



## Episode 4-21: Parenting Anxious Children

### Resources:

#### Podcasts

[Biblical View of Aging - Joyful Journey](#)

#### Handout

[Read Through the Scripture Challenge 2024](#)

### Transcript:

Jocelyn: I don't just need to feel better. I need the truth. And ultimately that will make me better.

Janet: I just want to make it as totally simple as possible for ladies to see that the Bible is really applicable to their everyday life.

Jocelyn: When they understand theology, the application flows out of it quickly with joy.

Janet: It is a journey, but even the journey itself is joyful when I'm doing it, holding the hand of my savior and trusting him all along the way. This is the joyful journey podcast, a podcast to inspire and equip women to passionately pursue beautiful biblical truth on their journey as women of God. When you choose truth, you're choosing joy.

Janet: Welcome back. This is Janet here with my trusty co host, Jocelyn.

Jocelyn: Hey, friends, hey!

Janet: And today we've got with us a special guest, Dr. Amy Baker. Amy's been on before and spoke. If you didn't hear the episode that she did on Biblical View of Aging, I came out of that going, I just want to be old! And that takes a lot. So that was a really good episode. We've asked her to come back and share with us on another session that we really believe is going to be an encouragement to our listeners. Amy has talked on what is it like, how do we best parent and help our anxious children. So I've asked her to come and just share that topic with us, primarily just walking us through that session because it was so helpful. Amy, as you share with us about parenting anxious children, what are some of the reasons you think kids just might struggle with anxiety these days?

Amy: as you think about it, you just think about all the pressures that kids have in their lives now to, that would stir up anxiety. Now, of course, for kids, there's always been things that stir up anxiety. There have always been bullies. There have always been monsters under the bed. There's always been kids afraid of the dark. But it seems to me like in our culture now, just there's increased pressure for things like academic performance. Because if I don't get the good



grades in this class and I'm not going to pass with honors and then I'm not going to get into the college I want and then I'm not going to get the job I want and then I'm not going to get to have the life I want and I think that puts a lot of pressure on kids or just thinking about trying to sort out, am I gay?

Janet: Yes. Oh, knowing that you now have to determine and think through your sexual identity. What a weight.

Amy: Yeah. Yeah. And I don't remember asking myself that question when I was growing up, but I think kids do now.

Janet: Yep.

Amy: Just things like are my parents going to get divorced like my friend's parents? Of course, crime, intruders, that kind of thing, that's been around. And then you think about COVID stirring up just fear of death. And of course, there's always been death, but now with COVID, it seems like it's more in our faces. And so kids are more sensitive to it. And am I going to die? Is somebody that I love going to die? What's going to happen? Just pain, being unsafe, being laughed at, being bullied, being made to look like a fool. All those things. You just think about our children wrestling with that and without answers. It just is going to get worse and worse for them. And so it just stirs up in me just compassion for kids that are wrestling with that.

Janet: Yeah.

Jocelyn: I have an anxious child who has struggled to handle this biblically, and her anxiety has very much affected me. What are some ways that anxious children can affect parents?

Amy: Yeah, I think it's easy for the parents to be just as anxious as the kids are.

Janet: Yeah.

Amy: And we may not worry about monsters under the bed. We can be seduced into worrying about academic performance, our kids being bullied, whether they're going to keep having horrible nightmares, crime, intruders, sexual molestation by somebody in their life, online predators, whether our kids are going to be popular and well liked at school, because we remember how unpopular and lonely, we felt when we were in school, their health and then so they've got all those pressures that their kids are feeling. And then we add in the other parts of parents lives that we're tempted to fret about our jobs, our marriage, our relationships, our finances, and we could easily become parents who are more anxious than our kids. So we end up with a family full of people who are all concerned about what if this happens and just being perpetually fearful. But that's one of the beautiful things about this subject that makes me so excited to talk about it is because in the midst of trouble, God reminds us again and again that He is our refuge and a very present help in trouble. Where he says, I've got to figure out and control



my world and faith says, God's in control. And he'll equip me or my child with the grace to trust him and bring him glory even in the midst of danger. Dave Powlison was often quoted as saying, "In this life, we have many reasons to be afraid, but we have even better reasons not to fear when we consider who the Lord is and how he's on our side". That's encouraging to think about. Isn't it? Yeah, we do have a lot of things to fear but, then just that reminder, but we've got even better reasons.

Jocelyn: It's helpful that we're not saying there's nothing to be afraid of because that is literally a lie. There's a lot to be afraid of, but there is a big God that's bigger than all the things that we have to fear.

Amy: Yeah, and in Psalm 116 that I began to love, it talks about where the psalmist concludes, everyone is a liar. If you've been telling there's don't be afraid, there's nothing to be afraid about. Then you begin to clue everyone is a liar. There is plenty to be afraid about.

Janet: So what is it do you think about Psalm 116 that you think just makes it so applicable to this topic?

Amy: Psalm 116 in it, we see a psalmist deal with anxiety in his life, and I think there's a lot in this psalm that relates to our children, and therefore it can help us take steps in guiding our children through anxiety. Now, it's not going to cover everything.

Janet: Sure.

Amy: But I think it can put us on the right path and help us take steps in the right direction. Also, as you're probably aware, Psalm 116 is in the middle of a sixth psalm, Praise to God, known as the Egyptian Hillel.

