

THROUGH THE PATH OF

SUFFERING

A 28-Day Devotion For Those With Anxiety Disorder

ERNIE SONG

Contents

MY STORY	4
The Anxiety Disorder Cycle	7
POSTURE	8
#1 Asking the Right Question	9
#2 The Conflict	10
#3 Davar in Your Midbar	11
#4 The Man of Sorrows	12
#5 The King of Sorrows	13
#6 11 + 1	14
#7 Delayed Promises	15
CHECKPOINTS	16
#8 Signal Strength	17
#9 Baggage	18
#10 History	19
#11 Rhythms	20
#12 Nom-Nom	21
#13 Enjoy Life!	22
#14 Switch Off!	23
#15 Out of the Cave	24
#16 Defeat	25
#17 GIGO	26
#18 Experience	27

Contents

SIGNPOSTS	28
#19 God is Still the God of Miracles	29
#20 God is Still in Control	30
#21 Jesus is Coming Back	31
#22 I Can Do All Things Through Christ	32
#23 I Am Who God Says I Am	33
#24 I Am Called for a Purpose	34
#25 You are Loved	35
FINAL ENCOURAGEMENTS	36
#26 Don't Fear Death	37
#27 Till the Very End	38
#28 My Prayer for You	39
SELF EVALUATION	40
EXERCISES THAT HAVE HELPED ME	41
BOOKS THAT HAVE HELPED ME	42

My Story

My journey with anxiety started 11 years ago on the Big Island in Hawaii. I was married for 2 days and both me and my wife were on our honeymoon. We were walking along the Kīlauea Iki crater. It wasn't a difficult walk or a strenuous hike. But as we were walking around the crater, I suddenly felt breathlessness. My chest began to tighten up. I have watched enough TV to know what the symptoms of a heart-attack looked like. And all these symptoms pointed to me having one. I sat down on one of the benches to catch my breath with my wife looking concerned. After a while, I felt better and continued on our honeymoon adventures. One week later, I was on a bus from Las Vegas to the Grand Canyon (North Rim, Arizona). It was a 7-hour ride one way. The bus was slightly stuffy and I felt suffocated. The symptoms came back – heart racing, breathlessness, tightening of chest. I persevered through the 14-hour journey and made it through. Fast forward 2 weeks later, we were back from our honeymoon. I woke up at 2am in the middle of the night sweating badly and my heart pounding uncontrollably. I measured my blood pressure and it was extremely high. My wife was worried. But there was no one we could turn to. I mean, it was 2am... who is going to answer my call.

The next few weeks were very challenging. I would have frequent panic attacks at home and at work. I would have trouble getting into a car or a bus because I would experience a panic attack. When we went to Hong Kong in the middle of that year, I suffered a panic attack at the start of the flight which turned my face to white.

I began to talk to my dad about my condition as he is a medical doctor. Was I having consequent heart attacks? What is wrong with me? My dad, being the introvert that he is, gave me the coldest yet logical advice I have every received from a doctor – if these were all heart attacks, I would not need to diagnose your condition because you would be dead! He then suspected that I had a panic disorder. Subsequently, he linked me up with a psychiatrist at SGH, Dr. Leslie Lim, and there I was officially diagnosed as having General Anxiety Disorder.

Everything changed for me in that moment.

Before this, I was a pretty active person. I would take solo trips for holidays, go to remote villages in East Asia for missions, do lots of sports, very outgoing, etc. I was an extrovert. After the sickness hit me, I couldn't do any of these things. I was afraid of everything. I couldn't do sports because I would hyperventilate which would lead to a panic attack. I couldn't go on planes because of the claustrophobia I suddenly developed. I hated crowded places because of the social phobia also suddenly developed. I even had an issue getting into a car because of the enclosed space. I struggled going back on stage to preach and would have a panic attack before each time I was supposed to. Casually walking around the house can also trigger a panic attack within me. In a nutshell, I couldn't do 70-80% of what I normally would do. This led me down a depressive path. I began to isolate and withdrew from people. I was afraid I would get a panic episode if I do these things or went for social gatherings.

To make matters worse, there was so little Christian help out there for people with anxiety. No one could empathise with me in church. "Just stop thinking about it and you'll be ok!" They did not understand that I couldn't help myself. It was a disability that I am suffering from. And to top it all off, ministry at times was very cruel to me. I just took on the role of Youth Pastor. I was expected to know what I was doing. I was expected to lead the ministry in the right way and in the right direction. I was supposed to have the answers. I was bombarded with demands but received almost no support. Doesn't anyone care about what I was going through? Can't everyone just be patient with me a bit more? Isn't this what the church should be? The one place that was supposed to be a place where I can receive support and help, became a source of my anxiety and depression.

I was left alone to figure out this journey by myself.... To figure out why God isn't answering my prayers for healing... to figure out how to do life in the midst of this "disability" ... to continue to lead well in spite of all the anxiety I was struggling with.

Medication did help me along the way. But, my journey to the place of stability in my condition took a number of years. There were many ups and downs, defeats and victories, falling down and getting up.



After walking this road for the past 11 years, today, I rarely have a panic attack – about 2-3 times a year and mostly due to drinking coffee that is too strong. I can enter into a plane (after taking medication) and not have a panic attack. I can stand on stage to preach. I can run and do sports once again. It was a long journey... but I did eventually arrive at the place of stability. There are still up and down days. Like just a couple of days ago, I experienced a panic attack triggered by something bad I ate. But unlike the earlier days, now, I know how to manage the condition and to live through it from a place of victory and not defeat.

The reason why I decided to write this devotion is because I know of many people in the church that struggle with anxiety disorder and there isn't much Christian help out there... most Christians do not know how to deal with the condition. Therefore, I wanted to put together my experience and lessons learnt over these 11 years so that those who struggle with anxiety will know how to walk through it.

It is important to note that I am not a medical doctor. I am a pastor and I will not be writing from the medical angle but from a pastoral angle in these devotions. (Do continue to seek your doctor for medical counsel!)

It is my earnest prayer that you will feel helped and supported as you go through these devotions. Let the Lord will speak to you as you align your life back to His design and His ways. He may not remove you from this path of suffering, but you can come to a place of stability in your life. Allow the Holy Spirit to speak to you and to root out anything that is not of God in your life so that you can walk this path victoriously.

Have a wonderful 4 weeks in this devotion and may you reach your place of stability!

God Bless,

Ernie Song



The Anxiety Disorder Cycle

The following diagram describes how a panic attack happens and the process it goes through.

Threat Stimulus

- Irrational Thought (eg. I am going to have a panic attack)
- Muscle pain similar to a past episode/trauma (eg. Hyperventilation after exercising)
- Seeing an overwhelming sight (eg. Crowds, confined spaces)



Misinterpretation of the Threat

The mind goes into "fatalistic" thinking – it is a dangerous situation.

Solution: Think rationally about the thought



Anxiety is Felt in the Physical

The body enters into a "fight or flight" mode (panic attack) producing a lot of adrenaline.

- Heart racing
- Tightness of chest / Difficulty Breathing
- Sweaty palms
- "Lump" in the throat
- Discomfort in stomach (Gassy stomach)

Solution: Distract yourself.



Safety Seeking

- The individual would then seek what it deems as "safety"
- Avoidance of places, events, people
- The individual also seeks for reassurances from people that everything is ok.

Solution: Face the situation head on over and over again until your body understands that it is normal



The Body Crashes

Once the adrenaline runs out, the body will crash resulting in the individual needing a rest or sleep.



Reinforce Irrational Thoughts

If the individual does not process the episode correctly, it will re-inforce the belief that the threat was real resulting in the body reacting the same way in a subsequent episode.

Solution: Reflect on the episode. What could have been done better?

