

Peace
over
ANXIETY

Peace
over
ANXIETY

a devotional by *Justina Nadolson*



Justina Nadolson is wife to her awesome husband and mom to three adult children and one teenager. She and her husband are entrepreneurs and she is also a former executive for a Fortune 500 company and a former Christian School Board President. She is a Jesus-lover, avid crafter, family historian, zealous reader, curious and passionate traveler, essential oil junkie, and appreciates a good movie or series. She wrote Peace Over Anxiety after growing through a year of great trial and turmoil where God showed up. She has a passion for helping people who have anxious thoughts find more peace and enjoys mentoring women. She resides in Ohio with her family, Golden Doodles, cat, and turtles, but will always identify as a "Hoosier."

Email info@peaceoveranxiety.com

Website peaceoveranxiety.com

Facebook [@peaceoveranxiety](https://www.facebook.com/peaceoveranxiety)

Instagram [@peace.over.anxiety](https://www.instagram.com/peace.over.anxiety)

UNIT ONE

UNIT ONE

Introduction to Peace Over Anxiety

Living in the middle of a worldwide pandemic has been a challenging time for all of us globally. In the news and on social media, we see that people's anxiety and stress levels are more highly elevated than ever. In the USA, it seems like we are living in divisive times about political issues and the pandemic. PEACE and HOPE are what we need worldwide.

As I write this, I am wrapping up a year where my 46-year-old husband had a sudden life-threatening medical crisis (not pandemic related) and almost died more than once. We have walked through the valley of his illness for over eight months, and I have had to learn to manage the ongoing anxious thoughts surrounding this crisis. My four children have been worried about their dad and could not regularly visit the hospital due to restrictions. One of my daughters and I have taken over trying to run his business and other work; I, sometimes from a dark hospital room. In my immediate circle of friends and family, we have lost 19 loved ones in less than four months. My sister was diagnosed with cancer. We are facing another surgery for my husband before the end of the year. Frankly, this has been one of the worst years of my life.

There have been numerous instances this past year when anxiety threatened to overwhelm me. But God. He's been right there with me in the middle of it all. This devotion is my endeavor to share what I have learned in these hard times about seeking peace. When we go through trials and testings, we hope something good comes from what we endured.

Note that I am a flawed human, and I am not claiming triumph all of the time. This devotion and accompanying Scripture Cards were born directly out of my own need. One morning while life's storms were raging, I found myself clinging to a list of scriptures and prayers. As I meditated on the scriptures, I thought that I needed to capture the verses onto cards and a ring to carry with me during the day and put by my bed to help me at night. My very next thought was, "I think a LOT of people would love to have scriptures they could use to help with their anxiety." I asked the talented Kelly Bangs, a graphic designer that has created some other beautiful faith-based tools, to collaborate on this project and she gladly agreed to do it. This is a devotion that seeks to remind me of what I can do as much as it is to inform you of practical steps that can help you find peace. My trials are not over, and yours probably are not either.

The answer to finding Peace, Hope and Joy is always Jesus, but it seems a lot of devotions and sermons give us vague instructions to “give it to God”. I have often wondered, “What does that actually mean?” Due to the past year’s events, I have gained the insight that it means we deliberately and earnestly seek Him and His will, and by doing so we will find Him right there. Fortunately for us, seeking Him is not difficult: we open His word and meet Him in prayer.

The study comes with a sheet for each Unit containing six corresponding Scripture Cards, for a total of 36 Scripture Cards. They are paired with the Unit for easy reference. We also encourage you to print and cut out each sheet of Scripture Cards on cardstock paper.

I hope you will be blessed by this study and that it will be used to change your life in some way. I will be praying for our global community and specifically over this devotion, that it will be well-received and impact each person with whom it comes into contact!

