

# Bloom

## Hope...for the uprooted woman

### Where Do You Turn When You're Afraid? By Ann Kelley

Doug and I couldn't believe what we were hearing. Our 25-year-old son, Jonathan, had just called from Thailand with a borrowed cell phone to let us know that he was at the hospital and that he was doing better; he'd "stopped passing out." He asked us for the phone number of his fiancé. He'd do his best to remember the number because he couldn't write with his injured hand. (Gasp!) In the span of that one-minute call, he managed to give us sketchy details of being mugged and knocked unconscious, regaining consciousness, and flagging down a passing truck driver who drove him to the hospital. The phone he was using was about to die and he needed to call his fiancé. Click.

Doug and I were left to process this horrific news while having no idea where he was in Thailand and no way to find him. Our imaginations ran wild. Would he get adequate medical help? Was he going to be OK? Would the local police get involved and would our son be implicated in some way?

**We would hear nothing more from him for more than three days.**

Fast forward 24 hours. Exhausted after a long day and busy evening, Doug and I were finally crawling into bed at midnight. Doug's phone rang. It was our *other* son's friend letting us know that our son, Dan (age 20), had just been in a very bad accident. Dan's friend had been following in his own car and had come upon the accident just after it happened. Dan had been thrown from the car and the ambulance was there to take him to a trauma center at the local hospital. "It doesn't look good," he said before hanging up.

The first hours at the hospital were spent waiting—waiting for someone to tell us if Dan was alive (he was), then waiting to learn the extent of his injuries. At last we were allowed to see him and were told that, miraculously, he had many broken bones and a concussion, but it didn't appear that he would need surgery. The next two days in ICU would be needed to determine if there was any spinal injury.

Needless to say, we felt great relief to be getting encouraging news about Dan's prognosis. We spent hours at the hospital and felt the prayers and support of family and friends.

But where was Jonathan? What was he going through? Why hadn't we heard from him? Simultaneous traumatic events involving both of my children was almost too much to bear.

I was completely helpless in the hours during which I did not know if one or both of my kids would survive. Doug and I prayed in desperation, knowing that our boys were in God's hands. There was nothing we could do. Fear was palatable, but a deep trust in a loving God assured us that we would not walk any sorrowful path alone. We had no answers and could only fall into the arms of God.

Eight years have passed and, thankfully, both boys recovered from their injuries. When I think back on that time, I thank God for getting us through it—and bringing good out of it. When Dan first got his driver's license at 16, I would pray for his safety each time he drove away from our house. The Late Night Call about an accident was what I feared the most. Well, I got The Call, but the thing I feared the most turned into the very thing that would start him on a new trajectory back to God.

I'm deeply grateful that this traumatic event ended well, but circumstances don't always turn out how we want. Then again, the things we fear don't always happen. We don't have to be facing down danger to be gripped by fear. Fear is a natural response any time we're plunged into uncertainty. How can we respond to fear and anxiety and even learn from these emotions? Read on.

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Go deeper using a sample from the **NEW** *After the Boxes Are Unpacked Companion Journal*





## 6. Disguises of Fear by Carol Kent

When we respond destructively to fear, we may try to disguise it in one (or more) of the following ways.

1. **A perfectionist lifestyle.** “If I can please all of the people in my life with flawless behavior and control everything and everyone around me, I won’t have to admit my deep insecurities and fears.”
2. **A possessive nature.** “If I can protect the people I love the most by establishing the borders of their activities and guarding the dimensions of their interactions with other people, I will safeguard them from fearful experiences.”
3. **A picky attitude.** “If I can criticize someone else, I will look better. Though I won’t admit it, I feel like a bigger and less fearful person when I put somebody else’s personality or methods down in order to secure my own position.”
4. **A pretentious faith.** “If I make a list of what real Christians do and don’t do and show people my saintliness in action, perhaps I can cover up my fears, which are usually expressed through pride, inflexibility, legalism, and condemnation of ‘less godly’ people.”
5. **A passionate workaholic.** “If I invest my total energy in worthy causes and/or work hard enough to earn the approval of my superiors, I’ll be too tired to worry about my fears. If I just keep busy enough with my family responsibilities and personal activities, I won’t have to acknowledge the ache inside of me and admit that I don’t know how to give or receive love.”
6. **A plastic smile.** “If I look like a trusting person, soon I’ll feel like a trusting person. When I’m confused and afraid, I just keep smiling—especially at church. Most of those people expect me to be spiritually mature—and they are the last people I would admit my fears to!”