Repeat





Posture

The journey of a thousand miles, begins with the first step.... says a popular quote. May I add - where you place your first step is critical because it determines the direction in which you go. The journey through anxiety may be a long one. It is full of highs and lows, good days and bad days. Our first step, therefore, is important. The foundations by which we stand will determine our approach and attitude on this journey. In the next few days, we will be visiting some posture foundations that are crucial for this journey and learn from figures in Scripture that have walked the path of suffering. Take the first step.... but, make sure it's in the right direction.

#1

Asking the Right Question

“Bring all who claim me as their God, for I have made them for my glory. It was I who created them.” - **Isaiah 43:7 (NLT)**

Today's Scripture: Psalm 13

“If you would like to receive healing, please come down to the front. The anointing of the Lord is here.” Full of faith and belief in God as a good Father, and the Healer of all diseases, I got up from my seat and walked down the aisle to the front. There, I received prayer for healing. I walked out of that meeting believing that God had healed me of my anxiety disorder. Fast forward 10 years, multiple responses to altar calls, many many prayers by those with the gift of healing, a few inner healing sessions with various ministries.... I still struggle with General Anxiety Disorder.

What went wrong? Why was healing absent? Were the prayer sessions not effective? Did I have insufficient faith?

One of the hardest lessons that I had to learn on this journey is this - God has set me apart to walk the path of suffering for His glory. This is not a popular belief. But if you read through Scripture (as you will see in the subsequent days), you will find that there are many that were called to walk the path of suffering.

If you have spent many years receiving ministry and prayers for your sickness, could I suggest to you that perhaps God has set you apart to walk the path of suffering for His glory. Perhaps, it is time to stop asking God - “What must I do to receive healing?”. Instead, maybe it is time to ask this question instead - “How do I walk this path for Your glory?”

PRAYER

Lord, teach me what it means to live for Your glory, even though it may be the path of suffering. Let my life display Your glory. Amen.

REFLECTION

Am I asking the wrong question as I journey through this path?

#2

The Conflict

“I remain confident of this: I will see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living.”
- Psalm 27:13 (NIV)

Today's Scripture: **Psalm 42**

God is good. But I am not healed. So, how do I make sense of this contradiction?

When I was much younger, I used to undergo swimming classes. We would all be in the Olympic sized swimming pool in Muar training under a coach, who was my neighbour. My coach was also the “youth pastor” at my church. Nice guy. Faithful to God and yet full of adventure. At the start of the 1.5 hour lesson, we are required to do our warm up laps. When I first started my lessons, I used to do 10 laps as warm up for the lesson. One day, at the start of the lesson, he told me - “From today onwards, you do 40 laps for warm up!” What?! I asked why! He explained to me that from that day onwards, I would be training for the life guard certification. Why me and not the rest of the group? Because of my build and my abilities, I was placed on the lifeguard training. The training was gruelling... but this was the path that he had set me on. He was still a nice guy, a good guy. But his direction for my swimming training changed.

God's direction for our life towards the path of suffering does not change who He is - He is still good. He is still faithful. He never changes. But my assignment is different from the others because of the way He has made me and the path He has ordained for me.

God is good. Never doubt this truth. We will never stop experiencing His goodness. Although some of us are called to the path of suffering, it does not mean we cannot experience His goodness. May our eyes be open to how good He has been to us on this path!

PRAYER

Lord, help me to see that You are good. Let not my sickness cloud my ability to see Your goodness. Amen.

REFLECTION

Is my vision of God's goodness clouded by my sickness?

#3

Davar in Your Midbar

“The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them; and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose.” - **Isaiah 35:1 (NKJV)**

Today's Scripture: 1 Kings 19:9-18

God does some of His best work in the wilderness. When confronted with the wilderness, the majority of Christians around the world would ask - “Lord, how do I get out of this?” But the Jewish people ask a different and more important question - “Lord, what is Your Word for me in this wilderness?” They talk about getting your Davar (Word) in your Midbar (wilderness). Everything that God does has a purpose. It is intentional.... including putting us in a season of wilderness. So, as you walk through the path of suffering / wilderness, you need to seek your Davar in your Midbar. Your Davar will align your life back to God's purposes and design for your life.

There was a season in my life when I went through a Midbar. It was a season of loss. The amount of grief led me down the path of depression. The defining moment came for me when I read about the incident Jesus had with His disciples in John 6:60-69. Not being able to accept the sayings of Christ to “eat His flesh” and “drink His blood”, Jesus lost many of His disciples that day. He then turned to the 12 and said - “Do you want to go as well?” Peter answered Him, “To whom should we go? You have the words of eternal life.” That was the Davar that I needed in that season of my Midbar. I made a choice that day - even though I don't see restoration of that which I have lost, I will still choose to follow Christ and to serve Him. This defining moment changed the trajectory of my whole life - from despair to hope, from depression to mission.

Don't let your wilderness experience go to waste. As you journey through this path of suffering, seek your Davar in your Midbar! And let your Davar align your life back to God's purposes and design!

PRAYER

Lord, in the midst of all the voices screaming at me each day, asking me to find a way out of this wilderness, sensitise my spirit to hear Your voice, so that I can find my Davar in this Midbar.

REFLECTION

What is the Lord speaking to you on this path of suffering?

#4

The Man of Sorrows

“This High Priest of ours understands our weaknesses, for He faced all of the same testings we do, yet he did not sin.” - **Hebrews 4:15 (NLT)**

Today's Scripture: Matthew 27:27-31

Scripture is not void of examples of godly men of God who had to walk the path of suffering. At the forefront of it all, is Christ. Isaiah paints us what the Messiah would look like - “a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief”. Isaiah wasn't just describing the scene of Gethsemane or the instances where His disciples abandoned Him, or when He was rejected by the crowd before Pilate. Isaiah was describing what Jesus was - a man of sorrows. Which means, Christ, throughout His life was frequently grieving and sorrowful. Perhaps because His heart was broken by what He saw and what He experienced every other day. Jesus walked the path of suffering... not just when He was sentenced to be crucified. But, throughout His whole life.

If you feel that you are alone in your suffering, that no one understands your pain and torment, I want to assure you that Jesus understands. While not everyone on earth can empathise with your situation, Jesus can. Because He too walked the path of suffering His whole life.

You are never alone in this!

PRAYER

Lord, help me to remember that I am not alone in this. You understand and know what I am going through. And you care about me... help me to remember that. And help me to learn from Your example - how You walked the path of suffering for Your Father's glory. Amen.

REFLECTION

How does knowing that Christ walked the path of suffering His whole life change the way you walk your own path of suffering?

#5

The King of Sorrows

“I am weary with my moaning; every night I flood my bed with tears; I drench my couch with my weeping.” - **Psalm 6:6 (ESV)**

Today's Scripture: Psalm 6

He was the teenage slayer of Goliath, when no other adult Israelite dared to step up. He slayed thousands of Philistines. He was a military genius. He united Israel and Judah and conquered territories that were in enemy's hands. He was anointed to be the next King of Israel. God called him the “Man after my own heart”. Safe to say, no one has ever had a closer, more intimate relationship with God. He was the greatest of all kings in Israel - David.

Yet, in the midst of all his accomplishments and titles, he was an emotional wreck for most of his life. After defeating Goliath, he was on the run for 10 years from Saul because of Saul's jealousy. His pride led him to commit adultery and murder, leading to the death of his unborn son. His very own son betrayed him and led a rebellion against him. If you were in David's shoes, can you imagine the emotional distress and turmoil that you would have gone through? And this is so evident from his writings in the book of Psalms when he poured out his soul to God.

But if there is one thing that we can learn from King David, it is this - in the midst of his suffering, distress and emotional turmoil, he continually connected with God. He brought to God his pain and despair. He poured out his emotions before the Lord. And, in spite of it all, He chose to see His God through the right lens - The Lord is good and His love endures through all generations.