UNIT ONE ACTIVITY

Ideas on how to use the Scripture Cards:

1. A Scripture Card page with six scriptures is included with each Unit of the devotion. Mark, highlight, or paper-clip the pages of Scripture Cards for easy reference.
2. Print and cut out the Scripture Cards on card stock paper to put in your wallet, pocket, desk, on your computer and/or by your bed. Consider laminating them.
3. Take a picture of the Scripture Cards for easy reference on your phone.
4. Hole punch the cut-up Scripture Cards and put on a ring.
5. Acquire a coil-bound index card book from an office supply store and tape each Scripture Card onto the index cards to make a flip book.
6. The devotion and Scripture Cards are also designed to fit in a Traveler’s Notebook.

Note: On the original colorful version of this devotion, which is available on IllustratedFaith.com, the Scripture Card pages are in the back of the file.

UNIT ONE VERSES

Peace
over
AXEY

Peace I leave with you;
my peace I give to you.
Let not your hearts be
troubled, neither let
them be afraid.

John 14:27

Peace
over
AXEY

Finally, brothers and sisters,
whatever is true, whatever is noble,
whatever is right, whatever is pure,
whatever is lovely, whatever is
admirable—if anything is excellent
or praiseworthy— think about such things.

Philippians 4:8

Peace
over
AXEY

Come to me, all you who are weary and
burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my
yoke upon you and learn from me, for
I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will
find rest for your souls. For my yoke
is easy and my burden is light.

Matthew 11:28-30

Peace
over
AXEY

You will keep in perfect
peace those whose minds
are steadfast, because
they trust in you.

Isaiah 26:3a

Peace
over
AXEY

For the word of God is living and
powerful, and sharper than any
two-edged sword, piercing even to the
division of soul and spirit, and of joints
and marrow, and is a discerner of the
thoughts and intents of the heart.

Hebrews 4:12

Peace
over
AXEY

Be still and know that I am God.

Psalms 46:10

UNIT TWO

UNIT TWO

Take Captive Every Thought

Anxious thoughts are funny. Have you ever noticed when they pop up that sometimes we let them take off like a runaway freight train? What starts as one simple thought can end up barreling down the tracks into full-blown anxiety. In my family, we call this “catastrophizing.” Trading these types of thoughts for the hope and joy that God intended for us is no way to live.

I had an interesting conversation with my doctor a few years ago. He explained that when we start having anxious thoughts, our body releases chemicals. It does not matter if we are in the middle of a real crisis, thinking about the past, or just imagining a possible future. Our brain does not know the difference, so it begins sending signals to help us cope. Here is where it really gets interesting: once those chemicals start to flow, we cannot think as clearly. Did you know this? The very chemicals released to help us cope with stressful situations also make it more difficult for us to “talk ourselves out of” our anxiety! *The longer you let yourself dwell on your anxious thoughts and feelings, the less control you will have over them.*

2 Corinthians 10:5(b) gives us a strategy to deal with runaway thoughts by stating “Take captive every thought and make it obedient to Christ.” While we cannot control many of the circumstances in

which we find ourselves, we can control our response to them. We can choose to work on managing the thoughts we have.

The One who created us knows the response that happens in our bodies, so perhaps that is one of the reasons 2 Corinthians advises us to take our thoughts captive. How can we do that? This past year as soon as I recognized I was worrying or having a fearful thought, I acknowledged it and immediately grabbed my list of Bible verses and started reciting, reading, or praying them – some from memory. I have literally retrained my brain because, even now, if I start reciting Isaiah 41:10 to myself, it triggers peace and calm within me. “Fear not, for I am with you [*I feel the knot in my stomach disappearing. I do not have to fear. The mighty God is with me!*]. Do not be dismayed, for I am your God. [*OK, God, thanks for the reminder.*] I will strengthen you and help you; [*GOD is going to help me!*] I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.” [*I will be held up by the strongest hand there is.*] Isn’t that comforting?

