

Creator of the *Midnight Mom Devotional*

Peace

Hope and Healing
for the Anxious
Momma's Heart

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BECKY THOMPSON

Foreword by Dr. Tim Clinton

Peace

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HOPE AND HEALING FOR THE
ANXIOUS MOMMA'S HEART

Becky Thompson



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Foreword

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“Dad, I had no idea . . .”

My daughter’s voice trailed off. As her parent, I knew what Megan was going to say before she even finished. We were standing in the nursery belonging to my brand-new granddaughter, Olivia (who I call Papa Girl), surrounded by the baby decor that had been lovingly selected months before by Megan and Ben and my wife, Julie. The arrangement of stuffed elephants, the baby books, and the warm blankets on the rocking chair—gifts from family members and friends in honor of “Princess O”—signified the hours Megan spent preparing to welcome her first child.

I felt my heart beat in my chest as Megan continued, “Dad, I know you always said how much you loved and cared for us, and I always knew how much you loved me. But I didn’t fully understand until now.”

I smiled at my daughter—now a mom—who has always made us so proud. And I thought about how love does nothing but grow even more over the years.

The love of a parent is fierce. And this love is so forgiving and wildly sacrificing. It will make your heart soar and sink in the same day—or sometimes in the same hour. This powerful love also makes us vulnerable because we can’t control everything for our children in this broken world, and there’s

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nothing more terrifying than that for a loving parent. We can't control the possibility of our kids getting high fevers, dying from SIDS, choking, falling and getting hurt, being late, being made fun of and bullied, getting lost or taken, not making the team, getting disappointing grades . . . and on and on. Each stage brings its own challenges, stressors, and insanity of sorts.

For Christian parents, it's a lifetime of calling on God's protection, comfort, and wisdom to help us navigate our feelings and responsibility. For some, that vulnerability can become a deep, painful battle rooted in all-consuming anxiety. I have sat with parents who love and trust the Lord with all their hearts but also battle crippling fear related to parenthood. This fear can keep them up at night or make them tired all day. It can affect their personalities so much—with tears and anger triggers around every corner—that even their spouses don't recognize them anymore. And, oh, how it can steal joy.

But no matter how tightly fear has gripped your heart, it doesn't have to stay that way. You can loosen the grip. Maybe not on your own, but with loving counsel and persistent prayer and by inviting Christ into your darkest places, you can win this battle and overcome. You can be free to love deeply and parent well.

I want you to know that if you picked up this book as a lifeline or an anchor in your journey as a parent, there is hope and healing. It comes moored in a relationship with our heavenly Father, who sent His own Son—His dearly loved Son—into our brokenness and pain. Taking the first step to reach out starts the healing journey.

Through the years, I've watched multitudes of parents work through their consuming fears to find a way to live unburdened and free from the weight that once gripped them. What Becky has written in this work is biblically sound, deeply encouraging, and filled with wisdom that will speak to your heart. You can be the mom who God wants you to be and the loving, emotionally close mom your kids need. Know that God's heart is toward you as you begin.

DR. TIM CLINTON
President of the American Association of
Christian Counselors

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To You, Momma, Before We Begin

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Hi there! I know you. Well, I don't know your name, but I know you better than you might think. You picked up this book or downloaded it onto your device or you're listening to the audio version because we are alike. It's just that simple. If you didn't face anxiety at some point in your life or hadn't ever felt overwhelmed by everything or nothing at all, then I don't believe you would have found your way to this book. So, right here at the beginning, I want you to know that I get it. I know how it feels to live with an underscore of anxiety as the soundtrack of your life.

I also know what it's like to be told to just stop feeling the way I do. I've had people say to me, "Just stop worrying. Just pray more or read more Scripture or focus on what's good and you'll *get better*." As if, perhaps, I hadn't thought of doing those things. Or, worse, as if maybe I just wasn't doing those things well enough.

I understand what it's like to love the Lord and read the Bible and know that God is good and trustworthy and completely deserving of our full faith. To *know* that His Word says "Be anxious for nothing"¹ yet *feel* anxious about everything. I know what it's like to be a Christian woman battling

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the sickness of anxiety. And I know that more than anything, if you're like me at all, you crave peace above everything else and reassurance that there's not something broken with your faith because you can't shake the fear.

