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An online mindset journey
to walking in your worth

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Module Six

*Not chilled-
skill chosen.*

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Module Six – Not chilled – still chosen.

My Story

I remember it like it was yesterday. However, it was actually about 7 or 8 years ago. I was the youth worker of my church at the time. It was a small church and the youth group were even smaller. I loved mentoring and discipling these teenagers - we had a lot of fun! So, you can imagine my excitement when one of the young ladies, who was probably about 15 at the time, told me that she wanted to get baptised! The days and weeks leading up to this were exciting. Her and I went through some preparation and spoke about what this new life in Christ would mean.

During this season, I found myself slowly feeling less and less excited and I had no idea why. Obviously, there was a lot of life going on aside from this young lady's baptism but nothing out of the ordinary. Work, church, repeat. And so in some ways, I'm thankful that the baptism presented me with an event enough to realise that something wasn't quite right with my mental health. The day drew nearer and my mind grew darker. I don't know if you've ever experienced a heaviness like that? Not a low or sadness as a result of something which has happened, but a cloud over your heart and mind which doesn't seem to lift, no matter how hard you try to do the 'right things', like eat well, exercise and focus on 'whatever is good'. I had no energy for pretty much anything. Even simple things like cooking and cleaning, let alone journeying with this amazing girl who was ready to publicly declare her relationship with Jesus. I felt like a fraud. I felt guilty for not feeling happy and yet I didn't seem to have the capacity to shake it.

So the baptism came and this girl shared her testimony. Her testimony of hope and truth and anticipation of her future life in Christ. Everyone clapped and cheered and was overjoyed. I was numb. And I was scared. This was meant to be a time of celebration and excitement and all I wanted to do was hide and I literally had no idea why. But I couldn't help myself, and so in the midst of all of the congratulations, off I headed to the church bathroom. I locked the cubicle door behind me, leant against it, and I cried.

My friend who had (thankfully) noticed and known about the recent changes in me, followed me to the bathroom knowing that something was up. She knocked on the door, hugged me, prayed with me and then said the words I really didn't want to hear.

"Maybe you should see a doctor."

Any fight left in me to paint a smile on my face and say 'I'm fine', was gone and instead, I agreed.

What I remember next is a doctor's office and a list of questions which I didn't seem to be answering too well, apparently. Because the next thing I was handed was a diagnosis of depression and anxiety and a prescription for anti-depressants. This wasn't 'me', I

thought. I was the 'church girl' who volunteered at all the events and had the youth over to her house for pancake parties.

I didn't want to take tablets, I didn't want a diagnosis, I didn't want to be worried and sad.

But, I took them, and with that, I took almost a month off of my job as a teacher and time away from all of my responsibilities at church. It was just me and God, battling it out to get me right again. And He was there. Of course He was there. When I was worried about spending so much time off of work and then worried about worrying too much, there He was.

That was the first time I recognised anxiety and depression for what it was and felt the weight of it grip me. In a way, I'm pleased that I had that season as it's made me much more aware of my mental health and the state of it at any given moment. It enabled me to determine what 'regular' thoughts are, and how, on other occasions, I might be thinking slightly differently than usual.

By God's grace, I no longer take medication for anxiety and depression. I still have bouts of lowness sometimes and certainly experience high anxiety from time to time, but it's more manageable now and not something which is medically treated. It's not something unknown and scary, it's more like an unwelcome, yet familiar dinner guest.

A key thing I've found helpful when reminding myself of what's going on in my heart and mind during those moments, is that even though these thoughts and feelings want to control me and take over, they don't have the ultimate say, God does. Now, as we've just read, I haven't always been able to think like that, and so I'm not in any way suggesting that it's easy. But at this stage, it's a process which allows my head and my heart to remember who's in charge.

Practically I've found, especially in the face of anxiety, that it can be helpful to ask myself rational questions like:

'Am I over thinking this?' 'Have I jumped to conclusions and reacted to a circumstance or situation irrationally?' 'Is there something I can do to allow my mind not to spin out of control?'