When my husband’s health crisis hit, I knew I needed to find someone outside my personal circle to help me process everything that was happening. As I met with a Christian counselor, we discussed how I could manage the real crisis happening in my life. We talked about my inability to sleep well, primarily due to my brain being in overdrive and overthinking every part of

UNIT TWO VERSES

Peace
over
AXEY

Take captive every thought to
make it obedient to Christ.

2 Corinthians 10:5b

Peace
over
AXEY

Fear not, for I am with you; do
not be dismayed, for I am your God.
I will strengthen you and help you;
I will uphold you with
my righteous right hand.

Isaiah 41:10

Peace
over
AXEY

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.

Joshua 1:9

Peace
over
AXEY

And the peace of God, which passes all
understanding, will guard your hearts
and minds in Christ Jesus.

Philippians 4:7

Peace
over
AXEY

When anxiety was great within me,
your consolation brought me joy.

Psalms 94:19

Peace
over
AXEY

For in the day of trouble He will
keep me safe in His dwelling;
He will hide me in the shelter
of His sacred tent and set me high
upon a Rock!

Psalms 27:5

UNIT THREE

UNIT THREE

All Anxiety Is Not Equal

One thing that I have identified this year is that there are different types of anxious thoughts. All anxiety is not equal! These thoughts can be categorized primarily as relating to the PAST, PRESENT, FUTURE, and PROCRASTINATION. To manage our thoughts, we must begin by analyzing the root. Today's unit will focus on anxiety over the past and present.

Anxious thoughts from the PAST creep in when we agonize over the details of something that has already happened and that we cannot change. It could be something we said or wished we had, a situation we wished had ended differently, hurt we have experienced, pain we have caused, grief, or anything that has led to regrets. The reel plays in our minds repeatedly, creating stress, misery, despair, and defeat.

Friend, I believe we should be introspective, seeking to learn from our mistakes and gaining closure if we can. We should forgive someone who has hurt or offended us, even if it does not make sense for them to be in our lives any longer. We should seek forgiveness from God and the people affected by our past actions. If resolution can be had over the past, seek it, and then learn to move on. Dwelling in those places is a recipe for ongoing angst over a past we cannot change.

When you catch yourself replaying the past, it is imperative to stop that train of thought quickly. Find the techniques that work best for you, such as meditating on verses, praying, journaling, or listening to worship music, and use them to divert your thoughts from a past you cannot change to a more productive present. Don't let the past hold you hostage. Living in the past is robbing your present and your future of joy and new opportunities.

Anxious thoughts over the PRESENT happen when we are in the middle of an actual situation, trial, or crisis. When my husband became suddenly and critically ill, it was a real calamity that was happening. Sights and sounds assaulted my senses, indicating that something terrible was happening in the ER and the ICU. The monitor beeped loudly, warning of trauma, as the staff raced around to care for my husband who was in terrible pain and distress. Anxiety is a natural response to a real-life threat, and my body was flooded with it. But we can still use the techniques in this devotion to try to manage these types of thoughts too. During that time of crisis, I felt the most at peace when I was praying and when others were praying for us, as so many were. It is essential to live in community, but extraordinary miracles happened, such as healing, when we allowed others

to pray over us in our time of need. There were many times that day and this year when I knew the peace I felt could only be attributed to God.

If you do not know what to pray because of your state of mind, claim Romans 8:26 "In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans." I have a journaling page from earlier this year with the words "Dear God, HELP" and then a bunch of scribbles on it. At the time I was not sure how or what to pray because I was overwhelmed. But I knew that He knew. We can ask for this intercession on our behalf when the stress of our present circumstances has us feeling paralyzed.

UNIT THREE ACTIVITY

In the space below, identify specifically the types of anxious thoughts you have about the past or the present. Add these items now to the "Take Captive Every Thought" box from Unit Two if they are not already there. What technique, verses, prayers, or songs will you choose for each?

Past: _____

Present: _____

UNIT THREE VERSES

Peace
over
AXEY

I can do all this through Him who gives me strength.

Philippians 4:13

Peace
over
AXEY

In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans. And He who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for God's people in accordance with the will of God.

