



OVERCOMING ANXIETY

Devo for the Devo

P E R R Y N O B L E

CHAPTER ONE

David, who is known in Scripture as a man after God's own heart, said the following in Psalm 40:1-2 (NLT)

"I waited patiently for the Lord to help me,
and he turned to me and heard my cry.
2 He lifted me out of the pit of despair,
out of the mud and the mire.
He set my feet on solid ground
and steadied me as I walked along."

Read through these verses and do the following:

- 1 - Circle the word, "patiently" and pause for a few seconds and ask the Lord to give you patience in the process.
- 2 - Say a "thank you" to the Lord for all the things He is doing that you are completely unaware of.
- 3 - Circle the word "despair" in verse two. If a man after God's own heart can use "despair" to use the condition he was in, you should not feel shame in dealing with it either.
- 4 - Read verse two again in its entirety and ask the Lord to give you the faith to believe that. As the He delivered David, He will deliver you.

CHAPTER TWO

As I mentioned in this chapter, our circumstances do not alter God's character.

We tend to think He is good when things are good, and we often tend to doubt His goodness when things are bad.

With this in mind, read II Corinthians 4:8-11 (NLT)

8 "We are pressed on every side by troubles, but we are not crushed. We are perplexed, but not driven to despair. 9 We are hunted down, but never abandoned by God. We get knocked down, but we are not destroyed. 10 Through suffering, our bodies continue to share in the death of Jesus so that the life of Jesus may also be seen in our bodies."

Take a few minutes to answer the following:

1 - Did Paul, a man loved and used by God, ever experience trouble and did he allow those trouble to crush him? Check out verse 8. If God didn't allow Paul to be crushed, He won't allow you to be crushed either.

2 - Was Paul ever confused or "perplexed" as to what was happening? The answer is yes and he didn't allow it to drive him to losing all hope. Check out verse 9. Ask God to continually let you see the next step in His plan for your life.

CHAPTER TWO

OVERCOMING ANXIETY

3 - Did Paul ever feel as if he were facing opposition in his spiritual journey? See the language Paul uses in verse 9 and know that when/if you get knocked down the best/right thing to do is get back up!

4 - Can God use the suffering in our lives for good? See verse 10 and know that just because God doesn't seem to be working immediately He always comes through eventually!

CHAPTER THREE

Nearly everyone has experienced “the voice of the enemy” as we talked about in chapter 3 with David and Goliath. With this in mind read II Corinthians 10:3-5 (NIV)

3 "For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. 4 The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. 5 We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ."

1 - According to verse 3, is there a way we are called to fight that is more spiritual than physical?

The answer is obviously, yes. The BEST WAY to get into the proper mindset is to figure out what it is that connects you the most/closest to the heart of Jesus and do it a lot! For example, reading your Bible, or prayer, or listening to worship music... If those things connect you to God, do them everyday.

2 - Notice, according to verse 4, that the thing that you mentioned above that connects you to Jesus has the power to demolish strongholds which is why you most likely find yourself being tempted to either “skip it,” or maybe even distracted from doing it at all.

CHAPTER THREE

3 - Underline “take captive every thought” in verse five.
Trust me, this is something we have to learn to do.

With this in mind: what is the BIGGEST lie you know the
enemy is trying to get you to believe about yourself?

What is the truth that God wants to to believe instead of
that lie!

Trust me, taking the time to write this down is powerful!

CHAPTER FOUR

Other than maybe the motivation to clean out your car, hopefully this chapter encouraged you that no matter what has taken place in your past, in Christ, you can STILL have an amazing future.

Read Psalm 103:8-12 (NLT) and work through the following questions:

- 8 "The Lord is compassionate and merciful,
slow to get angry and filled with unfailing love.
- 9 He will not constantly accuse us,
nor remain angry forever.
- 10 He does not punish us for all our sins;
he does not deal harshly with us, as we deserve.
- 11 For his unfailing love toward those who fear him
is as great as the height of the heavens above the earth.
- 12 He has removed our sins as far from us
as the east is from the west."

1 - According to verse eight, what are the four main characteristics of God?

2 - According to those four things, along with what is written in verse 10, does God want to deal with us harshly or with compassion?

