

JULIE K. GILLIES

*Prayers*

To CALM

*Your Anxious*

HEART



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### **Prayers to Calm Your Anxious Heart**

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## *An Invitation*

It's a heartbreaking reality: We're a nation plagued by anxiety, which affects more than 40 million adults in the United States.\* I've wrestled with anxiety on many occasions and have family members and friends who daily struggle with anxiety's oppressive reality.

This book is an invitation to pause, to breathe, and to let your heart rest in God's calming presence. The devotions are all Scripture based, because God's Word brings the comfort, stability, and truth that will fill your heart with His peace. I'm a fan of learning by doing, so I've provided prayers you can pray to reinforce each day's verse and thoughts.

The Heart Notes section at the end of each devotion is a space for you to quiet your heart and journal your thoughts, getting your anxieties out of your head and into God's hands. It's a place to remind yourself of all that stirred your soul as you read and prayed. It's a place of praise to reflect on God's goodness, to notice even the smallest victory and remember how

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\* "Facts and Statistics," *Anxiety and Depression Association of America* (website), accessed August 29, 2019, <http://adaa.org/about-adaa/press-room/facts-statistics>.

## PRAYERS TO CALM YOUR ANXIOUS HEART

God showed Himself faithful in the storm. It's an opportunity to observe your progress and God's faithfulness despite anxiety and worry. So take a moment. Breathe. And give yourself permission to rest here in Christ.

As you begin this devotional journey, know this: Though God doesn't always keep you from the fire, He's in there with you. Though you don't always escape the flood of anxiety that makes you feel like you're going under, He reminds you...

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 (Isaiah 43:2).

May the Lord, who is kind, meet you here. May His Spirit breathe on you as you take in these words. And may He grant you His beautiful, calming peace.



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## *Unshaken*

I know the LORD is always with me.  
I will not be shaken, for he is right beside me.

**PSALM 16:8**

How would our days differ if we lived with the tangible, ongoing awareness that God's presence is literally right beside us? Would our hearts race less? Would our minds worry less? Jesus knew our lives on this earth would not be easy. That's why He said, "I have told you all this so that you may have peace in me. Here on earth you will have many trials and sorrows. But take heart, because I have overcome the world" (John 16:33).

So when unexpected family news jars our hearts, when days of multitasking overwhelm us, or when we have no idea how we're going to pay this month's rent, we don't have to despair. God *is* always with us. We are not alone. He is Immanuel, God with us (Isaiah 7:14). This means that God Himself is our ever-present stability. We can have peace in Him. Lean on Him. Count on Him. We can remain unshakable because He is our firm foundation, our Rock. And because He is always with us, we can experience the deep, moment-by-moment peace and stability our hearts crave—no matter what situations we face. We can confidently say along with the psalmist, "I will not be shaken."

## PRAYERS TO CALM YOUR ANXIOUS HEART

*Lord, sometimes my heart is overwhelmed and I struggle to find peace. Will You please increase my awareness of Your presence and help me remember that I never face anything without You? Remind me that whatever I walk through, I'm never alone. Since You are always with me and You strengthen my heart, I can entrust every concern to You. I do not have to worry. Remind me that I can lean on You and count on You; You are my peace. Help me remain aware that You are Immanuel, God with me. Thank You for enabling me to experience the beautiful peace and stability my heart craves. Because You are right beside me, Lord, I will not be shaken. In the name of Jesus, amen.*

### HEART NOTES

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## *Thought Steering*

Now, dear brothers and sisters, one final thing. Fix your thoughts on what is true, and honorable, and right, and pure, and lovely, and admirable. Think about things that are excellent and worthy of praise.

PHILIPPIANS 4:8

What we think about steers our lives. We can head in a good direction or a bad one, depending on where we allow our minds to dwell.

Dwelling on the negative steers our hearts toward stress and discouragement and anxiety. *I never expected this. There's no way I can deal with it. Did she really say that to me—how could she? My anxiety won't let me get out of the car; guess I'll just go back home.* Each of these thoughts takes our minds to an upsetting, distressing place. A place where anxiety increases and interferes with our peace.

But what if we prayed first, asking the Lord to help us reframe our circumstances and think differently? How might that change our feelings? *I never expected this, but God will give me wisdom and grace to deal with it. Did she really say that to me? Then she must be hurting; I will forgive her and pray for her. My anxiety wants to keep me in the car; but I'm going to make the effort anyway, with faith that God will be with me and help me.*

## PRAYERS TO CALM YOUR ANXIOUS HEART

Dwelling on what is true, honorable, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent, and worthy of praise recalibrates our hearts and points us in a life-giving direction. It keeps our thoughts healthy and allows inner calmness to increase. It fills our minds and hearts with hope and light and truth and peace.

*Lord, will You please help keep my thoughts from veering in bad directions that foster anxiety? Teach me not to dwell on the negative but to pray and ask for insight. Whatever I face, let me reframe it by Your Spirit so I can respond differently. Teach me to focus on a fresh, God-honoring, life-changing direction. Help me think about what is true, honorable, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent, and worthy of praise. Thank You for the reassurance that as I fix my thoughts here, my heart is recalibrated, my anxiety is diminished, and my mind is filled with hope, light, truth, and peace. In Jesus's name, amen.*

### HEART NOTES

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## *Venting to God*

I pour out my complaints before him  
and tell him all my troubles.

PSALM 142:2

**B**elieve it or not, God wants to hear our complaints. We do not have to hide them or hold them in. He knows our hearts anyway (Romans 8:27), so attempting to conceal what is bursting inside us is not only unnecessary, but pointless. Bottling up our grievances, disappointments, and hurts is the exact opposite of what King David did (just read the Psalms!), and he was a man after God's own heart (Acts 13:22). When David struggled with fears, uncertainties, insecurities, and injustice, he poured out his heart to the Lord. Candid and honest, he expressed all that was in his heart, and we can do the same.

We can express our deepest hurts and disappointments and entrust all that is in us—the good and the bad—to the Lord. His heart toward us is kind, and He longs to be the safe place we run to when we need to vent. He loves us, understands us, and longs to be gracious to us (Isaiah 30:18). When we pour out our troubles to Him, He holds us close. He hears us, gives us insight and godly perspective, and quiets our hearts.

## PRAYERS TO CALM YOUR ANXIOUS HEART

*Lord, when I feel concerned or upset or grieved about something, may my first response be to pour out my heart to You. Help me not keep things bottled up but instead come to You and share my emotions and heart unreservedly. Thank You for being the place I can run to when I need to vent. God, You are always available, and You know my heart. When I tell You my troubles, You always hear me, You understand, and You soothe me. You give me insight and clarity and godly perspective. I'm grateful I can pour out my heart to You at any time and take comfort in Your abiding presence. In the precious name of Jesus, amen.*

### HEART NOTES

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