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The Anxious Mom

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a series that originally appeared on the blog

Suburban Stereotype

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Acknowledgments

What a fun and amazing experience it has been to weave together my thoughts and all that God has taught me about anxiety over the past year. I'm thankful to a Lord who is patient with me and who gently guides me to His Truth.

I am grateful to my husband and kids, who love me even through my anxiety, to friends who are quick to offer encouragement and prayer when I need it, and to the brave souls who read and edited The Anxious Mom (Ginny Hannan, Alison Templin, and Kate Motaung.)

May this eBook be a blessing to all who read it and lead them closer to Christ.

Introduction

I could count on both of my hands...and both of the hands on every person on this planet...how many times I've felt anxious.

It's grown over the past year or so to a point that I knew I had to make a change or I was headed to a breakdown.

God's really been working on my heart. He's been bringing things to my attention and putting them slowly in my path for a while, but lately it has been at break-neck speed.

I have learned so much about fear and anxiety.

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A big part of what I've learned is how common anxiety is among us. And most surprisingly, how common it is in women.

Many of us worry about our kids to the point of distraction. Of course, you'd never know that just from looking at us or even from having a casual conversation with us.

No, we're very careful to keep those "crazy" feelings tucked away while we're in public.

We hide behind the illusion of a smiling face, a full social calendar, and Christian buzz words like "blessed" and "faith."

It's usually not until the sun goes down, and the house sits still and quiet, that we allow those

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feelings to slowly crawl up our throats and threaten to spill out of us in heaving sobs. Our chests clench and the thoughts that run through our heads are worse than any horror movie we've ever seen.

Even though the details of our thoughts might be different, the feeling is all the same: a sense of being out-of-control. It's a nameless, faceless, unsubstantiated fear about our children's or loved one's safety and well-being.

For so long I have merely held the horror down and kept it at bay. But now...God is getting me ready to look the beast in the eye.

I'm taking this on.

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I'm going to look right at it and walk right through it.

I'm scared. Which is almost funny if you think about it: I'm afraid to face my fear...of fear.

But I have to. I need healing and I feel like I need to get these things I'm learning down on paper (so to speak) so someone else may benefit.

For the next several chapters, I'll share with you the posts I wrote about my struggle with anxiety (they appeared on my blog [Suburban Stereotype](#)). Bear with me. Basically, I'll be lying on the "couch" and you'll be the proverbial fly on the wall.

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Father, please guide us as we embark on this journey. Please open our eyes and hearts to Your Truths. In Jesus' name, Amen.

The Four-Letter Word: F E A R

After posting the introduction on my blog, by the response I received through comments and emails, I could tell that anxiety was an issue that many struggled with. I believe bringing more awareness to and having honest conversations about anxiety can only help us all. I've learned SO MUCH the past several months. I hope this is a help to you if you also struggle with anxiety.

F E A R

What is your stronghold?

What is it that makes you feel like you have plummeted 5 million feet below sea level, with a weight around your ankle and no air tank? What causes your heart to beat too fast and anxious thoughts to race through your mind? What grips you like a bully holding down your arms?

For me, I struggle with a few things.

But the worst, by far, is *fear*.

F.E.A.R.

There's an actual feeling I associate with fear. It's an oppressive, smothering sensation when fear is at its worst.

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My fear surrounds harm coming to my kids or myself.

Not only do I stress about common scenarios like one of them falling off the monkey bars or getting hit with a rogue baseball, but I plan ahead with my worry.

Driving sometimes is an exercise in deep breaths and reciting scripture because I wonder if "today" is the day we will be hit head-on by an out-of-control semi or if a construction truck will have neglected to tie down its metal tubes and one will fly off and crash through our windshield. Or, what if someone fails to stop at a red light and I'm T-boned? What if I don't see the train coming? What if the rusty supports on the bridge decide to give way right as

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I'm crossing? How will I possibly release all of the kids in time from their seat belts/car seats and swim them all to safety?

And when we make it home safely, I have other things that clutter my mind and take my breath away.

Like how Evangelical Christians are now being considered hate groups. I wonder if that verse in the Bible where Jesus says, "*But when they arrest you, do not worry about what to say or how to say it. At that time you will be given what to say*" (Matthew 10:19) will become a reality in my lifetime.

Do you see?

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It is exhausting being in my head.

Exhausting and unnecessary. And unproductive.

Deuteronomy 31:6: *"Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or terrified because of them, for the LORD your God goes with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you."*

I used to think that verse was God shushing me and stroking my hair while he calmly whispered to me. But then I read something that rocked my world, and not in a mother-holding-her-sleeping-baby kind of "rocked."

No, this was in a meteor-the-size-of-Texas kind.

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Joshua 1:9 says "*Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go.*"

My eyes were opened. It's God asking, "Have I not COMMANDED you..."

Commanded you.

This was God saying, "I am not asking you, nor am I suggesting to you, but I am DEMANDING that you not fear." (Mandy paraphrase)

Demanding with authority.

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Look at the following definitions for Command:

directing authoritatively, to demand or receive as one's due, to have or exercise direct authority, to dominate as if from an elevated place...

So, yeah....God isn't cooing in our ears, "Shhhh, darlin'. Everything's gonna be okay." (Said with a slight southern drawl.)

No! He is pointing in a "Uncle Sam wants YOU!" manner and TELLING us we are not allowed to fear.

Not. Allowed.

We have been commanded not to fear.

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So, no longer can I look at God's directive as merely for my own good, but as a direct order with which I must comply.

I learned some interesting things while reading [Lysa TerKeurst's book, *Unglued*](#). In it, she explained how our bodies react physiologically to fear. Our fight or flight response kicks in and actually stimulates parts of our brain that focus on getting us out of whatever the situation is that is causing the fear or anxiety.

That reaction actually keeps the brain from thinking logically. Therefore, we are not able to think clearly or make wise decisions.

God certainly does not want us making poor decisions. He wants us thinking logically.

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So if we allow fear to consume us, if we focus on that anxiety or those things that make us afraid, it interferes with making wise decisions.

Look at 1 Peter 1:13: "*Therefore, prepare your minds for action, keep sober in spirit, fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.*" NASB.

That word 'prepare' in the beginning literally means to "gird".

What in blue blazes does "gird" mean?

I'm glad you asked. I looked it up. It means this:

Gird:

1. to encircle or bind with a belt or band.
2. to surround; enclose; hem in.

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