3 - Circle the third word in verse 12 "removed" and think to yourself: does God want us to carry our trash around from our past, or is it His desire to remove it from our lives?

CHAPTER FIVE

It really was difficult to “hang in there” as a Clemson fan during the five year run we kept getting “the beat down” from our in state rivals. However, as we can now see, it was worth not giving up.

All of us, at some point, have wanted to give up. We’ve questioned God and wondered if it was even worth it. Which is why, when we experience this, we should not fear taking it to Jesus.

We read in Matthew 27:45-46 (NLT)

45 "At noon, darkness fell across the whole land until three o'clock. 46 At about three o'clock, Jesus called out with a loud voice, "Eli, Eli,[j] lema sabachthani?" which means "My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?"

1 - According to verse 45, did Jesus ever experience darkness?

2 - Underline in verse 46, “with a loud voice,” In other words, Jesus didn’t try to keep His questions/struggle locked inside. He was vocal about it, giving us an example that it’s ok to express our frustrations.

3 - According to verse 46, did Jesus feel abandoned? All of us have at some point.

CHAPTER FIVE

However, I heard someone say years ago we should never put a period where God puts a coma because, while we know in this moment His suffering was real we also know the celebration in the next chapter was even more real as Jesus wasn't delivered from his season of darkness but was delivered through it! Jesus' season of darkness brought about an event -- aka: the Resurrection -- that we've been celebrating for over 2,000 years!

CHAPTER SIX

The story about nearly drowning in this chapter is a powerful metaphor in regards to how many of us have felt when going through our own version of hell.

With this in mind, read Isaiah 43:1b-2 (NLT) and answer the following questions.

“Do not be afraid, for I have ransomed you.
I have called you by name; you are mine.
2 When you go through deep waters,
I will be with you.

When you go through rivers of difficulty,
you will not drown.

When you walk through the fire of oppression,
you will not be burned up;
the flames will not consume you.”

1 - Underline the first four words that appear in this text. Those words are said over 350 times in the Bible! “Do not be afraid” Pause for a second and ask God to help you to overcome any fear that may be dominating your mindset.

2 - In verse two, circle the number of times the word “when” appears. In so doing, God doesn’t say “if” we go through tough times, but “when.”

3 - Also in verse two, what are the three promises God gives us for when we are experiencing difficult times?

- “I will be with you”
- “You will not drown”
- You will not be burned up”

CHAPTER SEVEN

Every single person I've ever met has gone through a storm at some point in their lives. In fact, the way I've always heard it: you are either in a storm, coming out of a storm, or getting ready to go into a storm.

However, as we talked about in chapter seven, Jesus doesn't send us through difficult situations, He walks with us through them.

We see this in Acts 27:22-25 (NLT) as Paul is on a ship that is in the middle of a serious storm and had been for several days! In the middle of the storm, he says the following:

22 "But take courage! None of you will lose your lives, even though the ship will go down. 23 For last night an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I serve stood beside me, 24 and he said, 'Don't be afraid, Paul, for you will surely stand trial before Caesar! What's more, God in his goodness has granted safety to everyone sailing with you.' 25 So take courage! For I believe God. It will be just as he said."

#1 - According to verse 22-24, how did Paul manage to find courage in the middle of the storm? Hint: the angel standing beside him HAD to be pretty strong!

#2 - Circle the phrase, "Don't be afraid" in verse 24. This is the message God gives Paul (and us) during the storm. AND in yesterday's devotion!

#3 - According to verse 25 is it possible to have faith even as the storm continues to rage on?

If you are in the middle of a storm, right now is an awesome opportunity to pause and ask God to fill you with the faith to make it through your storm.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Doubt is a common emotion in life, just like the story of me doubting my father in this chapter. Whenever I tend to doubt I am often reminded of this verse:

Jeremiah 32:27 (NLT)

"I am the Lord, the God of all the peoples of the world. Is anything too hard for me?

I am also led to what Jesus said in Matthew 7:9-11 (NLT)

9 "You parents—if your children ask for a loaf of bread, do you give them a stone instead? 10 Or if they ask for a fish, do you give them a snake? Of course not! 11 So if you sinful people know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give good gifts to those who ask him."