May you learn from the example of King David. Stay connected to God even in the midst of your suffering. Never ever leave His presence no matter how hard the going gets. Come to Him and pour out your grief and struggles before Him!

PRAYER

Lord, the struggle is real and the pain at times is unbearable. Help me, Lord, to constantly come to You with my emotional turmoil because You are Life and apart from You, I have nowhere else to go.

REFLECTION

Are you involving God in your day to day struggles, as you journey through the path of suffering?

#6

11 + 1

“...but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will dress you and carry you where you do not want to go.” - **John 21:18 (ESV)**

Today's Scripture: **Acts 7:54-60**

Bar Kochba was a Jewish leader that arose around 100 years after the crucifixion of Christ. Because of his initial military victories, many proclaimed him to be Israel's prophesied Messiah that would free the nation from Roman rule. Unfortunately, his military campaign against the Romans was a disaster resulting in the death of half a million Jews and the exile of hundreds of thousands of them. No one dared to continue Bar Kochba's vision and mission. No one continued his work.

This is why the story of the disciples of Christ is so amazing. They were all put on the path of suffering in order to spread the gospel to the whole world. They would suffer greatly for their faith, culminating in martyrdom. They were persecuted and rejected, and lived lives as one at the bottom of the Jewish caste system. In other words, they barely got by each day. Yet, they persevered on. Peter was crucified upside down in Rome. Jude, was axed to death in Beirut. Doubting Thomas was speared to death in Chennai (Yes, he made it there!). Bartholomew was flayed and beheaded in Azerbaijan. Andrew was crucified in Greece, Simon in Iran and Matthew in Egypt. James, the brother of Christ, was clubbed to death in Jerusalem. Philip was hung in Turkey. The other James was stabbed to death in Jerusalem. The only Apostle that wasn't a martyr was John. But, he was forced to drink poison and ordered by the Roman Emperor Domitian to be boiled in oil. I'm not sure which is worse - martyrdom or being boiled in oil!

The point I'm trying to make here is this. Every one of these disciples were willing to go through persecution and suffering for the rest of their days in order to spread the gospel. The only reason they were willing to do was because they saw something they couldn't deny - the risen Saviour. If you have experienced the living Saviour in your life, then walk your path of suffering without fear just like the apostles. The God that you have experienced is real, and powerful, and present in your life. Live out of this knowledge and not out of fear!

PRAYER

Lord, teach me to walk this road victoriously. Even though healing is absent, teach me not to fear but to see what a great and real God I have!

REFLECTION

How can the example of the apostles inspire the way I walk this road?

#7

Delayed Promises

“Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?” – **Mark 4:38 (ESV)**

Today’s Scripture: Mark 4:35-41

Today’s passage is probably one of the most famous stories of Jesus and the disciples. In a nutshell, this is the story – Jesus and the disciples were on a boat. Jesus was sleeping. A storm came. The disciples panicked. Jesus woke up and calmed the storm. The disciples stunned like vegetable. Storms are rare at huge lakes like the Sea of Galilee but they do happen. And when it happens, it creates havoc!

On 14 May 2022, a huge storm hit the Sea of Galilee. Here is what an Israeli newspaper reported – “...the winds whipped up large waves on the Sea of Galilee. They wreaked havoc on the boardwalk, flooding dozens of shops and restaurants near the water.” Many Israelis living near the sea reported that they felt that the roofs of their homes were about to be torn off during the storm! The estimated repair costs for the damaged caused by this storm was \$50 million. If this is what happened on land, imagine what must it have been like for the disciples at a similar storm in the middle of the sea!

They had every right to exclaimed that they were going to die. They had every reason to be angry with Jesus because here was the Miracle Worker sound asleep! But silence from the Miracle Worker does not mean He doesn’t care or He won’t rectify the issue. Jesus cares and He will deal with the issue according to the Father’s ordained timing.

Scripture talks plenty about healing and restoration through Christ. Yet, our theology and reality doesn’t seem to match. This does not mean that healing won’t come. It is simply a delayed promised. For some of us, the promise of healing is manifested immediately. For others, it is a journey. And yet for some, we will not see it in this lifetime. But here is a truth – we will all see it, whether in this life or when Jesus returns. We may not know or understand the reasons for it all. But we must learn to be okay with it because God is good – everything He does is intentional and for our good.

Prayer

Help me, Lord to be ok with your timing for things. Although it may be tough at times on this side of eternity, help me to trust Your heart on this path of suffering. Amen.

Reflection

Will you be willing to trust God for the timing of your healing?

Checkpoints

One of the common desires of those who struggle with anxiety is to come to a place of stability – the sickness is still there, but you are at a much more stable place... you know how to manage your anxiety when it hits you. In order to get to that place of stability, you will need to first go through a number of checkpoints so as to align your life towards God's design and purposes for you. These areas involve the physical, spiritual, emotional and relational. For the next few days, we will examine some of these areas so that you are aware of those areas that have gone out of alignment with God's design and purposes.

#8

Signal Strength

“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.” - **Matthew 22:37 (ESV)**

Today's Scripture: **Deuteronomy 6**

The first and most important area we should examine is our relationship with God. When I was first diagnosed with Anxiety Disorder, I was newly appointed as the Youth Pastor of the church. Youth ministry was fast paced - back to back meetings each week, mentoring sessions, preaching, leaders training, camps, outreaches, mission trips... It wasn't easy leading a group of almost 500 youths. And as the Youth Pastor, I was expected to get my act together. On top of the list is doing my Quiet Time on a daily basis.

As I reflected back on my time as a youth pastor, I realised that my relationship with God was a means to an end. The end goal was effectiveness, success in ministry and leading by example. I read my Bible, but I did not relate with God. I prayed, but I was distant from God.

God became a petrol station for me. This was something that I had to first change in my life if I wanted to come back to God's design for my life. I had to learn once again to relate with God beyond ministry and titles. I had to learn to relate to Him as a person and not as a supernatural "force". When this aspect of my life was thriving again, my symptoms started to get better.

On the top right of the screen of our mobile devices is usually an icon indicating the network signal strength. When we are underground such as a caves or a basement, the signal strength decreases greatly from 4 bars to 1 bar. Sometimes, it goes out of range.

The only way we are going to thrive through the path of suffering is if our signal strength with God is at 4 bars. Make this a priority in this season of your life. God is life and abundant life can only come from Him. Draw from life from Him on a daily. Ensure that your signal strength is always 4 bars!

PRAYER

Heavenly Father. Forgive me if this is an area that I have neglected in my life. Forgive me if I have become religious in this area - doing the ritual but missing the heart of it. Help me to relate to You as a bride relates to the bridegroom. Amen.

REFLECTION

What is my signal strength with God? How can this aspect of my live thrive?

#9

Baggage

“Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and give no opportunity to the devil.” - Ephesians 4:26-27 (ESV)

Today's Scripture: 1 Samuel 18:6-16

King Saul was a flawed man. But then again, so was King David. What was the difference between them? Although there are many, one key difference between them is this - David was willing to acknowledge and work on his shortcomings. Saul wasn't. As a result, Saul carried unresolved hurts with him during his reign as king resulting in his downfall.

It all started when the women of Israel began to sing, “Saul has slain his thousands, and David his tens of thousands!” Saul was hurt and angry by the words of the song. He never dealt with this hurt and it turned into bitterness and jealousy towards David. Subsequently, the un-dealt hurts and patterns of sinful thoughts opened the door for demonic activity in his life as we see in verse 10. This would then dictate the path of his reign - one of pride, insecurity, disobedience and murderous intent towards David.

