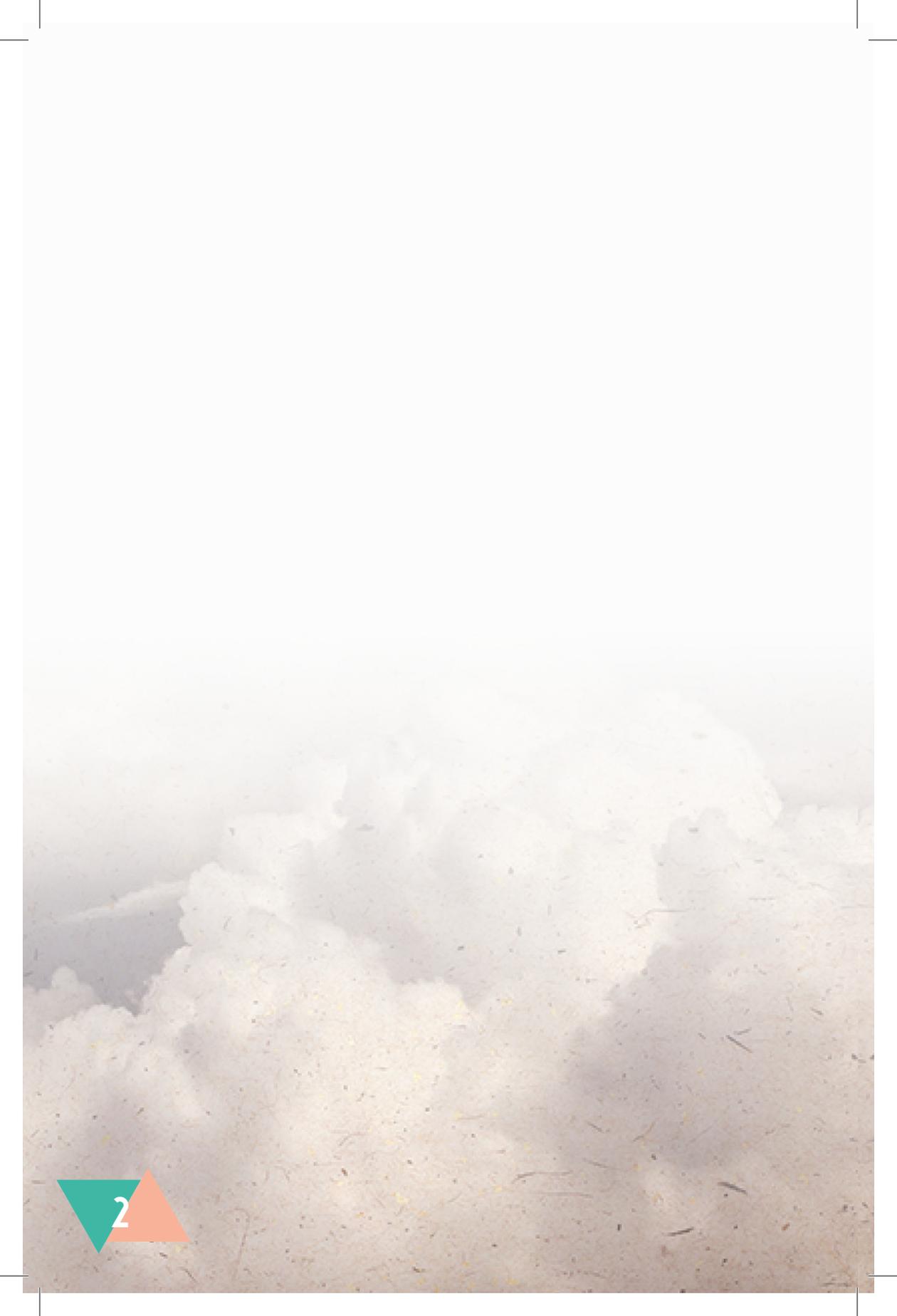




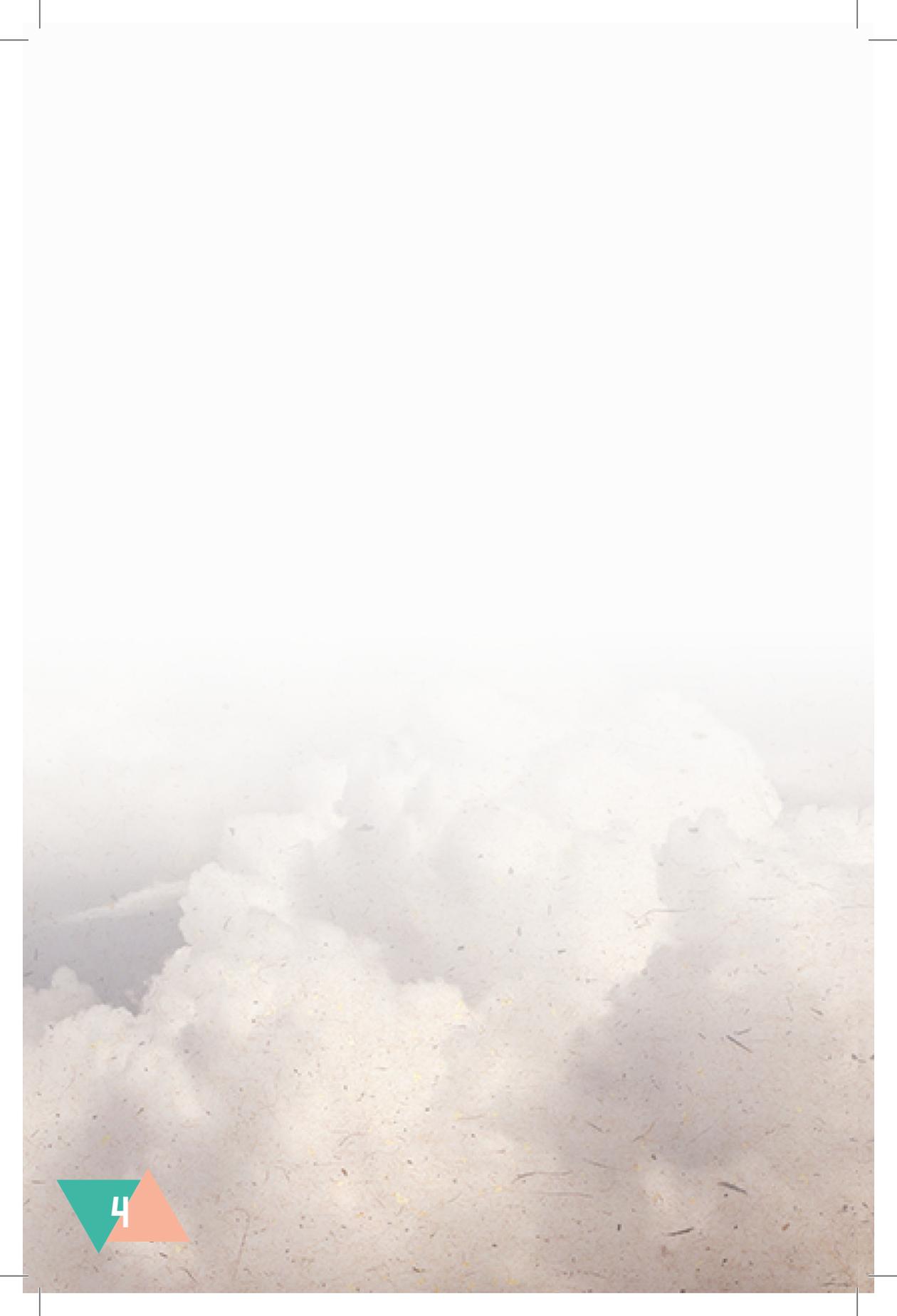
# JOY

IN ALL CIRCUMSTANCES ◀



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>INTRO by Eryn Hall</b> .....	5
Joy Print #1 .....	6
<b>Day 1: Remember the Joy</b> .....	7
<b>Day 2: Let Go and Let God</b> .....	8
Joy Print #2 .....	9
<b>Day 3: Joy for Today</b> .....	10
<b>Day 4: Joy in His Provision</b> .....	11
<b>Day 5: God Has a Plan for Your Pain</b> .....	12
<b>Day 6: God Sees Something Else</b> .....	13
<b>Day 7: Let Us Run</b> .....	14
<b>Day 8: The Jailer</b> .....	15
<b>Day 9: Think on These Things</b> .....	16
<b>Day 10: Joy in Change</b> .....	17
<b>Day 11: Joy in God's Word</b> .....	18
<b>Day 12: Great Joy and Consolation</b> .....	19
<b>Day 13: Joy in Thanksgiving</b> .....	20
Joy Print #3.....	21
<b>Day 14: Joy and Hope</b> .....	22
<b>Day 15: With Songs of Joy</b> .....	23
<b>Day 16: Beauty From Ashes</b> .....	24
<b>Day 17: Joy Is the Glue</b> .....	25
<b>Day 18: A Righteous, Joyful Life</b> .....	26
<b>Day 19: Walking in the Spirit</b> .....	27
<b>Day 20: A Minor Key</b> .....	28
<b>Day 21: What Is True Can Truly Bring Us Joy</b> .....	29
<b>Day 22: Think on These Things</b> .....	30
<b>Day 23: Rebuilding Walls</b> .....	31
Joy Print #4 .....	32
<b>Day 24: Joyful in All Circumstances</b> .....	33
<b>Day 25: The Most Effective Antidote to Anxiety</b> .....	34
Joy Print #5 .....	35



*You will show me the way of life,  
granting me the joy of your presence  
and the pleasures of living with you forever.*  
— Psalm 16:11 (NLT)

As a wife, mother and stay-at-home-missionary, it's a challenge to seek joy in all circumstances. But it can be done when our lives are saturated with the Word and surrounded by believers. As the co-host of the Declare Conference, I've been blessed to meet many writers and bloggers who support amazing ministries. One of which is near to my heart. So I asked my friends at Seed Company to co-author a devotional with me. This is our gift to you.

We are praying for your hearts to be filled with joy. And that God will stir your hearts to pray for the Bibleless — over 1 billion people who don't have access to the full joy of God's Word.

Journey to joy with us, and partner in prayer for those who so desperately need to know Jesus.

*May you be filled with joy, always thanking the Father. He has enabled you to share in the inheritance that belongs to His people, who live in the light.* — Colossians 1:11-12 (NLT)

— Eryn Hall  
@mamahall  
@theseedcompany

*For information on becoming a Seed Company prayer partner, visit [theseedcompany.org/prayer](https://theseedcompany.org/prayer).*

*I love that the **Word of God**  
was written for the imperfect.*

**The outcast.**

**The rejected.**

**And the forgetful.**

**Word by word.**

**Chapter after chapter.**

**Book by book.**

**We are reminded  
to **remember.****

***He won't give up on us.***

## READ

*Joyful are people of integrity, who follow the instructions of the Lord. Joyful are those who obey his laws and search for him with all their hearts.* — Psalm 119: 1-2 (NLT)

## REFLECT

What a confident declaration! Yet, just a few verses later the same psalmist says, “I will obey your decrees. Please don’t give up on me!” (Psalm 119:8 NLT). Oh, how I relate to this writer. When my temper explodes. When my soul is squeezed dry. When my life is covered in dust. Please don’t give up on me, Lord.

In the midst of circumstances beyond my control, it’s so tempting to control my way out of a mess. I try to control my temper, my soul and my life. I try to organize and orchestrate my days so that I can be a person of integrity. But it never works. Please don’t give up on me.

When I lay aside my complicated plans, suddenly it’s all so simple. “My soul clings to the dust; give me life according to your word!” (Psalm 119:25 ESV). The Word of God is a life-giving source of transformation. In the midst of any circumstance, joy is just a word away. Please don’t give up on me. Give me life. Give me Your Word. Give me joy.

I love that the Word of God was written for the imperfect. The outcast. The rejected. And the forgetful. Word by word. Chapter after chapter. Book by book. We are reminded to remember. He won’t give up on us.