#1 - According to these words of Jesus, what type of gifts does God want to give to His children? Specific answer is In verse 11.

#2 - Circle the word "ask" in verse 11 and pause for a second to ask God for the the good gifts you so deeply desire.

With this in mind, we can trust that gifts from His hands coincide with His plans and will ultimately work out for the good even when we tend to doubt.

CHAPTER NINE

Nearly every single person I've discussed spiritual matters with ultimately wants to know God's will for their lives. However, as we talked about in this chapter, it's a step-by-step process.

Take a look at Proverbs 3:5-6 (NLT) and answer the following questions:

- 5 "Trust in the Lord with all your heart;
do not depend on your own understanding.
6 Seek his will in all you do,
and he will show you which path to take."

#1 - Circle the word "all" in verse five and honestly ask yourself, "is there any part of my heart I am holding back?"

#2 - Taking a look at the second sentence -- the second part of verse five -- ask yourself the question, "have I ever led myself away from somewhere I knew God was leading me to?"

#3 - Circle the word "all" in the first sentence of verse six and ask yourself, "Is there any area of my life where I am not seeking His will?" This is often the most unstable area of our lives that brings about the most anxiety.

#4 - What is the promise in this passage the Lord gives us if we seek Him with all our heart, not lean into our own understanding and seek His will in all we do?

Answer = the last sentence of verse six.

CHAPTER TEN

No doubt that you, at some point in your life, have been wounded.

Often times, being wounded, especially in Christian circles, makes us feel worthless, like we are no longer useful.

In this chapter we talked about Paul in prison, but in this devotion, let's take a look at something that happened to Paul a few chapters before.

Acts 4:19-20 (NLT)

19 "Then some Jews arrived from Antioch and Iconium and won the crowds to their side. They stoned Paul and dragged him out of town, thinking he was dead. 20 But as the believers gathered around him, he got up and went back into the town. The next day he left with Barnabas for Derbe."

#1 - According to verse 19 how badly was Paul wounded?
Answer is in the last four words of verse 19.

#2 - Underline the first seven words of verse 20 and ask the Lord, "is there anyone I need to stand with who has been wounded by others"? Or another way of saying it: "Jesus, teach me to see people as you see people."

#3 - Circle the phrase "he got up" about halfway through verse 20 and ask the Lord to help you understand and believe that with His power, along with His people, you can get back up from anything and continue to be effective for Him no matter what has happened to you.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Before I dive in, yes, the story in the book about the lady with “fart face” is 100% true.

In the first chapter of the book of Joshua, God speaks to Joshua for the purpose of direction and encouragement. After all, he was about to do something he had never done before.

With this in mind, read Joshua 1:9 (NLT)

"This is my command—be strong and courageous! Do not be afraid or discouraged. For the Lord your God is with you wherever you go."

#1 - Underline the first eight words and ask yourself, “Was God making a suggestion or issuing a command?” Keep in mind that Joshua was 100% uncertain and had very little confidence at this point.

#2 - Circle, “do not be afraid or discouraged” and ask yourself what is currently causing you the most fear/discouragement? Then pause for 5-10 second and give those things to God.

#3 - What is the promise the Lord makes Joshua at the end of this verse? Answer: that He will be with him wherever he goes. What God promised him, God promises you as well.

Don't let what others have said about you have more power in your life than what God has said about you.

CHAPTER TWELVE

Yes, the story in this chapter is true -- I STILL cannot spell Massachusetts!

All too often we are dominated with thoughts of condemnation, thus completely forgetting about the grace of God.

With this in mind - take a look at John 3:17 (NIV)

"For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him."

#1 - According to this verse, what did God send Jesus to NOT do?

Also look at Romans 8:1 (NLT)

"So now there is no condemnation for those who belong to Christ Jesus."

#2 - Circle the word "no" in this verse. Then pause and answer this question, how much condemnation is there for those who belong to Jesus?

Finally, take a look at Ephesians 2:10 (NLT)

"For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago."

#3 - This verse is a promise to everyone who belongs to Christ. What we may see as a mess, He sees a masterpiece in the making.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

Nope, I will not tell you the name of the restaurant the Mafia guy picked...now onto the devotional...