Are there un-dealt hurts in your life? I know that I had quite a few, especially in the area of un-forgiveness. I had to learn to forgive those who have hurt me... those who have said condemning things towards me, and those that have left parts of my life broken. When I started to deal with these hurts, I began to travel light. There was more freedom and lightness in my spirit, which was crucial for healing and restoration of anxiety in my life.

Don't be afraid to deal with your hurts. If you struggle with it, shout out for help. Your inheritance in Christ is not boundedness but freedom. Do what it takes to take hold of this freedom in Christ!

PRAYER

Lord, if there are any open doors in my life that are the result of hurts that I have carried, help me to identify them and to deal with them. Help me to do what it takes to take hold of Your healing and freedom for me. Amen.

REFLECTION

Are there individuals that I need to forgive in my life? Is there anyone that I have hurt that I need to seek forgiveness from? Are there hurts that I have experienced that I need to let go? Are there traumatic events that needs healing in my life?

#10 History

“He committed all the sins his father had done before him...” – 1 Kings 15:3 (NIV)

Today's Scripture: **Genesis 20**

Scientists have discovered that some diseases can be passed on from parent to child. If a parent's gene (set of instructions to the body) has mutated away from God's original design, the child will inherit this mutated gene as well. That is how diseases are passed down from one generation to the next. In the spiritual realm, sinful behaviours can be inherited as well... although this is subjected to one's desire for change and one's environment. Let me give you 2 examples.

We are all familiar with King David's adultery with Bathsheba. No, she wasn't called Bathsheba because David saw her taking a bath! Her name simply means daughter (Bath) number seven (sheba). I digress... What is less well known in Scripture is that David was an illegitimate son born out of wedlock (Psalm 51:5). David's father, Jesse, probably struggled with lust and that probably led to his adultery. This was passed on to David - Lust led to adultery and murder. And.... it doesn't stop there. Remember Solomon, David's son? How many wives did he have? 700 wives and 300 concubines! How does that even work! Again, we see the pattern of lust being passed down from Jesse to David and to Solomon.

In Genesis 20, Abraham lied to Abimelech, King of Gerar that Sarah was his sister out of fear that Abimelech would kill him and take Sarah. Interestingly, this incident was carbon-copied repeated by his son Isaac to exactly the same person, Abimelech! (Genesis 26:7).

Here is the lesson point - we can inherit sinful behaviours and consequences from our forefathers. It is important that we deal with them. If not, they can dictate our lives! Examine your life, with the help of someone familiar with inner healing. Are there sinful patterns of behaviour, or patterns of fear/anxiety that are evident through the various generations? The Lord can break the power of generational sins and bring restoration to your life!

PRAYER

Almighty God, show me if there are generational sins that have been passed on to me so that I can live a life that is according to Your design for me. In Jesus name, Amen.

REFLECTION

What sinful behavioural patterns or sickness are evident in your family line? Did any of your parents or ancestors struggle with anxiety as well?

#11

Rhythms

“God called the light ‘day,’ and the darkness he called ‘night.’ And there was evening, and there was morning—the first day.” - **Genesis 1:5 (NIV)**

Today's Scripture: **Genesis 1**

The past 2 days, we have seen how undealt hurts and sinful generational patterns/ consequences can be one of the causes of one's anxiety. A lot of times, anxiety sufferers dwell on the possible spiritual roots of their anxiety, when the cause of it may be something simpler - physiological. In these couple of days, we will spend time examining possible physiological causes of anxiety.

At the top of this list is sleep. In the creation story, one thing is evident as you read through Genesis 1 - rhythms. Everything that God created flows in a certain rhythm - there was day and there was night. There were seasons at precisely the ordained time.

This is an important lesson from Genesis 1. Everything flows according to the rhythm God has ordained for it. And this includes human beings. We were designed to flow in a rhythm of work and rest, sleep and awake. The problem for many of us is that we violate God's rhythm for our lives. We work or play too hard and sacrifice our sleep, thinking that caffeine will be our Messiah in the morning. The truth is our bodies suffer.... When we have sufficient deep sleep each day here's what happens - your brain consolidates and processes the days' information, the pituitary gland produces growth hormones to repair and heal the body, the sympathetic nervous system (which controls your fight or flight response) relaxes... thus, lowering the risk of heart disease, the stress hormone (cortisol) lowers, and your immune system releases inflammation fighting cytokines. Everything that Genesis 1 teaches us about rhythms and sleep patterns is affirmed by scientists today. This is an often neglected area in anxiety sufferers. Are you getting enough sleep according to God's rhythm for your life?

PRAYER

Lord, help me to offer unto You, a body that is worthy of Your calling for my life. Help me not to forsake this area of my life. In Jesus name, Amen!

REFLECTION

Are you getting the required 7-8 hours of sleep each day? What can be done to make this happen?

#12

Nom-Nom

“Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore, honour God with your bodies.” – **1 Corinthians 6:19-20 (NIV)**

Today's Scripture: **Leviticus 11**

One of the hardest passages for an Asian to read is Leviticus 11 because this passage basically rules out most of the things we eat regularly – kway chap, bak chor mee, char kway teow (see-hums!), tulang, prawns, laksa, and the list goes on and on... we tend to see the Mosaic law as rules and directives on how to live. But we often miss the heart of it. Think... why would a good Father forbid us to eat some of these foods? Was it simply because of religious rituals? May I suggest that the whole Mosaic law was given because God wants the best for us. He knows that a lot of these foods will bring about consequences to our health especially during ancient times when knowledge about proper food preparation and consumption is not that developed. Consuming these then would increase result in the increase of cholesterol, hepatitis, liver failure, etc.

Although the New Testament teaches that through Christ, all foods are now permissible for consumption (Mark 7:19), not everything is beneficial for us. It is still our responsibility (with the advances of food science) to ensure that our diets are healthy. An unhealthy diet will lead to an unhealthy body. An unhealthy body does not glorify God nor able to do His will fully.

One important checkpoint to go through is to examine one's diet. Scientists today have shown that unhealthy diets do lead to mental illness. Is your diet healthy and holistic? Are you consuming too much junk food? Are you consuming too little greens and fruits? Are you consuming enough vitamins and minerals (especially vitamin B6) for your body to be healthy?

PRAYER

Lord, help me to honour You through what I consume. If my diet is not healthy, show me what I need to change so that Your will can be done through my life. Amen.

REFLECTION

Examine your daily diet – what needs to change (to eat less of and to eat more of) so that you can have a healthy body. (Refer to this [HealthHub page](#) for tips)

#13

Enjoy Life!

“...but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment.”
– 1 Timothy 6:17 (NIV)

Today's Scripture: **Mark 2:13-17**

It's hard to imagine Jesus doing recreation. Yet, if we carefully observe the narratives of the gospel, you would find that Jesus did recreational things. His life wasn't just about ministry, prayer, fasting, discipleship... Jesus took time to do things that He enjoyed as well. Scripture shows us that Jesus loves to fellowship with people. He spent time at people's homes fellowshiping with them, not regarding their social status. He would have meals with anyone that was willing to fellowship with Him – tax collectors, pharisees, sinners...

As you work through your anxiety, it is important that you incorporate recreational activities into your daily routine. Take time out to do the things that you love – playing a sport, doing a hobby, taking a walk in the park... Recreational activities have been proven to reduce one's stress level (reducing the cortisol level in one's body). Research has also shown us that a simple 10-minute walk in nature can lead to improved mood, focus and overall well-being.

The bottom line is this – daily recreational activities are beneficial to one's mental well-being. This is a checkpoint worth examining in your life. God has given us all things for our enjoyment – including the gift of time that can be used for recreation. Use it to give your body some down time.

PRAYER

Lord, help me to rediscover the things that I love doing but have placed on the shelf because of my lifestyle. Help me to find enjoyment in recreational activities once again.
Amen.

REFLECTION

How can I incorporate recreational activities into my daily/weekly schedule? What needs to give way in my calendar for me to make this happen?

