray about the little things! This week, be bold. Ask God for something that's been on your heart and mind.

1. Acknowledge God's Care and Concern

Invite your child to notice what he asks God for and what he might be slower to ask of God.

- What is one big thing that you're asking God for?
- And what is one small thing that you've asked God for? Maybe it was a big assignment at school. Or maybe you needed a ride home from school and your parent wasn't available.

Encourage your child to be bold to ask God for something small.

2. Notice That God Answers Prayer

A lot of time we ask God for what we want and need in prayer, but we might forget to slow down and notice that *God answers prayer*.

Discuss with your child the way that God answers prayer.

- Share a time that God answered your prayer
- Invite your child to notice and share when God answered her prayer

CHAPTER 7:

Say “Thank You”

When your child blows out the candles on his birthday cake, a well-meaning guest might encourage him, “Make a wish!” That’s the fun kind of wishing. But there’s another kind that can become chronic: “If only I were more popular;” “If only I were the team captain;” “If only I were prettier;” “If only I were smarter.” But we fool ourselves when we think that if we *finally* get what we want, we’ll be happy. It’s not bad to wish for things to improve, but sometimes our wishes make us worry.

Gratitude is an attitude of thankfulness, and we can choose it. Research shows that grateful people experience all kinds of benefits. It’s like medicine for the body and the soul.

1. Practice Gratitude

In this chapter, your child learned about keeping a gratitude journal and all the benefits that practice can provide. Practice sharing with one another that for which you’re grateful. (And you might even decide to make it a staple at your dinner table, too!)

Keeping in mind that slowly chewing on one or two items is more beneficial than zipping through a long list without really pausing to be grateful, here are a few prompts that might help:

- Who is a person for whom you’re grateful today?
- Is there an event for which you’re grateful?
- What’s a really simple thing in your life for which you can give thanks?
- Is there an opportunity you can thank God for?
- Is there a kindness shown to you for which you feel thankful?
- Is there a skill you have that you can thank God for?

2. Release What You Don’t Have

Sometimes we can lose our peace and joy when we focus on what we don’t have instead of all that we do have. Maybe your child wants something your family can’t afford right now. Or maybe a friend has had an experience—a vacation, a camp, a trip—that’s not available to your child.

- Share with your child something that you’d like to have but, for now, is out of reach. And ask your child to pray with you as you release that thing to God.

- Then invite your child to identify something he would like, but that is currently not available. Pray together, releasing it to God.

CHAPTER 8:

Perfect Peace

When natural elements combine to create a storm no boat can escape—hurricane-force winds, a cold front, a downpour of rain, mountain-sized waves—sailors call it a “perfect storm.” Sometimes life feels like that, doesn’t it? You don’t get the promotion at work *and* you get a flat on the way home. Or the air conditioning in your home stops working *and* you learn your parent received a difficult diagnosis. You wonder if you can even survive what you’re facing.

In Philippians 4:7, apostle Paul says that God offers a peace that *doesn’t even make sense*: “And God’s peace, which is so great we cannot understand it, will keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.” That basically means that we can experience the kind of peace that God offers even when it seems like we shouldn’t.

1. Discuss Ways to Feel Calm

As you and your child look at these seven strategies that can help you to feel better, ask your child:

- Which one or two of these seem most useful and natural for you to practice?
- Which one or two seem like they’ll be more of a challenge for you?
- If you had to *add* one of these healthy practices to your routine this week, which one do you choose?

Breathe: When you feel anxious, take five slow, deep breaths.

Exercise: Moving your body produces a chemical in your brain that makes you feel happy.

Talk: Tell someone how you feel. Share your worries with a friend, parent, teacher, pastor, or therapist.

Pray: Tell God how you’re feeling, and ask Him for help. Trust Him to take care of your worry.

Journal: Put your worries into words, and they will feel smaller.

Eat healthy foods: Your mind works best when your body is fed with good things.

Rest: Your mind needs rest as much as your body does. Get enough sleep, and spend time doing things that make you feel calm, like drawing, reading, or playing with a pet.

2. Listen to God

A lot of times when we pray, we do an awful lot of talking and not a lot of listening. And, to be fair,

hearing God's voice is something that we do need to work out throughout our lifetimes.

- Ask your child, "Have you ever heard God speaking to you?" How? What did God say?
- Share with your child a time when you heard God speaking to you. How? What did God say?