Read Matthew 9:9 (NLT)

9 "As Jesus was walking along, he saw a man named Matthew sitting at his tax collector's booth. "Follow me and be my disciple," Jesus said to him. So Matthew got up and followed him."

Circle the phrase, "follow me," and consider the following: In the days of Jesus, tax collectors were the absolute worse type of sinner on the planet. With this in mind, did Jesus tell Matthew to STOP something, or start something?

It would have made sense for Jesus to tell Matthew, "Stop collecting taxes and get your life right then you can come and find me, and maybe, if you are good enough, I'll let you in."

However Jesus communicates to Matthew, "Right now, just as you are, follow me!"

Because Jesus knew as Matthew followed he would eventually change from who he was too who he needed to be.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

Yes, I really did make a 790 on my SAT!

Read Ephesians 2:8-10 (NLT)

8 "God saved you by his grace when you believed. And you can't take credit for this; it is a gift from God. 9 Salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done, so none of us can boast about it. 10 For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago."

#1 - According to verse 8, is salvation a gift, or something we earn?

#2 - According to verse 9, is anyone truly "good enough" to earn salvation?

#3 - Underline the word "masterpiece" in verse 10. Then pause to reflect that word is describing YOU!

#4 - Circle the phrase, "created us a new" in verse 10. If this is true (and it is) Christ makes us good enough for what He has called us to.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

As we talked about in this chapter, Jesus KNEW Peter would deny Him.

After the resurrection, the disciples STILL wrestled with what to do so they went back to what they had pretty much always done; fishing. However, after an all night fishing trip they caught nothing.

Jesus shows up on the bank and they didn't know it was Him. Jesus tells them to cast their net on the other side and when they did, they caught so many fish it nearly sank the boat! (You can read John 21 for a much better version of the story!)
However, the fascinating part of this passage is found in John 21:9

"When they got there, they found breakfast waiting for them—fish cooking over a charcoal fire, and some bread."

Circle the words "charcoal fire" in this verse.

Why?

The phrase "charcoal fire" only appears one other time in the entire New Testament - check out John 18:18

"Because it was cold, the household servants and the guards had made a charcoal fire. They stood around it, warming themselves, and Peter stood with them, warming himself."

Circle the words "charcoal fire" in this verse as well.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

Isn't it fascinating that the same type of fire Peter stood around when He denied Christ is the exact type of fire He would sit around when he would declare Christ as Lord?

Even though Peter said he would NEVER deny Christ, he did. Instead of a lecture, Jesus showed him love by taking him back to the same environment and not pushing him away, but drawing him in.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

It's so easy to want to give up on life when we put forth effort towards something and do not see immediate results. Like we talked about in this chapter, often times it takes time to see God do a significant work in our lives.

With this in mind, read II Corinthians 4:16-18 (NLT)

16 "That is why we never give up. Though our bodies are dying, our spirits are being renewed every day. 17 For our present troubles are small and won't last very long. Yet they produce for us a glory that vastly outweighs them and will last forever! 18 So we don't look at the troubles we can see now; rather, we fix our gaze on things that cannot be seen. For the things we see now will soon be gone, but the things we cannot see will last forever."

#1 - Underline the first seven words of this passage. Notice for the Apostle Paul, giving up simply wasn't an option.

#2 - What is the promise we are given in verse 17?
Hint: just circle the first sentence in this verse!

#3 - Underline, "for the things we see now will soon be gone" in verse 18 and pause to say "thank You" to God that the pain will not be permanent.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

Fear is very real, very powerful and, if we allow it, very controlling. Just like the spider I talked about in this chapter!

With this in mind, there are a couple of verses/passages that help when I am experiencing fear.

II Timothy 1:7 (NLT)

"For God has not given us a spirit of fear and timidity, but of power, love, and self-discipline."

#1 - Underline the words "power," "love," & self-discipline" and ask the Lord to allow you to focus on these three things rather than the one thing that causes you the most fear.

Psalm 27:1-3 (NLT)

"The Lord is my light and my salvation—
so why should I be afraid?

The Lord is my fortress, protecting me from danger,
so why should I tremble?