Janet: Okay. I was not aware of that. That's cool.

Jocelyn: I had no idea. I don't even know what that is.

Amy: I may not be pronouncing it properly.

Janet: But we wouldn't know if you weren't, so go for it.

Amy: Anyway, you might wonder and Hillel means praise in Hebrew. This is what I have been told by our pastors, okay? But you might wonder when we're talking about parenting kids with anxiety. Why we would choose a psalm that is a psalm of praise? It's wait. But I think this will become more clear as we proceed, but I'll give you the spoiler here. These psalms were sung in connection with the Passover meal as well as other Hebrew festivals, and they reflect on how God saves His people.



Jocelyn: That's cool.

Janet: Which is what we need when we're anxious to remember.

Jocelyn: Yeah.

Amy: And so you think about it, more than likely, Psalm 116 would have been one of the psalms that Christ and His disciples sang before leaving the upper room on the night He was betrayed.

Jocelyn: Wow. That's profound.

Amy: On a night that had exceedingly powerful forces to stir up anxiety.

Janet: Yes.

Amy: Here they are as they're finishing the Passover reviewing Psalm 116. Now we don't know that happened for sure, but it would be typical of what was done at the Passover. So I think we can say that.

Jocelyn: That's really cool.

Amy: Yes. So as Christ and His disciples face the temptation to be controlled by anxiety. This song of deliverance stood as a powerful reminder of God's power. It praises God for His deliverance. So in the psalm, God has listened to the psalmist. He has delivered him. And the psalmist is just eager to tell about God's love. It has stirred up his soul to marvel at and rejoice in God's great goodness. And I think children and their parents are also in need of deliverance. And God offers himself not just to the Israelites, but to us as our deliverer. So because of the work of Jesus on our behalf, because He boldly entrusted Himself to the Father, we get to be free from slavery to anxiety and be stirred to praise.

Jocelyn: That's so cool.

Janet: Yes.

Jocelyn: A song of deliverance. I can't wait to hear about this. So can you walk us through Psalm 116 and how it could help us and our children who are anxious?

Amy: Sure. Let's do that. Let's start by just overview. So let's go through the whole Psalm and then let's go back and break it down. But just to give us our bearings here. Let's go through the whole psalm. Psalm 116. The Psalmist says, I love the Lord for he heard my voice. He heard my cry for mercy because He turned His ear to me. I will call on Him as long as I live. The cords of death entangled me. The anguish of the grave came over me. I was overcome by distress and sorrow. Then I called on the name of the Lord. Lord, save me! The Lord is gracious and righteous. Our God is full of compassion. The Lord protects the unwary. When I was brought



low, He saved me. Return to your rest, my soul, for the Lord Has been good to you. For you, Lord, have delivered me from death, my eyes from tears, my feet from stumbling, that I may walk before the Lord in the land of the living. I trusted in the Lord when I said, I am greatly afflicted. In my alarm I said, Everyone is a liar. What shall I return to the Lord for all his goodness to me? I'll lift up the cup of salvation and call on the name of the Lord. I'll fulfill my vows to the Lord in the presence of all his people. Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his faithful servants. Truly, I am your servant, Lord. I serve you just as my mother did. You have freed me from my chains. I will sacrifice a thank offering to you and call the name of the Lord. I will fulfill my vows to the Lord in the presence of all his people in the courts of the house of the Lord in your midst Jerusalem, praise the Lord. So that gives us the overview. So now I know I've always did was read it. I think we'd be more equipped, but then when you start to unpack it and think about how it relates to kids and anxiety and how parents can come alongside and help them, it just gets even more exciting. It does. It does. It does. Okay. So let me jump in at verse one. Verse one. I love the Lord for he heard my voice. He heard my cry for mercy. So the psalmist, he just starts out proclaiming he loves the Lord and it's why do you love the Lord? He doesn't waste any time in telling us there are all kinds of reasons to love the Lord. But the reason the psalmist gives is because the Lord heard him. Specifically, he heard his cry from mercy. He is an ever present help in time of trouble. Does that have any relevance for a child struggling with anxiety?

Jocelyn: Absolutely, yeah.

Amy: Does the Lord only listen to people who have their acts together?

Janet: Praise God that's not true.

Amy: People who are confident and fearless and anxiety free. Does he only listen to grown ups? It's the only present when everything in our life is going well. Like, when we got the parking space right up front in a crowded parking lot.

Janet: We know God's with us.

Amy: When our child got an A in math. Or when our child was voted student of the month. God's certainly present then, isn't he? But is he present when I have to park in the next county because I can't find a close parking space? Or when my child fails the math test? Or when my child gets detention? We don't know from verse one how the psalmist struggled with anxiety, but we do know he didn't have his act together because he cried for mercy.

Jocelyn: That's true.

Amy: You don't ask for mercy when everything's going right. You don't ask for mercy when you're confident and not afraid.



Janet: That's a good point.

Amy: You ask for mercy when you're concerned and you don't have the power to make everything okay.

Janet: Yeah.