So, before I tell you my story and we go on this journey together, I want to be sure you know a few things from the start. First, you, with all the forms of anxiousness you experience, are welcome here. I don't know your story. I don't know what you've been through, when the fear started, what caused it, or what triggers it today. I don't know how you manage it or whether you've told anyone about it. I don't know whether you're just hoping the fear passes on its own or you've tried everything to no avail. But I do know that you don't need to be anything other than who you really are to find hope and healing in these words. I just need you to be honest with how you've felt, what you've thought, and what you've believed. And I need you to be okay with me being very honest in what I share with you.

I believe in honesty. I believe in the power of sharing our stories. And I believe that you are living a story right now that others are going to need to hear about someday. It's true. I believe every road we walk has pieces of our story that Jesus invites us to gather as we journey. Think of every road Jesus walked. Each step He took taught us, inspired us, and pointed us toward our Father in heaven. Even the road that led to the cross told the ultimate story of God's sacrificial love.

The road you find yourself on today isn't a path you alone will walk. Women will come behind you, maybe this year or years from now, who will need to know how you made it.

They are going to need to hear how you became healthy and found both acceptance of the story you're living and freedom from the power of fear in your life. Maybe these women will not hear you share your story from a stage or read it in the form of a book (but maybe they will!). Maybe you'll share your story across cups of coffee or over the phone late at night or through a text to another desperate momma. But no matter how you end up using your journey and your story, this road you are walking right now just might save someone else's life. That's powerful. *That's heavy.*

I've said it before in other books, but I think it needs to be repeated here: seasons often seem hard and weighty because we don't realize how many women we are carrying with us—women who will learn or grow or be healed because we walked the road in front of us, carrying their hope within our own stories, taking notes along the path, and leaving a trail of courage for them to follow.

We have the chance to influence so many people when we acknowledge the stories God is writing in our lives, even the hardest parts, and then find the bravery to share them with others. So, I hope you underline or highlight or take some notes as we journey together through this book. I hope you start to prepare to share what God has done and is doing in you as we walk toward peace.

Next, I need you to know that we are on the same team. Always. Forever. You and me. I have never written a book for a woman I didn't believe could be my best friend. All the advice or hope or truth that I share through all platforms is intended for women I could go out and get a coffee with (if we could find someone to watch our children). I think of us

together as I write these words to you. The Lord asked me to share these words with you, so I imagine you every time I sit down to write them.

As a matter of fact, I had this vision of you while I was standing at my kitchen sink one night about a year ago. I say vision, but I didn't see anything with my eyes. I wasn't praying or meditating on God's Word. I wasn't alone or in deep, reflective thought. Actually, I was finally soaping the dishes I had been avoiding all day when I looked out into my backyard and saw a whole scene playing out in my mind as if I were watching a movie I had seen a million times.

As I scrubbed a pan, I saw this woman. I couldn't describe her face or tell you her age or ethnicity. I just knew she was a woman who was afraid. She was standing in the middle of a dark forest, blindfolded as if she had been kidnapped and dropped off in the woods by her captor. She couldn't see anything; she could just hear the sounds around her. Rustling leaves. Wind in the trees. Her own quick breathing. Her heart pounded inside her chest, and I watched as she reached up and slowly pulled the covering from her eyes, trembling and terrified of what she'd see.

Her breathing quickened. I could tell she was panicked. She blinked, and as the fuzziness cleared, she peered into the darkness, beginning to make sense of her surroundings. It was night. The only light came from the moon shining through the tops of the trees. She spun one way and then the other. But there was only forest in all directions. Only night. Only cold darkness.

"Hellooooo?" she cried out as panic took over. She paused and listened. "Hello!?" she called out again, allowing her plea

to ring out in the night air as if she were a little girl awakened from a bad dream. But this was no dream. This was the dark forest of fear and anxiety in the middle of the night, and she had no idea how she was going to get out of there alive.

Tears streamed down my face as I rinsed out a glass. “Lord, who is she?” I asked, heartbroken for this woman who felt so desperately alone.