2 When evil people come to devour me,
when my enemies and foes attack me,
they will stumble and fall.

3 Though a mighty army surrounds me,
my heart will not be afraid.

Even if I am attacked,
I will remain confident."

#2 - What two questions does David ask in this passage?
Hint: both of them are in verse one.

#3 - What is the declaration David makes in the last part of verse 3? If he can be confident, so can we!

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

Nearly every person I have spoken with has felt the pain caused by feeling alone.

In one of the most popular passages in the Bible, David says in Psalm 23:4 (NLT)

"Even when I walk
 through the darkest valley,
I will not be afraid,
 for you are close beside me.
Your rod and your staff
 protect and comfort me."

After reading this verse, take some time to think about the following questions.

#1 - Did David acknowledge there were times he felt like he was walking through a dark season?

#2 - Underline the phrase "for you are close beside me" which is the answer to the question, "why was David not afraid in the darkest valley?"

Notice the very last thing Jesus tells His followers in the book of Matthew (Matthew 28:20 (NLT)

"...And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

#3 - Underline, "be sure of this" and then read the rest of the verse to what Jesus said for us to be sure of!

Even when we feel alone, we are not alone.

CHAPTER NINETEEN

Yes, this story really did happen - I SO wish I would have caught it on video!

Paul is the author of the majority of the letters in the New Testament. At one point in his life, he was incredibly religious. However, after meeting Jesus (see Acts 9) he discovered it was not about religion, but rather a relationship—which inspired the words he wrote in Philippians 3:5-7 (NLT)

5 "I was circumcised when I was eight days old. I am a pure-blooded citizen of Israel and a member of the tribe of Benjamin—a real Hebrew if there ever was one! I was a member of the Pharisees, who demand the strictest obedience to the Jewish law. 6 I was so zealous that I harshly persecuted the church. And as for righteousness, I obeyed the law without fault. 7 I once thought these things were valuable, but now I consider them worthless because of what Christ has done."

Take some time to reflect on the following questions:

#1 - Was Paul “on the religious treadmill” according to verse 5?

#2 - Did Paul, at one point in his life, feel like he was doing everything the way it should be done? Answer is “yes” according to verse 6!

#3 - Underline the last four words in verse 7 and then answer the following: Did Paul eventually discoverer that being a Christian is not about the work we do but rather about the work Christ has done?

CHAPTER TWENTY

Often times I've had this thought and maybe you have too... "If I could only see Jesus do one miracle, I would never doubt Him again." However, one day when reading through the Gospels I discovered that those who were closest to Him were often the ones that doubted Him the most.

The feeding of the 5,000 is the only miracle recorded in all four Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke & John.)

Matthew writes in Matthew 14:15-17 (NLT)

15 "That evening the disciples came to him and said, "This is a remote place, and it's already getting late. Send the crowds away so they can go to the villages and buy food for themselves." 16 But Jesus said, "That isn't necessary—you feed them." 17 "But we have only five loaves of bread and two fish!" they answered."

You probably already know this but Jesus pulled off a major miracle here. However, notice the disciples, those who had seen Him do incredible, undeniable things were the ones who doubted.

Look at verse 17 and circle the exclamation point. When the disciples said this they were doing way more than just making a statement, they were essentially saying, "I can't believe you think this is possible."

CHAPTER TWENTY

Having doubts does not make us bad Christians. It actually makes us honest ones. And God can handle our doubts way better than He can our pretending everything is ok.

If you have doubt - get it out - literally write it down and let God know this is what you are wrestling with. He may address it - He may not - but you will take a step forward in your walk with Jesus because you took the time to be honest and real.

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

Sometimes it's so difficult to *believe* when giving up seems like the better option. Jairus' daughter was dying, he heard Jesus was nearby and so he did the only thing he knew how to do; he went to Jesus and begged Him to come and heal his daughter.

However, on the way he received some horrible news in Mark 5:35 (NLT)

"...messengers arrived from the home of Jairus, the leader of the synagogue. They told him, "Your daughter is dead. There's no use troubling the Teacher now."

Can you imagine the confusion, the hurt and pain Jairus felt in that moment?

However, what Jesus says to him in the next verse (Mark 5:36 NLT)) had become a "go to verse" for me so many times...