Romans 8:26-27

Peace
over
AXEY

It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness.

Lamentations 3:22-23

Peace
over
AXEY

The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit.

Psalms 34:18

Peace
over
AXEY

Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to Him, and He will make your paths straight.

Proverbs 3:5-6

Peace
over
AXEY

Cast all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you.

1 Peter 5:7

UNIT FOUR

UNIT FOUR

Don't Worry About Tomorrow

The morning of the day my husband became critically ill, we innocently watched a sermon about Matthew 6. Our Pastor specifically reminded us "do not worry about tomorrow because today has enough trouble of its own", and the remedy to worry being "seek first God and His will." Later that day as we suddenly headed to the hospital and then to the ICU, Matthew 6:25-34 became the life raft I clung to in one of the worst storms of my life that surged for months. I shared in Unit Three about my anxious thoughts in that present situation. Now imagine how our thoughts can morph into worrying about the future. In this Unit we are going to examine anxious thoughts about the future and procrastination.

Anxious thoughts about the FUTURE seem to be what plagues many of us. Those thoughts are usually about what we fear and not about a reality we can control. Worrying about the future is the real joy-stealer because it is often not rooted in truth. The day my husband became ill, I was in the middle of the chaos and working to cope with my present thoughts about his real-life condition. Forty-two sleepless hours later, after being forced to leave the hospital due to regulations, I finally went home. In the quiet of my bedroom, I allowed the fear of the future to control my thoughts and run to worst-case scenarios. What if he dies in the middle of the night? How would I live without him? My kids would be devastated, how would I be able to help them navigate life without their dad? Where would I hold his funeral? Would I sell his

company or try to run it myself? How could I even do that as I grieve? How long would the money last to support the family? Should I move back to my home state, where the rest of my family lives?

In full disclosure, I gave those thoughts free rein to barrel down the track of endless possibilities. Although I had absolutely no control over what was going to happen next with my husband, I lost sleep and peace worrying about it. My anxiety level shot through the roof, my heart was racing, and tears were rolling down my face instead of getting the sleep my body desperately needed. *However, in the end, none of that ended up happening. Not one single thing I worried about came to fruition.* (I realize not everyone gets that outcome, and I am grateful I did.) MANY times the anxieties about the future never happen, and MOST of the time, it is over things we cannot control. Worrying about the future becomes a colossal waste of energy! We allow fear to creep in like a thief and rob us of peace and joy, while we settle into a front row seat and do nothing to stop it. In retrospect, I wish I had recited the Isaiah 41:10 verse, read Psalm 121, or other verses that night. Instead, I let the thoughts of fear and dread over a possible future that never came into existence annihilate my peace and desperately needed sleep.

Time for a little tough love now for us all. I have many friends with anxiety, and the root of a good majority of it is worrying about everything. The Bible tells us in Philippians 4:6-7 "Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, make your requests known to

God.” The most commanded phrase in the Bible is to FEAR NOT. So every time we go ahead and indulge that anxiety over the future, we are not following what God has to tell us. That makes me squirm a bit, how about you? Of course, we have concerns! But what we do with those and how we treat those thoughts is the key. As my husband moved from the ER to the ICU, I began to realize that I needed to heed the words of my Pastor from that crucial sermon on Matthew 6. I needed to focus on the current day and sometimes even just the next few hours. Thinking about every possibility that yawned ahead in the coming days, weeks, and months completely overwhelmed me. When I just focused on that day, I could keep my fear and worry under control. Over the months of his continued illness, I endeavored to focus on each day, and I am still doing that. While it is true sometimes we cannot escape bad things happening in the future, worrying is unlikely to help. We will deal with it if it comes.