## RESPOND

Heavenly Father, as we seek to be joyful in all circumstances, give us life according to Your Word. No matter what situation we may find ourselves in. No matter how joyless we may feel. We will seek You with all of our hearts, just as we are, temper and all. We ask You to meet us in Your Word. Revive us according to Your Word. And as we seek You, we pray a special prayer over Your children in Namibia, the San people. May You bless our brothers and sisters as they selflessly pursue Your Word. May Your name be glorified through their generosity. May Your instructions bring them great joy.

Amber Berry

## READ

*Listen to me, all who hope for deliverance — all who seek the Lord! Consider the rock from which you were cut, the quarry from which you were mined. ... The Lord will comfort Israel again and have pity on her ruins. Her desert will blossom like Eden, her barren wilderness like the garden of the Lord. Joy and gladness will be found there. Songs of thanksgiving will fill the air. — Isaiah 51:1, 3 (NLT)*

*For I am the Lord your God, who stirs up the sea, causing its waves to roar. My name is the Lord of Heaven's Armies. And I have put my words in your mouth and hidden you safely in my hand.*

— Isaiah 51:15-16 (NLT)

## REFLECT

The times in my life when I experience the greatest joy are when I let go and let God. I have heard this phrase many times, but I am finally seeing the truth and value in this wisdom. When I try to control my circumstances instead of letting my Father guide me through the wilderness, I become frustrated, dissatisfied, and at times bitter. It isn't until I let go of my tight grip and trust God with my situation that I find true freedom, comfort and joy.

Joy isn't circumstantial or based on feelings. Rather, joy is the source of delight. As believers, we delight in the sovereignty of the One who is the Author of creation and providentially perfects His plan through us.

By our nature, we are weak, but God is made strong through our weakness. When our outlook is ominous, we can find comfort and joy in the work of His hands. We have been redeemed. He takes the desert and makes it a garden.

God promises His people that joy and gladness will be found in seemingly desolate places. We can find beauty and rest in the sovereignty of our God and His promise to never forsake us. Trusting the truth of God's Word is when joy emerges. Whenever you face loss, oppression, temptation or defeat, lift your eyes to your Savior and place your hope and trust in the Source ... where true joy is found.

## RESPOND

Lord, we praise You for having all things in Your control. Help us to yield to Your sovereignty. In Jesus' name. Amen.

A cluster of stylized teal leaves is positioned behind the word "JOY". The leaves are of various sizes and orientations, some overlapping the letters.

JOY

IS THE  
SOURCE OF  
DELIGHT.

## READ

*Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me.* — Psalm 51:12 (NIV)

## REFLECT

Having joy in a fallen world is hard. The injustices, pain and suffering can be too much to bear. Even the mundane of day-to-day living can leave us emotionally worn and flat. We can easily feel low, apathetic or detached from the circumstances around us.

God tells us to ask Him for joy so we can press on with the Spirit that is obedient to His will. He wants to restore us to the joy of His salvation.

Scripture tells us this joy can only be found in Him because this joy requires forgiveness. Forgiven-joy is the deep-seated response of a life pardoned — one that stands free from sin, unaccused and released to perfect, eternal life with Jesus. It is the overwhelming understanding of unearned grace and undeserved mercy.

When we recall our salvation experience, God's Spirit wells up in perfect gratitude and humility toward the One who paid our cost. We remember the unjust suffering and illegitimate penalty offered by God's Son. He focuses our attention on life eternal and fills us with the Spirit that compels us to share His forgiven-joy with others in the midst of hard circumstances.

Where is your joy today? Is it lost in the afflictions and disappointments of this world, or is it rooted in the deep knowledge that your soul has been set free and you will never be separated from the love of God? In whatever you face, whatever turmoil surrounds you, remember: You. Have. Been. Set. Free! Will you share God's salvation-joy with others who do not have His hope in the heartache of their circumstances?

Remember your redemption experience and the freedom Jesus gave you from eternal death. Ask God to restore the joy of His salvation and revive the willing Spirit that keeps you walking with a heart that shares His joy with others.