"But Jesus overheard them and said to Jairus, "Don't be afraid. Just have faith."

Jesus overhears the conversation and doesn't even address the people talking, but rather the one who is struggling the most. With this in mind, underline the last six words of this verse.

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

OVERCOMING ANXIETY

It's hard not to fear when things are completely out of control. However, through Scripture and life experiences I am learning that just because things seem out of control God is still in control and really can take a mess and turn it into a miracle.

Jesus raised her back to life! In fact, he specializes in bringing dead things back to life.

If you feel your faith is dead because of the anxiety and worry that you so often experience, my prayer is you will know that in His time He will bring you back to life.

CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

All of us have experienced “9-11” type events that have shaken our faith to the core. When things like this happen we can either tap out, or look up.

With this in mind let’s take a look at Psalm 121 in its entirety.

Psalm 121:1-8 (NLT)

- 1 "I look up to the mountains—
does my help come from there?
- 2 My help comes from the Lord,
who made heaven and earth!
- 3 He will not let you stumble;
the one who watches over you will not slumber.
- 4 Indeed, he who watches over Israel
never slumbers or sleeps.
- 5 The Lord himself watches over you!
The Lord stands beside you as your protective shade.
- 6 The sun will not harm you by day,
nor the moon at night.
- 7 The Lord keeps you from all harm
and watches over your life.
- 8 The Lord keeps watch over you as you come and go,
both now and forever."

CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

OVERCOMING ANXIETY

#1 - In verses 1-2, which direction does the write say we should look when we truly need help?

#2 - In verse 5, circle the first sentence, “The Lord himself watches over you!” Notice there is an exclamation point at the end!

Take a moment to pause and think about the fact that you are not alone in what you are going through.

#3 - According to verse 8, specifically the last four words, will there ever be a time that the Lord stops watching over us or even gives up on us?

Hint: Underline the last four words in verse 8, that’s an awesome promise!

CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

I know, I know, the title of this is quite offensive to some. However, in the context of how it was written, it's actually one of the most popular and well received chapters in the entire book because we've ALL felt that way at least once in our lives!

Taking a look at a few verses in Romans 8, think about the following questions.

Romans 8:1 (NLT)

"So now there is no condemnation for those who belong to Christ Jesus."

#1 - Circle the words, "no condemnation," and pray the Lord will help you to continually believe that in Him there really is no condemnation.

Romans 8:28 (NLT)

"And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them."

#2 - Circle the word "everything" in the verse above, and ask God to give you the faith to believe He really can work out all things for the good.

CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

OVERCOMING ANXIETY

Romans 8:38-39 (NLT)

38 "And I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from God's love. Neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons neither our fears for today nor our worries about tomorrow—not even the powers of hell can separate us from God's love. 39 No power in the sky above or in the earth below—indeed, nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord."

#3 - Circle "nothing can ever separate us from God's love" at the beginning of verse 38 and ask God to give you the faith to continually believe that is true.

As you read the rest of the passage, find and underline, "nothing in all creation will even be able to separate us from the move of God.." Notice this appears twice in this text. God is obviously making a point!

CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

Guilt is an incredibly effective for short term motivation. However, those who focus more on *guilt* than on *grace* will often give up in their attempt to walk with Jesus because they never feel like they are good enough.

If you wrestle with guilt -- which leads to intense spiritual anxiety -- take a few minutes to check out the following verses.

John 19:30 (NLT)

"When Jesus had tasted it, he said, "It is finished!" Then he bowed his head and gave up his spirit."

#1 - Circle the phrase, "it is finished" in this verse, and know that "it" is referring to payment for all our sins. Jesus wasn't declaring guilt. He was declaring grace.

I John 1:9 (NLT)

"But if we confess our sins to him, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all wickedness."

#2 - Underline the phrase at the end of the verse, "cleanse us from all wickedness."

All means ALL! Not one single person reading this is the exception.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

Romans 6:10 (NLT)

When he died, he died once to break the power of sin but now that he lives, he lives for the glory of God.

#3 - Circle the word, “once,” and then answer the question, “How many times did Jesus have to actually die to break the power of sin?”

