

teentalk

Hope in Christ

Anxiety and stress can cause us to lose focus on God's love and power.

Grace Finstrom

Many teens today struggle with anxiety. Anxiety can range from a crippling fear of doing anything wrong in a social setting to post-traumatic stress. Sometimes those with anxiety need professional help. Sometimes they simply need the help of a friend and reminders of God's love and promises.

I suffered from mental anxiety, finding myself inconsequential and telling myself I didn't matter. I had a mental fear of putting myself out of my comfort zone and doing something considered "wrong." I also felt great stress and anxiety, especially as due dates approached.

Like many teens, I didn't say anything to anyone. I didn't know how my parents, teachers, or friends would react to my "problem." I pretended to be happy and didn't make a fuss when people put pressure on me in social situations, which was one of the worst things I could do because it only made things worse.

One day, in my junior year, I broke down and told my best friend. Instead

of making fun of me for my insecurities, she comforted me, hugged me, and told me to pray about it. She quoted a passage from 1 Peter, "Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you" (5:7). I've been a Christian since I was really young, but I had never considered giving God control over my fears or asking him to help me work through my anxiety.

I think I'm not the only one who has fears and anxieties. These problems—although we can't be rid of them entirely—can become minor. God is all-powerful. He knows what we think and what we fear and will help us get through any issue that arises in our lives. "When I am afraid, I put my trust in you" (Psalm 56:3). All we need to do is trust God, in his power and glory, to do whatever is best for us at that point in our lives.

God knows us all: our good points, our flaws, and our breaking points. We are his workmanship, his finest creation, and he loves us, flaws and all. We should not fear because we have been redeemed. We have a Sav-

ior who gave his life on the cross for our sins and failings so that we can stand perfect and righteous before our Holy God. There is no longer a reason to fear anything.

Anxiety is one of the devil's most effective weapons. It causes us to doubt ourselves, our faith in God, and God's power. It breeds within our hearts and eats away from the inside until we no longer feel human and whole, but worthless and broken.

But do not despair. We have hope in Christ and an everlasting happiness in the kingdom of heaven that is to come after this earthly world has passed away. Now we might have to feel anxiety and stress, but God assures us of his love. He promises he will always be there for us in our times of trouble and grief and will give us opportunities to let our faith and his power shine. There is no need to fear this world, for God is with us. Forever.

Grace Finstrom, a senior at Evergreen Lutheran High School, Tacoma, Washington, is a member at Holy Trinity, Des Moines, Washington.

teentalk

Do you believe this?

Christ, who lived and died and rose again so that we could be in heaven someday, helps us fight through the pain when a loved one dies.

Philip Treptow

“Do you believe this?”

Jesus asked Martha this question after Lazarus died and after he shared what is now a well-known Bible passage: “I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; and whoever lives by believing in me will never die” (John 11:25,26). Her response is one of the best expressions of faith in the Bible. “‘Yes, Lord,’ she replied, ‘I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, who is to come into the world.’” (John 11:22). After this Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead.

Don't we all wish that we could look Jesus in the face and say, “We do believe,” and then expect him to raise our loved one from the dead? But it doesn't work like that. No matter how much we pray, no matter how much we beg, no matter what we do, they will still be dead. It takes a lot for us to think about our loved ones as being dead. We love them. We want them to still be here for us to give us their advice or just to talk with them once more. We can pray, but everything is not okay.

My mom died when I was in seventh grade. Why isn't my Mom here? Yes, I know that she is in heaven and that she was suffering on earth in her battle with cancer, but that still doesn't help change the fact that my mom is gone and no one can replace her.

Some people say it gets easier as you move on, but they are lying. It never gets easier; it is always a pain—a stumbling block—in your life. It hurts every time someone jokes about their mom or someone else's. Mother's Day is hard. One of the hardest things I have learned to do is to hide the facts that these things still hurt and that I do still think about her every day. You figure out pretty quickly that the pain never really goes away. You learn to mask the pain.

We think that by praying, everything will just magically be perfectly fine. That is not the case. But we still need to rely fully on Christ when we hurt, because he cares for us and he will help us through these times of troubles.

When the doctors told my mom she had colon cancer, they told her she had six months to live.

For the next seven years, she battled this disease. She fought for six and half more years than what the doctors gave her. This is the greatest blessing I have from my mom. I was able to enjoy that much more time with her.

Jesus compares death to sleep in the Bible. It is hard for us to comprehend the fact that we will fall asleep and when we wake up, we will be in heaven with Jesus.

After my mom died, it was very hard to go to school every day knowing that she wasn't coming back. But my family and I have stayed very faithful in our church attendance, and I truly do believe that this is the sole reason we all have been able to make it through this.

Prayer does help. It may not fix things, but it does help.

Yes, I do believe.

Philip Treptow, a sophomore at Lakeside Lutheran High School, Lake Mills, Wisconsin, is a member at St. Matthew, Janesville, Wisconsin.