

when the  
noise won't  
stop

a Christian guide to  
dealing with anxiety



PAUL GRIMMOND

Is there a relationship between anxiety and sin? If so, what does the Bible say about it? Does the gospel offer comfort to those suffering from anxiety disorders? How can our hope in Christ lead us when living seems impossibly hard? Are psychology and medication biblical ways to seek help?

*When the Noise Won't Stop* combines deep personal experience and comprehensive biblical study to demonstrate how the gospel addresses the pain and difficulty of anxiety. Avoiding simplistic answers while candidly sharing his own struggles, Paul Grimmond presents readers with a future that is both down-to-earth and full of hope, showing how the good news of Jesus offers light and promise to those who are suffering.

A well-known pastor and preacher, Paul begins with his story, outlining the perspectives of psychology and medicine. But the heart of this book is an in-depth consideration of how the Bible forms and addresses our understanding of anxiety.

*When the Noise Won't Stop* is a much-needed encouragement for Christians dealing personally with an anxiety disorder and for Christians caring for someone with this growing societal problem.

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Paul Grimmond is the Dean of Students at Moore Theological College, Sydney. Before joining the faculty, he served in university ministry and as an editor for Matthias Media. He is a well-known conference speaker, as well as an experienced trainer, mentor and pastor. He is the author of *Right Side Up*, *The Archer and the Arrow* (with Phillip Jensen) and *Suffering Well*.



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ISBN 978-1-922206-55-8



9 781922 206558

If you wanted to read a Christian book about anxiety, what kind of author would you be looking for? Someone who is writing not just abstractly but from real personal experience? Someone who has years of experience as a tender-hearted pastor? Someone who always engages deeply, thoughtfully, and humbly with God's word? My friend Paul Grimmond is exactly this kind of author. Under God, this book is a great gift to the Lord's people, and I hope many will read it and be blessed by it.

**Simon Flinders**

Senior Pastor

St Marks Anglican Church, Northbridge

Paul's pastoral warmth and honesty are so clearly expressed in this book. I expect many will benefit from his careful treatment of this important topic as they grapple with their own or their loved one's experience of anxiety within a Christian framework.

**Kirsty Bucknell**

Organizational Psychologist

Centre for Ministry Development, Moore College, Newtown

The uniqueness of this book is its deep exploration of how the gospel speaks into the experience of the debilitating impacts of anxiety taking over human physiology. I appreciate the value of Paul Grimmond sharing his lived experience of symptoms, their effects, and their relationship context. Best of all are the biblical truths that bring clarity and hope to sufferers, and indeed to all of us with our different symptom vulnerabilities in this stress-filled world.

**Dr Jenny Brown**

Founder, Director Emeritus, family therapist and mental health specialist

The Family Systems Institute, Neutral Bay

We live in increasingly anxious times, and Christians are not immune from mental ill health and conditions such as clinical anxiety. *When The Noise Won't Stop* is an excellent resource for those experiencing anxiety, and those seeking to help others who live with it. Taking a biblical wisdom approach and drawing on personal and pastoral experience, plus research from other disciplines, Paul Grimmond sensitively helps the reader consider how it is possible to live faithfully and wisely with anxiety in a way that honours Jesus. The book also engages thoughtfully with questions such as the relationship between anxiety and sin, and provides practical tips for praying and self-care, while pointing us to the secure hope we have in Jesus.

I recommend this book; it has ministered to me personally and has helped to deepen my understanding of what a wise Christian response to living with anxiety looks like.

**Sally Sims**

Care Ministry Coordinator

Christ Church (Anglican), St Ives

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Matthias Media

(St Matthias Press Ltd ACN 067 558 365)

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ISBN 978 1 922206 55 8

Cover design by Tina Nguyen.

Typesetting by Lankshear Design.

# Acknowledgements

Writing this book has been a great blessing. It has reminded me of God's kindness towards us in Jesus. It has reminded me that in his hands, even my anxiety has been used to mould me as his servant. And it has especially reminded me that all ministry is done in fellowship. As such, I am profoundly thankful for those who have contributed to the writing and production of this book.

