

## You Are Seen

90 Devotions to Encourage Stressed and Anxious Teens

Ollie Lia and Amber Lia



#### WaterBrook

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For Quinn, may these upcoming teenage years in high school be easy on your mind. Come to this book when you are troubled or when you think of me. Lead your brothers, as I have led you, to become godly men.

The words in this book, the time spent writing, and the Bible study I have done, I did first for God, and second for you and our dearest brothers.

I love you more than absolutely anything.
You will always be my first-ever best friend.

#### -Ollie

For my wonderful boys, Ollie, Quinn, Oakley, and Quade. A sound mind and a peaceful heart are gifts from God. May peace rule your hearts and minds because God lives there. Being your mom during your teenage years is one of the best chapters of my life! I get to love you, and for that I'm eternally grateful to God!

And for my former students at GHB and VCS, you were the first teens I got to teach, love, and disciple. You brought me such delight—and you still do. Keep your eyes on Jesus. He sees you.

-Amber

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### A Letter from Ollie

HEY, HEY! I'm guessing that if you picked up this book, you may be struggling to find peace in your life. Maybe you think nobody cares about you. Or maybe you feel alone and wonder why you were even born. Perhaps you are hurting so much that it's difficult to make it through the day. I'm here to tell you that God has a purpose and a plan to give you a beautiful future.

My name is Ollie, and like you, I'm a teen. Like you, I have gone through seasons of anxiety, stress, and even depression. During those times, I found myself longing for help. When life was at its lowest, my mom, Amber, pointed me to Bible verses that gave me hope in my havoc. When I shared with her about how low I was feeling, she reminded me about God's love for me—which was life-changing in my stressed-out mental state. As I consistently read God's Word, I found the answers and encouragement that I needed to battle life's demons and satisfy my soul. Throughout these pages, I want to share with you that same biblical wisdom and guidance. As a former middle and

high school teacher, my mom has always had a heart for leading young people toward the truth of the Bible, and she spent years helping teenagers live out their best life while walking with Jesus.

We both believe that counseling, medication, and other interventions can be used by God to help those who struggle with mental health issues, but we also believe that leaning on God to carry us through hard seasons is a gift that can change everything. The hope of Christ offers a deeper kind of healing for our minds and souls that's accessed as our relationship with Jesus grows and becomes more meaningful.

Over the next ninety days, we hope to shine a light into the dark corners of your hurting heart. Each devotional will focus on the ways you can feel known, loved, forgiven, guided, hopeful, treasured, equipped, healed, victorious, heard, chosen, protected, joyful, purposeful, and peaceful. We've written devotions for each section that offer hope for your weary mind—my mom's writings appear in this font—and mine appear in the font you see here. The devotionals include a Bible verse to meditate on and a simple prayer to help you take the first step in casting your cares on the Lord.

It's okay if you miss a day of reading-just keep going, one page at a time, just as we journey through the anxieties in our hearts and minds one moment, one day at a time.

While writing this devotional, my mom and I were also blessed to work with two mental health professionals who have been kind enough to provide insights, resources, and practices as additional support as you go on this journey. Although they can be a great help, please do not take their contributions as a replacement for seeking a diagnosis or treatment from your doctor or other medical healthcare provider. Everything in this book is meant to encourage and support you, but do not substitute this for consulting with a mental health professional.

Know that we are praying for you, and we believe God placed this book in your life at just the right time to assure you that you are not alone. You are not overlooked. You are seen, and everything is going to be okay.

Ollie



#### DAY 1

#### God Knows You and Your Future

Your eyes saw my unformed body;
all the days ordained for me were written in your book
before one of them came to be

-PSALM 139:16

OFTENTIMES, MY BIGGEST ANXIETIES stem from when I'm worried about what today, tomorrow, or some date far in the future will look like. The words in Psalm 139:16 bring me so much peace because they remind me that God designed each day of my life with love and purpose. The Lord not only understands me better than anyone, but He also knows what each day of my life is going to be like—and He knows the same for you too. He even knows your inner thoughts and your worries about things like whether you'll be sitting alone at lunch or what's going to happen when you take your math test. This is why we can trust that everything that has happened and will happen is in God's good hands.