And the Lord answered, *She’s a woman lost in the forest of fear, and you’re going back for her so we can lead her out together.*

“Okay,” I answered through hot tears. “Tell her I’m coming, Lord! Help her see she’s not alone!” At the time, I was in an intense season of anxiety. I was living daily with that familiar weight of worry that steals all the extra space in my heart. I’ve lived with anxiety most of my life, but some seasons have been harder than others. And as the Lord showed me this vision, I knew this time my walk through the woods would be different. This time I was to take notes of how I navigated certain situations. I was to make a map that I could use to lead other women out of the forest of fear.

Listen to me, sister. I’m not a psychologist. I’m not a licensed counselor or a therapist. I have no training that would qualify me to give you any medical or professional advice. I will not claim that I am someone the medical world would recommend as a resource on this subject. But I have spent years navigating a life with anxiety. I am on the inside of this story. And so, whether you have lived in the darkness of anxiety most of your life or it seems as though you’ve been kidnapped by your emotions and dropped off suddenly without cause or explanation, I know these woods. I know

how fear likes to lead, how it taunts, how it tries to make your mind play tricks on you. I know how hopeless the space you're in right now can feel. And if there was ever a guide who knows this path well enough to tell you how to find peace in the middle of fear, it's me, following the Holy Spirit as our ultimate guide.

Friend, there are so many reasons you might be experiencing anxiety right now. You might be able to pinpoint a cause or a catalyst that brought you to this place. Or maybe you can't. Maybe you have always been just a little bit afraid. Maybe you have always been just a little bit anxious. Or maybe you're looking around, asking yourself, *How did I get here?*

Sister, more important than knowing how you got here is knowing the way out. It's knowing where to place your feet and what to trust as solid ground as you journey through this space. That's what we're going to work through together.

I need to be clear about something. We aren't formulating a personalized plan for you to overcome the anxiety you face, because our methods to find wholeness are all unique. In the pages ahead, we are going to identify solid places for your heart to find rest and meet with Jesus as you journey forward. So much of our fear is rooted in lies we've believed about ourselves or about who God is. And while I don't have the clinical recommendations to tell you how to stop your racing heart, I do have the biblical foundation—and a degree to back it—to give your feet a safe place to walk. So, we are going to look at spiritual, mental, emotional, physical, and practical steps we can take together that will lead us to hope and healing.

You're much less alone than you feel. You're much closer to Jesus than it seems. And so many of us out here understand exactly what it feels like not only to deal with constant anxiety but also to navigate motherhood at the same time. There is hope for us. There is healing for us. And, friend, I venture to say there is even peace for our troubled hearts. It's our aim. It's our focus. It's the center of this book and the foundation under each step I'm going to invite you to take with me.

Peace is not just an idea. It's not just a goal. Peace is a person. We're on a journey to walk with Peace Himself right through that forest of fear until the dawn breaks and we reach the clearing.

Peace

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I

Unafraid of the Dark

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WHAT DOES THE FEAR YOU FEEL SAY ABOUT YOUR FAITH?

About a year ago, I woke up one morning and felt nervous about everything but nothing specific. I closed my eyes and tried to remember what I was worried about exactly. We had made a cross-country move from Oklahoma to California on a giant God adventure just about six months before. Despite the big leap, our kids were settling into school and life in Los Angeles. Our marriage was in a really healthy place. Our business was steadily growing. Our finances weren't in terrible shape. We had supportive families and a growing community, and we had never felt more strongly that God was leading us daily. He was meeting all our needs, but despite how great everything seemed, that morning I woke up afraid.

Here's the way I describe this sort of feeling to friends or family who don't deal with chronic anxiety: Imagine your alarm clock goes off and you open your eyes, knowing you're going to face something that day that will bring you to a fearful place. It's the same feeling someone might experience

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if she was afraid of the dentist and had a nine o'clock appointment, if she was about to take a big exam she didn't feel prepared for, or if she needed to make a speech and was terrified of public speaking.

Anxiety can feel just like those common fears anyone might experience when anticipating a big event or when an uncomfortable situation needs to be overcome. It's the feeling of getting ready to face something scary, but there's not always a specific cause on the calendar. Sometimes it's brought on by something specific we are afraid of, but other times it's not. There's no dentist appointment or exam or speech. There's not always even a conversation or conflict. Nothing needs to be tackled, climbed, surmounted, or pushed through. There's just fear. Looming fear. About everything. And nothing. And sometimes that feeling of fear can be scary all on its own.

