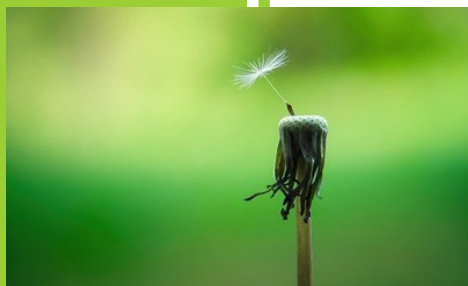


Hope for the uprooted woman

Is your glass half-full or half-empty? by Ann Kelley



I've been asking myself lately how I would characterize my mindset. Is it one of **abundance** (glass half-full): able to celebrate the success of others and a sense of gratitude regarding my own situation? Or is it one of **scarcity** (glass half-empty): others have what I long for, but I seem to lack?

Well . . . it depends on the day.

Some days, gratitude comes easily. I recognize the good things in my life: health, a secure job, friends, family, a home to live in. Other days, I'm anxious about my circumstances or jealous of what others possess. Some days I'm drinking in the beauty and blessings in my life, while other days I can only seem to focus on my long list of unsatisfied longings.

How can I stop being a slave to my circumstances? Turning to Scripture and searching for the encouragement of respected thinkers and writers, in this issue of *Bloom* I share some of what I found. Don't rush through this issue. Each article contains an opportunity to pause, prayerfully consider, and invite God into your experience. **Watch for the green boxes as your cue to pause and consider.**

Psalm 23: Live Like You Believe It

Psalm 23 may be one of the most well-known and most memorized Psalms in all of Scripture. Because it's so familiar it's easy to recite it without truly believing it and **living as if it were true**. In *Life Without Lack: Living in the Fullness of Psalm 23*, Dallas Willard states,

"Many can recite the Twenty-Third Psalm from memory, including people who don't believe much of anything about God. But far too few have experienced in their own lives the vivid reality described by the psalmist."

"The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want." It describes the life we all desire—a life in which we want for nothing, or better yet, lack nothing. The psalmist is portraying a life we were meant to enjoy, one that is imminently available to us. But do you believe this verse is actually true? Few people act as if it were.

"Recite the Twenty-Third Psalm, out loud if possible, and take your time. Relax in this moment alone with God, say a verse or two, and then pause to allow God to fill your thoughts. If you do this prayerfully..., I am certain that you will move increasingly into the experience of a life without lack."

The LORD is my shepherd; I have all that I need. He lets me rest in green meadows; he leads me beside peaceful streams. He renews my strength. He guides me along right paths, bringing honor to his name.

Even when I walk through the darkest valley, I will not be afraid, for you are close beside me. Your rod and your staff protect and comfort me.

You prepare a feast for me in the presence of my enemies. You honor me by anointing my head with oil. My cup overflows with blessings.

Surely your goodness and unfailing love will pursue me all the days of my life, and I will live in the house of the LORD forever.

(New Living Translation)

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The essential resource for every woman who's been uprooted by a move.





How to Live With Open Hands excerpt from *The Ninefold Path of Jesus* by Mark Scandrette

At the beginning of his teaching on the hill, Jesus said, “Blessed are the poor in Spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” Luke’s account simply says, “Blessed are you who are poor.” What does it mean to be poor? Poverty is when a person doesn’t have enough or when they feel like they are not enough. Something is lacking materially or emotionally.

What’s your poverty? Where in your life do you feel like you don’t have enough or are not enough?

We each have places in our lives where something is lacking. Ultimately, none of us have enough. We each experience loss, loneliness, and disappointment. Eventually, we will all get sick or injured or grow old and die. While we each experience lack in our lives, those of us with control-oriented personalities feel particularly pained by our vulnerabilities. We act aggressively to ensure that we are never dependent, out of control, or lacking anything.

When we become aware of what we lack, our first instinct is to grab and grasp, holding on to whatever we believe will make us feel safe and secure. It’s an instinct of closed-handed anxiety. Not letting go.

What makes you feel anxious and closed handed? I feel anxious when I think about political and economic uncertainties in our world today. I often worry about getting all the things done on my to-do list. Sometimes I worry about my children. Will they thrive, find good partners, and live the values I’ve taught them? I worry about having enough money to pay for expenses when I’m too old to work. But more than anything else, I worry about whether I’m competent and successful.

When I mention my work insecurities, people are quick to assure me that I am competent—yet it’s still something I often feel anxious about. Our worries aren’t always rational but feel very real to us.

PRACTICE: *Confronting Worry*

If you were to make a list of the top five things you tend to worry about, what would they be?
Take a moment to make a mental list or write them down.

We don’t all have the same worries, but there are predictable patterns to the kinds of things we tend to worry about:

(1) money, job, and finances; (2) physical and mental health; (3) relationships and the well-being of those we love; (4) esteem, identity, and significance; and (5) anticipating future difficulties, pain, and uncertainty.