A huge thanks to Simon Flinders, Kirsty Bucknell, Nick and Elissa O'Neil, Jenny Nixon and Carolyn Russell for reading the initial manuscript and providing all sorts of challenging and helpful feedback, as well as personal encouragement. The book is much better for their faithful engagement with it.

I owe another debt to the team at Matthias Media, who produce such wonderful resources and who are so committed to the ministry of the gospel as they do so. Particular thanks to Lisa Neale, whose attention to detail and gracious hard work helped to make the manuscript readable.

Thanks too to my dear wife, Cathy, who has walked through so much of life's journey with me and who has struggled alongside me, helping me to keep looking to Christ.

I am deeply thankful to God for her—as I am for my children, Anna, Ethan, and Joel, whom I love more deeply each day, and who have all been patient with a dad who is sometimes absent with his work.

Like all books apart from the Scriptures, this one is less than perfect. Nevertheless, I pray that it might encourage you to look to Christ and to see more deeply how all that he has done for us allows us to live faithfully, even when our anxiety feels debilitating.

To God be the glory.



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# Introduction

This is a book about anxiety. Unfortunately, that label can be a bit confusing. Some people use it to mean the stresses of day-to-day life and are looking for a book that engages with how to live Christianly with those issues. There are many good books on this subject, but it's not what this book is about. This book aims to engage with anxiety as a mental health condition. Because it deals with the issue from a strongly biblical basis, it does have insight to offer people looking for wisdom about dealing with everyday stress, but that's not its primary purpose. To give you a better feel for how to read, let me tell you about the different groups of people I had in mind as I wrote.

First, it is for people who struggle with all the distress and difficulty of living with anxiety—from a racing heart to rushing thoughts, panic attacks to a buzzing body that feels almost too full of adrenaline, and lots of things in between. If this is you, this book has been written to encourage you to understand your experience from a biblical perspective and to offer some gospel-shaped wisdom for how to live well in the struggle.

Second, it is written with supporters, family and friends in

mind. If you have a loved one with anxiety, this book is designed to help you understand anxiety a little more clearly and learn how to support them from a Christian perspective.

Third, it is written with pastors in mind. Many (most?! ) pastors work in a world where members of their congregations will wrestle with this miserable condition. This book is designed to give them places in the Bible to turn to and a theological framework to help them make sense of anxiety as they pastor others.

*When the Noise Won't Stop* is not a short book. It has grown out of my own experience and my desire to make sense of how various elements of biblical truth intersect to shape our understanding of anxiety and our response to it. This means it covers a lot of ground. There are bits of history, theology, philosophy, cultural analysis and practical wisdom. I've tried to make it all accessible and easy to read, but it isn't simple. My prayer is that the complexity will give you a richer insight into what we believe about anxiety and why, and how to respond in a Christ-honouring way.

Because of the breadth and the nature of the subject matter, some of the book feels objective and third-hand, while other parts feel deeply personal and pastoral. A few friends who have read it have commented that they struggled a bit with the early chapters (others have told me these were their favourite chapters). In light of this, here are a few quick tips for reading *When the Noise Won't Stop*.

The first chapter tries to convey something of the experience of struggling with anxiety. There are testimonies from people who have wrestled with anxiety at varying levels of intensity. It can feel a little overwhelming to read. If hearing about how anxiety affects others spikes your own anxiety,

you might want to read this chapter a little bit at a time, or even skip it altogether. The rest of the book will make sense without it. (Yes, this is your official trigger warning!)

The second chapter is all about how I have approached the task of thinking biblically about anxiety. It lays out some of my method and presuppositions. This will be a chapter that you'll either love or hate. It isn't necessary for understanding the rest of the book, so feel free to jump past it if it's not your thing. (If it *is* your thing, welcome to Nerdsville!)

Finally, for many people, this will be a book best read in community. I have been richly blessed by thinking through the many passages of Scripture contemplated on the pages that follow and I hope that you will be too. But if my experience is anything to go by, the truths that follow will take a bit of time and effort to wrestle with, understand and put into practice. This means that you will probably get a lot more out of the book if you can talk to someone about what you've read. These are promises, truths and riches from God that need to be chewed on and worked into your soul. If you know that this happens best for you in conversation and relationship, find some other people to read with. (As always, there's no compulsion. If you like to read by yourself, more power to you!)