Amy: When you're afraid, you ask the one in power to take pity on you and show you compassion. When our kids are anxious, they need mercy. There's something pressuring them which they don't have the power to control. They lack the ability to achieve with certainty the outcome they want. Maybe it's the ability to get good enough grades to get into the college they want that they lack. Maybe it's the ability to make others like them, or make them at least stop bullying them, that they lack. Maybe it's the power to prevent themselves from having nightmares, or to get the thoughts from the nightmare out of their mind, that they lack. Maybe it's the ability to prevent burglars from breaking into the house at night they lack. Maybe it's the power to turn scary darkness into light that they lack. Maybe it's the ability to keep themselves from dying or someone close to them from dying that they lack. Maybe it's the ability to make sure they're never laughed at or ignored that they lack. Maybe it's the ability to make sure that they never have another panic attack that they lack. You parents know your kids. You know their fears. Our kids are not powerful enough to control every outcome in their lives, and neither can we. We can't do it for ourselves, and we can't do it for our kids. We need mercy.

Janet: So even already, as you've said that, that's convicting to me, even as a parent. My kids are grown now, but when my child is anxious, my first go to is to teach truth and why they shouldn't be. Not just to give, show mercy first. And as you're saying that, I'm like, it's so true we need mercy. We don't just need, you don't need to be afraid. We need mercy. And I'm so glad to hear you say that because I don't think that's my go to.

Amy: Because I wanted to solve it. I want to just make it all go away, solve it for my child. You don't need to be afraid. And if they're not afraid, then we don't have an issue and we can just go on. But it doesn't that's why the psalmist ends up saying everyone is a liar

Janet: When mom says I don't need to be afraid she's wrong

Amy: We need someone else to show compassion to us and we don't have the power to control or fix or make everything All right, and the psalmist seemed to understand that so Love has been stirred up in him because the Lord has heard his cry for mercy. Like Janet said, that could be true for us. Couldn't it? We could teach our kids to cry out for mercy. Couldn't we?

Janet: Yeah, yeah.



Amy: We could talk about how much we love the Lord because of the ways he shows us mercy every day. We could, Tell our children about how we've cried out for mercy. Lord, please help me figure out how to get this new printer set up.

Janet: Oh my word, that's a little too close.

Amy: Or please help me listen politely to this customer right now. Or, please help me be a good mom or a good dad right now. So as we parent anxious kids, let's teach them to cry out for mercy. So that was just verse one. Verse two, the psalmist says, because he turned his ear to me, I will call on him as long as I live.

Jocelyn: Oh, that's so cool.

Amy: So what happens when the psalmist cries out for mercy, the Lord turned his ear to him. He listened to him attentively. That can encourage our hearts as parents, can't it? Because we love our children. We'd love to be able to turn our ears to our children whenever they call.

Janet: Yeah.

Amy: But we can't always do that. By necessity, we can't always be with our children. We have jobs we have to go to without our children. They have school they have to go to without us. But there is someone who's able to listen attentively whenever our children call. And what is even more comforting is that even though we sometimes blow it when it comes to listening to our children, there's someone who won't blow it.

Jocelyn: That's true.

Janet: 100% safe to go there.

Amy: As parents who love our children, we're not always thrilled to have our children call on us.

Janet: Truth.

Amy: Mom, Dad, I'm having a bad dream in the middle of the night when you're trying to get some sleep. Or, Mom, Dad, I forgot my lunch. Can you bring it to me at school? When you've got a full day of meetings and this is the fourth time this month your child has forgotten their lunch. Or, Dad, Mom, I have a science project due tomorrow and I need poster board when it's snowy and 10 degrees below zero outside. Or Dad, Mom, can you help me with this chemistry homework after you've had a long day at work and you could barely pass chemistry yourself when you were in school. God will turn his ear to his children and we can confidently call on him 24/7 as long as we live and he will turn his ear. In the end, our children's greatest need is not us or the school or anyone else. It's God. And that's true for all of us, as long as we live, like the Psalmist says, I'll call on you as long as I live. Then verse three, the Psalmist really starts to



unpack his anguish a little bit here. He says, the cords of death entangled me. The anguish of the grave came over me. I was overcome by distress and sorrow. So it seems like this psalmist came face to face with death. Perhaps his own life was threatened, or perhaps someone he loved died or was dying. Either way, he was overcome by distress and sorrow. We don't know precisely what it looked like in the life of the psalmist to be overcome with distress. But we know what it looks like in the life of our kids, don't we? We've seen what it looks like when the distress of anxiety overtakes them. It might look like a refusal to do something. It might look like uncontrollable crying. It might look like anger. It may look like withdrawal or isolation or hiding. It may look like a panic attack. When our kids are in panic mode, we see the cords of death wrapped around them. Their hearts pound, they tremble, or they shake. They experience shortness of breath or feel like they're smothering. They may feel like they're choking. They may have chest pain. They're nauseous. They may feel dizzy or unsteady or lightheaded. They may fear that they're going crazy. They may fear that they are dying.

Jocelyn: It feels like you're dying.

Janet: Yeah.

Amy: Yeah. You are overcome by distress when you're in the midst of anxiety like that. The psalmist knows what it's like. He was overcome by distress and sorrow. So what did he do? Verse four. Then I called on the name of the Lord, save me. So in the midst of being overcome by distress, the psalmist called out to the Lord and notice how small this step is. Notice that the psalmist didn't do something huge and courageous. He didn't prepare an eloquent prayer. He just uttered three words, Lord, save me. When we're in the midst of terror, we probably can't do much more than that. We aren't equipped to have a reasoned conversation. We aren't focused enough to be able to read a booklet on fear. We need something simple. And that's a step you could teach your kids to do. Three words, that's it. Lord, save me. As parents endeavor to help their kids with anxiety, we want to consider how we can get those three words in front of them. Make a bracelet, write it on their hands, text it to them every day. Get those three words in front of them. Lord, save me. Now. In saying that, we need to note that this crying out to God is not some kind of unbelieving mantra.