Take a minute to identify any of the disguises above that you identify with. After you’ve given them some thought, ask yourself the following questions.

- Are my disguises so much a part of who I am that I have never admitted (even to myself) the fears they cover up?
- What (or who) triggers a fearful response in me?
- Do I struggle with guilt over my fears?
- Am I afraid to give and receive love?
- Am I experiencing a sense of hopelessness?
- Do I want to change, or am I afraid to leave the comfort zone of my fearful disguises?

From *Discipleship Journal*, #130, 2002

## Our God Has Broad Shoulders by Richard Foster

In the most natural and simple way possible we learn to pray our experiences by taking up the ordinary events of everyday life and giving them to God. Perhaps we have a crushing failure that gives us more than one sleepless night. Well, we pace the floor *with* God, telling him of our hurt and our pain and our disappointment. “Why me?” We cry out, “Why me?” for frustration and tears and anger are also the language of Simple Prayer. We invite God to walk with us as we grieve the loss of our dream. Maybe an offhand remark by a neighbor triggers a whole explosion of emotions within us: anger, jealousy, fear. Very well, we speak frankly and honestly with God about what is happening and ask him to help us see the hurt behind the emotion.

We should feel perfectly free to complain to God, or argue with God, or yell at God. One time the prophet Jeremiah shouted out, “You have seduced me, Yahweh, and I have let myself be seduced; you have overpowered me: you were the stronger. I am a daily laughing-stock, everybody’s butt” (Jer. 20:7, JB). And I can well imagine that Jeremiah shook his fist toward heaven as he spoke!

God is perfectly capable of handling our anger and frustration and disappointment. C. S. Lewis counsels us to “lay before Him what is in us, not what ought to be in us.”



From *Prayer: Finding the Heart's True Home* by Richard Foster

## Help For the Anxious Child

You don't have to be a child to benefit from these insights

News reports warn of a rise in anxiety among our children and teens. Factors contributing to this rise may include pressure to succeed academically, pressure to fit in with their peers and maintain an online identity through social media, brain overstimulation from too much screen time, and a lack of physical activity and "down time." Moving to a new community and attending a new school adds even more stress. It can be easy for parents to fear for the well-being of their kids.

According to licensed marriage and family therapist, Megan Croft, in an interview with *Christianity Today*, a key in helping kids and adolescents is to help them externalize the feelings causing them so much fear. "When kids learn to name and recognize their worries, then those feelings can become a target they can attack."

Giving them an "emotional vocabulary" helps kids put words to worries. This can lead to a recognition that "sadness or fear are feelings all people experience." Also important is the message that it's ok to "be in that place of sadness or worry. It wasn't about trying to ignore or fix the feeling but allowing those emotions to be the child's teacher."

“This step is crucial, Croft says. “So often people will say things such as, ‘Don’t worry’ or ‘God has a plan.’ While these things are inherently true, saying them can feel diminishing to someone struggling with anxiety. The last thing we want to do is minimize a child’s feelings or make her feel like we’re trying to hastily fix her.”

Instead, empathetic parents or a counselor can enter a child’s pain through extending compassion, strength, comfort, and power. “You can say, ‘I care so much that you’re struggling,’” Croft suggests. “And ‘I can’t promise you scary stuff won’t happen, but I can promise that you are strong enough to handle it, and I will walk with you through it.’”

This approach reflects the truth that Christ did not come to prevent people from ever experiencing suffering but to be a constant presence *through* pain and worry, Croft says. “In Romans 5, Paul begins with telling us that making sense of our pain produces endurance and hope. And as we do so, we carry the promise that God will be with us. This is the very essence of the meaning of the word *Emmanuel*.”

Croft believes God created humanity in such a fashion that anxiety builds with isolation but dissipates with authentic community. The more parents can form deep connections with their child, the more they can discover what triggers their child’s anxiety. Parents can then help remove unnecessary stressors while also cultivating courage by helping their child learn to work through their fears. “The goal isn’t to try to fix your child, but to help them navigate something that is a part of who they are.”

The reality that Scripture repeatedly tells us to not be afraid or anxious shouldn’t feel like a harsh commandment to the anxious person as much as it should feel like words of deep comfort, Croft says. “If anything, it should help us realize that God knew we’d face fear and anxiety, and he wants to surround and love us in those worries. He promises to never leave us alone in our anxiety, and that is really good news.”