#14

Switch Off!

“And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life?”
– Matthew 6:27 (ESV)

Today's Scripture: **Matthew 6:25-34**

One of the common problems anxiety sufferers struggle with is turning off. Their minds are constantly racing. A thousand thoughts run through their minds - Have I prepared all the ingredients for dinner? Have I finished that piece of work that's due tomorrow? Have I checked through all my child's homework? Have I done my Quiet Time today? What would happen if the COVID cases increases? What's going to happen today - will I get another panic attack?

Because the mind is constantly processing all of these thoughts that it deems as threats to one's life, the brain is constantly on alert. This, needless to say, is not healthy. Neither is constantly thinking about one's work. The brain is constantly stressed up. This in turn will elevate one's anxiety levels. The simple truth is this - the brain needs some down time.

Being consistently anxious can be the result of a medical issue. However, most of the time, it is a learned dysfunctional pattern of behaviour that we have developed over the years because we do not take stock of what is going through our minds. This is not God's design and will for our lives. He desires that we are not bounded by worries. Therefore, we need to take stock of our daily thoughts and see if we are over-thinking or overly anxious of the various things in our lives. In addition to that, we also need to give our brains a rest.

Do things / activities that will take your mind off things that stresses it out. One powerful practice that helped me over the years is Scripture Meditation. I use an audio Bible these days because it forces me to “listen” to God's Word, taking away any distracting thoughts that may be going through my mind. Consider doing this as part of your daily routine. God's Word can relieve your mind off all anxious thoughts as you meditate on it, and it reveals who Your God truly is!

PRAYER

Lord, help me to examine if anxious thoughts are streaming through my mind non-stop each day. Help me instead to give my mind some down time, especially through meditating on Your Word. It is life to my body. Amen.

REFLECTION

What patterns of thoughts / worry dominate my mind each day? Do I give my mind enough down-time?

#15

Out of the Cave

“It is not good for the man to be alone.” – **Genesis 2:18 (NIV)**

Today’s Scripture: Hebrews 10:19-39

The first problem in the history of mankind was not sin. It was isolation. That is why God said, “It is not good for man to be alone!” Studies have shown that isolation has been found to raise levels of stress, impede sleep (in turn, harm the body), and augment depression or anxiety.

Have you ever wondered why God created the church? It is the predominant theme in the New Testament. I suspect, one of the reasons why God does this is because, in isolation, mankind is not able to thrive or survive. That is why, one of the worst punishments in any prison is being in solitary confinement. God designed human beings to be in community, not isolation. One of the tendencies for anxiety sufferers is to detach from their community, and to live in isolation out of fear. There’s something very healing about the spiritual community. We need to come out of the caves of our depression, and allow ourselves “to be vulnerable” in our communities – leaning on their shoulders, pouring out our tears before them and being willing to simply say – “This is me and this is what I am going through!”

I know that isolation may seem appealing and spiritual community can seem scary because you never know when the next panic attack may happen. Can I encourage you to take one step closer to allowing your spiritual community to come into your life? It may be challenging at first and the panic attacks may come. But as you continually do so, the anxiety will slowly disappear and you will receive help, support and a shoulder to cry on in your spiritual community.

PRAYER

Heavenly Father. You created me for community and not isolation. Help me to not disconnect from my spiritual community but to lean in on them as I walk this path. In Jesus name. Amen.

REFLECTION

How can I involve my spiritual community on this journey that I am on? Who is 1-2 persons I can lean on in times of anxiety (they will need to agree to journey with you)?

#16

Defeat

“For though a righteous man may fall seven times, he still gets up...” - **Proverbs 24:16 (BSB)**

Today's Scripture: John 18:15-18, 21:15-19

One dysfunctional approach that many anxiety sufferers take is this - the quick fix. That is not the approach that you should take when dealing with anxiety. The path to stability and healing is a long one and often times, we will face defeat every now and then - We will still get the anxiety attacks. We will still feel lousy some days. We don't know how to manage the situations that causes our anxiety. We don't know why our bodies crash or is on high alert.

I have struggled with this at the start of my journey as well. When I've had days without the anxiety, something triggers and then the anxiety is back. I get discouraged, depressed. “What is the point of fighting this? I would never be able to defeat it!” There are days that I felt like giving up.

But I have discovered, it's 5 steps forward and 2 steps back. I am still progressing when I look at the overall journey. I was further than when I first started the fight. I have learnt that I needed to accept failure as part of this journey. There will be lousy days. There will be days of defeat, discouragement and fear. But, the key is this, in spite of the days of defeat, I still choose to get up and walk this path. I still choose to say I want to glorify God with everything I have to offer.

10 years later today, I look back and realised how far I have come. Because I chose to get back up every time I get knocked down (Flashback to Chumbawamba), I still press forward. It doesn't matter how many times I get defeated (I just had a panic attack 3 days ago). As long as I still have breath in this body, I will press on to glorify God by how I walk this path.

Don't buy into the quick fix approach. Rather, take it one step at the time. Celebrate the small victories and learn from your defeats. Remember... heaven is cheering you on!

PRAYER

Help me, Lord, not to give up when I face defeat. Empower me to get up again and to continue walking this path for Your glory. Amen.

REFLECTION

Do I easily get too discouraged and depressed when days of defeat come? How can I change this?

#17

GIGO

“Who is wise and understanding among you? Let them show it by their good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom.” – **James 3:13 (NIV)**

Today's Scripture: **2 Chronicles 18**

When I was studying programming in university, I learned a computing term – GIGO. It is the acronym for “Garbage In, Garbage Out.” What this acronym means in computing terms is simply this – incorrect or poor-quality code will produce a faulty output. Remember the time when Windows 98 crashed during its first public demonstration? When demonstrating the “plug and play” feature of Windows 98, it crashed (in front of Bill Gates), and produced the fatal blue screen! I bet a lot of engineers got fired that day! The reason for the crash was simple – the code for Windows 98 at that time was simply faulty. Therefore, it produced a faulty result.

Similarly, what we allow to feed our minds will determine how we think and behave on the path of suffering - the information we choose to consume, the people we choose to take advice from, the fear we entertain in our thoughts, etc.... We need to verify if the information consumed is true – whether what we read on the internet is verified, or whether the advice of a friend is sound and good, or the thoughts that go through our mind is rational and not birthed out of fear. We cannot take it wholesale immediately. It will encourage the anxiety within us. Or worse – it sets us on a path away from healing and restoration.

We need to guard our minds and ensure that the information we receive from people, the internet or even our own thoughts is aligned to God's Word, is the truth and is helpful for us on our path of suffering. Allow the wisdom of the Holy Spirit to guide you as you navigate through the many voices on this journey.

PRAYER

Father, help me to differentiate truth from error, what is helpful and what is not helpful for me on this journey. Empower me with Your wisdom so that I can live as one that is wise in this day and age. Amen.

REFLECTION

What is your mind feeding on? Does it encourage you on your journey or drive you further from healing and restoration? Is the advice you receive from people setting you up for healing or more anxiety?

#18

Experience

“The Lord who delivered me from the paw of the lion and from the paw of the bear will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine.” – **1 Samuel 17:37 (ESV)**

Today’s Scripture: 1 Samuel 17:31-51

We all love David - the teenager that defeated Goliath. I can imagine my sons imitating him with their Karate chops – fwahhhh, haiyahhhh, hadouken.... But here is a question I’m not sure you have ever considered – “Did David experienced anxiety when he first stood in front of the giant Goliath?” Tough one. But I have a small suspicion that he did. Yet, he didn’t back down or run away upon feeling that anxiety. Why? In his life, he has faced bears and lions and tore them apart. He was continually placed in situations of anxiety and fear, over and over again. Because of that, he grew accustomed them. Goliath was just another situation of fear and anxiety.

