



Centre for Public Christianity

Anna Grummitt, 12 March at 21:00 ·

After a horror summer of bushfires, a global pandemic is now officially upon us. With whole countries in lockdown, international travel bans, free-falling stock markets, and face masks becoming the norm, it's increasingly feeling like the dystopian future is here.

New cases of novel coronavirus are rising daily, and things are changing so fast it's impossible to predict what next week will bring. The global mood is one of fear and anxiety, as we're reminded that despite our best efforts, we ultimately don't have control of our own lives.

Of course, the 'fear and anxiety' part is not novel. Those have been rising for years – and particularly among young people. Data suggests, though, that many of them are looking for comfort in a perhaps unlikely place.

The world's most popular Bible app, YouVersion, has been installed on more than 400 million devices worldwide. And for the last two years, the most popular verses have been ones directly relating to anxiety and fear. Topping last year's searches was this verse from Paul's letter to the Philippians: "Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation ... present your requests to God." In 2018, it was from the Old Testament prophet Isaiah: "So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God."

Two years ago, I was grappling with fear from another (albeit more localised) health crisis, as my husband received treatment for an aggressive cancer. The idea that someone is in control, even though I'm not, made a real difference to me. Many will see this as wishful thinking – but for those who believe the words of Paul and Isaiah, while the source of our anxiety changes constantly, the source of comfort never does.

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