CHAPTER 9:

Think About What You Think About

When we are bullied by our emotions, it can feel like they are the boss of our hearts and minds. But the reality is that we can choose our thoughts! And this is exactly what the Apostle Paul is saying when he advises us to think on what is noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent, and praiseworthy. When we do, he promises, *the God of peace is with us.*

1. Notice What is Good

Read Philippians 4:8-9 together:

"Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is **noble**, whatever is **right**, whatever is **pure**, whatever is **lovely**, whatever is **admirable**—if anything is **excellent** or **praiseworthy**—think about such things. Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you."

Ask your child to identify a situation in her life that's been troubling her. Then invite your child to consider the situation she's facing, and also look at the larger context of her life, noticing and naming what is right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent, or praiseworthy.

For example, let's say your child didn't make the elite soccer team. As she thinks about the larger picture of her life, she might be able to say.

- What's right? I'll still have fun playing soccer with friends at school.
- What's pure? I have a lot of fun kicking around with my siblings in the backyard.
- What's lovely? I get a lot of enjoyment from this game I love.
- What's admirable? I'm probably going to have fun cheering in the stands with my other friends.
- What's excellent? I actually improved my skills at tryouts.
- What's praiseworthy? God's given me a strong healthy body that can run and play.

2. Whose Voice is It?

One of the ways we can break free of negative emotions—like fear and worry and stress—is to pay attention to our thoughts and take them captive. We do that when we notice who might be behind

the voice in our head!

Based on what you know of your child, his strengths, and his struggles, play a little game together. Offer statements he might believe, like "I'm stupid," "No one likes me," or "I'm ugly." And then invite your child to replace the lie with a statement that is more true: "I learn differently," "My best friend loves me," or "God made me exactly as I am."

Note: This is a great exercise to continue in your home. If you hear your child verbalizing the negative voice that's in her head, ask her how she could replace the lie with what is more true. When you do, you are helping her develop that new life-giving habit.

CHAPTER 10:

Cling to Christ

If you've ever seen a grape vine in a vineyard, or even noticed a tomato plant in your yard, you may have seen a few fruits that dropped off the vine and died before their time. But the plump juicy fruits that grow to be full-sized are the ones that remained attached and were nourished by the vine. That's exactly what happens when we remain in Christ: we grow; we flourish; we thrive. The secret to living well isn't found in trying harder. Rather, we thrive when we hold tight to Jesus.

1. Consider Your Connection to Jesus

Just like our friendships, our relationship with Jesus requires spending time together, getting to know one another. So when and where and how do you connect with God? Share with your child how you connect with God—Morning prayer journal? Worshiping on your commute? Evening prayer?—and ask him how he best connects with God.

2. Notice How is God Calling You to Grow

Consider this variety of practices that can nourish your soul. Discuss with your child which of these practices, below, you might *add* to your life with God, this week, to deepen your relationship with Him.

Read the Bible.

Sing worship songs.

Take a walk and notice all the things God made.

Write in a prayer or gratitude journal.

Pray with others.

Ask God for forgiveness.

Draw, paint, or make a craft for Jesus.

Make a list of questions for Jesus. Look for the answers in your Bible or ask an adult for help.

Memorize a Bible verse.

- What practice will you try out this week? When and where can you see that happening?
- What practice does your child want to experiment with this week, either alone or with you? When and where?
- And what will each of you need to move, or shift, or avoid in order to make the time and space you need? (Seriously, put it on your calendar *right now*.)

CHAPTER 11:

C.A.L.M.

Guess what? If you or your child worry about the first day at a new school or new job, it doesn't mean you're broken. It means you're human! All of us face situations that cause us worry or fear, and we get to choose how we deal with, and think about, those situations.

1. Make Lemonade

Life will always give us lemons. And because of the years you've lived, you likely have been given more lemons than your child! We'll always have to face hard things. And we'll even feel anxious and afraid. But when we choose to meditate on what is good, beautiful, and true, we can make lemonade from our difficult experiences.

Share with your child:

- What is one hard situation that you've faced in your lifetime?
- And what good—what sweet lemonade—were you able to make because you faced that situation?

And then invite your child to share how she has overcome and transformed a difficult situation.

2. What Have You Learned?

As you and your child have discussed *Anxious for Nothing*, it's likely that you've learned something about anxiety, something about God, and maybe even something about yourselves and one another!

Taking turns, consider these questions:

- What did you learn about anxiety?
- What did you learn about yourself?
- What did you learn about your child/parent?
- What did you learn about God?

¹ https://kidshealth.org/en/parents/anxiety-disorders.html?view=ptr&WT.ac=p_ptr

² Bulleted list found at: <https://www.healthychildren.org/English/health-issues/conditions/emotional-problems/Pages/Anxiety-Disorders.aspx#:~:text=According>

³ <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/parenting/wp/2018/10/09/what-does-childhood-anxiety-look-like-probably-not-what-you-think/>