Whoever you are and whatever your reason for reading, my prayer is that this book will enrich your understanding of God and his grace, and guide you to think about what it means to live faithfully in this fallen world as we wait for the appearing of our beloved Jesus.



# 1. Panic, anxiety and guilt

Memory is a strange beast. Some things are clear; some are hidden in a cloud. I'm not sure how old I was when I experienced my first panic attack, but it was some time in my early adolescence. I was lying in bed comparing the length of eternity with the duration of my earthly existence—the maths wasn't working out well. I can't remember why I was thinking about this, but the effect on my body and brain has been carved into my memory as if with a penknife in the trunk of an old gum tree.

Panic is a full-body experience. Imagine someone sets multiple mobiles to vibrate, implants them in your head and chest, and then rings you constantly. When panic takes hold, your body is on fire and a thousand ants march inside your brain. But it's not just the physical sensation; it's the noise. A strangely silent noise. No one else can hear it, but it deafens you. And it's everywhere and nowhere. You think simultaneously, "Oh no! I'm going to die!" and "I wish I could die!" The feeling is exquisitely designed to send you mad while causing you to wonder whether that might be the better option. If tearing your head open and throwing away your brain would make it stop, you would do it in an instant.

Fortunately, I have only experienced about half-a-dozen panic attacks. I learned quite quickly to avoid thinking about my own death in light of eternity. Sometimes I would feel these kinds of thoughts growing and the panic rising in my chest and I would hum and bounce and move and desperately seek something else to occupy my attention. Usually it worked; occasionally it didn't. In God's kindness, the fear of death led me to engage more with Jesus and I found great hope and comfort in his death and resurrection (but more of this story later).

I started with this explanation of panic as a way of introducing you to something of the experience of anxiety, particularly if you've never experienced it. (If you have, I'm sorry for what my description might have already done to you.) Panic is the extreme end of anxiety. It is anxiety plugged into an amp turned all the way to eleven. While God has kindly spared me many panic attacks (some people are not so fortunate), I can vouch for the fact that the muted version of panic called 'clinical anxiety', while not as intense, is a pig of a thing to live with. It shares many characteristics with the full-blown reality. For much of my life I have lived through periods of anxiety with the volume at different levels. Sometimes that has meant waking at 4 am and replaying a conversation from the day before a hundred times before breakfast. At other times, it has involved living with confused thoughts and a desperate desire to avoid even a hint of conflict in any of my relationships. Recently, by God's grace, it has been quite a bit better.

But like any human experience, every person's journey with anxiety is different. So to get a better feeling for what it might be like for others, I asked a bunch of friends who have



struggled with anxiety to share some of their experiences.<sup>1</sup>

When my second child was 10 weeks old I began to have a *lot* of trouble sleeping. In fact, there were nights when I couldn't sleep at all. I was very anxious about not sleeping which made it harder to sleep but I couldn't seem to stop the anxiety. It was a vicious circle! I became very teary and struggled with the basics of life. Just cooking dinner felt overwhelming, let alone caring for two children. I felt like I was not in my right mind. My mind was racing constantly and decisions felt overwhelming. My body felt like it was in a constant state of alert. I remember one night my husband suggested I take a relaxing bath and read a book. I read the same page of the book over and over but couldn't take it in—I couldn't concentrate long enough to get through the page and follow what it was saying! I feared I would never get better and that I'd be sent to a psychiatric institution. When my doctor told me I was anxious and I would get better, I thought she was making it up. I remember asking her if she'd ever seen someone as bad as me and if they ever got better.

—Rachel

Living with anxiety was extremely difficult. A lot of the time I felt as if I was living in a cloud of fog, crippled by the inability to escape the chaos in my own head. Anxiety affected my relationships, my ability to function in everyday life, and my ability to think clearly and rationally about a whole lot of things. I

1 The names have been changed to protect the identities of those willing to share.

used to wish that I could just switch off my brain, as this is exactly what I was unable to do.

—Sam

In the past, it was often obsessive thoughts that I couldn't let go of and they caused a lot of distress. Sometimes I analyse my decisions and relationships so much I can't focus on reality or move on with life. When it's bad, I can't sleep well and want to say no to anything that comes my way.