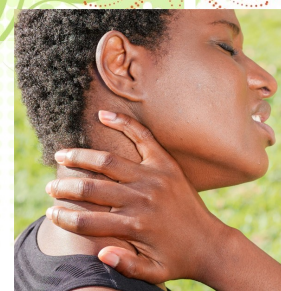
It is a sacred trust to hold each other’s worries. Sharing your worries with another person can help you feel more normal and less alone. They can help you see your situation from a larger perspective.

It can help to clarify that worry and concern are not the same. When I’m concerned about something, it motivates me to action. If I’m concerned about a loved one’s physical or mental health, I can provide support and assist them in exploring treatment options. In contrast, worry is a heightened state of alarm that changes nothing. The dreaded

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thought just loops on repeat. This is why Jesus said, “Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to your life?”

An anxious thought might wake you up at night, cause you to lose concentration, or distract you when you are spending time with someone. It zaps energy and paralyzes action. Worry even manifests in our bodies. Where do you hold it? In your stomach? Forehead? Chest? Neck and shoulders? Lower back?



Imagine being significantly free of worry and anxiety. What would that be like? Deep peace. Sound sleep. Full attention. Is that a quality of life you desire? Do you think it's possible?

In the teaching on the hill Jesus said, “Do not worry about your life.” The apostle Paul echoed this when he wrote, “Do not be anxious about anything.” When I hear the instruction “Do not worry,” I’m tempted to feel shame because I do worry. But I’m learning to receive these instructions from Jesus as a gentle invitation into a better way. What would I have to see and believe differently about the nature of reality that would allow me to be less anxious?

PRACTICE: *Gratitude*

Take a moment right now to open your hands to receive the good. What are you appreciating about this day and this moment? What can you see, hear, touch, taste, and smell right now that makes you feel alive and connected to what is good? When you look back over your life, where do you see evidence that you are cared for and loved?



Open your hands to share what you have. Anxiety breeds a sense of scarcity and greed. Gratitude fuels a sense of abundance, contentment, and generosity.

We are meant to be part of the flow of abundance: to open our hands to receive what we need and share what we have with others.

Open your hands to express your desires. I meet a lot of people who believe it's wrong to have desires. Or they hesitate to name their desires because they're afraid of being disappointed. One of the most compelling questions Jesus ever asked is, “What do you want me to do for you?” What if the Creator of the universe wants to have an interactive relationship with you in which you express your deepest longings? It's a step just to get in touch with your desires, pausing to ask, What do I want and why?

Open your hands to let go of expectations. What might your worries reveal about your attachments? We may tell ourselves, *I can only be truly happy if I find a life partner, get my dream house or a particular job.* It's dangerous to make your sense of well-being contingent on a particular outcome. Focus on deeper longings. What do you want that you can actually experience today?

Jesus invites us into radical trust: believing that nothing can separate us from what is most essential to our well-being. The divine presence is with us through whatever difficulties we face. It's an invitation to live with open hands, giving our sacred consent, and speaking a radical yes! to life, no matter what may come. It's an invitation to trust that the One who made us will bring us through.

Looking for Happiness at the Next Stop by Stephanie Pletka



It's tempting to think that making a change like a move across the country, ending a relationship, or getting a new job will clean the slate and rid you of the circumstances that hold you down. A new environment will save you, free you, relieve you from the pain, the grief, the suffering, the heartache you try to elude. Nope. The baggage comes with you. You're just giving those problems a new place to lay their weary head.

- I don't have what it takes to make it.
- If I can start a new job (move to a new state, find a new guy) I'll be happy.
- I'll enjoy life when we have more money.
- Others have it together more than I do.
- I'll wait until my circumstances are perfect.
- Others don't struggle in their marriage like I do.

Baggage shows up as lies we tell ourselves:

Somehow our contentment meter has gotten off-kilter. Until the lies we tell ourselves are resolved, we will remain off-kilter, no matter the new city, partner, or job.

It's time to let go of the labels and lies we tell ourselves. It's time to drop the baggage and walk a lighter path. It's time to live in the freedom God created for us. He's a God of redemption and grace.

"Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28).

As Susan Miller says: "You can't move forward if you're always looking back." You can't move forward if you're always carrying baggage not meant for you to bear. I love how God invests in our spirit. He cares about our emotional psyche. He created us to soar, to succeed. He didn't say to focus on whether your rear end is too big or your house is too dirty. Stop. He said to focus on anything praiseworthy (Philippians 4:8).

So how do we free ourselves of the lies? Reading God's Word is a good start. God is for you and not against you. His Word does not go out and come back empty (Isaiah 55:11). No ma'am. It goes out and does the work He has commanded it to do.

"Let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect" (Romans 12:2).

This is not about your own makeover project with a perfect 3-point plan. Release your grip and *let God* transform, revamp, reconstruct. This is about saying yes to God's transforming power in your mind and heart.

Stephanie Pletka is a speaker and the author of *Living Your Best Life*. Her passion is to empower women to let go of fear, self-doubt, and other's expectations to live the life you always dreamed. stephaniepletka.com

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