## RESPOND

Jesus, I ask You to restore the joy of Your salvation in me. Help me to remember my redemption experience and the hope You give, no matter what my circumstances are. Fill me with Your willing Spirit, who sustains me in obedience so I can reach others in need of Your salvation-joy in the midst of difficulty. For Your glory, amen.

## READ

*For you, O Lord, have made me glad by your work; at the works of your hands I sing for joy.*  
— Psalm 92:4 (ESV)

## REFLECT

As I look at our family life — busy schedules, home improvements, surgery recovery and ministry opportunities — there's one word that comes to mind over and over again ... something I know I'd like to ask God to deepen in our hearts: Joy.

It's not that we don't have any joy — laughter is a constant in our home. But I desire for my boys to know the joy of the Lord, not just the joy of circumstances. I want their eyes to be opened to all the ways the Lord has provided and will continue to provide for us. I want them to experience joy in knowing God loves them.

Sometimes, we get so busy we forget to see the way the Lord delights in us. I don't want my boys to miss a thing.

So I picked Psalm 92:4 to pray for our family all year long. I want us to know the deep joy of the Lord that comes from trusting in His provision. I want us to know the joy that comes from believing He is who He says He is — no matter what. And I want us to know His joy even when it comes attached to hardship. Especially when it's attached to hardship.

## RESPOND

Lord, thank You for the kind of joy that only You can give. We ask for You to give us eyes to see Your many provisions so we can sing for joy at the work of Your hands. Be with our brothers and sisters in Christ who have trusted in You without having Your Word. Be their joy, their strength and their strong support. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Crystal Stine | <http://crystalstine.me>

## READ

*“Come closer to me,” Joseph said to his brothers. They came closer. “I am Joseph your brother whom you sold into Egypt. But don’t feel badly, don’t blame yourselves for selling me. God was behind it. God sent me here ahead of you to save lives.”* — Genesis 45:4-5 (MSG)

## REFLECT

When life throws us a curve ball, it’s easy to start blaming. We get a speeding ticket and blame the police. We lose our job and blame our boss. We watch friendships fall apart and we blame the other person. When we fail, we blame ourselves.

Joseph could have blamed his brothers for selling him into slavery. He could have used his power to punish them and seek revenge. But he didn’t. He saw God’s hand over every detail. He felt joy in the reunion. God used Joseph’s brothers to put him right where — and when — He wanted him: in a position to save lives.

What if we looked at our stories that way? What freedom we would have if we looked at the moments that have hurt us and saw them as God laying the foundation for a greater moment!

It’s not a fast process. It took years for Joseph to reunite with his family. And it took a decade for me to see why God had me walk a path of loneliness and broken community. At the time, I wanted to blame. She could have done something differently.

But she wasn’t the one with the bigger plan for my life. God took my broken heart and used it. He gave me a heart that was no longer broken *by* community, but *for* community. After 10 years of blaming and bitterness, I was set free by the truth that God put me on that course for His glory.

God sent me here, not broken friendships. God sent me here, not the boss who fired me.

The story God is writing in your life will save lives in the sharing as we give God glory and continually point others toward Him. Don’t feel badly and don’t blame — God has a plan for your pain.

## RESPOND

Father, we come to You with hearts broken in the middle of hard circumstances, trusting that You have a greater plan for our lives. God, we thank You for the privilege of learning these lessons through Your Word. We pray that people everywhere will see Your plan for their lives.

Emily Thomas | [www.heyemilythomas.com](http://www.heyemilythomas.com)

## READ

*For He Himself has said, "I will never leave you, nor forsake you." — Hebrews 13:5 (NKJV)*

## REFLECT

Like most people, I assumed I would grow up and have a family. I got married, but the kids never came. For six years. Everyone around us was successfully procreating but I was left well rested with rock-hard abs. Okay, maybe not the hard abs part. I had my heart set on breastfeeding and strictly organic, sugar-only-over-my-dead-body parenting. My pregnancy would be filled with exotic Himalayan roots and anything else Google said would benefit my baby. It just never happened.

We began down adoption road, meaning someone else would carry my baby. Anxious and weary, I leaned heavily on a Sara Groves song, "From This One Place," about God seeing what we cannot.

The agency presented us with six possible babies that year. Would you like a baby whose mom drank throughout the entire pregnancy? How about a baby who was conceived during rape? We said yes to every heartbreaking scenario. But God kept saying no. God saw something else.

God waited until we had abandoned the adoption dream and dismantled the nursery. He waited until I was standing at the consignment shop, having just sold every thread of baby clothes ...

"Hi Emily. We have a baby boy for you guys. You've already been chosen. He is yours if you're willing."

"Can he sleep in a laundry basket?" I asked. They said yes, and four hours later I was holding him.

I don't know what his birth mother ate for breakfast during pregnancy. He wasn't breast-fed and he eats more sugar than he should. But he's ours and he's perfect.

In your situation now, the one you're desperate to escape, God sees something else. Hold on.

## RESPOND

Father, help me to never forget that You see everything, from beginning to end. Forgive my impatience and help me to trust You more.

Erin Mohring | [www.homewiththeboys.net](http://www.homewiththeboys.net)

## READ

*Let us run with endurance the race God has set before us.* — Hebrews 12:1 (NLT)

## REFLECT

The first two half-marathons I ran left me in a sick stupor for the rest of the day. While I was proud of running — and finishing — it was hard to enjoy the accomplishments lying in bed post-race.

I felt defeated after the second race. I had a specific goal in mind and missed it by just a few minutes. I knew the weather hadn't been ideal and I suffered from dehydration, but I also felt like my body failed me. In the aftermath, I lost the joy that running had brought me throughout the year.

So I took some time off, still exercising but unable to tackle the sense of failure I felt.

During that period, I realized that running had become all about me. The successes — faster paces, greater distances, fun races — I considered great accomplishments for me. The failures — missed goals, feeling sick — were all my fault. There is no lasting joy when we put our hope and happiness all on ourselves: fallible, faltering, imperfect human beings.

By the time I returned to running, I was happy to lace up my sneakers again. I had a new running partner: God. He was my only constant source of joy, no matter my circumstances.

Running isn't easier these days, but the joy associated with it is more constant and complete. I pray at the beginning of each run, worship Him throughout and even talk to Him aloud when the Spirit moves. Each run has become an act of reliance on Him. Running is less about me and more about what He can do through me and for His glory.

We each have a race to run for Jesus. Our races may be long, treacherous, painful or scary. Trying to run in our own power can leave us tired, defeated, even sick. The only way to run with endurance and joy is to include the One who gives us the power and peace to keep going.

## RESPOND

Father, You have placed a unique race before each of us. Help us to press into You each day and then take off running to tell the world about Your saving grace. Give us endurance. Bless and multiply the efforts of those who translate and distribute the message of Your hope to all people. In Jesus' name, amen.

## READ

*In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus. — Philippians 1:4-6 (NIV)*

## REFLECT

It's easy to be skeptical when Paul talks about joy in the middle of his struggles, particularly when we have a difficult time rejoicing in the middle of our struggles. All through Philippians, we wonder whether Paul was really as filled with joy as he encourages these believers to be.

There was one person in Philippi with inside knowledge of Paul's attitude in suffering. One person who knew what Paul was like in prison. One person with the credibility to say, "Paul, you can say that we should have joy, but when you are in prison, you are cranky." But that one person knew better.

When Epaphroditus read this letter from Paul to the Philippian church, one listener was likely Paul's former jailer. This man would have seen Paul's back, wounded from the beating. This man would have known how bad the town jail was. And this man would have heard Paul and Silas singing in the middle of the night. And this man would have spent the rest of the night listening to Paul explain what it meant to "believe in the Lord Jesus Christ" (Acts 16:31 NIV).

And that jailer is evidence that God can work in the hardest situations to reach the least likely people. When Paul writes that he takes joy in their faith, that jailer is part of the story, a good work begun in earth-shattering circumstances.

## RESPOND

Father, help me remember those whom You are working in. Help me rejoice in the good work You have started and that You, by Your Spirit, are bringing to maturity. Help me see the partners I forget and be encouraged. And thank You that You are doing the same good work in me that You are in them. Amen.