This is great advice for parents, grandparents, and other caregivers, but read back through it with yourself in mind. Will you apply these insights to your own fears?

From "Why Are Our Children So Anxious? Unpacking the reasons behind childhood and adolescent anxiety—and the hope we find in the gospel." by Corrie Cutrer. Read the entire article at [WWW.CHRISTIANITYTODAY.COM/WOMEN/2017/JANUARY/PARENTING-IN-AGE-OF-ANXIETY-CHILDREN-TEENS.HTML](http://WWW.CHRISTIANITYTODAY.COM/WOMEN/2017/JANUARY/PARENTING-IN-AGE-OF-ANXIETY-CHILDREN-TEENS.HTML)



The last thing we want to do is minimize a child's feelings or make her feel like we're trying to hastily fix her.





## Gripped by Fear By Susan Miller

Many times in the middle of the night or when I wake up in the morning I can be gripped with fear over some real or imagined hurdle that feels overwhelming. Can you relate?

Fear might clutch your heart and flood your mind and emotions as you face the possibility of losing your home, losing a job, moving, or becoming seriously ill. You may fear the threat of addiction, a severed marriage, or a broken relationship.

You and I can *control our fears* or let our *fears control us*. It's as simple as that, but it's not always easy. Many a day I have to release my fear and give it over to God through prayer, perseverance, and sheer determination to not let it consume me. I have to lay fear down at His feet, then stand up and move forward by His power and strength.

There are five reasons in Isaiah 41:10 that remind us why we should not give in to fear and discouragement. "*Do not fear, for I am with you; do not anxiously look about you, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, surely I will help you. Surely I will uphold you.*"

1. **I am with you**, comforts us with the assurance that we are not alone. God's presence is with us.
2. **I am your God**, reminds us that He is our personal God. He cares about every detail of our lives.
3. **I will strengthen you**, assures us that when we feel overcome with fear, God is our strength to overcome.
4. **I will help you**, reminds us that God will not fail us or abandon us. He will walk with us through our fear.
5. **I will uphold you**, assures us that God will lift us out of the pit of fear. He will support us and keep us from sinking into despair.

## GO DEEPER

With the NEW  
After the Boxes Are Unpacked  
Companion Journal

face your circumstances and keep on going. You can take that to the bank and cash it, friends. The things I learned going through the valleys in life, taught me more about God and His faithfulness than I could have ever learned on the mountain tops.

Maybe you didn't want to move and leave your family and friends. Maybe you're terribly lonely. Maybe your marriage is suffering from the transition. Maybe your children are rebelling over having to move. Maybe you're financially strapped with two house payments. Maybe life just stinks right now with all the losses you've experienced. Regardless of your circumstances, cling to God's faithfulness.

Trust Him for what you don't know, don't understand, or can't see. Difficult or devastating circumstances can hit you hard, knock you off your feet, and leave you breathless. (p.174,175 in *After the Boxes Are Unpacked* by Susan Miller)

## The Big Picture

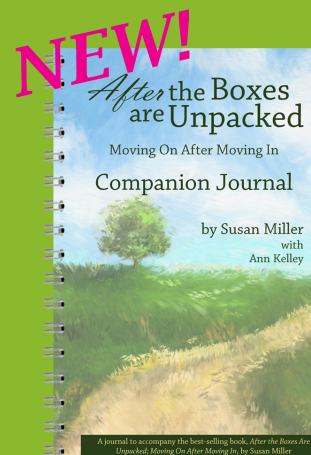
From the NEW Companion Journal

God doesn't always change your situation, but He will give you strength, hope, and encouragement so you can

## JOURNAL YOUR THOUGHTS AND PRAYERS

- Write to God about anything that's troubling you. Be honest and vulnerable. Hold nothing back. Make no effort to be "on your best behavior" or to place "shoulds" on yourself (I *shouldn't* feel this way. I *should* be doing better.)
- Do you walk by faith or by sight? Walking by faith isn't something you can muster up in yourself by trying harder. Fall into God's arms and ask *Him* to help you walk by faith. What will you do to remind yourself to pray each time you are tempted to worry or fear? "*I believe. Help me with my doubts*" (Mark 9:24)! Invite God into your doubts.
- "*We can be sure that every detail in our lives of love for God is worked into something good*" (Romans 8:28). Write down any good that you can see coming out of your circumstances. Not coming up with anything? Ask God to help you see.

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