Why? Well, those of us with anxiety know that when the average person has fear about the dentist appointment, she can look forward to the appointment being over. When she must give the speech or take the test or sit through the interview, once it's done, it's done. But when fear comes without a cause, we don't have that hope of getting to the other side of the situation. There's no deep sigh of relief and release of stress once it's done and over with. There's just the lingering unrest of an unidentified dread. And in that restless place of worry, we can begin to look for and create unrealistic fears that feel very, very real.

That's how I felt that morning one year ago. My heart sank. It was as though something terrible had happened or was about to happen, yet everything was just about as good

as it could be. My brain was signaling to my body some impending doom, something off, something that deserved my attention. But I couldn't think of what it could be.

Like flipping through files, I pulled up in my mind each person I love, doing my best to locate the source of the morning's fear. *Is everything okay with Jared?* I couldn't think of anything wrong with my husband. *It's not him. What about Kolton or Kadence or Jaxton?* I thought of each of my children's faces. Nothing to be afraid of. Well, nothing out of the ordinary sprang to the front of my thoughts . . . just all the usual worries a typical mom might have concerning her children.

I continued to think of situations and relationships, work deadlines and friendships, and I couldn't identify any one thing that could be causing this sinking feeling of fear. Simply, I had nothing to be worried about, yet I was nervous about the day.

I wonder if you've ever experienced something similar. Yes, I'm sure we can all say we have gone to bed thinking about a problem that causes us to feel afraid and then awoken the next morning with the same issue ready to reclaim our attention. Maybe for you it was a health situation or financial issue. Maybe it was a relationship in conflict or a conversation that needed to be had. Maybe it was work or something to do with your husband or with your child's teacher. Maybe it was just your daily to-do list that seemed so much bigger than you. But maybe, like me, you've woken up and experienced fear without a source. You've felt alarmed by . . . something . . . everything . . . but nothing at all. Maybe you've just felt anxious.

What Is Anxiety?

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Many of us are familiar with the feeling, but few of us understand what actually goes on in our bodies when we experience anxiety. So, what is anxiety, exactly? According to the American Psychiatric Association, “Anxiety is a normal reaction to stress. . . . It can alert us to dangers and help us prepare and pay attention. . . . Anxiety refers to anticipation of a future concern.”¹ Basically, anxiety is what we experience when we look toward the future and feel afraid and then prepare to face whatever threat we see coming. Anxiety disorders are different from daily feelings of nervousness. Anxiety disorders are diagnosed when a person’s fear is not proportional to the situation he’s facing and when his responses to the fear impede his daily life.

I know how anxious momma hearts work. If I had just read those facts surrounding anxiety disorders, I would start self-diagnosing, wondering, *Do I have a disorder? Am I okay?* So, I’ll just pop in with a quick reminder. You are okay! But even if you were to be diagnosed with an anxiety disorder, you’d be a part of a very large community. Anxiety disorders are very common, affecting nearly a third of all adults at some point in their lives.² That’s a lot of people!

Some obvious questions come up after reading this statistic: If anxiety disorders are so common, why is there such a stigma of shame in the church surrounding feelings of fear? Why are we so hesitant to tell others (especially our friends who go to church with us and should want to help us) that we are out here in the forest? Why are we so afraid to shout “Hello?” and hope someone who has been here before or

who is out here with us comes to our rescue and reminds us that we are not alone?

I think, deep down, one of our biggest worries as Christian women is what our fear says about our faith. We think to ourselves, *If God tells me to fear not and if Jesus tells me He has given me His peace yet I am still afraid, then what does that say about what I believe at my core?* So we worry. We worry because we deal with anxiety, and then we worry about what the anxiety says about who we are. On top of all that, we worry about what other people would say if they found out about our silent struggle.

And so, instead of feeling overwhelmed and crying out, “Help! I need help over here! Something’s not right. I need my people to surround me!” shame keeps us silent. We wander through this darkness alone, willing ourselves to just be better.