Recently, I was watching a documentary with my kids on Nat Geo called, “Weird but True”. When talking about overcoming their fears of roller coasters, the scientist shared that you have to take roller coasters over and over again. As you do that, your mind normalises the experience, thus reducing the levels of anxiety and fear greatly.

You may struggle going to church because of the social phobia. You are afraid that you will experience a panic attack in the midst of it. In order to live as an overcomer and not be defined by your anxiety, you will need to place yourselves these situations over and over again. Start off small. Maybe going into the auditorium may be a big leap. Then, why not just hang out at the atrium first! Then slowly, take the next step of going upstairs and being outside of the auditorium. Then, once you feel normal in these situations again, take that step of faith and sit through a service inside the auditorium. You may experience defeats here and there – “This is too much! I need to get out of here...”. Can I tell you that its normal? The important thing is to not stop trying until you reach your place of freedom.

PRAYER

Help me, Lord to face my fears like David did. Help me not to give up too easily. But, help me to persevere on until I have taken hold of the freedom that You have bought for me.
Amen.

REFLECTION

What situations should I start intentionally placing myself into again in order for my mind to normalise it?



Signposts

As you journey through the path of suffering, there will be days when you grow frustrated. There will be times that you get angry at God because He did not answer. You feel like giving up the fight. You feel like going back to the place of defeat... because that is the easiest thing to do. In times like these, we need signposts to tell us where to go or what to hang on to. These next few devotions will deal with a few of these important signposts you will need to constantly look at on this journey.

#19

God is Still the God of Miracles

“With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.” – **Matthew 19:26 (NIV)**

Today's Scripture: Matthew 8:1-17

One of the toughest things I had to do in ministry during the initial phase of my anxiety was to preach, teach and counsel people to believe that God is the God of miracles. It was tough because here I was, chained to my anxiety, experiencing panic attacks every now and then. And yet, I have to tell people that God is the God of miracles. I am preaching what I was not experiencing.... It was tough. My theology and reality couldn't be further apart.

But here is something I have learnt... Just because I don't see it happening in my life, doesn't mean it's not true. My situation and experience cannot determine my understanding of God. My understanding of God must come from the Word of God. And my Bible tells me that my God is the God of miracles. In faith, I held on to that truth. I ministered to people in faith that God heals, even though I still didn't see it in my life. I prayed for people to hope in God in the midst of a hopeless situation, even though I have not seen God rescuing me.

Over time, I began to realise that faith in me had increase. You see, it is easy to have faith when everything is going well. Faith is needed so much more in situations when things are not well. A faith born out of delayed promises is so much more authentic, resilient and real because we proclaim what we have not seen. We trust, even though we don't understand because we know who our Father is – He is good. I think that is the kind of faith that our Father is looking for.

Today, I still proclaim that our God heals. I still pray for the sick. I still declare that He is a miracle-working God... because I want my journey to be one that is filled with faith and not doubt....

God still does miracles!

PRAYER

Lord, help me to believe even though I have not seen. Cultivate that level of faith in me, so that my faith is not just words and emotion, but one born out of trials and tribulation. Amen.

REFLECTION

Do you still believe that your God is a miracle-working God?

#20

God is Still in Control

“Bring all who claim me as their God, for I have made them for my glory. It was I who created them.” - **Isaiah 43:7 (NLT)**

Today's Scripture: Psalm 13

One of the most fascinating games on the earth for me is the game of chess. I remembered one particular instance where I was watching a game of chess between two of my classmates. One of them was what we called “an expert”. The other was “an amateur”. At a particular point in the game, the expert made a move that left all of us scratching our heads. He sacrificed his queen to be eaten by a pawn. Why would he do that? It doesn't make sense. My “amateur” friend thought he was on his way to victory. He couldn't contain his excitement and joy. But what happened next shocked all of us. The “expert”, moved his horse to a particular point on the board before exclaiming, “Check-mate!” We were all stunned. We thought he had lost control of the game. But in reality, he was in control of it all along, sacrificing the queen in order to finish off the game. What a move!

Things may not make sense at the moment. God's move on the chessboard seems illogical. Why, me? Why this path? Wouldn't I be able to do so much more for You, God if I am healed? I don't have all the answers. But, this I do know – He is still in control. And He has a purpose for everything that He does... and it is for our good. So, trust in His sovereignty, even though you might not understand. Like the old gospel song that my father listens to in his car – “The God of the mountain is still God in the valley... the God of the good times is still God in the bad times.” He is still in control. And He is getting ready for His checkmate move!

PRAYER

Lord, help me to trust in Your ways and Your wisdom even though I may not understand Your will in this season of my life. I still believe that You are sovereign and that You are in control. Help my unbelief. Amen.

REFLECTION

Is there doubt in God's sovereignty as you walk this path of anxiety?

#21

Jesus is Coming Back

“Behold, I am coming soon...” – Revelation 22:12 (ESV)

Today's Scripture: **Revelation 21:1-8, 22**

Let me quote a portion of the Apostles Creed:

I believe in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; He descended to hell. The third day He rose again from the dead. He ascended to heaven and is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty. From there He will come to judge the living and the dead.

One of the core beliefs of a Christian is that Jesus will be coming back. The return of Christ is necessary because it is only at His return that His work of salvation will be completed – He will rid sin from creation, He will overcome the kingdom of darkness, He will take away every pain and sickness and wipe every tear from our eyes. What a day that is going to be!

But we live in the “already but not yet”... between the resurrection and His return. Because of that, we will still experience pain and suffering, such as anxiety disorders, in this life. But as Christians, we don't live in light of our suffering and pain. We must learn to live beyond that and look towards the glorious hope that we have in Christ – He is coming back again.

When you are discouraged, frustrated, depressed and tempted to give up the fight along this journey, lift up your eyes and look towards the hope of His return. He is going to make all things new! We will have new bodies that CANNOT malfunction! We will no longer know anxiety disorders. And on that day, He is going to wipe every tear from your eye. He is going to give you the biggest hug you will ever receive (my imagination!) and say to you, “I'm so sorry that you have to walk that path. But, well done, my child! Enter into your inheritance.”

What a glorious day that is going to be! Live in light of this glorious hope!

PRAYER

Lord, I believe with all my heart that You are coming back. And when You return, You are going to take away the pain and remove every anxiety that I am experiencing today. Help me to live in light of Your return. Maranatha, come quickly, Lord Jesus. Amen.

REFLECTION

How do I live in light of this glorious hope?

#22

I Can Do All Things Through Christ

“My grace is sufficient for you, for My power is made perfect in weakness.” – 2 Corinthians 12:9 (NIV)

Today's Scripture: **Philippians 4:11-13**

One of the common problems that I have seen in anxiety sufferers is this – they admit defeat even before they begin fighting. For example, recently, I challenged one individual who struggles with anxiety and isolation to get out of the house every day, and to go downstairs and buy food for the family. Before considering the advice, the individual exclaimed – “I don't think I can because the panic attack is going to come.” Defeat before the fight.

Actually, this was me at the start of the journey as well. I kept admitting defeat and this led me to a place of isolation and fear. But after a while, I determined within myself and with the help of the Holy Spirit that this is not my inheritance in Christ Jesus. He has given me strength to face my fear. So, little by little, I stepped out of my comfort zone – going on a public bus, taking an MRT, getting into an aeroplane, going up on stage (yes... this was a challenge for me at the start of my journey!)... Here is what I discovered after all these years - If God has placed me on this path, then He has more than equipped me to thrive on this path. Little by little, I stepped up because I claimed on the verse that His strength is made perfect in our weakness (2 Corinthians 12:9). So, every time I sat on the bus, and the panic attack happened (the rush of adrenalin, the tightening of the chest, the rushing of fatalistic thoughts in my mind, the gastric in my stomach, etc...), I tell myself – “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me!” It was tough at the start with a lot of defeats. But I never gave up. Today, taking a bus to and from work has become a normal thing for me. It no longer triggers my anxiety. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me!