Mary Borsh

## READ

*And 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 (NLT)

## REFLECT

When circumstances present a challenge — and that happens a lot — I am confronted with where to fix my thoughts. The obvious lean is to focus on the screaming issue at hand and try to figure it out. That is the broad way, the route highly traveled.

The narrow road is to not lean to my own understanding, but to press into the One I am trusting. Am I amplifying the issue at hand or the question of who He is? Is my focus on what is written in the Word, on thanksgiving, on His character or on the worship He deserves — even when the squeeze is on?

Leaving the position of “figuring it out” and moving to adoration will change things. Maybe not everything changes on the outside, but the atmosphere on the inside realigns my mind and heart. “Fix your thoughts on what is true” is a tool to keep in our tool belts when challenges come.

## RESPOND

Abba, You are such a wise Father that You equip us with tools to gain a course correction when our joy is being threatened. Teach us to rehearse Truth when we feel under pressure. Give us the awareness that “the joy of the Lord is our strength” (Nehemiah 8:10 NLT). Joy retention yields strength. Help us, Holy Spirit, to rehearse Truth in the hard places, fixing our thoughts on Your excellency. Amen.

## READ

*He waited seven more days and sent the dove out again, but this time it did not return to him.*

— Genesis 8:12 (NIV)

## REFLECT

This verse and the passage leading up to it have always made me sad. Noah and his family have just spent 40 long days in a damp, rocking ark, and he is waiting to see if the storm has passed. The fact that the dove did not return meant that dry land was found. The dove had discovered somewhere to land, so it was safe for everyone else to leave the ark too.

In theory, this is a happy thing for Noah. They have made it through the flood, and this day represents the hope and promise of the future. Noah and his family can at last move forward with their lives into the new normal and all that God has for them. When I read it, though, I get stuck on the missing animal and the fact that things have to change.

Change is one of the hardest things about this life. Just as we get accustomed to one normal, everything gets thrown up in the air and we have to start anew. Human nature prefers to stay in the familiar rather than venture into something new. Starting over can seem bad and scary. Even if we don't particularly like where we are now, we often prefer the safety of the known rather than stepping into the uncertainties of the unknown.

But to God, change is not a bad thing. It's essential. In Noah's case, change meant a fresh start. A new beginning. Freedom. In our case, change often means the same. We get preoccupied with the hard parts of change: saying goodbye, leaving what is comfortable, figuring things out again.

Change allows us to grow. It allows us to experience more of God and rely on Him in new ways. Change opens us up for God's best ... even when it is hard.

## RESPOND

Unchanging Father, please help me to trust You when life changes. I know You are the one constant in life. You. Never. Change. Help me to embrace new things with the comfort of knowing that You are there and it is good. Thank You for being my constant. Thank You that I face nothing on my own. Amen.

## READ

*When I discovered your words, I devoured them. They are my joy and my heart's delight, for I bear your name, O Lord God of Heaven's Armies. — Jeremiah 15:16 (NLT)*

## REFLECT

*This is it. It is the end of my life and future. I cannot find a better job in this city without a bachelor's degree.*

That's what I was thinking on my last day of college. I had to leave my studies because I only had a part-time job. I couldn't afford my tuition, books, and other costs for school. I also had to help my parents pay off their debts after they declared bankruptcy.

But that was before I came to know Christ. That was when I blamed the god I thought I knew and had trusted since I was a baby. The god that my parents and family taught me about from childhood. I didn't know the true and living God of the Bible, Jesus Christ — I didn't know how to trust Him with my life. But I do now.

The first time I read God's Word from the Book of Acts in my heart language was in 2007. My heart filled with indescribable joy when I discovered God's Word and could understand it in my heart and mind. Later I was given the Gospel of Mark. Then the greatest news I got last year was that by the end of 2014, we will have the whole New Testament!

I rejoice for having God's Word in my heart language. But, I also think of the others who are still waiting for God's Word in their heart languages. They need to discover and hear the Word so they may believe and trust in the Son of God.

## RESPOND

Dear God, the Father in Heaven, You are holy and worthy of our praise. Father, today we bow down before Your throne asking Your grace for the Bibleless people who are still waiting to hear Your Word for them in the language they understand. You are our joy and delight. Thank You for giving us new life in Christ Jesus, our Lord and Savior. In Jesus' mighty name we pray. Amen.

Bonnie Wallace | [www.BonnieJWallace.org](http://www.BonnieJWallace.org)

## READ

*For we have great joy and consolation in your love, because the bowels of the saints are refreshed by thee, brother.*  
— Philemon 1:7 (KJV)

## REFLECT

Where has God ministered to you? Where is it that you have been wearied or burdened by life? Has it been in the struggle of an illness or a great loss? Maybe the disappointment of unmet expectations or in the death of a dream?

And what did God do in that time?

Did He reach down from heaven and comfort you with His love and provision? Did He gently carry you through and set your feet on solid ground? Or, did He take the hidden things of your heart and cast His Light on them so you could walk in the freedom of hope and joy?

Whatever God has helped you overcome has not been only for you. It's been for another as well. He wants us to take those experiences and fling wide our homes, hearts, schedules and resources — and He wants us to give them away. His works are not for us to keep; they are for us to share and invest in others.

Because of your intimate life experiences with God, you have an opportunity to minister to the depths of another's heart. You've been given a firsthand perspective of what is needed physically, emotionally and spiritually. And when you do, you console that person with the faithfulness of God Himself.

When we open our hands to the poor in spirit and reach out to those who lack, Jesus extends His relief and lightens the load of those in need.

What grace and mercy does God want you to give away? Will you ask Him to speak to your heart and connect you with others who are in need of the same?

## RESPOND

Jesus, thank You for meeting me in every struggle and heartache I've faced. You have ministered to the depths of my heart and given me deep joy and hope. Open my eyes to those who are struggling and allow me to be the extension of Your love and kindness. Knit me to those who are in need of my experiences with You so I can refresh them with Your grace and mercy. It's in Your name I go. Amen.

Eryn Hall | [www.mamahall.com](http://www.mamahall.com)

## READ

*Let your roots grow down into him, and let your lives be built on him. Then your faith will grow strong in the truth you were taught, and you will overflow with thankfulness. — Colossians 2:7 (NLT)*

## REFLECT

I had an unsettling feeling of discouragement and dissatisfaction stirring in my spirit. I tried to cover it up, make excuses for it and pretend it didn't exist. I talked to friends about it and confided in my family. I tried praying it away and asking God to make it easier. Finally ... I asked God. And snap! He showed me.

The long, overgrown, deep root of my problem: comparison. And because He is a loving God, He also revealed the remedy: thanksgiving.

I was so caught up in comparison in an area of my life that I didn't see that thanksgiving could be a major part of God's plan — my key to freedom. Instead of comparing, critiquing and feeling dissatisfied and discouraged, I could turn it around by being thankful to God.