The forest of fear can be one of the loneliest places for Christian women because only people who have made it out want to admit they are familiar with the woods of worry. Do you know what I mean? We hear things like, “Oh, I used to have anxiety.” “I went through a season of anxiety.” “I knew someone who faced anxiety, and then the Lord healed her.” While those testimonies are tremendously life giving and it helps to know there are women who made it to the other side, what about a community for the women who are still walking through the dark? Why do we feel so much shame in admitting we haven’t made it out of this place yet?

THOSE WHO STRUGGLE WITH ANXIETY HAVE A PROBLEM, BUT THEY ARE NOT THE PROBLEM.

I think we are hesitant to say we are anxious because for a very long time, the church has spoken from the position that anxiety is primarily a spiritual thought battle. When Christians struggle with fear, they are told, “Just pray more and read your Bible, and you’ll have peace.” And while it is true that anxiety can stem from an emotional trauma, a stressful life event, or a supernatural attack by the Enemy, anxiety can also be triggered by a broken process in the body. As a result, many churchgoing, Jesus-loving Christians with clinical anxiety wonder what’s wrong with them and their faith. *I’m doing all that, and it’s not changing anything. I must be the problem*, we believe. But that’s a lie that must be addressed. Those who struggle with anxiety have a problem, but *they* are not the problem.

Have you ever done any research on what happens to people’s bodies when they experience anxiety? It’s really very interesting. Anxiety is one of the most common emotions across all species. It is the emotion that tells a living being to be on guard and aware of potential danger. Anxiety, at its core, helps keep us alive. Here’s how.

When we stumble or get startled or sense immediate danger, our brains trigger a fight-or-flight response. Almost immediately, chemicals are released that prepare our bodies to face peril and fight it or run from it. This physiological re-

sponse increases our alertness and causes us to pay very close attention to our surroundings. It makes us look for any possible threat. Our breathing changes, our bodies reroute blood, and our muscles are primed and ready to respond. It's why your heart races and you feel that rush of adrenaline when you nearly trip or the car in front of you brakes suddenly. Do you know that feeling?

This is all part of our bodies' autonomic nervous system, the system in charge of running things behind the scenes. This system is made up of two sets of nerves, the sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous systems.³ I know this is getting really scientific, but stick with me for a second. There's a reason I'm telling you all this.

When our anxiety is triggered by some stimuli that says there is danger, the first system, the sympathetic nervous system, releases a round of chemicals that causes us to prepare for what we are about to face. The second system, the parasympathetic nervous system, acts like an antagonist, keeping the first system in check. In other words, the second system releases chemicals that act as a sort of antidote to the first. It's all a careful dance of what we sense around us: how our brains interpret what we sense, how our brains then signal different response centers in our bodies, and how those systems function together to keep us from danger.

Why is it important that we understand how anxiety works? Because just like any other system, such as our immune, respiratory, circulatory, or digestive system, sometimes our nervous system has problems. Sometimes what's going on in our bodies affects our brains (which are also part of our bodies). And sometimes we need a doctor's input to

aid what is wrong. I read recently in the book *The Struggle Is Real* that “about twenty percent of the population have one or more disorders related to brain chemistry that are primarily genetic.”⁴

This is why you shouldn't be ashamed of admitting you are in the forest. Anxiety isn't your fault. It's not a result of fraudulent faith. You shouldn't be rejected religiously because of it. So, I'll repeat myself: Anxiety can stem from emotional trauma. It can be the result of a spiritual attack by the Enemy. Or it could be some form of physical brokenness, where a process in your body doesn't work the way it was designed to. There's much more to anxiety than many of us realize, and we must gain a fuller understanding of what we are dealing with if we are going to find hope and healing.

So, the first area where your heart might need healing is this: Perhaps you're afraid of feeling afraid. You wonder how you can call yourself a devoted follower of Christ when many days you've got an anxious heart and a racing mind. You wonder how you can point to Him as the answer for yourself and others when you've called on Him for peace but you still wake up afraid some days. You worry what the anxiety you feel says about who you are as a Christian woman. And you can't talk to others about it because the shame keeps you silent.

Before I say one more word, I want to make something abundantly clear. I want to say what pastors and other church leaders and kind church counselors should have told you a long time ago. I want to say what your heart has desperately needed to hear to begin to heal. Ready? Lean in.