—Leanne

My experience of anxiety has been somewhat mild compared to others, yet it has nonetheless had an effect on myself and others, and it has been a slow process recognizing it and managing it. The anxiety is mostly connected to feelings of disconnection from others and has caused me to spiral into negative thoughts about myself, and, ironically, withdraw from others due to the actual feelings of anxiety. It has also caused me to withdraw from life responsibilities, feeling like normal life is 'too much' and I need to 'clear my head'.

—Arthur

I often describe my anxiety as being like a spinning colour wheel (you know those ones where they turn white if you spin them fast enough?). Every single anxious thought and the varying emotions attached to them are like a different colour on the colour wheel (there are a lot of colours on my colour wheel!). And they never stop spinning. On good days they might spin slowly enough for me to pick out and differentiate

a few ‘colours’—that is, different anxious thoughts, how they relate to each other, what they make me feel, and so on. But on bad days the colours (i.e. thoughts) spin so fast they’re just a ‘blur of white’ and it’s impossible to slow them down and figure out what each individual thought actually is. When this happens I am thinking and feeling absolutely *everything*, and yet paradoxically I’m thinking and feeling absolutely *nothing* at the same time; the thoughts and worries are flying around my head so fast that it’s just a ‘blur of white’. I become hypersensitive to everything; every touch and vibration are like nails on a chalkboard, and every noise is amplified a thousand times. And yet at the same time, I feel like a deer in the headlights; paralysed by the ‘blur of white’ and the sensory overload. It is so utterly exhausting, and it doesn’t take long before desperation kicks in, and I’m willing to do almost anything (cue unhelpful coping mechanisms) for just a bit of relief from the ‘blur of white’.

—Anthea

These kinds of experiences are happening for people all around us all of the time. According to Beyond Blue (a leading Australian source of information on anxiety and depression):

Anxiety is the most common mental health condition in Australia. On average, one in four people—one in three women and one in five men—will experience anxiety at some stage in their life. In a 12-month period, over two million Australians experience anxiety.<sup>2</sup>

2 Beyond Blue, *Anxiety*, Beyond Blue website, 2022, accessed 1 February 2022 ([beyondblue.org.au/the-facts/anxiety](https://beyondblue.org.au/the-facts/anxiety)).

The statistics, while variable, are similar for the USA and the UK.<sup>3</sup> A meta-analysis from 2015 suggests that the prevalence of anxiety disorders in China may be even higher.<sup>4</sup> As Scott Stossel's New York Times bestseller puts it, we are living in an "age of anxiety".<sup>5</sup>

This "age of anxiety" has certainly not bypassed God's people. Wherever I have gone in ministry I have met people who struggle with anxiety (and its equally obstreperous cousin, depression). In 2018, I participated in an online seminar about a Christian response to anxiety conducted by The Gospel Coalition Australia. It had the largest attendance of all the events they had run up to that point in time. In our ever-busy, hyper-connected, never-resting world, Christians, like many others, wrestle with the effects of anxiety. And their faith sometimes makes it harder, even while at other times it is a comfort.

The friends who have already shared about what anxiety has felt like for them also shared with me something of how their experience of anxiety has interacted with their Christian faith.

3 For the US statistics see EJ Bourne, *The Anxiety and Phobia Workbook*, 6th edn, New Harbinger Publications, 2015, p 1. The specific statistics for anxiety in the UK are difficult to find, but according to a top UK mental health charity, "1 in 4 people will experience a mental health problem of some kind each year in England" (see Mind, *Mental Health Facts and Statistics*, Mind website, 2020, accessed 1 February 2022 [[mind.org.uk/information-support/types-of-mental-health-problems/statistics-and-facts-about-mental-health/how-common-are-mental-health-problems](http://mind.org.uk/information-support/types-of-mental-health-problems/statistics-and-facts-about-mental-health/how-common-are-mental-health-problems)]).

4 X Guo, Z Meng, G Huang, J Fan, W Zhou, W Ling, J Jiang, J Long and L Su, 'Meta-analysis of the prevalence of anxiety disorders in mainland China from 2000 to 2015', *Scientific Reports*, 2016, 6:28033, doi:10.1038/srep28033, p 3.

