ANXIOUS *for*

NOTHING

FINDING CALM *in a* CHAOTIC WORLD

By Max Lucado with Jenna Lucado Bishop

**Meditate on These Things**

 Read Philippians 4:4-9

OPENING REFLECTION

**"The challenges are great. But our God is greater."**

Friends. We find ourselves in a sober moment. These are uncertain times around the world and fears are rising. People who have never felt anxious before are suddenly weighed down with worry and are not sure what to do next.

Do you need encouragement right about now? Are you feeling anxious and uncertain? Do you find yourself in a season of isolation as events cancel, schools shift online, and churches close their doors to large gatherings?

When I need to stay calm, I turn to this Scripture: “Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus” (Phil 4:4-9, NIV).

**Less Fret, More Faith.**

Rejoice In the Lord’s Mercy

Confront the Chaos

1. “There is a guilt that sits in the soul like a concrete block and causes a person to feel bad for being alive. There is a guilt that says*, I did bad.* And then there is a guilt that concludes, I am bad. It was this deep, dark guilt that I felt. I found myself face – to – face with a version of me I had never known.”

Can you relate to this disorienting, dark guilt described above?

Perhaps your guilt is triggered by an event in the past, or maybe it is prompted by something you daily struggle to overcome. Take time to think through and identify the most cavernous sources of guilt in your life.

1. Read Genesis 3, the account of sin entering the world. As you read list the emotions Adam and Eve experienced immediately after they disobeyed.

When did the negative feelings start?

How did Adam and Eve move from negative thinking to sinful action?

Note how they reacted emotionally and physically.

1. “Lists of anxiety triggers typically include busy schedules, unrealistic demands, or heavy traffic. But we must go deeper. Behind the frantic expressions on the faces of humanity is unresolved regret.”

Do you agree with the above statement? Why or why not?

Was this statement true for Adam and Eve?

Could something deeper than heavy traffic and business demands be causing your anxiety?

Would you attribute part of what you feel to regret or guilt? Why or why not?

1. Here is a start of a list of ways we try to process our guilt and failure. *Numb, deny, minimize, bury, punish, avoid, redirect, offset & embody* are the main false approaches described.

During times of high anxiety which of these false approaches do you indulge in most often?

After reflecting on the prior question. How do you try to process the deepest parts of your guilt?

1. Confronting our guilt is unpleasant because it often requires us to relive painful experiences or seasons of our lives. But not addressing guilt only perpetuates the problem. “Unresolved guilt will turn you into a miserable, weary, angry, stressed-out, fretful mess.”

Examine your guilt. Are you burdened because you need to ask forgiveness of someone? Come up with a plan to do so. Make the call. Write the note. Unburden your heart.

Read Psalm 32:3-4 again. Can you relate? Are your anxiety and fear taking a toll on you physically? Explain.

Do you feel as if you are always running, always hiding?

If the answer is yes, choose someone to confess these feelings to this week. Entrust these secrets to someone who is worthy of trust. When we say something aloud, it often loses some of its power over our minds.

**Choose Calm**

1. So where do we go from here? Once we have identified our guilt, how do we move forward in a healthy way? There is good news for those who can address their chaos head-on:

“A happy saint is one who is at the same time *aware of the severity of sin and the immensity of grace.* Sin is not diminished, nor is God’s ability to forgive it. The saint dwells in grace, not guilt. This is the tranquil soul.”

Do you think that acknowledging the severity f your sin increases the gloriousness and power of the news that grace is available to you? Why or why not?

Additionally, can you identify the role of choice in the quotation above? What is your role?

1. “My salvation has nothing to do with my work and everything to do with the finished work of Christ on the cross.”

Do you believe this is true? If so, do you live as if this is true?

How or how not?

If you don’t believe this, “we have stumbled upon a source of your anxiety…. What you did was not good. But your God is good. And he will forgive you. He is ready to write a new chapter in your life. Say with Paul, “Forgetting the past and looking forward to what lies ahead, I strain to reach the end of the race and receive the prize for which God is calling us’ (Phil 3:13-14)

Take time to write a prayer asking God to help you believe that his grace is truly greater than whatever you have done.

1. Like trapeze artists that fly through the air the secret is that the flyer does nothing the catcher does everything. “When I fly to Joe (my catcher), I have simply to stretch out my arms and hands and wait for him to catch me and pull me safely over the apron… The worst thing the flyer can do is to try to catch the catcher. The flyer isn’t supposed to catch the catcher it’s the catcher’s job to catch the flyer. If the flyer grabs the catcher it might break the wrists of either the catcher or flyer and that would be the end for one or both of them. A flyer must fly and a catcher must catch, the flyer must trust, without stretched arms that his catcher will be there for him.”

What holds you back from fully trusting God to catch you?

While it may seem unnatural to “practice” trust, we shouldn’t be surprised that it requires disciplined effort. The Bible repeatedly refers to the faith journey with athletic metaphors, insinuating that it takes daily dedication and discipline to train our minds and hearts. What are some practical ways you can discipline your mind and heart to release your guilt to the Lord each day?

Meditation

“Your Father has never dropped anyone. He will not drop you. His grip is sturdy and his hands are open. As the apostle Paul proclaimed, ‘And I know the Lord will continue to rescue me from every trip, trap snare and pitfall of evil and carry me safely to His heavenly kingdom. May He be glorified throughout eternity. Amen.”

When I refused to confess my sin, my body wasted away, and I groaned all day long. Day and night your hand of discipline was heavy on me. My strength evaporated like water in the summer heat.

Psalm 32:3-4

If anyone ever had reason to hope that he could save himself, it would be I (Paul). If others could be saved by what they are, certainly I could! For I went through the Jewish initiation ceremony when I was eight days old, having been born into a pure-blooded Jewish home that was a branch of the old original Benjamin family. So I was a real Jew if there ever was one! What’s more, I was a member of the Pharisees who demand the strictest obedience to every Jewish law and custom. And sincere? Yes, so much so that I greatly persecuted the Church; and I tried to obey every Jewish rule and regulation right down to the very last point. But all these things that I once thought very worthwhile—now I’ve thrown them all away so that I can put my trust and hope in Christ alone.

Philippians 3:9 NCV

I (Paul) am still not all I should be, but I am bringing all my energies to bear on this one thing: Forgetting the past and looking forward to what lies ahead, I strain to reach the end of the race and receive the prize for which God is calling us up to heaven because of what Christ Jesus did for us.

Philippians 3:13 TLB

God’s readiness to give and forgive is now public. Salvation’s available for everyone! … Tell them all this. Build up their courage.

Titus 2:11, 15 the Message

Forgetting the past and looking forward to what lies ahead, I strain to reach the end of the race and receive the prize for which God is calling us.

Philippians 3:13-14 TLB

And I know the Lord will continue to rescue me from every trip, trap, snare, and pitfall of evil and carry me safely to His heavenly kingdom. May He be glorified throughout eternity. Amen.

2 Timothy 4:18 the voice