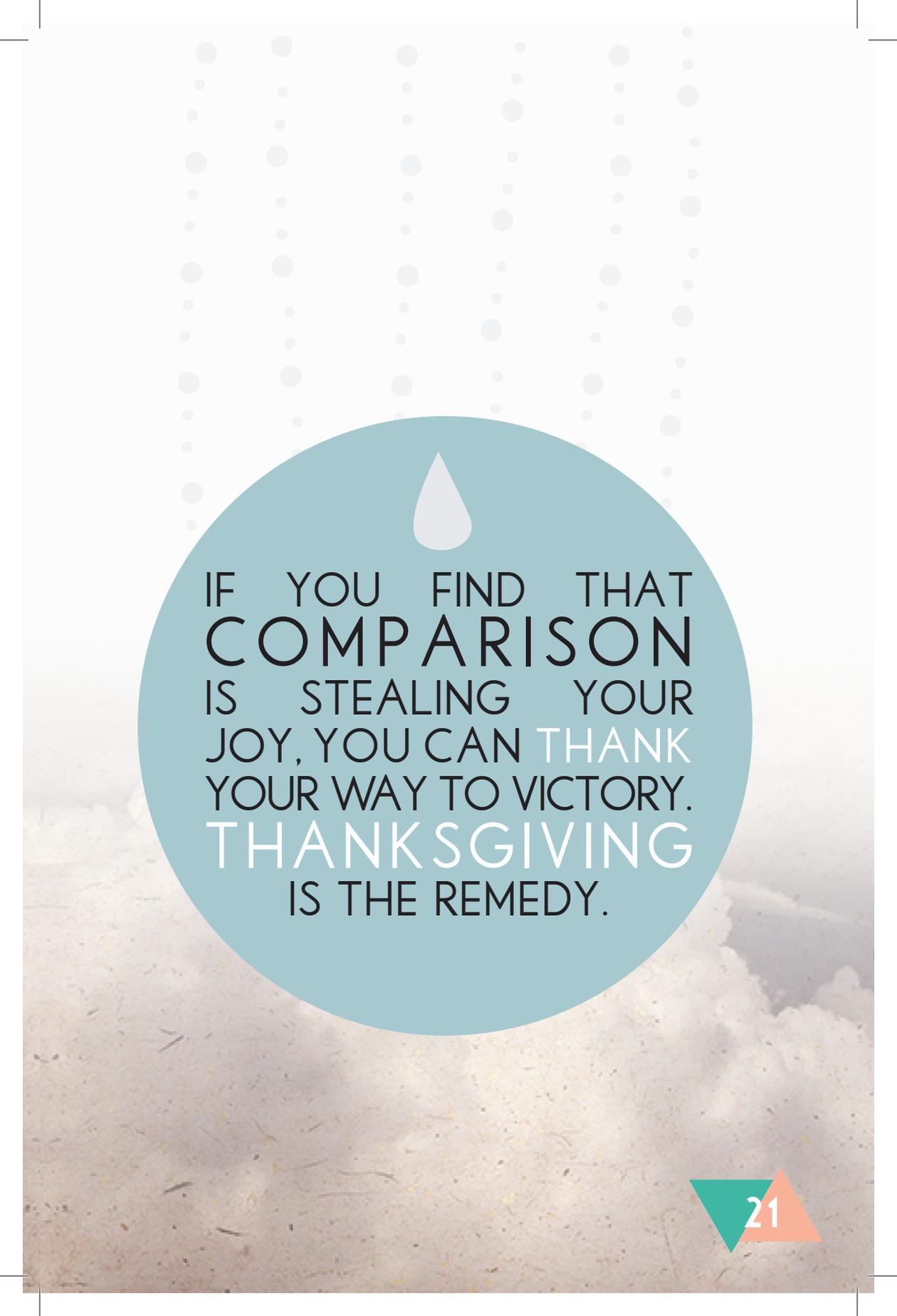
It's liberating to know I can thank God for where He has me, for the amazing blessings He's bestowed upon us and for the freedom to worship Him with other believers. I thank Him that we live in a country where I am free to call Jesus my Savior. I am thankful I can hear God and He hears me. There is so much to be grateful for! How could I possibly forget?

Comparison was robbing me of joy and peace. But no more. I am killing those discouraging roots with my utmost thanksgiving. God can do a new thing with these roots of thanksgiving. I will grow in gratitude. I am so thankful. God is good. He is worthy.

If you are feeling down, lost, resentful, jealous, dissatisfied or discontent, I pray God shows you the root. And if you find that comparison is stealing your joy, you can "thank" your way to victory. Thanksgiving is the remedy.

## RESPOND

God, thank You for creating us in Your image. Thank You for calling each of us to where we are now and how that is part of Your good plan for our future. Thank You that we are Your children, bought with a price and invited into Your kingdom for eternity. Nothing compares to Your goodness! In Jesus' name. Amen.



IF YOU FIND THAT  
**COMPARISON**  
IS STEALING YOUR  
JOY, YOU CAN THANK  
YOUR WAY TO VICTORY.  
**THANKSGIVING**  
IS THE REMEDY.

## READ

*In hope against hope he believed..* — Romans 4:18 (NASB)

## REFLECT

“Every surgery is routine unless it’s yours.” My dad’s words rang in my ears as I went under anesthesia for the third time in four months. After the first two surgeries, a staph infection invaded my body. Antibiotics failed. Then I needed a third surgery to clear the infection.

Lord, why is this happening? I’ve done my best to stay healthy and follow doctor’s orders. For weeks I wrestled with God. I begged, made deals and promised Him all sorts of things. No answers came.

Abraham must have felt that way — hoping against hope that he would one day have a family. I think we all feel like that when we have an unfulfilled longing or when life is hard and no end is in sight. Mornings begin with renewed hope, *Will my answer come today?* By evening those hopes are dashed. It’s easy to get discouraged while waiting for answered prayers.

But instead of despairing in God’s silence, what if we looked for the joy that’s around us? The kindness of others, the quiet beauty in nature, or the belly laughs of children.

After my third surgery, I watched the sunrise one winter morning. Having tossed and turned all night, I was up early waiting for my coffee to brew. As I gazed out the window, brilliant pinks smeared the horizon — God’s handiwork at its finest. I realized that this too would pass. One day I’d look back on this confusing period. God would prove faithful ... but would I? Hoping against hope, I chose to believe.

## RESPOND

Father, life throws crazy circumstances at us, and many of them are impossible to understand. Help us remember that You have a plan in everything and we can trust You to work things out. Amen.

Katie Orr | [www.katieorr.me](http://www.katieorr.me)

## READ

*You satisfy me more than the richest feast. I will praise you with songs of joy.* — Psalm 63:5 (NLT)

## REFLECT

An exciting phenomenon occurred this week. My two oldest (6 and 8) cleaned their room, made their beds and put their clean laundry away all by themselves. Three days in a row — and counting.

Why? They get to visit their cousins this weekend. Since we typically see them once a year, my children are incredibly giddy to see them, and I am incredibly willing to try anything to reinforce good habits. So the deal is, if they do all their chores this week they will each receive a much-desired toy to bring and play with their cousins.

My energetic 8-year-old runs to the fridge as soon as he gets off the bus to view his chores for the afternoon. My sweet 6-year-old gets up a little bit earlier in the morning to be sure she has enough time to make her bed. It is a thing of beauty.

You see, they have a great joy set out before them: new toys and beloved cousins to play with. They are enduring the dreaded tasks of trash-emptying and teeth-brushing because they know they will be rewarded with the presence of their cousins (and a shiny new toy.) The promise of good things to come fuels their obedience. Their anticipated joy keeps them going.

David, who penned Psalm 63 while in a wilderness, also had joy fueling his obedience. He lived through wars, betrayals, tragedies and the fallout of his own epic mistakes, but he consistently turned to his God.

His source of strength and joy is unmistakable: God his Helper. David longs for God's presence more than anything. The character and promises of his maker fill David's thoughts like a child anticipates Christmas Day. David's key to enduring joy in every circumstance was to cling to the promises and presence of the only One who is safe, good and faithful.

## RESPOND

God, You are good. Grant me the grace to cling to the truth of who You are, regardless of my difficult circumstances. Show me where I'm trying to find satisfaction in something other than You. Bring the song of joy to my soul as I take refuge under Your almighty wings.

Lara Williams | [www.larawilliams.org](http://www.larawilliams.org)

## READ

*Provide for those who grieve in Zion — to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of joy instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair. They will be called oaks of righteousness, a planting of the Lord for the display of his splendor. — Isaiah 61:3 (NIV)*

## REFLECT

I feel a little naive writing about joy in all circumstances from my cushy seat at a local coffee shop. I mean, I know that excruciating circumstances plague people all over the world while I sit here sipping my coffee with ease. And I think, Who am I to talk about joy in all circumstances? I've lived through some things but I haven't lived through a typhoon or buried my child or been born in a land that doesn't have a single verse of Scripture in my language.

But then God reminds me that it's not about whether everyone else experiences joy in all circumstances; it's about whether I experience joy in all of my circumstances.

Too often we close off our hearts when someone like James says, "Count it all joy when you fall into various trials," because deep down we think, Well, he never had to live through THIS. And we miss the blessing when all the while God offers each of us joy in Him, regardless of our circumstance.