5 The phrase "age of anxiety" comes from the title of Scott Stossel's excellent treatment of the issue from both a personal and a medical perspective: S Stossel, *My Age of Anxiety: Fear, hope, dread, and the search for peace of mind*, Vintage, 2015.

Guilt. Guilt over being a burden on my Christian brothers and sisters who have helped care for me. Guilt over not being more up-front and honest with them when I withdraw in an attempt to be less of a burden. Guilty for feeling anxious all the time, when the Bible tells me not to be. Guilty for not praying about my anxieties. Guilty that despite knowing that I am a child of God and made in his image, I still despise and agonize over who I am; everything I do and say, and the way I look, still makes me so revolted and ashamed. Guilt over doubts. Guilty for feeling guilty, when I know that I have already been saved, etc. etc. etc. ... Anxious and obsessive doubts. Am I really saved? What if I've misunderstood what the Bible is actually saying? Were my motives for doing 'x' really godly/what I keep telling myself they were? Maybe I'm just deceiving myself?

—Anthea

The hardest part of having anxiety as a Christian was how it impacted my ability to trust in God. Not being able to control my mind and finding it hard to trust in God led to guilt, which deepened the anxiety and continued the perpetual cycle. Understanding that our minds are part of this broken world and that faith is dependent on God who is faithful was extremely important for me. I learned that God holds on to us even when we can't hold on to him.

—Sam

Compared to many my struggle has not raised significant difficulties Christianly—the Scriptures have been a great source of comfort to me. However, the more

anxious I am feeling, the more binary my thinking and reasoning becomes. And so I may feel like I've made 'no progress in the Christian life, so why do I bother trying?' Or 'I haven't learned much from Scripture lately, and there's so much to read—it's too high a mountain to climb!' This means sometimes it's very hard to feel like I've progressed at all, or can at all! However, I have learned that even when I feel like this, it is still right and good to keep attempting small steps and to trust those small steps.

—Arthur

I struggle to trust God's sovereignty because I'm anxious about the past or future decisions I have made or will make, and I really feel burdened by that. I find it hard to know what is a legitimate concern about making godly decisions and what is anxiety. Sometimes I feel so anxious for people's salvation that I feel despair. In those times, part of me tells myself to let it go, but I find that really hard as a Christian.

—Leanne

I prayed a lot for God to help me but he didn't seem to answer my prayers. Why didn't he allow me to sleep? Why didn't he calm my anxious thoughts? I felt like a bad Christian, as I knew I wasn't meant to be anxious about anything but to pray and commit my concerns to him. But still the anxiety continued. And what sort of wife was I? So much for being my husband's helper—I was more of a burden that greatly reduced his capacity for anything outside the home. And what sort of a church member was I? I wanted to be serving others

and here I was needing to accept help from others. It was a very humbling time and a long, slow recovery. God really impressed upon me that my worth was not at all based on what I do, but thankfully on what Christ has already done!

—Rachel

There are so many things that I notice as I read through these words, like the way that God helps his people to long for godliness even when life is complex. While many of the reflections that we've just read reveal the tendency of those struggling with anxiety to be hard on themselves, they also reveal a precious and wonderful longing to trust God and to put his truth into practice. Anxious people are often aware of others and their need for salvation; they long to be faithful and fruitful members of their local churches; they wrestle with the idea of trusting God in all circumstances. There is much to encourage and challenge us here. But the honesty of these brothers and sisters also points to some of the big questions that are raised for Christians who want to follow Jesus and who experience anxiety.

Perhaps the most pervasive question concerns the relationship between anxiety and sin. Anxiety leads to deep feelings of guilt for many Christians as they feel their capacity for service being stunted. But at an even more basic level lies the question of obedience. God's word calls us not to be anxious. Talk to any anxious Christian and they will be able to quote Philippians 4:6, "do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God". If there's one thing we know about anxiety, it's that God calls us to avoid it. Jesus himself warned us against worry:

“Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? ... Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.” (Matt 6:25, 34)

Most Christians who wrestle with anxiety feel like they are being disobedient to the clear and straightforward command of God.