Janet: Yeah. Yeah.

Amy: This crying out to God is not some repetition of supposedly magical words. This crying out to God is not some kind of ritualistic religion. Crying out to the Lord must be accompanied by confidence in the Lord. Why be confident in the Lord? The psalmist has already presented so far in this psalm why he has confidence in the Lord in verse one He told us he loves the Lord because he's merciful. That's a reason to have confidence in him He loves the Lord because God has turned his ear to him in verse two So the psalmist already has reasons to be confident, but in verse five he now piles on Reasons to be confident. He says the Lord is gracious and righteous Our God is full of grace of compassion. So in verse four, after calling out in distress, Lord, save



me. The psalmist has good things to say about the Lord. He doesn't say well, He was no help or he didn't know what to do. The psalmist says, the Lord is gracious and righteous. Our God is full of compassion.

Jocelyn: That's beautiful.

Amy: So he gives us more reasons for his confidence. The Lord, he says, the Lord is gracious. He'll help because he's kind. That's what someone who is gracious does. So I trust him. He's going to help me because he's gracious. He's kind. He's not only gracious, he's righteous. He's going to do what's right. He won't do what's wrong. He's not going to mess this up. Sometimes we don't know the right thing to do to help our kids, but the Lord does.

Janet: So we get to run there too, not just our kids.

Amy: Yes. And then it says he is full of compassion. Unlike me, I have a little bit of compassion and then I'm done. I am far from full of compassion. God is full of compassion. And I would presume that means if he's full of compassion, there's no room left in him for the opposite. Uncompassion or being indifferent or uncaring or unresponsive. Or unkind. Or unloving. He is full of compassion.

Janet: and I think it's really important to, to, for us to think about because I think some of the reasons that even I, I won't wanna run to the Lord because I'm concerned he's had enough. Because I've done this. How many times? Because I forget he's not like me. I forget he is full of compassion. He can't be these things when I know I am. So that's so good to think through.

Amy: Yeah, gracious, righteous, full of compassion. Those are reasons to love the Lord, aren't they?

Janet: Yes.

Amy: Knowing God is gracious and righteous and full of compassion gives us reasons to trust him. Knowing this equips us to be confident in turning to God as our refuge and strength and ever present help in trouble. Our kids need someone they can always trust. That person is the Lord. We as parents want to be someone our kids can trust, but we realize sometimes we fail. We aren't always gracious. Always righteous, always full of compassion. it can soothe our anxiety to know that for our kids, like Janet said, and for us, there's someone who is completely trustworthy.

Jocelyn: And it takes the pressure off as parents to have to be that to our kids I can't be there all the time. I can't never get upset. I can't be always compassionate.

Janet: I'm going to let them down. And then I feel like, I've completely failed them instead of I can ask forgiveness and I'm crowding them back to the one who will never do that.



Amy: Because without that, now our anxiety is all stirred up. so for our kids and for us, it just, it brings peace to know that there's someone who is completely trustworthy. There's no one else our kids can trust completely, not even us. But they can fully trust the Lord. He'll help them. He'll do what's right. And he doesn't have an uncompassionate bone in his body. Isaiah 26 tells us the outcome of trusting in the Lord in verse three of that chapter. We hear you will keep in perfect peace. Him whose mind is steadfast. Because he trusts in you. So as your child trusts in the Lord, he receives the opposite of anxiety. That's cool. He receives perfect peace. No longer will you be parenting an anxious kid. You'll be the parent of a child who has peace. And the option and privilege to put all of our trust in God brings with it the blessing of perfect peace. And as you work on this with your child, perhaps you could help them come up with a list of reasons why God is trustworthy, similar to what the psalmist did in verse 5. Maybe use your driving time with your kids to list ways God is trustworthy. So do things like play the ABC game, going through the alphabet, giving reasons why God is trustworthy. So for example A, God is God is trustworthy because he is always with us. B, God is trustworthy because he is, because he's the best. C, God is trustworthy because he cares. Use your driving time to just go through the alphabet, thinking of reasons why God is trustworthy. So you're getting these truths in front of your kids. And if you want to wrap it up, play the, I'm going to California and I'm taking version of that. Build on it. I don't know if you guys played I'm going to California.

Jocelyn: We played that. You have to remember all of them.

Amy: Yes. in the nicely family, when we were on vacation, we would play I'm going to California and I'm taken. So for those of you who don't know what I'm going to California, how that works is, The first person starts out and says, I'm going to California and I'm taking an apple. And then the second person, Jocelyn, says,

Jocelyn: I'm going to California and I'm taking an apple and banana.

Amy: And then Janet, the third person says,

Janet: I'm going to California and I'm taking an apple and a banana and a carrot.

Amy: All right. So the I'm going to California version of this ABC game would be, God is trustworthy because he is awesome.

Jocelyn: God is trustworthy because he's awesome and believable.

Janet: God is trustworthy because he's awesome and believable and compassionate.