Victory over our circumstances won't come when we waste our time comparing our lives to the lives of others. God is writing your story and mine, individually and purposefully. Victory comes when we let go of the reins and trust that the God of all joy and love will bring beauty from ashes in order that we might be "a planting of the Lord for the display of His splendor."

## RESPOND

Father, forgive me for the time I've wasted comparing my life — my ups and my downs — to the lives of others. You are writing my story, and I want to rest in Your faithfulness. I want to trust You today, regardless of what may come, knowing that Your heart for me is love and Your eternal plan for me is good. Use me to glorify Your name through a vibrant walk of faith. This life is all about You, Lord God. It's all about You. Amen.

Marilynn Howe | [www.littlegirl dancing.com](http://www.littlegirl dancing.com)

## READ

*God is standing right here among you, and He is the champion who will rescue you. He will joyfully celebrate over you; He will rest in His love for you; He will joyfully sing because of you like a new husband.*

— Zephaniah 3:17 (The Voice)

## REFLECT

Joy is the glue. I encountered this simple phrase years ago. Before the newlywed stage and the evolving career paths. Before the newborn months and the toddler years. But still, it stuck. Even after I forgot it and became undone for a season, this phrase remained embedded in my heart.

Perhaps I forgot it for a while because I didn't understand it. You see, joy is the glue of relationships. Before creating my own family, I didn't understand the power of relationship. Today, the cares of life cease when my son shares a joyful moment. A ladybug. Shimmering leaves. Ice cream. It's all a wonder to him and inconsequential to others. But for me? I rest in those moments.

As much as I love my family, there's an even greater joy. We were created to live in relationship with the Eternal, our God. Can you begin to imagine with me? He rests in His love for us. And joy is the glue of our relationship with Him. How often do I make room for joy? Or, am I consumed with success and productivity? It's hard to be joyful in all circumstances during the bad times. But what about the better times? What am I celebrating with the Eternal, my God?

## RESPOND

Holy Spirit, return us to the wonder and power of joy. According to Your Word, "The joy of the Lord is [my] strength" (Nehemiah 8:10). Joy is the glue and we need more of it. May You open our eyes to the joy present in every moment. In the bad and better times, let us be joyful in every circumstance. And may the San people of Namibia find joy. May they enter into a joyful relationship with You as Your Word becomes available in their language. Amen.

Sarah Peppel | [www.GenesisMoments.com](http://www.GenesisMoments.com)

## READ

*For it is not those who hear the law who are righteous in God's sight, but it is those who obey the law who will be declared righteous. — Romans 2:13 (NIV)*

## REFLECT

In John 13:34, God commands us to love one another as He loved us. That command is not as easy some days as others. Taking negative thoughts and emotions captive and surrendering them to God is one of the most challenging aspects of being a Christian. Each day provides new opportunities for our sinful nature to creep in and threaten our peace and joy.

As a busy mom of teenage daughters, I find it easy to get overwhelmed with my precious children's needs to be driven here and there and back again. I get critical of my husband for not helping around the house as much as I would like. On some days I find myself getting seriously irritated with my co-workers over the silliest things. Outbursts of laughter from reading a text or funny email. Loud sneezes that break my focus and burst the silence of the workday!

All small things, I know. They're just the little annoyances of everyday life we all deal with, living in a world with other people: being a part of their lives and loving them regardless ... and accepting their love for us despite our faults.

I am challenged by Romans 2:13, which admonishes me to obey God's laws, not just let them go in one ear and out the other. I must let go of the little irritations and criticisms. I need to love people unconditionally and let God work. Because despite my best efforts in my own strength, daily trivialities are going to threaten my resolve to walk in the light and to be light to others.

Praise God that He allows us all to start fresh every day, forgetting what is behind, pressing on toward the goal.

## RESPOND

God, help me to not only listen to the Word, but to absorb its meaning — Your meaning — into every fiber of my being. Help me to honor You in word and in deed every day of my life. Thank You that I can start each day afresh and face the challenges of life with joy. May my life be a celebration of praise to You as I purpose to walk in righteousness and live joyfully before You.

Rachel Ramey | [www.titus2homemaker.com](http://www.titus2homemaker.com)

## READ

*I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish. — Galatians 5:16-17 (NKJV)*

## REFLECT

There is a moment that stands out in my mind, although it was years ago. As I stood at the sink washing dishes, I was contemplating joy, and talking to the Lord. God, I wondered, if joy is one of the fruits of Your Spirit, and I have Your Spirit, why don't I have joy all the time?

God's response came quickly. *How fully are you walking by my Spirit?*

Ouch. Having God's Spirit is easy. Once we have the Spirit, He doesn't go away. Walking in the Spirit is tougher, because it requires a constant series of choices. It is true, though, that the more completely I am obedient, the more complete is my joy.

There is a cycle here. If I'm doing what I'm supposed to be doing, I am joyful, which motivates me to do what I ought to do. If I am not doing what I'm supposed to be doing, I get discouraged. Then it's difficult to want to do much of anything — most of all the things I should be doing!

A conscious effort is necessary to continually perpetuate the joy cycle and break the discouragement cycle. Being aware of the cycle and mindful of how a single decision can disrupt it — for better or for worse — is a great start. It's encouraging when I'm in the discouragement cycle to remember that one or two hard decisions that push me into doing the right thing will likely get things rolling smoothly again!

## RESPOND

Lord, please help me to be mindful of You, following Your Spirit's leading as I walk with You each day. Help me not to be drawn in by the lust for ease or comfort, but to hunger after righteousness and Your glory.

The Little Linguist\* | [www.thelittlelinguistinthemist.blogspot.com](http://www.thelittlelinguistinthemist.blogspot.com)

## READ

*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction. — 2 Corinthians 1:3-4 (RSV)*

## REFLECT

On Easter I sat with fellow translators waiting for a bus after the Russian church service. We sang songs we associate with Easter in our respective cultures. Part of the way through “Oh Sacred Head Now Wounded,” our melodies suddenly diverged. The tune you and I know starts in a minor key, but shifts to a bright major key, in beautiful symbolism of the hope we have found through the tragedy of Christ’s death.

The Russian version stays minor all the way through.

Many minority people groups in the Russian-speaking world have been handed full portions of suffering and struggle throughout their histories. The Gospel removes the yoke of sin but does not always remove the political bondage in which many of them remain. When the sun went down on Good Friday, Jesus was still dead. There was no major upturn at the end of that sad verse. Can we praise a God who leaves us in the broken world? Can we find joy when the key stays minor?

The songs of the Body of Christ in the Russian-speaking world make room for a heritage of trials. We worship Christ as truly in the minor key of Good Friday as we do in the joy of Easter morning. When trials continue, so does the song of the Church.

## RESPOND

Lord, we are in awe of Your humility, that You would taste suffering, death and the darkness surrounding Your people on Earth. We pray for the Bibleless in the Russian-speaking world. Be merciful to the individuals who take tremendous risks to bring your Word into their heart languages. Hold open the doors for translation work in these lands of locked doors. Bring Your joy into the hearts of those who suffer, and may they teach us to worship You even when life stays in a minor key. Amen.

*\*The Little Linguist serves Bible translation projects of Seed Company in the Russian-speaking world. Real name withheld due to sensitivity requirements in this part of the world.*

# DAY 21 WHAT IS TRUE CAN TRULY BRING US JOY

Wendy Speake | <http://wendyspeake.com>

## READ

*Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things.*

— Philippians 4:8 (NASB)

## REFLECT

When trials come, tempting our eyes to turn from the Lord to our troubles, we admonish one another in Christ to, “Consider it all joy.” And this admonition is good and true. We know that “suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope” (Romans 5:3-4). Knowledge of this truth brings joy, indeed! And yet we forget.

Why do we forget? A spiritual nearsightedness occurs when we ignore what is true under tribulation’s dark cloud. The shadows of hardship block out the light of God’s glory and grace, and we flail in the storm. Like Peter, who had great faith when his eyes were on the Savior, we start to sink looking at the wind-swept sea, toward the forces that threaten us as well.

