

be afraid of, but this is what he wrote. 'When I am afraid, I will trust you. I praise God for his word. I trust God. So I am not afraid. What can human beings do to me?' (Psalm 56:3-4). David made a choice. Did you notice it?"

"No, what was it?" Sophia asked.

"He chose to trust God instead of being afraid. That's the third step forward!"

PRACTICAL TIPS

Before Sophia went home, she and Grandma prayed. Sophia told God about the K9 dog and feeling afraid of Hannah laughing at her. She thanked God for the fun things her teacher had planned—and for her grandma. Then Grandma helped her brainstorm a path forward. They started with small dogs since Sophia wasn't as scared of them. They planned to visit a neighbor with a small dog. The next time, they'd visit longer, and Sophia would try to pet the dog. They planned each goal to be a little harder than the last. After a month of prayer and hard work, career day came. Sophia was ready!

"I did it, Grandma!" Sophia shouted as she hopped off the bus. "I was afraid, but I trusted God—and I did it!"

Do you ever feel anxious like Sophia? If so, you're normal! But God doesn't want anxiety to get in the way of a happy life. Below are some tips:

- 1) Learn about anxiety and its effects.
- 2) Learn ways to relax, like slow, regular breathing.
- 3) Consider your thoughts. Are they accurate?
- 4) Face your fears one at a time—the least scary ones first!

Most importantly, remember God cares for you! When you trust Him, He can help you overcome your fears.

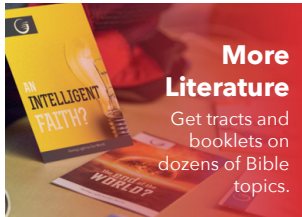
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HOW TO STOP BEING SCARED

The children in Sophia's classroom were buzzing with excitement after the teacher's announcement. A K9 policeman would visit their classroom on career day. And he was bringing his dog! Hannah leaned over, giggling. "I've never seen a police dog! It's going to be so cool!"

Sophia squirmed a little. "Yeah," she said, "I guess...." But Hannah had turned to someone else. "I bet he'll be big," she said, "and fierce so he can scare all the criminals! But I don't care—I love dogs!"

On the bus, Sophia was quiet. Her mind was whirring and her stomach was tight. How big is a K9 dog? He's probably huge. Hannah said he would be fierce. What if he thinks I'm a criminal? He'll bite me! If he comes near me, I know I'll scream! Then what will Hannah think? I better not go to school that day....

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When the bus came to her stop, Sophia saw her grandmother waiting for her. She wiped her sweaty palms on her jeans and ran to her.

"What's the matter, Sophia? You look upset!"

The story spilled out. Sophia exclaimed, "Oh, Grandma, I can't go to school on career day! I would die if Hannah laughed at me!"

"Ahhh," Grandma sympathized. "You're feeling anxious. You're afraid of that dog—and your friend's opinion of you."

Sophia paused. "You're right, Grandma. That's how I'm feeling."

ANXIETY IS NORMAL

"Sophia, anxiety is normal! If you met a growling dog in the woods, feeling anxious would be healthy! Fear is God's gift to help you recognize danger."

"Really?"

"Oh, yes! In fact, your entire body tries to protect you. You breathe faster so you have more oxygen available. Your muscles get tense. They're at attention and ready for orders!"

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"But I don't like it, Grandma. Sometimes my stomach hurts."

"Yes, it can be uncomfortable. And anxiety can get in the way of good things, too."

"Like what?"

"Like wanting to stay home on career day. What will you miss if you do?"

"There will be a nurse, a pilot,... that policeman..." Sophia shuddered. "But the best part will be Ryan's dad. He owns a bakery downtown. My teacher said he's bringing treats for us."

"It would be a bummer to miss all that."

"Yeah." Sophia scuffed her shoe on the sidewalk. "But I know I'll scream if that dog comes close...."

Grandma pulled out her keys as they turned up the driveway. "Come on in, girl. Let me show you something."

THREE STEPS FORWARD

Grandma's house was cool and inviting. Grandma kicked off her shoes, picked up her Bible, and settled onto the couch. Turning to a colorfully marked page, she read aloud. "Do

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not worry about anything. But pray and ask God for everything you need. And when you pray, always give thanks" (**Philippians 4:6**).

Sophia looked at the colorful marks in her grandma's Bible. She had underlined pray, ask, and thanks. "Oh, I get it, Grandma," Sophia said. "When we feel worried or anxious, we should pray and ask for what we need."

"That's right, Sophia! Telling God about your fears and asking Him to help is the first step forward!"

"But why did you underline thanks? I don't feel thankful—I feel worried!" Sophia complained.

"Saying thanks is the second step forward. This may surprise you. But changing how you think is part of conquering your anxiety! So, after you've asked for help, think of something you're thankful for."

"Are there any other steps?" Sophia wondered.

"One more, dear," Grandma said, flipping backward in her Bible. "King Saul wanted to kill David. David escaped to another country, but only found more danger! He had a lot to

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