Amy: Ah, way to go. Okay. God is trustworthy because he is awesome and believable and compassionate and Dear. Okay. So you get it. But just think about that ramped up version, we're rehearsing those things with each iteration. Without even knowing it. Yes. And it's fun.



Janet: Yeah.

Amy: It's fun. Rehearse those truths, tape them on their lockers, put it on colored pages, stick it on the mirror, save it to the lock screen of their phone. He is kind. He will do what's right. He is full of compassion. Okay, verse six. The Lord protects the unwary. When I was brought low, he saved me. So here the psalmist gives us another reason to trust God. He protects the unwary, or in the ESV and NASB, that gets translated as simple. So as a parent, you're discerning enough to be alert to danger, even when your kids don't see any danger. That's why from a young age you gave them instruction about electrical outlets and playing with fire and not playing in the street. As they get older, you continue to provide instruction. You monitor their social media accounts. You give them curfews. You want to protect them. You want to protect the unwary. God protects the unwary also. He's able to protect me not only from dangers I see, but also from dangers I don't see.

Jocelyn: That is so cool.

Janet: That is and it's so encouraging to think it's not like I have to get so wise that I know all the things I want to grow in wisdom, but God's gonna protect me and them.

Amy: Yes. He protects the unwary. So the best he truly is the best. Okay, and here's one of the areas. I believe our kids may be especially unwary. They may be unwary of what is in their hearts. They may be unwary of how their hearts are leading them to anxiety. As we parent anxious kids, we want to help them see what's in their hearts to see what they're treasuring. Anxiety gets stirred up when we fear that we're going to lose something that we treasure when what we want is jeopardized. So if I long for comfort, if I long for approval, if I long for pleasure, if I long for a life without suffering, you fill in the blank. I may be overcome by anxiety. I may be brought low if it seems like all that's going to be taken away from me.

Janet: Yeah.

Amy: So as we parent anxious kids, we want to be listening for the desires, the motives, the treasures, the delights, the wants, the idols that influence and control their hearts. If we don't address the danger within, removing all the dangers without, outside of them, isn't going to result in peace.

Janet: That is very true. Which is the temptation as parents to try to get rid of all the circumstances that cause it.

Amy: Exactly. And that becomes even more important as we understand that our hearts are corrupt and dangerous. Jeremiah 17: 9 tells us the painful truth that the heart is deceitful and desperately wicked. You work hard to make sure deceitful and desperately wicked people don't get access to your kids. Our kids are often sensitive to danger that's outside of them. They're



scared of wicked people. But they may be unwary about the danger from within. Our kids tend to see danger as coming from outside of them without realizing how dangerous their heart is. They're unwary of the danger within. The danger of coveting good grades so they can get into the college I want, so they can have the life I want. The danger of living for the approval of others and doing whatever it takes to get it. The danger of relying on myself and wanting to control everyone and everything around me so that I don't have to suffer. The danger of idolizing physical safety. The danger of not loving God and others and instead only caring about myself. God may be providing protection to the unwary by allowing some of these external fears to put pressure on us and bring us low so that we can see what our hearts are treasuring. God may allow some of these fears to put pressure on us so that we can repent of treasuring the creation more than the creator. God may allow some of these fears to put pressure on us. So we'll turn to him for salvation. And then the Psalmist says something interesting in verse seven, the Psalmist says, return to your rest, my soul, for the Lord has been good to you. And I think there's something interesting in this verse. The Psalmist does some self talk here. And I think it's fascinating that he is telling himself to return to your rest. Why would a person who has been saved and protected by the Lord need to instruct themselves to return to rest? After all, we've just learned at the end of verse 6 that the Lord saved him. Okay? He protected him. This psalmist is no longer in danger anymore. Why tell yourself, return to rest? You're safe. Why tell yourself return to rest? And maybe you have to tell yourself that because maybe it doesn't happen automatically. Even though I'm safe, my soul, my body and spirit may not act like it. They're still adrenaline pumping through me. I'm still shaking. Return to your rest. Oh, my soul, for the Lord has been good to you. I may still see danger all around me. I may not believe or have thought through. That the Lord has been good to me. Or God's rescue from danger may not look like what I expected it to look like.

Janet: Yes, that happens a lot.

Jocelyn: I think that's a big one.

Amy: God's goodness to me may not have come in the form I expected it to happen. Or I may have told myself something else so often that I'm prone to forget and need to keep reminding myself. That's why we want to get all those reminders in front of our kids. Like writing it on their hand, reviewing it on the way to school, on the way home from school. Return to rest. So we shouldn't be surprised if our kids still wrestle with anxiety, even when there are no apparent dangers. Rest is not a result of lack of danger. Rest is a result of confidence and trust in God. Let me say that again, rest, peace, freedom from anxiety is not a result of lack of danger. Rest, peace, and freedom from anxiety is a result of confidence and trust in God. That's why you might tell your kids they're safe. Bogeyman is not going to get them, but they may remain anxious because rest is not a result of lack of danger. Rest is a result of confidence and trust in God. What basis does this psalmist use for this self talk? Return to your rest, oh my soul. I'm talking, return to your rest, oh my soul. Is he merely trying to convince himself through the power of positive



thinking that everything is okay? is he assuring himself all the doors are locked, no harm can get through to him? Nope. He has experienced the Lord's goodness. He has history with the Lord, so his soul can be at rest. It's because the Lord has been good to him that he can have peace instead of anxiety,

Janet: For some of our kids, they don't have a lot of that history yet And so we need to have mercy while they're developing that.