IT'S AMAZING TO THINK that God was watching you even before you were born as you grew inside your mother's womb! Psalm 139:13 tells us that He actually "knit" you together. You are not an accident! Anxiety builds when we view our bodies with shame, but the Bible tells us that God, in His goodness, designed our bodies intentionally. He has a purpose in design-

#### 4 YOU ARE SEEN

ing your height and the color of your eyes—and even more, He has a design for your life. Don't allow your thoughts to tell you anything opposite of what the Bible says about you or God. Trust that He knows what's happening today, tomorrow, and each day ahead, just like He knows every detail of your being. As a good Father, He is setting things up to meet your needs and help you make the most of every day. In His eyes, you are His masterpiece!

#### ///\\\///\\\

God, I don't know what will happen later today, but I know You do. I trust that You will be with me no matter what I face. Help me to think positive thoughts about what's next in my life and not to worry, even if things are hard right now. You made me and You know me. I'm not an accident. Thank You for giving me life. Help me make the most of it. In Jesus's name, amen.

#### DAY 2

## God Knows Your Anxious Thoughts

Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.

-PSALM 139:23-24

IN THESE VERSES, the psalmist is praying, asking God to look deeply into his heart and mind and to know his anxious thoughts. Over time, I've learned to allow my feelings to come to the surface instead of stuffing them inside. Sometimes I punch a pillow or run up and down the stairs or write out what I'm worrying about in a journal. When I allow myself to feel what I feel, I sense peace and healing in my spirit. Since God already knows why we are feeling anxious, we may as well go to Him with an invitation to not only "know" us but guide our thoughts to focus on truth. Whether we show our emotions or not, God knows everything we feel, and He cares.

THE ANXIETY WE FEEL can sometimes be in response to living in a way that is offensive to God. When I was a teenager, if I talked back to my mom or borrowed something from my brother without asking, I didn't always realize how much those seemingly small sins weighed me down. I came to find that

asking Him to search my heart and see if there is anything offensive in me puts me in a place of surrender. It opens my eyes and lessens my anxiety because I'm doing things that glorify Him. If we're open to hearing what God has to say, He will help us live in a way that honors Him and will provide a solid path toward peace and away from anxiety.

#### ///\\\ ///\\\

Dear God, I don't always understand my anxiety or the confusion in my mind, but I know that You know me deeply and that You care. Father, I trust that You love me no matter what You find in my heart. I'm sorry for the things I have done that are offensive to You and others. Show me if things I've done are at the root of my anxiety. Thank You for being willing to help me when I am a mess inside and for being my faithful guide so I can live a wonderful and blessed life. Lead me out of my anxiety! Help me open my heart to receive Your peace. In Jesus's name, amen.

# God Knows the Reasons for All Your Tears

You keep track of all my sorrows.

You have collected all my tears in your bottle. You have recorded each one in your book.

-PSALM 56:8, NLT

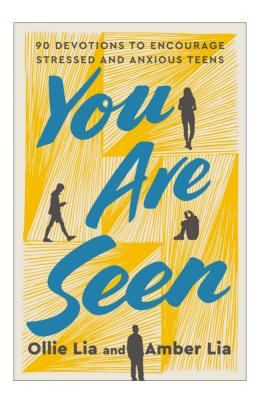
IMAGINE HOW GENTLE you need to be to preserve a teardrop. I know I couldn't do it! This is evidence of an awesome God who truly cares. God doesn't just know when we shed tears. He knows why. And if God cares deeply enough to hold on to something as small as the tears we cry, He must care even more deeply about the worries that cause each tear. I often remind myself that the Lord will never abandon me—and the same goes for you. The next time you find yourself crying over whatever is worrying you, know that God is tender toward your pain and He loves you.

WHEN I WAS A TEENAGER there were some days when I locked myself in my room and no matter how hard I tried, I couldn't stop the tears from falling. I didn't want to cry! But there I was, helpless to stop the hot, stinging flow of sadness and frustration from streaming down my face. I cried when I didn't make the cheer team. I cried when some other girl started dating my crush. I cried when uncaring adults in my life were rude to me and hurt my feelings.

None of our secret tears are hidden from God. He knows us inside and out. He collects our tears in His bottle and records each one in His book. Our sorrows matter to God so much that He doesn't ignore them. He takes notice because He sees and knows us—all the small and big things that concern us today. When we collect something, it's meaningful to us. Precious. Valuable. God never ignores our pain!

#### ///\\\ ///\\\

Lord, thank You for wiping the tears from my face when I'm too weak to wipe them myself. I know that You are with me and that You join me in my suffering. You know me, Lord! I pray that You would give me, Your child, peace. Lift me when I am at my all-time low. I know You will help me. Thank You for caring so deeply. In Jesus's name, amen.



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