If all that anxiety did was to raise this question of obedience and sin, it would be complex enough. But this is the beginning, rather than the end, of the questions. If anxiety is sin, then how should we respond when anxiety sufferers say that they ‘can’t help it’? Are they responsible for their anxiety or is anxiety in some sense beyond their control? At this point, we enter some very deep water.

As incredible as it may seem to us, the term ‘Anxiety Disorder’ only entered the official medical vocabulary in 1980. This was the year that the term was first used in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM)*. The *DSM* is effectively the ‘Bible’ of the American Psychiatric Association and the de facto standard worldwide for what constitutes a medically recognized mental health condition. First published in 1952, the *DSM* is updated every decade or so (with considerable variation in timing) and we are currently up to *DSM-5*, published in 2013.<sup>6</sup>

As the name *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual* suggests,

6 American Psychiatric Association, *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, 5th edn, American Psychiatric Association, 2013.



the classification of mental conditions is an imprecise science. Many of the conditions included under the banner of “Anxiety Disorder” in *DSM-3* (1980) had previously been called “Neurosis” (*DSM-2*, 1968) and before that, “Psychoneurosis”, a label that owed its origins to the influence of Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung in developing the fields of psychiatry and psychology. Of particular note is the word “Statistical” in the title of the *DSM*. Unlike orthopedics, where a bone is either broken or it isn’t—you can check it on an X-ray—mental disorders are a matter of degrees.

The *DSM* is an attempt to define what lies within the bounds of ‘normal’ psychological experience and what lies outside. The boundary lines are created based on the impacts of particular mental health conditions on personal functioning. This is a partially subjective judgement that is open to considerable debate. For example, a diagnosis of “Generalized Anxiety Disorder” in *DSM-5* requires “excessive anxiety and worry (apprehensive expectation) occurring more days than not for at least 6 months”, as well as the presence of at least three of six identified symptoms.<sup>7</sup> What qualifies as “excessive anxiety and worry”? Why six months rather than five, and why at least three of the symptoms—why not two or four?

Given that each edition of the *DSM* redefines the boundaries of what is and what isn’t a psychological condition; that these changes have massive impacts on healthcare budgets and are thus highly politicized; and that for thousands of years, people have experienced these conditions without any

7 American Psychiatric Association, *DSM-5*, p 222. The six identified symptoms are: 1. restlessness or feeling keyed up or on edge; 2. being easily fatigued; 3. difficulty concentrating or mind going blank; 4. irritability; 5. muscle tension; 6. sleep disturbance (difficulty falling or staying asleep, or restless, unsatisfying sleep).

medical diagnosis, the process of classifying psychological disorders is open to a great deal of scepticism. Does God's word give us any way of thinking about these questions? Should we treat anxiety as a medical condition? And what is at stake if we do or don't?

Added to this is the often antagonistic attitude of the psychological establishment towards religion in general and to Christianity in particular. I know of Christians who have been told by secular counsellors that their problems would be significantly alleviated by letting go of certain treasured Christian beliefs, or by leaving Christianity behind altogether. It's little wonder, then, that the area of mental health is fraught with pain and complexity for believers.

In response to this, it is easy to resort to simplistic responses. "God tells you what to do—just do it"; "No, you don't need medication. People haven't had medication for thousands of years"; "Just believe! If you pray hard enough and trust God enough, he will break through. It is possible to be delivered of your mental anguish." For most Christians who have struggled with anxiety, these are opinions that they have been generously 'offered' by others who are almost always well-meaning, if also clueless.

But behind these responses lie some big issues that often plague us as we seek to think God's thoughts about anxiety. Is anxiety normal in a fallen world? What is the relationship between my faith and my lived experience? How do my thoughts and feelings relate to the physical body that I inhabit? How does God bring relief for those who struggle with anxiety? And perhaps most importantly of all, how is it possible to be faithful to my Saviour while I wrestle with this affliction?

This book is an attempt to engage theologically and biblically with some of these big questions. It is an attempt to think slowly and deeply about what God is like, what life is like in this fallen world, how Jesus makes a difference, and how we make sense of our fallen experience as we peer through the glass darkly, waiting for that wonderful moment at the end of the ages when we see our Saviour face to face.