This means the power of sin and the condemnation that comes with it, is broken in our lives. Whenever we feel guilt and shame beginning to dominate our minds, we’ve got to trust that God’s facts about grace are greater than our feelings of guilt!

CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE

All of us, at one point, have experienced stress because we felt forgotten by God, and like He was going to allow our needs to go unmet.

I've always loved this story in II Kings 4:1-7 (NLT)

"One day the widow of a member of the group of prophets came to Elisha and cried out, "My husband who served you is dead, and you know how he feared the Lord. But now a creditor has come, threatening to take my two sons as slaves." 2 "What can I do to help you?" Elisha asked. "Tell me, what do you have in the house?" "Nothing at all, except a flask of olive oil," she replied. 3 And Elisha said, "Borrow as many empty jars as you can from your friends and neighbors. 4 Then go into your house with your sons and shut the door behind you. Pour olive oil from your flask into the jars, setting each one aside when it is filled." 5 So she did as she was told. Her sons kept bringing jars to her, and she filled one after another. 6 Soon every container was full to the brim!" "Bring me another jar," she said to one of her sons. "There aren't any more!" he told her. And then the olive oil stopped flowing. 7 When she told the man of God what had happened, he said to her, "Now sell the olive oil and pay your debts, and you and your sons can live on what is left over."

Take a second to think about the following.

#1 - In verse one it's very clear this poor lady is freaked out because she is going without!

Is there anything you are personally lacking in your life right now that is causing doubt?

CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE

OVERCOMING ANXIETY

#2 - Underline the first seven words in verse 5, “So she did as she was told.”

When we are in a crisis, our willingness to listen often increases, and our potential for obedience does as well as we often ask, “what do I have to lose?”

#3 - The miracle in this story did not happen because the widow just stood still, but rather was willing to take a step of faith and do something that didn’t really make sense on the surface. With this in mind, what step of faith do you feel the Lord is asking you to take?

There have been times I’ve asked God to provide for my financial needs and instead of giving me money He provided me with a job (or a better job) where the need I had could be met. Whether he provides the money or the means to get the money, either is still a miracle!

CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX

No, I have not tried a marathon again and doubt I ever will!

All of us know what it's like to experience pain - David, who is referred to as a man after God's own heart, writes about this in Psalm 30:1-5 (NLT)

1 "I will exalt you, Lord, for you rescued me.
You refused to let my enemies triumph over me.
2 O Lord my God, I cried to you for help,
and you restored my health.
3 You brought me up from the grave,[a] O Lord.
You kept me from falling into the pit of death.
4 Sing to the Lord, all you godly ones!
Praise his holy name.
5 For his anger lasts only a moment,
but his favor lasts a lifetime!
Weeping may last through the night,
but joy comes with the morning."

#1 - According to verse 1, was David ever in a situation that He needed God to rescue him from? All of us have these experiences!

#2 - Underline the phrase in verse 2, "I cried to you for help."
One of the reasons David was able to stay stable is he was not afraid to admit to God (and others) that he needed help! With this in mind - what area in your life do you feel the most overwhelmed with? Take a moment to ask God for help and to ask God WHO ELSE you should talk to about it.

#3 - What is the promise we get in the second half of verse 5? Weeping may last through the night, but joy comes with the morning.

CHAPTER TWENTY-SEVEN

All of us have memories of hearing painful things said to or about us. As we talked about in this chapter, Jesus talked about this in Matthew 5:11-12 (NLT)

11 "God blesses you when people mock you and persecute you and lie about you and say all sorts of evil things against you because you are my followers. 12 Be happy about it! Be very glad! For a great reward awaits you in heaven. And remember, the ancient prophets were persecuted in the same way."

I've got to be honest, for years it was hard for me to read these verses. Did Jesus really want me to be happy about bad things being said to and about me?

Then one day I was reading Matthew 27:39-44 (NLT) and saw that Jesus didn't just teach this - He lived in, even in the most painful period of his life.