I've found it important to *respond* to a situation as opposed to *reacting* to it. Reactions are typically irrational, rarely thought through and can come across as quite sudden. Whereas a response is something which has been more methodically thought through and is therefore a lot more rational and level-headed.

The truth is that we'll all feel depression and anxiety at one point or another from time to time, and studies show that one in five people suffer from it. It'll look totally different for everyone. In those difficult moments, it's important to remember that if it's something you're facing, you're not 'weird', nor are you alone.

*His Story***Pause Point****Read Matthew 6:25 – 34.***(Use your favourite journal or a notebook to make notes on this passage.)*

Much like the story of the baptism, this passage brings up a lot of memories for me. In the face of anxiety, a fresh reminder of God's presence is powerful. Especially when it's His truth-filled words directly telling us not to worry. These verses have featured in my journal more than once!

As I unpacked in the audio, God's response in the face of fear from humans (like Peter), was faith. Jesus responded well to faith – almost as though it were the antidote to fear, anxiety and doubt. It's so important that we heed these words from Matthew 6 as we remind ourselves of Jesus' promises in John 16:33...



Something which we're absolutely promised here on earth, is trouble. Jesus tells us we'll have it. And so we shouldn't be surprised when it creeps in and has its way. Anxiety and depression are, no doubt, a part of that 'trouble'. Whether they lay hold of us as a result of circumstance, or because of a chemical imbalance in our brain, the position of God in the midst of it does not change. We are therefore prompted and perhaps even required to 'take heart'! Because of His divine power and authority, we can be encouraged that He has indeed 'overcome the world'. And our right-standing in Him means that we as God's chosen and precious daughters, fight *from* a place of victory and not *for* it!

Anxiety and depression can take shape in a number of ways - from a diagnosis, to simply overthinking. Therefore, I'm aware that sometimes, practical tips and advice don't work in the same way as they might on other occasions. However, I hope that some of the thoughts in this module will allow you to ponder on why those feelings might have crept in and I would *always* encourage journaling in those seasons too. I've found there to be something quite freeing in penning my prayers and thoughts in difficult times.

Interestingly, the verses which precede our key text here are warnings not to lay up treasure here on earth, but rather, to store it in heaven. And so, what better place for the Lord to remind not to be anxious! The cares of the world - finance, security, health, comfort and safety, can so overwhelm us and therefore, the fact that we're anxious should come as no surprise. Yet, it's verses like the ones we've just read which call for hope in the midst of it all.



Studies show that the most common factors which contribute to anxiety are: financial issues, welfare of loved ones, work, unemployment, personal relationships, growing old and death.

Pause Point

Have you found yourself frequently worrying about these most common factors? Which is most prevalent and why? Are there any 'go to' scriptures which help you in those moments?

(Use your favourite journal or a notebook to make a note of your response to this.)

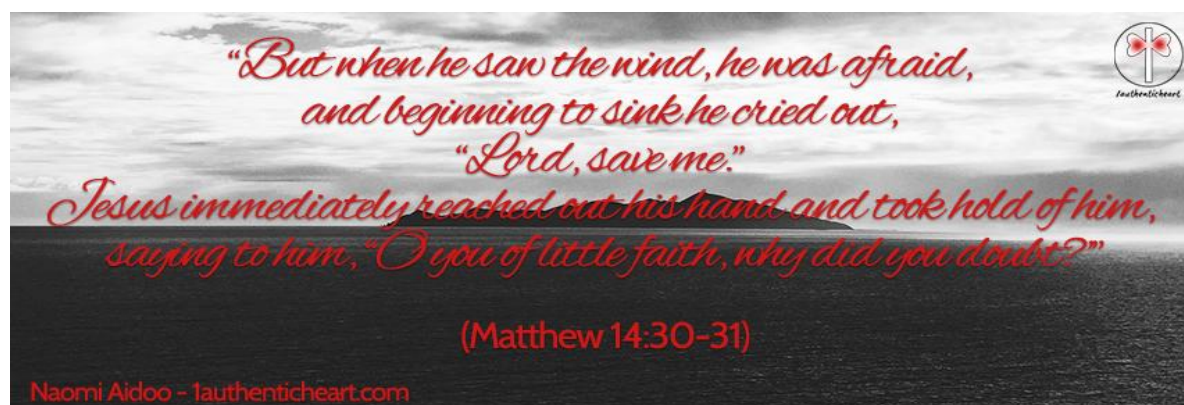
As we journey through Matthew 6:25-34, we pick up some important and applicable reminders of God's truth from the text. One of the first things I notice is the simple but powerful command which states 'do not worry'. On the surface, words like these can sound so obvious. But clearly, in reality, we can of course know this to be harder than it looks. Jesus' preface to 'not worrying' is that, in doing so, we demonstrate a lack of trust in God. Although, of course this isn't always the case, it's important to recognise that it sometimes can be.