Amy: Yes, and we need to help them remember those reasons

Janet: Yes.

Amy: Why the Lord is trustworthy. We have the same reasons for confidence in our Lord. Romans 8 31 and 32 Speaks to this what then shall we say in response to these things if God is for us Who can be against us? He who did not spare his own son, but gave him up for us all. How will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? Ah, be at rest, O my soul, for the Lord has been good to you. We can be so confident, in fact, that even if others actually try to harm us, We can still have confidence because we know that all things work together for good for those who love God so that we can look like Christ. So what does rest look like in our kids? How do we get there? Rest, peace and freedom from anxiety for our kids comes as they practice delighting in God and being confident he's up to something good even if they can't see it yet. And that will mean actively reminding themselves of ways God has been good to him.

Janet: Yeah.

Amy: We unpack that more in verses 8 and 9, or the psalmist unpacks that more in verses 8 and 9. He says, For you, Lord, have delivered me from death, my eyes from tears, my feet from stumbling, that I may walk before the Lord in the land of the living. So I think we need to talk about what deliverance looks like because if we don't unpack this, our kids may decide that we're one of the liars mentioned in verse 11 and they may turn away from God. Biblical counselor, Julie Lowe says if you have a child that struggles with anxiety, you may be tempted to comfort your child by reassuring them, don't worry, that will never happen. Or, you're fine, no one is going to hurt you or kidnap you. And though we can say those things with relative confidence, the reality is, the things our kids fear do happen.

Janet: Yep. Absolutely.

Amy: Kids do get kidnapped. People do break into homes, and older kids do mistreat younger kids. Julie continues, Kids realize this. Kids are more informed and in tune with the world and local events more than they ever were. They are often very aware of every danger out there. They hear it from the news, social media, a home device connected to the internet, or smartphones. And if you somehow buffered them from all of that, they'll hear it from their peers.



She says bad things do happen. Telling kids otherwise will either feel dismissive to them, or they'll determine you are irrelevant or inadequate to help them. Or, as the psalmist said, you're a liar. In this world, there will be trouble. They'll be exposed to it, or alerted to it, and we need to help them navigate it. When God delivers, He may deliver us from whatever immediate danger we're facing. The psalmist says, you've delivered me from death. However, if we interpret God's deliverance to mean that he'll spare us from all trouble, we're not accurately representing him. We know from John 16, 33, that in this life we'll face trouble. Jesus said, I've told you these things so that you may have peace. Interesting what he's going to say next. I've told you this so you can have peace. And then he says, in this world, you'll have trouble. Interesting, isn't it? But take heart. I have overcome the world. And in fact, all who live godly lives will face persecution. So deliverance can't be limited to temporal rescue. Even though that is overwhelmingly frequent. I mean, just think of ways that we've already been delivered from danger today. We got here safely. Yes. We didn't choke to death on our breakfast. Our heart hasn't burst open. We haven't been blinded by the sun, We weren't attacked by terrorists. We haven't been kidnapped. No one mugged us on the way in. We weren't bitten by a snake. We haven't been run over by a truck. The telephone pole didn't fall on us as we drove by it. We have already been protected from temporal danger in hundreds of ways today. God regularly does deliver us from hard things, but God's focus is not primarily on making us safe for the moment. So we need to make sure we're not leading our kids to believe that deliverance means we won't experience hard things. God's focus is eternal as well as temporal. He provides safety so that we can be restored to our original purpose of showing how excellent He is as we're conformed to His image. He wants to deliver us from the prison of living life selfishly, living life enslaved to idols, living life thinking everything is okay because I've been a, quote, good person. Never realized I could never be good enough. We need Jesus. True deliverance is not deliverance from hard things. It's a deliverance from a life lived apart from God, both now and in eternity.

Jocelyn: Oh, that's so true.

Amy: For those who belong to God, this deliverance God offers means God will never allow us to face harm that will do irreparable or eternal damage to our soul. God forbids suffering that would hurt us eternally. At his return, death is going to be vanquished and we will be completely healed and finally, forever delivered from death. God will wipe every tear from our eyes. We will be done with tears. Also, we will no longer stumble into sin. We will walk before the Lord and with the Lord in eternal life. The psalmist understood that, as he said in verses eight and nine. For you, Lord, have delivered me from death, my eyes from tears, my feet from stumbling, that I may walk before the Lord in the land of the living. Isn't it just so much fun to connect that? You just think about what we learn later in Scripture about God wiping every tear from our eyes, death is going to be vanquished, and we're no longer going to stumble into sin. Here's the psalmist just putting it out there for us. Putting it out there. So the Psalms may have experienced temporal deliverance, but for those who belong to Christ, we get something even better than that. We get eternal deliverance. I love this statement from Charles Spurgeon. Spurgeon said, it