Another type of anxious thoughts is those due to our PROCRASTINATION. These are the thoughts that plague us when we did not pay a bill, forgot to mail the birthday present, have a deadline looming, or owe someone a phone call and keep putting it off. The more we procrastinate, the worse the anxiety gets, and the more damage is done by our inaction (late fees, upset grandparents, an unhappy boss, a poor grade, etc.). The good news is that these are real things we can deal with today. If you have a knot in your stomach about something you should have done or need to do soon, the answer is simple: stop procrastinating and get it done! This is

a rare life circumstance where you have control! Some people, by procrastinating with inaction, are actually choosing that big knot in their stomach. They choose lost sleep over something they know needs done, and they just go right on living that way instead of taking care of it. Make a list, check it off, and get some peace.

UNIT FOUR ACTIVITY

In the space below, identify specifically the types of anxious thoughts you have about the future and add them now into the box from Unit Two “Take Captive Every Thought”. Make a list of the top three things that are causing anxiety due to procrastination and write next to it when you plan to do it.

Future: _____

Procrastination: _____

UNIT FOUR VERSES

Peace
over
AXEY

Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to your life? Since you cannot do this very little thing, why do you worry about the rest?

Luke 12:25-26

Peace
over
AXEY

Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

Matthew 6:34

Peace
over
AXEY

God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control.

2 Timothy 1:7

Peace
over
AXEY

Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.

Philippians 4:6

Peace
over
AXEY

Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—His good, pleasing and perfect will.

Romans 12:2

Peace
over
AXEY

Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes?

Matthew 6:25

UNIT FIVE

UNITS THREE & FOUR *Wrap Up*

Vow now to identify and deal with the root of your anxious thoughts:

Past – resolve, learn, and move on

Present – manage with verses, prayer, journaling, worship music

Future – take captive every thought and stop worrying about things you cannot control that might not happen

Procrastination – make a list and get it done

UNIT FIVE *Practice Gratitude*

“Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances.” 1 Thessalonians 5:16. Have you ever noticed that the verse says give thanks “in” all circumstances? Not “for” all circumstances? While we may not feel thankful for the trials and testings we endure, we are still called to rejoice, give thanks, and be grateful in the midst of them.

A few years ago, I was at a women’s retreat and one of the speakers at the event was a woman named Larissa Traquair. Larissa has built a broadcast around her ministry as the Gr8tful Chick. Every single day she writes at least three things for which she is grateful. She shared with us her perspective on gratitude, which she had been practicing daily since 2013. The two of us had an immediate deep connection and became fast friends. When I met her, she was coping with a terminal cancer diagnosis for her husband. Yet in the middle of that hardship, Larissa was encouraging us to practice gratitude.

On the day her husband died nearly a year after we met, I went to the Gr8tful Chick social media pages. I already knew what I would find. Sure enough, her gratitude post was there. My friend’s

husband of 27 years died that day, yet that evening she still proclaimed her gratitude for the world to see. Every day since then, Larissa has been faithful to post her three+ things. While she is still deeply grieving the loss of her husband and is not thankful that he is no longer with her here, she is thankful for the time they had together and the promise of seeing him in heaven. Larissa is living proof that practicing daily gratitude and giving thanks in all circumstances can change the course of your thoughts and life. What an inspiration!

Practicing gratitude changes our mindset no matter what our situation is. Being grateful and meditating on the good things for which we are thankful is one strategy that can work well to stop our thoughts from consuming us. Larissa inspired me at the workshop to begin practicing daily gratitude. But even still, there were times this last year where I felt despair. In those moments, I pulled out a notebook and just started listing everything for which I was grateful. I listed the obvious things like home and family, but also obscure things like running water, cupcakes, and an unexpected tax refund. Sometimes I could fill 3-4 pages. As I engaged my brain, choosing to focus on gratitude, rejoicing in my blessings, and praying for peace, it disengaged my brain from stressing over my current circumstances.

There is science behind the practice of gratitude. There are numerous studies that show people who practice gratitude regularly are more happy and less depressed. It shifts attention away from toxic and anxious thoughts and helps the brain process information in a different way. Many mental health professionals recommend this practice. However, one could derive from the confirmation by science that our creator knew when He made us that it would be important to tell us to rejoice, to pray, and to give thanks IN all circumstances.

