



Finding Peace in Troubling Times

Devotion

I laced up my boots and straightened my starched uniform every morning as I left for work before the sun rose above the horizon. I was a soldier and a combat veteran. Strong. Confident. Competent.

But I packed a secret deep in my cargo pockets. I could not shake the thought of a black sedan with government tags pulling up in front of my town house and dress-uniform-wearing soldiers knocking on my door. My heart pounded and my stomach was tied in knots. For months on end, I did everything within my power to be anywhere but home during official notification hours. If your spouse has been deployed in a combat zone, this scenario might sound familiar.

But for me, common fear crossed the line into unhealthy anxiety. By the grace of God, my husband came home from that deployment unscathed, but my experience uncovered an uncomfortable truth in my heart. My faith had been tested and found insufficient. I lacked confidence that God would take care of me if something should happen to my husband. I was consumed by fear because the roots of my faith were shallow. My focus was on myself and on my fears rather than on God's almighty power.

Have you found yourself in a similar situation? A lack of trust often presents itself as worry, fear, anxiety, discouragement, or a constant desire to fix things our own way.

I believed in God and knew that His Son was sacrificed for my salvation, but my trust in Him was weak. Believing in God and trusting Him are not necessarily synonymous. Trusting in God means knowing He is our Friend, Father, Protector, Sovereign Lord, and Redeemer. God strengthens and nourishes our relationship with Him through His Word – His love letter to us.

God leads us to find peace in troubling times through the faith relationship He establishes with us when we are baptized and through our entire life as we read and hear His Word. Instead of being consumed by my earthly needs, God led me to seek His Kingdom and then to trust Him to provide all that I require for righteousness (Matthew 6:33).

Between my husband's second and third deployments, the Holy Spirit led me to four valuable promises in the Bible that have reduced my anxiety and bolstered my faith. The Holy Spirit promises to help you remember and apply them in your own life the next time worry threatens your peace of mind.

1. Put God first. *But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added you* (Matthew 6:33). During His famous Sermon on the Mount, this passage comes immediately after Jesus tells his followers not to worry. He said the Gentiles worry about their earthly needs, but God knows exactly what we require. Nothing should matter to us more than God's righteousness – not even our husbands. When we care for and worry over earthly things more than His love and salvation, anxiety creeps in. Our security and prosperity become contingent upon things that are not guaranteed. Who wouldn't worry then? Our security is found in the salvation Jesus earned for us on the cross and in the faith God gives us that Jesus is *the way, and the truth, and the life* (John 14:6).

2. **Get to know God better by spending time in His Word.** When we hear and read the Bible, the Holy Spirit works to strengthen our relationship with Him. Knowing the truth about God and His love for us in Christ Jesus fills us with peace and trust in His tender care. Believing in God and trusting Him to sustain us do not always go hand in hand. In His Word, God continually reminds us that He is always with us. God promises *He will not leave you or forsake you* (Deuteronomy 31:6).

3. **Let God do the heavy lifting.** *Cast all your anxiety on Him because He cares for you* (1 Peter 5:7 NIV). The word *cast* means “to roll over”. God loves us and wants us to pass our hurts, struggles, and worries off to Him. Roll over your burdens on God and let Him carry them. Jesus reassures us, “*Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest*” (Matthew 11:28).

4. **Focus on the good things God daily gives us.** It takes so much effort to worry. Anxious thoughts wear us down and keep us up at night. They consume our every thought making it impossible to focus on what is good and right and true. In times of worry, ask God to help you see the good He works for you every day. Give thanks to Him for even the smallest of blessings.

In place of fretting I began to pray and give thanks (Philippians 4:6-7) even for the smallest of blessings, acknowledging that all goodness comes from above. Rather than agonizing over the possibility that I would suffer unspeakable pain, I trusted that God would never leave nor forsake me (Deuteronomy 31:6) no matter what happened, because He is near the brokenhearted (Psalm 34:18). In lieu of allowing worry to consume me, the Lord helped me to cast my cares on Him, reminding me in His Word that He cares for me more than I can imagine (1 Peter 5:7).

Since instituting these practices into my life, I have not experienced a single moment of all-consuming anxiety during any of my husband’s more recent deployments. In fact, I have learned to look forward to deployments as periods of significant spiritual growth. God continues to lead me to replace worry with trust.

Will you join me? Let us commit together to trusting God so that the enemy cannot steal from us one more second of the peace that surpasses all understanding (Philippians 4:7).

Prayer: From Psalm 56, verses 9b-11a, we pray:

This I know, that God is for me.
In God, whose word I praise,
In the Lord, whose word I praise,
In God I trust; I shall not be afraid.

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