

At The Movies: Week 1

September 1, 2024

Message Summary

We all have those moments when anxiety feels like it's controlling our lives. Whether it's stress about the future, fear of failure, or the overwhelming pressure to be perfect, anxiety can shake our sense of self. Just like Riley in **Inside Out 2**, we might find ourselves struggling to stay afloat when our emotions seem out of control.

But there's hope. This Sunday, we dove into the story of Elijah, a prophet who faced extreme fear and anxiety, much like we do today. Elijah's story teaches us that even in our darkest moments, when it feels like we've run ourselves into the ground, shut people out, and lost sight of God, there's still a way through. God doesn't shout over the noise of our fears—He whispers, reminding us that He's near, even when we feel alone.

Let's explore how Elijah's journey can help us understand our own struggles with anxiety and how God's presence, no matter how quiet, can bring us the peace we're searching for. Together, we'll discover that we don't have to face our fears alone—God is always with us, whispering truth and offering strength.

Icebreaker Ideas

1. **Desert Island Picks:** Ask each person to share three items they would want to have if they were stranded on a desert island. This can spark creativity and give insight into each person's personality, interests, and priorities.
2. **Favorite Things:** Have each group member share one of their favorite things in a few different categories, like a favorite book, movie, hobby, or place they've visited. This helps everyone learn more about each other and discover shared interests.

Key Scripture(s)

Philippians 4:4-7

- *"Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."*
- **Context:** This letter was written by Paul while he was in prison, facing an uncertain future. Despite his circumstances, Paul emphasizes rejoicing and trusting in God's peace, which transcends human understanding.

Philippians 4:4-7 discusses not being anxious about anything. Do you think this is possible in today's world? Why or why not?

Discussion Point: Reflect on the pressures faced by different generations (Gen Z, adults) and how this verse applies to them.

1 Kings 19:3-5

- *"Elijah was afraid and fled for his life. He went to Beersheba, a town in Judah, and he left his servant there. Then he went on alone into the wilderness, traveling all day. He sat down under a solitary broom tree and prayed that he might die. 'I have had enough, LORD,' he said. 'Take my life, for I am no better than my ancestors who have already died.'"*
- **Context:** Elijah, a prophet who had just witnessed God's power in defeating the prophets of Baal, is now afraid and fleeing for his life from Queen Jezebel. Despite his past experiences of God's provision and power, Elijah falls into despair and anxiety.

Elijah's reaction to Jezebel's threat shows a sudden onset of fear and anxiety despite his faith. What does this tell us about the nature of anxiety, even among those strong in faith?

Discussion Point: Discuss how even the most faithful individuals can experience anxiety and the importance of recognizing this.

1 Kings 19:11-12

- *"Go out and stand before me on the mountain," the Lord told him. And as Elijah stood there, the Lord passed by, and a mighty windstorm hit the mountain. It was such a terrible blast that the rocks were torn loose, but the Lord was not in the wind. After the wind, there was an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake. And after the earthquake, there was a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire. And after the fire, there was the sound of a gentle whisper."*
- **Context:** This passage highlights God's presence not in the grand or overwhelming but in the gentle whisper, illustrating how God is close and speaks softly, especially when we are overwhelmed by anxiety.

In 1 Kings 19:11-12, God speaks to Elijah in a gentle whisper rather than through dramatic means. Why do you think God chose to communicate in this way, especially when Elijah was overwhelmed?

Discussion Point: Explore the significance of God's whisper and how it relates to experiencing God's presence in moments of anxiety.

Talk About It

1. **Reflecting on both the teaching and the Bible verses, what practical steps can we take when anxiety starts to take over?**
 - a. *Discussion Point:* Share strategies like prayer, community support, remembering God's faithfulness, and professional help if needed.
2. **Elijah made four common mistakes: (1) running himself into the ground, (2) shutting people out, (3) focusing on the negative, and forgetting God. Can you identify with any of these? How can we avoid these pitfalls?**
 - a. *Discussion Point:* Encourage participants to share personal experiences and discuss ways to combat these tendencies.
3. **How does understanding that "My God is Yahweh (my Breath)" (1 Kings 19:11-12) provide comfort in times of anxiety?**
 - a. *Discussion Point:* Discuss the meaning of God being our source, sustainer, and strength, and how this can be a foundation for dealing with anxiety.

Closing Thoughts:

- Summarize the discussion by reiterating that anxiety is a part of life, but with God's help and by following biblical principles, we can find peace and balance.
- Encourage everyone to remember the significance of God's gentle whisper and His constant presence in our lives.

Closing Prayer:

- Take prayer requests
- Lead a prayer that focuses on asking for God's peace to guard our hearts and minds, as promised in Philippians 4:7, and for the strength to face anxieties with faith and courage.