Philippians 4:8 is our chin-tilting call to look upon the mountains from where our help comes. So I ask you:

- What is true? God’s Word is true. (John 17:17)
- What is honorable? Jesus is preparing a place for me in His kingdom. (John 14:2)
- What is right? God is the great I AM of yesterday, today and tomorrow. (Hebrews 13:8)
- What is pure? The world is full of sin, but Christ remains the unblemished Lamb of God. (John 1:29)
- What is lovely? I am lovely, because God loves me. (1 John 4:16)
- What is of good repute? I call on the Lord, morning, noon, or night, and He hears me. (Psalm 55:17)
- What is excellent? God’s promises are excellent; I can trust each one. (Psalm 33:4)
- What is praiseworthy? Jesus’ name calms the wind and settles the sea. (Luke 8:25)

## RESPOND

Lord, there is joy in the truth of Your marvelous Word! We lift up the people who have not heard what is true about You because they do not yet have Your Word in their language. We specifically remember the Boma people today, and ask that You ready their hearts for the truth of Your Word. Amen

Mary Borsh

## READ

*And 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 (NLT)

## REFLECT

When circumstances present a challenge — and that happens a lot — I am confronted with the object of my focus. The obvious lean is toward the screaming issue and attempting to fix it. That is the broad way, the route highly traveled.

The narrow road is to not lean to my own understanding, but to press into the One I am trusting. Am I amplifying the issue at hand and hunting for the fix, or am I amplifying Jesus? Is my focus on what is written in the Word, thanksgiving, God's character, or the worship He deserves even when the squeeze is on?

Leaving the position of "figuring it out" and moving to adoration will change things. Maybe not everything changes on the outside, but the atmosphere on the inside realigns as we chew on what is true. Fixing our thoughts — we need to put that in our tool belt.

## RESPOND

Abba, You are such a wise Father that You equip us with tools to gain a course correction when our joy is being threatened. Teach us to rehearse Truth when we feel pressure. Give us the awareness that Nehemiah speaks of in Chapter 8:10: "The joy of the Lord is your strength!" Joy retention yields strength. Help us, Holy Spirit, to rehearse Truth in the hard places, fixing our thoughts on Your excellency. Amen.

Jon Swanson | [www.300wordsaday.com](http://www.300wordsaday.com)

## READ

*Then I said to them, "You see the trouble we are in: Jerusalem lies in ruins, and its gates have been burned with fire. Come, let us rebuild the wall of Jerusalem, and we will no longer be in disgrace." I also told them about the gracious hand of my God on me and what the king had said to me. They replied, "Let us start rebuilding." So they began this good work. — Nehemiah 2:17-18 (NIV)*

## REFLECT

Nehemiah had a clear picture of how ruined Jerusalem was. He heard the news from his brother. He traveled 900 miles from Susa and then made his own tour of walls and gates. He knew exactly how many piles of rubble there were. He saw clearly the charred remnants of gates burned by the Babylonians more than a century before. And Nehemiah knew the disgrace of being a descendant of an exiled family living by the rivers of Babylon.

So what gave him confidence when he started talking to the people in Jerusalem?

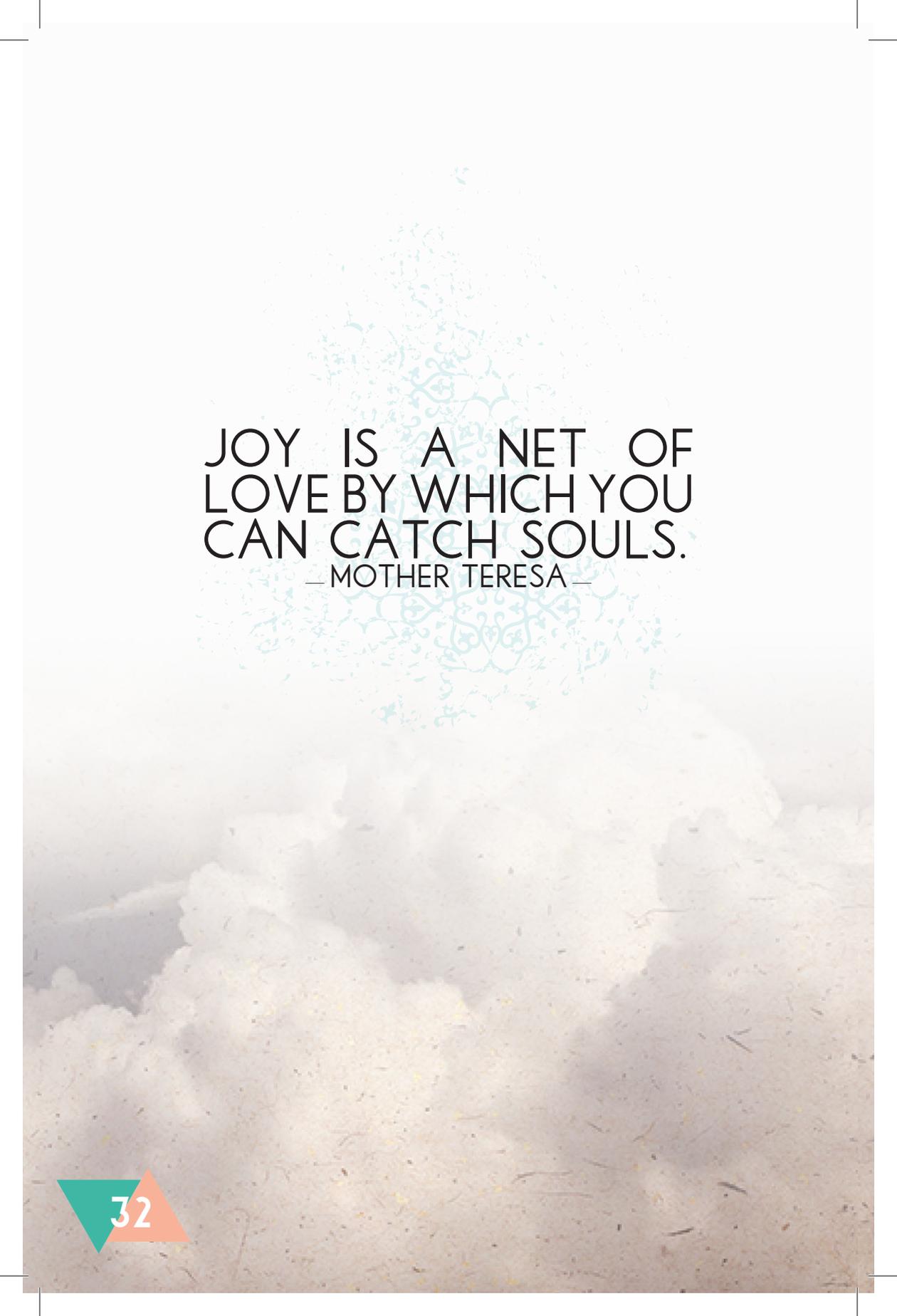
He had spent four months praying, morning and evening. He had confessed all the sins he could think of, his and his family's and his people's. And he had spent four months and more prevailing on God to remember His promises.

But it wasn't just the praying. It was the courage God had given him to answer the king — and the amazing response of the king to give Nehemiah all the resources he needed to do the work.

Nehemiah had been devastated when he heard the story of the walls. But by the time he actually saw the walls, fellowship with God and power from God gave him everything he needed to lead the people in the great work of rebuilding Jerusalem.

## RESPOND

Father God, the walls around me are broken and the gates are burned. In families, in nations, in my heart. But You have made promises about your forgiveness and presence and peace. Today, would You help me know the fulfillment of your promises? And again tomorrow. And again the next day. Until we see the rebuilding complete. Through Your name, Jesus. Amen.