is impossible that any ill should happen to the man who is beloved of the Lord. The most crushing calamities can only shorten his journey and hasten him to his reward. Ill is not ill to him. Only good in mysterious form. The point of God's rescue is not mere survival, but a life lived before God in the land of the living. And that deliverance results in action. The psalmist is going to walk. Not hide, not burrow into a safe place, not isolate, not disengage, not run away, not build a fortress. He's going to walk before the Lord in the land of living. So what's that look like as we parent our anxious kids? I think it means we help them to live to please God, not retreat from life. So we want to help our children to identify what opportunities God has given them to love God and others in their everyday activities. Being kind to people. Being a hard worker. Being confident that God's plans are for good. Helping others with what they're working on. Being friendly to everyone. Smiling, saying hello, remembering people's names. Obeying their parents, respecting their teacher, asking for help when they don't understand instead of shutting down. To walk before the Lord means living life the way we were created to live, reflecting his beautiful image by loving him with all of our heart, mind, soul, and strength, and loving other people. Now we get to verses 10 and 11. The psalmist says, I trusted in the Lord when I said, I'm greatly afflicted. In my alarm I said, everyone is a liar. when he was overcome by distress and sorrow, Back up in verse three, when he was alarmed, when he was anxious, when he was panicked, the psalmist concluded that everyone was a liar. He concluded no one but the Lord is trustworthy. Everyone else is a liar. Our kids may come to the same conclusion. That stings of the parent, doesn't it? You're the one that's been getting up in the middle of night comforting your child after a nightmare. You've run to school with forgotten lunches. You've gone out in the negative 10 below degree weather. You've been the one helping with chemistry and now everyone is a liar. the fact is, only God is trustworthy. We're not. We will fail. As much as we want to provide security and safety, we'll snap at our kids. We'll forget a promise. We will just want a moment of peace, or a good night's rest, or a day without a tantrum. Maybe everyone is a liar because they told your child his loved one wouldn't die, that he would be fine, no one would hurt him, it would be alright. So as parents of anxious kids, we want to prepare them for the failures of others. We want to prepare them for when they're bullied, when they're laughed at, when they feel threatened. When we as parents, fail them. How do you do that? How you prepare them for that? Kids need to know that all people will fail. And when they do, it's going to hurt, but God won't fail. And they can talk to him about what they're experiencing. Like the Psalmist did in verse 10, and he will turn his ear to him like verse two, and he will deliver like verse eight. We want them to be able to say to others, you have the power to wound me. You can wound me with your words. You can destroy my reputation. You can hurt me physically. You can push me down on the playground. You can make it hard for me to be in class. But you don't have the power to destroy me.

Janet: Yes.

Amy: And, if you wound me unrighteously, God will vindicate me and repay you. It makes me sad to think about that, so I'm going to be praying that God will help both of us. That, that is



trusting in the Lord. Verses 12 through 14, psalmist says, What shall I return to the Lord for all his goodness to me? I'll lift up the cup of salvation and call the name of the Lord. I will fulfill my vows to the Lord in the presence of all his people. Because he has been the recipient of God's goodness, the Psalmist wants to please the Lord, but how? First of all, he decides he's going to exalt the Lord. Where do we see that? He says, I'm going to lift up the cup of salvation. He's going to exalt the Lord. He also says, I'm going to depend on the Lord. Where do we see that? Verse 13, he says, I'm going to call on the name of the Lord. He's going to depend on him. And then he will actively do what pleases the Lord. Where do we see that? Verse 14, he will fulfill his vows to the Lord. I think those verses give us a test to see if our kids are beginning to have victory over their anxiety. Are they eager, like the psalmist, to live like they belong to the Lord? Are they trusting God? Are they looking to God for salvation? Are they choosing to live life in a way that pleases God? Are they doing what's right with, for, and around other people. Are you starting to hear your kids say things along the lines of even if I don't get into the college I want I can pay attention and review diligently and accept the grade I get on the test. God made us with different gifts and abilities. This may be my opportunity to rejoice in the strengths of others without coveting them for myself.

Janet: And that takes maturity.

Amy: Maybe it would sound like I may not be able to make others like me. but I can be kind to them and ask God to bless them. Or I may not be able to prevent nightmares, but I can choose to review that God is near to me and that he is an ever present help in time of trouble before I go to sleep. And then when I wake up from a nightmare or I may not be able to prevent burglars from breaking in, but I can thank God that no burglar can ever steal God's love from me. I can't turn darkness into light. But I can live my life trusting in the God of the universe who made light. I can't keep myself or others from dying, but I can repent of my sin and ask Jesus to be my savior and Lord so that I can live with him forever. I can't make sure I'm never laughed at, but I can seek to be a friend to those around me who are regularly scorned by others. I can't make sure I never suffer another panic attack. But I can be confident that if I do have a panic attack, it's an opportunity to examine my heart to see what I fear I might lose.

Jocelyn: That's helpful. Yeah.

Amy: If we receive the Lord's goodness and it doesn't stir up a desire to live for God in front of others, then that should lead us to concern. If we don't see that happening in our kids, that should lead us to concern. And 15, the psalmist says, Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his faithful servants. And again, I don't know that I can say for sure in this psalm whether the cords of death that entangled the psalmist were because his own life was threatened or whether someone he loved died or was dying, perhaps his life was spared or the life of his loved one was spared, but I wonder if it's also possible that he's had a change of viewpoint about death and that has saved him from the anguish of the grave, from being overcome by distress and sorrow. His



soul's at rest because God has protected him from the despair of the unwary or the simple when faced with death. The simple are generally able only to see what's temporal. And if that's all you see, It's natural that facing death will lead to anguish and being overcome by sorrow. But as you begin to see life through the lens God provides, you realize that precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of the saints. And that enables you to have a different view of the cords of death. The psalmist now seems to have the view that if you belong to the Lord, your death is precious to him. Your life and death are something dear to God. And because he's convinced that God cares, the psalmist no longer seems to be overcome by distress and sorrow. He's able to look at death with a different focus. That is radical, isn't it?