39 "The people passing by shouted abuse, shaking their heads in mockery. 40 "Look at you now!" they yelled at him. "You said you were going to destroy the Temple and rebuild it in three days. Well then, if you are the Son of God, save yourself and come down from the cross!" 41 The leading priests, the teachers of religious law, and the elders also mocked Jesus. 42 "He saved others," they scoffed, "but he can't save himself! So he is the King of Israel, is he? Let him come down from the cross right now, and we will believe in him! 43 He trusted God, so let God rescue him now if he wants him! For he said, 'I am the Son of God.'" 44 Even the revolutionaries who were crucified with him ridiculed him in the same way."

CHAPTER TWENTY-SEVEN

OVERCOMING ANXIETY

#1 - Underline verse 39 and think about the fact that everyone passing by the cross as Jesus was being crucified were “shouting abuse” at Him.

#2 - Underline verse 41 and notice that the religious were also among those who mocked Jesus.

#3 - Underline verse 44 and think about the fact that even the men who were also being crucified took part in persecuting Him.

All of this to say Jesus completely understands when people say things about us that simply are not true. If this has happened to you, take a second to literally think about each instance, and give it to Jesus. Understand this is a process, often times we have to do this over and over again. However, in doing so is where we find healing.

CHAPTER TWENTY-EIGHT

This was, hands down, the hardest chapter for me to write in the entire book. However, I really do believe Jesus can use ALL things for good, even though it is nearly impossible to see in the moment.

Take a look at James 1:2-5 (NLT)

2" Dear brothers and sisters, when troubles of any kind come your way, consider it an opportunity for great joy. 3 For you know that when your faith is tested, your endurance has a chance to grow. 4 So let it grow, for when your endurance is fully developed, you will be perfect and complete, needing nothing. 5 If you need wisdom, ask our generous God, and he will give it to you. He will not rebuke you for asking."

#1 - According to verse two, should Christians believe that troubles will never come our way or should we see trouble as an opportunity?

#2 - Underline verse 4 and take a second to pause and look at the promise given to us in this verse.

#3 - If you are confused as to why you are going through certain things - what are we told to do in verse 5 if we need wisdom?

God will give us the wisdom we need, in His ways and in His time, for His glory and our good.

CHAPTER TWENTY-NINE

Unfortunately, even after the painful lesson in this chapter, I will walk & text!

Often times it's so easy to focus on what's urgent that we lose sight of what is important.

Take a look at this story in Luke 10:38-42 (NLT)

38 "As Jesus and the disciples continued on their way to Jerusalem, they came to a certain village where a woman named Martha welcomed him into her home. 39 Her sister, Mary, sat at the Lord's feet, listening to what he taught. 40 But Martha was distracted by the big dinner she was preparing. She came to Jesus and said, "Lord, doesn't it seem unfair to you that my sister just sits here while I do all the work? Tell her to come and help me." 41 But the Lord said to her, "My dear Martha, you are worried and upset over all these details! 42 There is only one thing worth being concerned about. Mary has discovered it, and it will not be taken away from her."

#1 - According to verse 39, where was Mary's focus?

#2 - Underline, "But Martha was distracted" in verse 40 and pause for a minute to honestly answer what is the one thing that most often distracts you from Jesus?

#3 - Jesus said in verse 42 that intentional, focused time on Him was important. That being said, what is the one thing you can do for at least five minutes a day that connects you with Jesus? Pray, reading your Bible, meditating, listening to worship music... whatever it is, make the commitment for five minutes a day without distractions. I promise, over time, your spiritual focus will dramatically improve.

CHAPTER THIRTY

Sometimes I wonder if God is so good, and God is so powerful, why do bad things happen?

I know all of the philosophical and theological answers. However, in the moment of suffering, having the right answers doesn't take the pain away.

With this in mind, take a look at James 1:12 (NLT)

"God blesses those who patiently endure testing and temptation. Afterward they will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him."

#1 - Circle the two words, "God blesses" and pause for a second to reflect on the fact that Scripture says that God blesses those who go through tough times.

#2 - In your battle with anxiety, have you ever felt like it will never end, that it will always be this way? Circle the word "afterward" about halfway through this verse, and in so doing understand in that one word is a promise that, one day, the weight and pressure you feel right now will one day be gone.

#3 - Underline the word "life" towards the end of this verse and pause for a second to reflect on the fact that God's desire for us is that we experience a full, rich, meaningful life. In His time, He will bring it about as we continually strive to focus on Him.