## **In the interests of full disclosure**

Before we get started then, I want to put a few things on the table in the interests of full and frank disclosure.

First, I am a pastor and a theological educator who has struggled with anxiety (and with more than a hint of depression at times, as well as serious burnout). I am not trained in psychiatry or psychology. I have been to a counsellor (many times). I have read and thought a lot about mental health, both as an interested layperson attempting to make sense of medical information and as a servant of Jesus, seeking to make sense of what God's word has to say. This book is an attempt to create a biblically faithful framework for understanding anxiety and then to apply that framework to living with anxiety. Because this is a complex process, I am likely to say things that you won't agree with—indeed, I hope that I do, otherwise reading this will be a very boring exercise. My hope is that this will stimulate you to ask questions, to pray, to read the Scriptures, and to talk to others so that you come to your own answers for some of the big questions. You don't have to agree with me, but if as a result of reading you reach your own conclusions that you can defend from God's word, I will give great thanks to God.

Second, this book is specifically about anxiety but it is almost impossible to talk about anxiety without straying into territory where depression also roams.<sup>8</sup> There is significant overlap in the symptoms and one condition can very often give rise to the other. Despite this, anxiety disorders and depressive conditions are also different from each other in ways that are sometimes significant. In this book, I am going to be particularly discussing anxiety, but there will be some crossover and application for those thinking about depression.

Third, I am going to assume that you're reading this book because either (a) you are currently struggling or have struggled with anxiety, or (b) you love someone who is struggling and you want to know how to serve them better. The needs of these two groups overlap in some places and differ in others. I will try to serve both groups of readers, but each of you may find some parts of the book more useful than others. Feel free to skip around and find the bits that are helpful for you. But a word for those currently struggling with anxiety: as you're probably aware, anxiety doesn't always lead you to think as clearly or as wisely as you would like. At points, we will deal in depth with issues that need to be talked about but that might be difficult or distressing for you. If you have the opportunity to read this book in

8 An older US study found that "among patients in the community who meet criteria for major depression, approximately 50% are also suffering from an anxiety disorder" (see RMA Hirschfeld, 'The comorbidity of major depression and anxiety disorders: recognition and management in primary care', *The Primary Care Companion to The Journal of Clinical Psychiatry*, 2001, 3(6):244-254, doi:10.4088/pcc.v03n0609, p 246). A more recent Chinese study found that a massive 69% of Chinese patients with a depressive disorder also have an anxiety disorder, while 49% of people who have an anxiety disorder also have a depressive disorder (see Z Wu and Y Fang, 'Comorbidity of depressive and anxiety disorders: challenges in diagnosis and assessment', *Shanghai Archives of Psychiatry*, 2014, 26(4):227-231, doi:10.3969/j.issn.1002-0829.2014.04.006).

relationship with others who can help you to test and form your thinking, I would encourage you to do so. God's gift of Christian family is a great blessing, particularly at this time for you.

Fourth (and finally), not all anxiety is the same. *DSM-5* lists four different types of anxiety: Generalized Anxiety Disorder (GAD), Social Anxiety, Specific Phobias, and Panic Disorder. It also lists two other conditions that used to be included under Anxiety Disorders as their own conditions—Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD) and Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). The *DSM* acknowledges that there are significant elements of anxiety involved in both while arguing that they are separate conditions. I include this information here to remind us that while there are some similarities between different anxiety conditions, not everyone experiences anxiety in the same way. Some people feel a deep sense of anxiety all the time. Others have their anxiety aroused by very specific circumstances. Some have panic attacks; others don't. Each condition is debilitating in its own way, but it is also important to realize that each individual has their own experience.

This book has been inspired in equal parts by the awful experience of anxiety, my ongoing awareness of the many in our Christian communities who continue to suffer, and a belief that God's truth makes a difference. My prayer is that by reading it, you might take a few steps closer to thinking God's thoughts after him, and so be encouraged to live faithfully and fruitfully for the Lord who purchased his people by loving them unto death. He is kind and faithful and he will hold on to you, even when you feel like you can't hold on to yourself.