ANXIETY DOES NOT DISQUALIFY YOU FROM BEING A WOMAN FULL OF FAITH.

Anxiety does not disqualify you from being a woman full of faith.

Full stop. Read it again. Underline it. Highlight it. It's true, and you're going to want to remember it. You might have been trained to believe that the anxiety you feel disqualifies you from being considered a faith-filled woman. You might have grown up doubting your relationship with Jesus, or you might have been told in your adult years that something is wrong with your relationship with Him because you feel afraid or have panic attacks. You might have been told this by people you trust in church leadership. But it's simply not true. You can *feel* afraid and *know* God is in control. You can *feel* anxious and *know* God is good. Because you are not what you feel, and sometimes our bodies don't line up with what our spirits know is true.

I'll give you an example. Just a few months ago, I was invited to minister at an event not far from my home in Los Angeles. I was part of the prayer team asked to simply pray during the weekend conference. I suppose you could think of my role that weekend as playing defense. While the speakers were on stage, the prayer team was praying against what the Enemy might try to do during the gathering. We were praying against distractions. We were praying against confusion. We were praying that the Lord would open hearts and minds and bring healing and inspiration to every person in attendance. We were praying that the conference speakers

would say only what the Lord wanted them to share and that the attendees would fully receive the messages in such a way that the words transformed their hearts. I'm often the speaker at such events, so this was a new and exciting ministry opportunity for me.

It was the afternoon of the second day, and the team and I decided to get some coffee before the evening session. I don't drink coffee (a story I'll share later in the book), but I decided to go ahead and grab a dessert with the rest of the group. It was a nice afternoon, and I was really enjoying ministering as a team. But on our way back to the venue, my heart began to race. That familiar flush of anxiety raced through my body. I sat in the back seat, trying my hardest to make sense of what I was experiencing physically. *What's really going on?* I prayed. And immediately the Lord began to remind me about my day, bringing to my attention some simple facts. First, I hadn't gotten much sleep the night before because I was staying in a hotel. Second, I hadn't really eaten properly throughout the day because of the busy schedule. My body was reacting to physical stressors that I hadn't thought about until that moment. My heart was pounding. My hands were sweaty. My stomach hurt. My shoulders felt tense. Physically, I was on the verge of a panic attack, but it wasn't because I was weak in my faith. My body simply needed a good meal and the chance to pause and regroup.

So, here's the interesting part. During this short trip back to the conference venue, my spirit didn't feel overwhelmed at all. My physical heart was racing, but my spiritual heart was looking forward to the evening service and what I antici-

pated God was about to do. This was the first time in my life that I recognized a disconnect between what my body was experiencing and what my heart was sensing spiritually. I was full of faith, praying for the attendees of the conference to encounter God's love in a new way, while at the same time, my body wasn't behaving as it should.

PHYSICAL BROKENNESS DOES NOT
LIMIT WHAT GOD DOES THROUGH US,
NOR DOES IT ALTER HIS VIEW OF US
AND OUR FAITH.

After about twenty minutes, my body came into alignment with my spirit—which sounds strange to say, but I just mean my body stopped panicking and I began to physically feel what my spirit had known all along. It was going to be a great night, and I simply needed to eat something and rest for a minute before I got back to work. That's exactly what happened. I was able to fully step into what I had been asked to do for the night. Anxiety didn't disqualify me from praying or ministering or sharing the love of Jesus any more than deafness, diabetes, asthma, or any other chronic physical disability might have. Do you know why? Physical brokenness does not limit what God does through us, nor does it alter His view of us and our faith.

Jesus Uses Only Broken People

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Sister, what you are is a spirit who lives in a body—a broken body. Your brokenness might look different from others'. Your brokenness might manifest mentally. Your brokenness might show up in your emotions. Your brokenness might be a result of some physical dysfunction that you have no control over. But make no mistake. You and I—and the rest of the entire world—live in broken flesh. The fact that we will all die proves this is true. Our brokenness just doesn't always look like everyone else's.

Remember, when God created humanity, He made us in His perfect image and designed us to live forever with Him in a garden made just for Him and His creation. Death was not part of the original plan. But when Adam and Eve sinned, God's children were separated from Him; death and brokenness entered their bodies *and minds*.