UNIT FIVE ACTIVITY

Begin practicing gratitude daily. You can acquire a simple notebook, a date planner with room to write, or you can go to IllustratedFaith.com and purchase the Project Gr8tful kit on which my friends Larissa Traquair and Kelly Bangs collaborated.

My personal technique is to put post-it notes in my daily planner and write down things that happen during the day I want to remember. Later, I write it in my decorated gratitude journal. It is so rewarding and helpful to go back and look at past entries, remembering moments of God's goodness to me that I otherwise might have forgotten.

UNIT FIVE VERSES

Peace
over
AXEY

Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

Peace
over
AXEY

The Lord is my strength and my shield;
in Him my heart trusts, and I am helped;
my heart exults, and with my song I give thanks to Him.

Psalms 28:7

Peace
over
AXEY

This is the day that the Lord has made;
let us rejoice and be glad in it.

Psalms 118:24

Peace
over
AXEY

Be joyful in hope,
patient in affliction,
faithful in prayer.

Romans 12:12

Peace
over
AXEY

Taste and see that the Lord is good;
blessed is the one who takes refuge in Him.

Psalms 34:8

Peace
over
AXEY

Rejoice in the Lord always.
I will say it again: Rejoice!

Philippians 4:4

UNIT SIX

UNIT SIX

The Eternal Perspective

As we wrap up this study, we need to acknowledge that sometimes we do not have the “happy ending” here on Earth for which we had hoped. Even when we do not understand God’s plan, we can trust Him and His will and still choose peace. It is important for us to keep the eternal perspective in mind: our hope is in Christ! For those of us who have accepted Christ as our Savior, the trials, traumas, hurts, stress, and grief we all have in life will one day be a thing of the past. But we have a decision to make on Earth now. Are we going to seek and find Christ in the middle of our trials? Are we going to live a life serving Him?

Jesus Christ, the son of God, came to Earth and lived a sinless life. He went to the cross, died for our sins, and rose to live again to repair our broken relationship with God and to assure our eternal life in heaven when we accept Him as Savior. (1 Corinthians 15:1-4 and Romans 10:9-10). I hope that you have taken that step to acknowledge this and are walking in a personal relationship with Jesus.

Jesus said in John 16:33 “I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have troubles. But take heart! I have overcome the world.” It is not IF we are going to have

troubles, but WHEN. Because of our eternal perspective as Christians, we know that we have access to pray to God Himself about what we are enduring and to ask others to pray for us. We have tools available to us in the Bible that can help us through our trials. We can actively practice gratitude every day. We have an opportunity to take those trials and discover how God is going to use them to make good. Romans 8:28 promises us that “...we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.” If you receive hope or inspiration from this devotion, know that this study is living proof of Romans 8:28 in my life and yours.

If you are steeped in anxiety, it is time to claim the promises of Peace, Hope, and Joy we can access despite our circumstances. And believers in Christ know that, ultimately, we will be healed and whole in every way. We can focus our thoughts on the eternal perspective.

This life on Earth is finite. There is comfort knowing that there will be an end to our earthly suffering after our work on Earth is done, and that a beautiful eternity of wonderful is waiting for all who have accepted Christ as their Savior. However, we should not be racing towards heaven outside of God’s

UNIT SIX VERSES

Peace
over
AXEY

Blessed is the one who trusts in the Lord, whose confidence is in Him.

Jeremiah 17:7

Peace
over
AXEY

"I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart! I have overcome the world."

John 16:33

Peace
over
AXEY

But those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.

Isaiah 40:31

Peace
over
AXEY

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope.

Romans 15:13

Peace
over
AXEY

Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us.

Romans 5:3-5

Peace
over
AXEY

Consider it all joy, my brothers and sisters, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance.

James 1:2-3

Peace
over
ANXIETY