So can you! Do not dismiss the potential that God has placed within you. I guarantee you that as you step out of your safety zone little by little, you will find that you are stronger than you think, more resilient than you give yourself credit for. You can do all things through Christ who strengthens you!

PRAYER

Lord, help me to believe in the potential that You have placed within me. I am able to thrive even on the path of anxiety because You are my strength! Amen.

REFLECTION

Do you believe in the potential that God has placed within you to thrive on this road?

#23

I am Who God Says I Am

“You were taught... to put off your old self... and to put on the new self!”
– Ephesians 4:22-24 (NIV)

Today's Scripture: Ephesians 1:3-10

My secondary school years were not the most pleasant... There were some things that people said to me that scarred me for a very long time. One day, my classmate turned to me and exclaimed, “You are the ugliest person I have ever seen!” On another occasion, my history teacher falsely accused me of something that I didn't do. He would go on to cane me in front of another class and strangled me (Yes.. strangled... until I couldn't breathe!). When I was a young adult and in full time ministry, one of my leaders was always commenting about how there is something wrong with me because I am a feeler. Another leader once remarked that I wouldn't last in youth ministry...

Life and ministry can be a very cruel place at times. Words and labels can really hurt. And if we don't deal with it properly, it can define us and the path in life we choose to walk.

What does this have to do with anxiety? One of the tendencies for anxiety sufferers is to allow their sickness to define them. Commonly, they allow the sickness to limit what they can do in life. For example, they would stop pursuing God's call on their life. If that is you, hear this loud and clear - Don't let your sickness define you! You are so much more than your sickness. The devil's favourite activity is to put thoughts into your head that you are defeated.. you are a failure... you cannot do this... Don't listen to those words! Shut him up in Jesus name! Tell him - “I am who God says I am! I am wonderfully created and not a mistake. I am blessed and not curse. I am loved and not rejected. I am chosen and destined for great things. I will not allow my sickness to define me. I am who God says I am!”

PRAYER

Lord, I am who You say I am... and not what my sickness says I am. Help me to live and believe that each day. Amen.

REFLECTION

What are some harmful labels that have come to define you as a result of your anxiety? Let go of them and counter it with what God has to say about you!

#24

I Am Called for a Purpose

“Even when I am old and grey, do not forsake me, my God, till I declare Your power to the next generation, Your mighty acts to all who are to come.” – **Psalm 71:18 (NIV)**

Today's Scripture: Matthew 28:16-20

One of the tendencies that we have as people with anxiety disorder is to step away from ministry and what God has called us to do. I know that during the early stages of my battle with anxiety, there were many days which I felt like giving up my role as the Youth Pastor because the anxiety it was causing was so great. And the worst part was that no one understood or could empathise with what I was going through. “Just don't think so much...” That was their common response. But over the years, I have discovered as we have seen in previous devotions, that my sickness should not define my life. I have a calling, and I want to live out my calling even though it is through a sick body.

One of the most inspiring examples of this is the story of Katherine Wolf. Katherine had everything going for her in her life. She did modelling in her twenties, got married to her university sweetheart who subsequently graduated as a lawyer, and had her first child soon after. Life couldn't get any better. Then one day, her husband came home to find her collapsed in the kitchen while their baby was napping in the other room. Katherine had suffered a massive stroke from a rare congenital brain defect she never knew she had. She wasn't expected to live. But after a 16-hour brain surgery and 40 days in the ICU, she survived. This was only the start of her story. She subsequently went through 1 year in neuro rehabilitation and 11 subsequent operations. She had to re-learn how to talk, walk, swallow, and navigate the world with a newly disabled body. Part of her face was paralysed and she is confined to a wheelchair. Yet, in spite of it all, she chose not to allow her disability to affect her calling. Today, she goes all over the USA to share her story and to bring hope to those with disabilities. Her key message – “Suffer Strong!”. She did not allow her condition to affect her calling. What a testimony! (Listen to her testimony [here](#)) How about you? Remember that you are called for a purpose! Don't allow the enemy to take that away in the midst of your anxiety. Suffer strong and live out loud!

PRAYER

Heavenly Father. Help me to remember that I have a calling. You have called me to do Your work even though I am stricken by my anxiety. Grant me the strength to walk in this calling You have given me. Amen.

REFLECTION

What is the calling God has given to you for your life? Is it taking a backseat because of your anxiety?

For more information about Katherine and Jay Wolf, visit their website:
<https://www.hopeheals.com/who-we-are>

#25

You Are Loved

“I have loved you with an everlasting love; I have drawn you with unfailing kindness.”
– Jeremiah 31:3 (NIV)

Today's Scripture: John 8:1-11

When a panic attack happens, your body is preparing you to “fight” or “flee”. As a result, it produces a lot of adrenaline which mobilises glucose and energy. But when the adrenaline runs its course, your body crashes, leaving you feeling drained and exhausted. This is known as a “Panic Attack Hangover”. That is why, I often cannot do anything else after a panic attack happens. I will need to rest or have a nap.

In addition to the exhaustion, I would often times also feel frustrated, confused, depressed, and frail emotionally. My emotions are all over the place. I will feel defeated, and alone – “No one understands what I am going through. No one really cares. God doesn't seem to want to intervene.” The thoughts in my head would spiral down a negative path. I would feel useless, worthless and rejected. As I began to work on my recovery, I noticed two problems with the way I handled my Panic Attack Hangovers. Firstly, I would isolate. Secondly, I would go into a depressive thought cycle that concludes – no one cares. Not even God.

That is far from the truth. In times like this, we need to remind ourselves of this one truth – we are loved. You are loved. Though people may not understand what you are going through it doesn't mean they don't care. It doesn't mean they don't want to journey with you. Sometimes, they just don't know how! And God definitely cares for you. If not, Jesus would not have died on the cross for you! So, we need to change our thinking in moments like these to remember that we are loved by others and we are loved by God! So, look to Him in faith and invite others into your struggle to journey with you during your low moments!

PRAYER

Father, forgive me if I doubted Your love in my low moments on this journey. Help me to always remember that I am loved by You and by many people around me. Amen.

REFLECTION

Who is able to give you a listening ear during the Panic Attack Hangover? What Scriptures about God's love can you cling on to during these moments?



Final Encouragements

We have gone through 25 devotions together so far dealing with our posture through anxiety, the checkpoints we need to go through and the signposts we need to hold on to as we continue down this road. The next couple of devotions are some of my final encouragements to you as we bring this devotion to a close.

#26

Don't Fear Death

“O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?” – **1 Corinthians 15:55**
(ESV)

Today's Scripture: [Philippians 1:19-30](#)

It is normal to feel afraid about death, especially when you suffer from anxiety disorder. It is an unknown to us. It is the end for our journey here on earth. Yet, as Christians, we must remember that death for us is but a passing moment. When we leave this earth, we transition into glory, into a place where we will be with Christ for all eternity. Therefore, though we may be afraid, let us not be troubled about death because Jesus has overcome it and given us eternal life. That was why all the apostles were not afraid to lay down their lives for the cause – they saw the resurrected Christ!

As you continue walking on this road, don't be afraid that today might be your last day on earth. Trust in God's goodness. Trust in God's timing. Trust in His sovereignty. He knows what He is doing and He does everything out of His goodness. Don't be afraid of death! But make sure you make every moment on earth count for your eternity! I want to leave you with the story of the Apostle Andrew's final moments on earth. May you take heart and be like him, unafraid of death.