When we witness how God so evidently cares for animals and nature, we should be comforted in knowing that His heart for us as His daughters is far greater than this. Oh, how He loves us!

I think it is also wonderful to note how many of our common anxieties are addressed in this passage, almost as though God were saying 'I've got this!' The reassurance and hope of verse 32 should serve as great encouragement to us. "...your heavenly Father knows that you need them all." In short – God knows. He gets it. Your feelings of worry and doubt are not alien to Him. Yet, in the midst of them, His encouragement is to trust, to have faith and to recognise that He is Lord of all.

This point is encapsulated further in verse 33, when it states – *"But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and all these things will be added to you."* Put plainly, going to Jesus should be the *first* port of call. Before worrying about some of the more practical realities like clothing, food and drink, we should remind ourselves of who's in control and Who's given us life and breath in the first place. That's why I find journaling so important at the height of anxious and low moments. Rewriting the promises of scripture can really help to realign our minds in the midst of it all and cause us to instead, reflect on and remember hope and truth.

As I briefly discussed in the audio, someone who faced anxiety as a result of circumstance was Peter. I've always loved Peter's brave character – his ability to be bold in the face of danger and zealous in his love for Jesus, Peter often wasn't afraid to do the things everyone else was too nervous to try. And so when it was he who walked on water, it shouldn't really have come as much of a shock. Equally, his reason for beginning to sink also gives us real insight into where his security was rooted and grounded.



When Peter begins to look at the wind and waves around him, Jesus doesn't question why Peter started looking at them but rather, why he doubted. The same can sometimes be said for us. We can find ourselves in fear, doubt and anxiety because we've allowed ourselves to spend too long looking at the external circumstances and away from Jesus.

Action Step

Unlike the circumstances Peter faced, I know first-hand, that sometimes, anxiety and depression can creep in without us even fully being able to locate why. However, I'm also aware that sometimes, we have allowed ourselves to get to a place where we are worrying about things so much that we've forgotten to even *try* to give them to God.

Much like Martha, who I mentioned in the audio, we can become so busy with 'doing' that we forget about 'being'.

Make list of and pray over, the things which have caused you to worry or feel especially low in the recent days and weeks. See if you recognise any patterns and continually and purposefully give them to God this week.

(Use your favourite journal or a notebook to make a note of your response to this.)

I hope that as you've unpacked some general thoughts around what Jesus has to say about sadness, worry and fear, as well as looking at how that might have practically looked in the lives of people in the Bible, that you're encouraged by the fact that these thoughts and feelings are common and can take shape in a number of ways. Be mindful of that as you continue to journey, and keep your eyes fixed on Jesus, the author and perfecter of your faith. Cry out to Him. Remember His promises, hold fast to His truth.

Praise Break

As we close this module, It's time for another praise break and so, as you soak in the goodness of God and your chosen state in His sight, close the door, raise your hands, dance around - whatever worship looks like to you - take a quick praise break and listen to [this wonderful song](#).

"I just can't give up now. I've come too far from where I started from"

I pray these are your words and your truth today. Indeed, God has not brought you this far to leave you. Give Him your lows and all of your anxious and clouded thoughts and remind yourself of your chosen state in Christ - He's able!

Lovely, you are chosen.

See you on the next leg of the journey - I can't wait!