JOY IS A NET OF  
LOVE BY WHICH YOU  
CAN CATCH SOULS.  
— MOTHER TERESA —

Laura Gish | Contributor at [www.MillionPrayingWomen.com](http://www.MillionPrayingWomen.com)

## READ

*We do this by keeping our eyes on Jesus, the champion who initiates and perfects our faith. Because of the joy awaiting him, he endured the cross, disregarding its shame. Now he is seated in the place of honor beside God's throne. — Hebrews 12:2 (NLT)*

## REFLECT

Jesus came that we would not just survive this life, but live abundantly. Joy is easy when times are good. Yet amid difficulty, the joy of what awaits on the other side can keep us grounded in His presence. In this posture of dependence upon His strength, we're conduits of His power.

All people will die, but the greatest tragedy is to never truly live. As our perfect model, Jesus demonstrated a matchless faithfulness and joy amid eternity's greatest trial. While on the cross, He interceded on behalf of His perpetrators. What kind of heart-strength compels this radical response?

Jesus didn't live in reaction to darkness, but in response to His Father. Life presents us with choices, big and small, not to react in the dark spirit of this age but to respond to the Holy Spirit. The outworking of His indwelling presence is love, joy and peace. We don't manufacture joy. Isn't that freeing? It is created, sustained and grows in response to our Maker.

God has made us to thrive, not just survive. The fruit of His indwelling presence, the promises of His Word, and the joy of what awaits in eternity compelled Jesus to experience matchless joy and obedience. This eternal perspective can shift our gaze upward in any circumstance and compel us to greatness.

"Joy is a net of love by which you can catch souls"\* (Mother Teresa).

## RESPOND

Father, thank You for the gift of joy. May the presence of joy be a light to the hurting around me. Be glorified in and through my life today. Amen.

\*Joy\_is\_prayer\_Joy\_is\_strength\_Joy\_is. Dictionary.com. Columbia World of Quotations. Columbia University Press, 1996. [http://quotes.dictionary.com/Joy\\_is\\_prayer\\_Joy\\_is\\_strength\\_Joy\\_is](http://quotes.dictionary.com/Joy_is_prayer_Joy_is_strength_Joy_is) (accessed: June 11, 2014).

# DAY 25 THE MOST EFFECTIVE ANTIDOTE TO ANXIETY

Jessica Bolyard | [www.AdjustingToTheWorld.com](http://www.AdjustingToTheWorld.com)

## READ

*Then I thought, "To this I will appeal: the years when the Most High stretched out his right hand. I will remember the deeds of the Lord; yes, I will remember your miracles of long ago. I will consider all your works and meditate on all your mighty deeds." — Psalm 77:10-12 (NIV)*

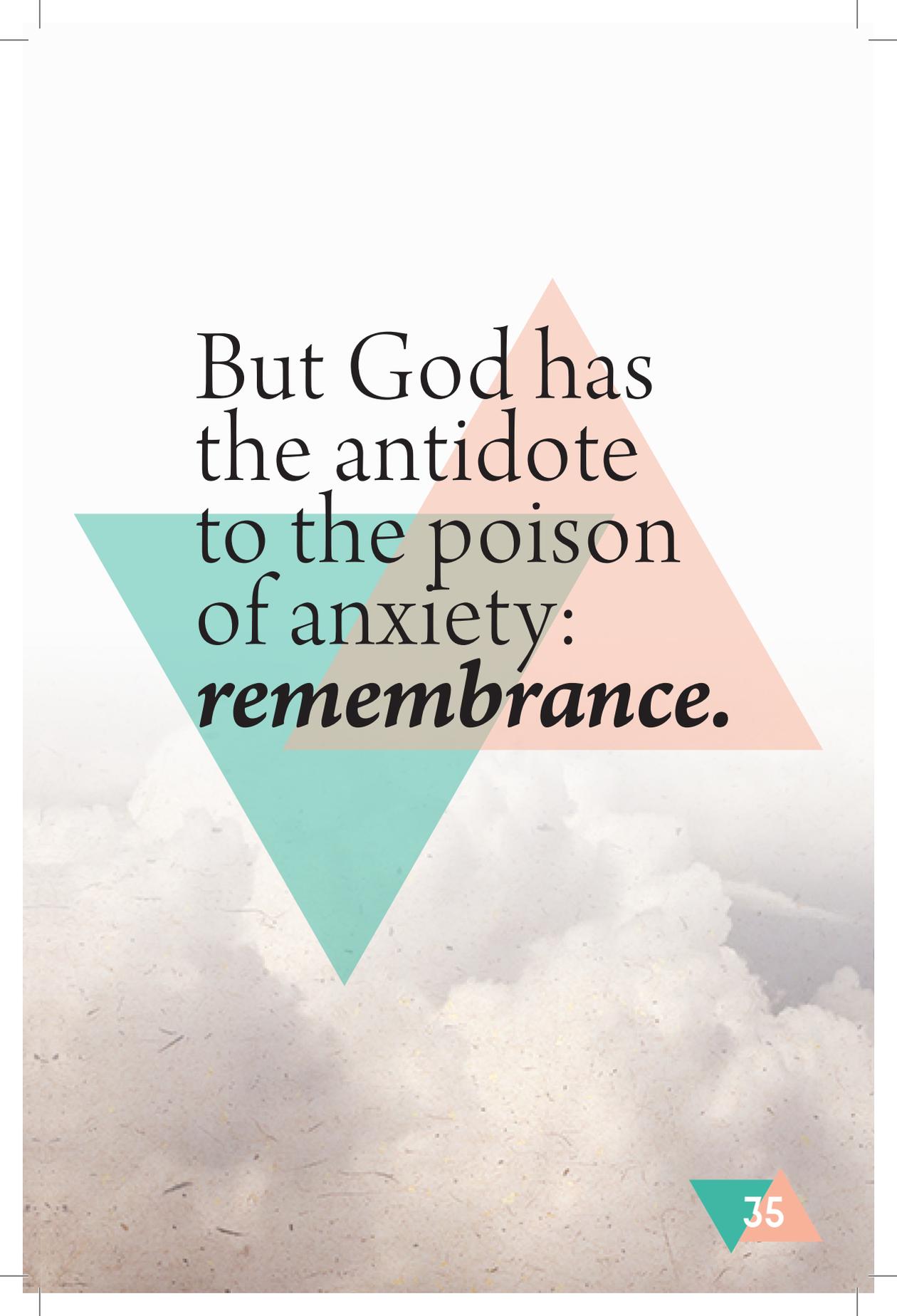
## REFLECT

Anxiety is a thief. Whether it sneaks in with the early morning light or the darkness of midnight, the clamor of the afternoon or the quiet of dawn — its purpose is the same. Anxiety comes to steal our joy and peace. Its purpose is exactly opposite of the Holy Spirit. Where the Spirit brings life, peace and freedom, anxiety comes to rip those things from our grasp. The intent of anxiety is to take away what we know is true about God and to replace it with uncertainty and fear. It works to drown out the whisper of hope with shouts of fear and to hide the light of God within the shadow of lies.

But God has the antidote to the poison of anxiety: remembrance. As we willfully turn our thoughts to the goodness of God — who He is, what He has done and what He has promised, we can free ourselves from anxiety's grip. With our hearts and our minds firmly fixed on the truth of God's Word and the goodness we have experienced in the past, the uncertainties of today and tomorrow will lose their power. As we remember what we do know of God, He will fill in the gaps of what we don't yet know.

## RESPOND

Eternal Father, I know Your hand has been all over my past. I know in my heart that You are with me now and You will be with me in the future. Please give me the mental strength to focus on what I know to be true, so that the uncertainties of my future can rest firmly in Your powerful hands. May my life be a testimony of Your faithfulness to those who have never even read Your Word. Thank You for all that You have already done, and thank You for what You have yet to do. Amen.



But God has  
the antidote  
to the poison  
of anxiety:  
***remembrance.***

**Joy In All Circumstances**

© 2014 by Seed Company  
All Rights Reserved

Published by Seed Company.

This book and parts thereof may not be reproduced in any form, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form by any means (electronic, mechanical, photocopy, recording or otherwise) without prior written permission of the author/Seed Company, except as provided by United States of America copyright law.



*Bible Translation. Life Transformation.*

Seed Company  
3030 Matlock Road  
Arlington, TX 76015  
[theseedcompany.org](http://theseedcompany.org)