Yet God did not leave us in our brokenness. His plan was for us to be restored into right relationship with Him and into full wholeness. This rescue plan was carried out over thousands of years through God's imperfect people and ultimately through His perfect Son, Jesus. He gained the ultimate victory over death, but our days are still limited on earth. Brokenness still plagues our planet.

Every person—except for Jesus—whom God used to carry out His work on earth has been just as broken as you and me. Period. End of story. We are all broken folks used by God in some way to expand His kingdom and bring all the other broken folks back into a relationship with the Father. Why is this important? Sister, your anxiety, your fear, your

mind, your emotions, and the way your brokenness affects your life do not disqualify you from knowing, loving, and serving the Lord and from being used by Him. You and your heart and your life are a needed asset to the kingdom of God!

Feeling afraid doesn't disqualify you from being used by Jesus any more than chronic migraines or allergies to foods prevent one of our brothers or sisters from preaching the gospel of hope and healing. The fall of humankind at the beginning of time meant we would all be faulty on some level. It is the reason we all need Jesus.

GOD DOES NOT FAULT THE ANXIOUS
WOMAN FOR HER ANXIETY. HE CAME SO
THAT SHE—WE—COULD BE FREE!

So, let's exclaim this truth over the lie that says we are to blame for our anxiety. Ready?

God does not fault the anxious woman for her anxiety. He came so that she—we—could be free!

And whether that freedom comes by the vehicle of counseling, medication, vitamins, or an encounter with His presence that radically and miraculously reorganizes your DNA, my job is to walk with you, believing that hope and peace are coming for you. My job is to point to Jesus and say, "It's always been up to Him." Our job is to trust and follow Him and take every step He says to take.

We do not have to be afraid of feeling afraid. We do not

have to fear the reality of being in the forest at night. God sent His Spirit and gave us His Word so that we could walk through this dark world with a lamp to our feet and a light to our path, and He gave us one another so we wouldn't have to walk this road alone. Sister, hold that lamp up a little higher because what you see here and whom you see in this space with you just might surprise you.

So many women are walking this journey with you, all realizing that none of us have to be afraid of the fear. There's hope in the Holy Spirit, who doesn't leave us. There's help available as we acknowledge the many ways to become whole. And there's a host of other women all holding up their lights, all acknowledging that they aren't afraid of being afraid anymore, all making this dark forest a lot less scary, all on our walk toward healing.

LET'S PRAY TOGETHER

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Father, You know exactly where the fear we face comes from. You know the root cause. Whether it's situational, relational, or physical, Lord, we ask that You'd help us now. Bring healing as only You can. Lead us as we take our next steps toward wholeness. We give our health journeys over to You. Help us know whom to talk to, where to seek treatment, which friends we can trust, and which methods we should explore.

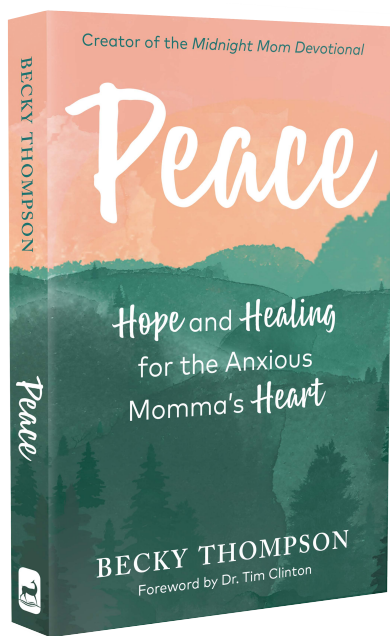
We know that You are our healer. We know that with just a word, You healed those in Scrip-

ture. With just a touch, others received full wholeness. So, right here, we ask that You'd touch us—minds, bodies, and spirits. Push back the darkness and bring complete healing. We trust You with our lives. We trust You with our hearts. We trust You to lead us. And we trust that You are good. Thank You for sending Jesus to make us whole. We ask in Jesus's name. Amen.

SAY THIS WITH ME

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I'm not afraid of being afraid. The Lord doesn't fault me for the anxiety I face. He wants to free me. Therefore, I won't shame myself for needing His help!



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