Janet: Yeah.

Jocelyn: Totally.

Amy: What view do our kids have? The untaught view of the simple hearted, or The view of someone who has been encouraged and enlightened by God's perspective.

Janet: Our kids may not have that yet, but it makes me think, what view do the parents have? Because that's what the kids are seeing and over time will learn from.

Amy: Yeah. Yeah, these things that we're talking about for kids, they really are things for parents too, aren't they? It's not like there's a different formula for parents. This is how you do it if you're a parent. It's the same for all of us. So we go back to Spurgeon who said it's impossible that any ill should happen to the man who's beloved of the Lord. The most crushing calamities can only shorten his journey and hasten him to his reward. Ill's not ill to him. It's only good in mysterious form.

Jocelyn: Wow.

Amy: Yeah. Yeah, these things that we're talking about for kids, they really are things for parents too, aren't they? It's not like there's a different formula for parents. This is how you do it if you're a parent. It's the same for all of us. So we go back to Spurgeon who said it's impossible that any ill should happen to the man who's beloved of the Lord. The most crushing calamities can only shorten his journey and hasten him to his reward. Ill's not ill to him. It's only good in mysterious form.

Janet: Absolutely, yeah. I love that. You're showing them what to do, not, why aren't you, why, stop, just. Run. And they get to see it in you.

Amy: Exactly. We can think that setting a good example or good modeling for our children is having it all together. We're not afraid. When really good modeling is when we model what we do with anxiety. We're no different from our kids. We face temptation to be overcome by anxiety. However, by God's grace, we've learned to turn to him that setting a good example for our kids.



And then that first also mentions chains. What chains do our anxious kids need to be released from? All those things that we mentioned as we got started. Academic performance, and bullying, and bad dreams, and wondering, am I gay? Are there monsters under the bed? Are my parents going to get divorced like my friend's parents did? Crime and intruders, and being made to look like a fool, being laughed at, ridiculed, dying, someone close to me dying, being unsafe. All those things. Chains. Chains. But I think we'd be remiss if we didn't discuss a chain that has the power to hold our children in its power all their lives. A chain that's stronger than all those other chains, as strong as they are. In Hebrews 2:14-15, we're told, Since the children have flesh and blood, Jesus too shared in their humanity, so that by his death, he might break the power of him who holds the power of death, that is the devil, and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.

Janet: That's a chain.

Amy: Yeah. Even if we could make everything in our child's environment safe, we install the most secure burglar alarm available. We make sure our kids are not bullied. Our kids are never laughed at. They never fail a test. No one they love dies. Our children will never be free from anxiety until they've been freed from their fear of death. So as we parent anxious kids, we want to point them to the one who has the power over death and encourage them to repent of their sin and turn to Jesus for salvation. This is unquestionably the most important thing we can do for our children. Jesus died a cruel death on the cross so that when we trust in him, we could be free from the fear of death and enchanted by his goodness and love. And now we're building up to the finale here verses 17 through 19 The psalmist says I will sacrifice a thank offering to you and call the name of the lord I will fulfill my vows to the lord in the presence of all his people in the courts of the house of the lord in your midst jerusalem Praise the lord. So now the psalmist goes back to saying how excited Not fearful he is about living and bringing glory to god. Seems like we already heard that in verses 13 and 14, didn't we? Why bring it up again? Maybe because he's so excited about it. How excited would you be if you were no longer the parent of an anxious kid, but the parent of a child who has peace and is living life to love God and serve others? I think you might do the same thing.

Janet: I totally agree.

Amy: You might just babble on and on about what happened and give praise to God.

Jocelyn: What a wonderful psalm. That is such a blessing. Thank you so much for sharing that. I'm just, my mind is just thinking a lot about what it looked like for us to battle anxiety as a family. And I sure wish I had studied this psalm before then. But God is merciful. And I'm really thankful to hear like the importance of the Lord, save me, the cry out for salvation in the middle of that devastating, scary circumstance.



Amy: And I love that. It's just three words. Yeah. Just three words. Lord, save me. It's not complicated. It's okay, I think I can do that. Lord, save me.

Jocelyn: He's compassionate. He's full of mercy.

Janet: And it's just such a picture because, when our kids are little and something is scaring them and they cry out for their parent, they don't give a whole long, here's what's going on. And I was thinking that maybe you could help with it. They're just like. Mom! Because they're scared. And what do we do? We go and save them. Now, we're not perfect, but that's our heart. And to think, how about a perfect father? That's all he's asking, is just, come to me and ask. And he wants to

Jocelyn: do that. It reminds me of God's ezer quality, E Z E R, his helper quality, and that word means it's similar to, he sees an animal trapped in a trap screaming out for help, and he reaches down and saves him. So that is where God is. He loves to save.

Janet: Yes. Excellent. Thank you so much for sharing with us, Amy. That's very encouraging.

Amy: Oh, that was fun, wasn't it?

Janet: Yes, it was.

Amy: Psalm 116, I love this. Yeah.

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