Andrew was brought in before the Roman governor Aegeas to be reprovved for constantly preaching the controversial message of Jesus. The governor threatened, “If you don't stop preaching this message of Jesus and this cross, I am going to crucify you on one, too!” Andrew, though, was undaunted. He simply replied, “Sir, I would not have preached about the glory of the cross of Jesus if I was not also willing to die on it.” Andrew was immediately taken out and ruthlessly tied to two beams of splintery wood, then set upright to die a slow and painful death. He hung there, in what must have been excruciating pain, for three days, preaching the triumphant message of Jesus and His cross the whole while, until he was finally taken home to be with the One he loved more than his very life.

Death, where is your sting?! Death, where is your victory?!

PRAYER

Father, help me not to fear death. You have shown me that death has no longer any hold on me because of the resurrected Christ! I have a glorious eternity with You. Amen.

REFLECTION

If you are afraid of death, why is that the case? How can you bravely face death?

#27

Till the Very End

“I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.” – **Philippians 3:14 (ESV)**

Today's Scripture: [Philippians 3:1-14](#)

As you walk down the path of anxiety, expect suffering, pain and challenges. Our world is suffering from the curse of sin. That's why we have all these challenges. However, You have a choice to live beyond them, or to be drowned by them. Resilience is needed. Press on and don't give up easily!

One of the most amazing people I have had the privilege to know in my life is a former colleague of mine, Joel Goh. He was like a “dugong” to me – a gentle, calm and God-fearing man. He was one year my senior. Joel was diagnosed with cancer in His brain. We prayed for him and God came through. He was healed. But shortly after he came onboard the church staff team, they discovered that the cancer had returned. As it affected his brain, Joel lost mobility and was confined to a wheelchair. His condition got worse in his final days as it affected his memory and physicality – he had trouble staying awake.

But here is what I want to share with you – never once did I hear Joel complained about his condition. I've never seen him downcast. He was committed to doing the Lord's work and never backed down from it. He led worship when he was asked to, and served the church whenever he was able to. One of the most impactful moments for me was watching him lead worship for our staff team from his wheelchair. Although there were so many challenges for him, Joel never backed down and continued to live out his calling until he was not able to.

If I were to summarise Joel's attitude as he walked the path of suffering, it is this – “I have fought the good fight. I have finished the race. I have kept the faith.”

Never ever give up till the very end! Let your life be as that of Joel's... always abounding in faith and fighting the good fight!

PRAYER

Lord, help me to be resilient as I walk the path of anxiety. I want to make every moment count for You. I want to finish this race and keep the faith. Grant me the strength to do so.
Amen.

REFLECTION

Are you giving up too easily when you walk along this path?

#28

My Prayer for You

“May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.” – **Romans 15:13 (NIV)**

Today’s Scripture: Acts 1:2-11

Well, we have come to our final devotion for this little booklet. I pray that this has been helpful for you as I shared with you some of the lessons I have learnt along this path of anxiety. As we end, I want to proclaim some truths over your life and I pray that you will be in a posture to receive it.

You are wonderfully made. You are not a mistake. You are valuable to God. You have great purpose. Do not doubt that but seize your calling! You are not your anxiety. It does not define you! You are a child of the Living God. You are an overcomer and not a failure. No weapon formed against you shall prosper! All the schemes of the enemy against you shall fail because the blood of Jesus covers you. You have the power of the Holy Spirit in you to go through all things. You are more resilient than you think. You can walk this path victoriously because of the strength of Christ.

I want to bless you with wisdom, strength, courage and everything that you need on this journey. So, go out there and make every moment count! Remember that many are up there in heaven cheering you on. You are not alone! So, press on. Lastly, I will like to leave you with the Serenity Prayer. May this be your prayer each day as you continue on this path.

*God, give me grace to accept with serenity the things that cannot be changed,
Courage to change the things which should be changed,
and the Wisdom to distinguish the one from the other.
Living one day at a time, enjoying one moment at a time,
Accepting hardship as a pathway to peace,
taking, as He did, this sinful world as it is, not as I would have it,
Trusting that He will make all things right, if I surrender to His will,
That I may be reasonably happy in this life,
And supremely happy with Him forever in the next.
Amen.*

PRAYER

Father, help me to press on as I continue my journey on this earth. Help me to make every moment count for your kingdom. And let me be an inspiration to many along the way. Amen.

REFLECTION

How can I continue to walk victoriously once this devotion has ended?

Self-Evaluation

SPIRITUAL

1. Open Doors: Do I have any intentional sin(s) in my life?
2. Open Doors: Have I dabbled in anything occultic?
3. Open Doors: Am I addicted to pornography?
4. Generational Sins: Does my family have a history of anxiety / mental illness?
5. Personal Walk: Is my relationship with God thriving?

PHYSICAL

1. Exercise & Recreation: Do I make time for daily exercise and recreation?
2. Sleep: Do I get enough sleep? (7-8 hours per day)
3. Rest: Do I dedicate time to turn off from work each day?
4. Sabbath: Do I keep the Sabbath?
5. Diet: Is my diet considered healthy?
6. Diet: Am I consuming enough vitamins and minerals?
7. Diet: Do I consume too much junk food / sugary foods?

RELATIONSHIPS

1. Do I have someone to talk to about my anxiety journey?
2. Am I connected to my spiritual community: church & cell group?
3. Do I isolate from social gatherings with friends?
4. Is there a group of people praying together with me on my journey?

POSTURE

1. Am I still living in denial concerning my condition?
2. Have I accepted my condition and surrendered to God's will?
3. Do I have a defeated mindset when I encounter a panic episode?
4. Do I feel useless?
5. Am I still doing God's will in my life? Am I living out my calling?
6. Am I expecting "quick fixes" and not committed to a step by step approach?
7. Do I give up too easily after a panic episode? Do I celebrate the small victories?
8. Do I learn from my moments of defeat?

Exercises That Have Helped Me

REFRAMING

At times, you may find yourself entertaining irrational thoughts. This exercise, though simple, will help you to think rationally about the situation.

1. On a blank page, or note on your mobile devices, state your anxious thought as the header of the page.
2. Draw a line down the centre of the page or, make two subheadings – for and against.
3. On the left column (for), list down all the evidence that the anxious thought is true or a fact.
4. On the right column (against), list all the evidence that the thought is not true or irrational.

Often times, you would find that the right column (against) outweighs the left column (for). Therefore, consider the alternative ways to think about the situation. This will loosen up the hold of your initial anxious thought and allow for alternative interpretations of the situation.

SQUARE BREATHING

At times, your body, due to muscle memory, may trigger anxiety. This in turn will cause you to hyperventilate leading to tightness in your chest and other symptoms. One way to decrease the anxiety and stress, and to calm the nervous system down is to do what we call square breathing. If it is possible, sit in a relaxed position. Find around you a squarish object, or you can picture a square window in your mind. Then, follow these steps:

1. Starting from the bottom left of the square, trace the left line of the square. As you do that, exhale all of your air and count to 4.
2. As you move to the top line of the square and trace the top line, hold your breath and count to 4.
3. As you reach the right corner of the square, begin to inhale gently through your nose and count to 4 as you trace the right side of the square.
4. Finally, hold your breath and count to 4 as you trace the bottom of the square.
5. Repeat the square breathing steps until your anxiety has gone down. This would usually take 10-15 minutes.



Books That Have Helped Me

1. **Out of the Cave** by Chris Hodges
2. **Rhythms of Renewal** by Rebekah Lyon
3. **Why Has Nobody Told Me This Before** by Dr. Julie Smith
4. **Forgiving What You Can't Forget** by Lysa Terkaust
5. **Resilient: Restoring Your Weary Soul in These Turbulent Times** by John Eldredge



RIVERLIFE

Published for RiverLife Church. For Internal Distribution Only.
(C) 2023 All Rights Reserved.