

The Wonderful Proverbs 18:21

Power of Your Spoken Words

Oh, those words that can cut right through! And then there are those that can soothe our pain.

What Happened

Last week, I stepped to the counter at my doctor's office. "Here is your referral for your blood work," the receptionist said. But her words, though simple and mundane, were delivered in a delightful, pleasant tone.

I smiled. "Thank you."

Then I leaned toward the desk and added, "And stay as sweet as you are."

Her reaction surprised me.

"What did you say?" she said, then paused. "That's the nicest thing anyone has said to me lately."

What? I gave a simple ordinary comment and it touched her. Can our words have that power?

I think they do. So, when hubby came home that night I gave him the usual hug and after a quick peck, I said, "Do you know how much I look forward to you coming home?"

He picked me up and twirled me around. "So sweet," he said.

Theory Proven

There you go, my theory proven. Words spoken are like a fishing line. Cast them out and you're sure to reel something in.

And that something depends on us. Caring words reel in

pleasant results. Conversely, raw words cut through the heart.

Listen to what L. Tomlin once said, "Man invented language to satisfy his deep need to complain."

But the contrary is also true: People have a deep need to be encouraged. They have a longing to feel valued, appreciated and accepted. Our words can speak to that need.

And the effort is easy. Positive and kind words are available at all times. And even better good news is that our words are the beginning of the love God commands we must extend to strangers.

The True Test

I decided to use this approach with telemarketers. Whenever they call, I search and choose words carefully.

I answer the phone. "Did you say your name was Mary?" I ask. "Well, Mary you sound like you're a nice person. So very sorry that I can't accept what you're offering. But what I'll do is pray for God to bring success in your life. Is that OK?"

There's usually silence. But one woman seemed touched because her voice choked as she said, "Thank you. I needed to hear that today."

We all have that power. Those sounds that come from our lips called *words* make a difference. They can change an attitude. Transform negativity. And ring a bit of joy into an otherwise gloomy life.

No wonder God said, "Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it will eat its fruit" (Prov. 18:21).

And as we speak life into others, the beauty is that what we say also comes back with positive, satisfying, and pleasant feelings that make our soul happy.

Delight in that feeling as you consider that:

- Words are free.
- They require little effort.
- They're always available.
- They can be chosen with love.
- They can turn a life around.
- They can calm anger down.

Speaking loving, sincere words is like tracing a colorful rainbow across the gray skies of someone's life.

Let's Pray

Father, thank you for the power of my words. May I use them to make a difference, to bring your light into the darkness of others, and may I be quick to praise and slow to tear down. In Jesus' name, amen.

What influence have your words had lately? {eoa}

Janet Perez Eckles is an international speaker and the author of four books. She has helped thousands conquer fear and bring back joy.

This article originally appeared at .

6 Keys for Restoring God's Peace to Your Hurting Heart

What do you do when impossible situations steal your peace? I have experienced enough of them to know.

New friends ask me, "Being blind, how do you put on your makeup?"

They also ask me, "How do you coordinate your clothes? I could never do it."

My answer is simple...

"Although I need no light or a mirror, I apply it in the dark. Feeling the eyelid to determine what colors to brush, I do it carefully."

It's a routine task for me. After living with complete blindness for 30 years, I've had lots of practice. So much so that I often forget my limitations. I guess that's good.

But what's not so good is that I also forget to give myself enough time to get ready when going out. I have to pry myself from endless tasks. At the last minute, I rush around like a crazy woman. I hop in the shower, slip on my robe and dash into my walk-in closet. Frantically, I slide hangers, looking for any outfit to wear.

How do I do this with no sight? I have an easy method.

When I purchase an item, I store in my memory its characteristics—the texture, the shape of the neckline, buttons or length of sleeve. One light touch tells me what the item is.

But when I'm in a hurry, trying to find the right outfit gets a bit tough. Not because I can't see, but because I just have too many clothes. Way more than any blind gal should be allowed to have. The bar holding all those hangers is probably sagging from the weight!

Pleasing Others

Oh, how my jammed closet resembles my life—full of tasks of all kinds and sizes. That's because we're crazy-busy women and have no choice. Because we have lots of people to please, don't we?

As a young girl, my mindset was that I tried to perform to win my parents' and teachers' approval. Later on, I wanted to please my husband, my kids, my employer and my friends. Phew! I thought that the only way to please myself was by pleasing them.

Have you been there?

The pleasing craze explodes during holiday season. We rush through life eager to make someone happy. And the level of stress and tension rises like the thermometer in Orlando's summer.

But now that the holidays are behind us, an invitation to begin a good new year is calling us. Whether you have snow or not, how about if we vow to cool off? God never meant us to live in the heat of tension. He gave one pretty refreshing directive: "Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the law? Jesus said to him, 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind'" (Matt. 22:36-37).

When life sags from the weight of countless tasks, obeying His greatest commandment is the key to peaceful success.

Really? So how do we do that?

Bringing Back His Peace

Early In the morning as we slide our feet into our slippers, this is what should play in our head: Loving God means receiving His peace. And when the world robs it, here are six secrets to bring back His peace:

1. Inviting Him into our day.
2. Drawing wisdom from His word to place the correct order to our priorities.
3. Presenting Him with our to-do list for His approval.
4. Giving thanks in advance for glitches we know He will

resolve.

5. Inviting into our day moments of silence in His presence to refuel our energy.
6. Inhaling the aroma of His reassurance for calmness.

Deviating from His ways equals burnout. But obeying His greatest commandment ushers in wisdom: To arrange priorities; to press forth when fatigued; to bring clarity when confused; to be calm when overwhelmed and to know the warmth of His love—the love that sparks a desire to please Him. To receive His rest. And to know His peace because “It’s useless to rise early and go to bed late, and work your worried fingers to the bone. Don’t you know He enjoys giving rest to those He loves?” (Ps. 127:2b, The Message).

Let’s pray.

Father when impossible situations bring on stress rather than peace, grant me wisdom to stop and to invite your peace back into my heart. And in that calmness, may You be the one who reigns and occupies the main place. In Jesus’ name, amen.

What has robbed your peace lately? {eoa}

Janet Perez Eckles is an international speaker and the author of four books. She has helped thousands conquer fear and bring back joy.

This article originally appeared at .

How This Blind Woman Learned

to Seek—And See!

Gotta love this friend. She made me laugh with her story.

While a favorite cake I made baked in the oven, I put my feet up and began reading a print catalog. I saw an item that interested me.

In order to see the photo a bit larger, I simply touched the picture. I expected it would load additional info with a larger picture.

Nothing happened. So, I touched it a few more times until I realized DUH! It's not going to load anything else. It can't load. It's not 's print!

I laughed, and you might have, too. But how often you and I have done the very same thing? We've tried and tried to enlarge God's love.

When the ugliness of life turns dark and tears soak our pillow, we want God to be large enough to ease our sorrow. We want to enlarge His power to quickly erase our heartache. And we definitely want to increase His understanding of the yuckiness of our situation.

An Unwelcome Visitor

Then we go to the next stage. Self-pity visits and settles besides us on the couch of life, and biting our lower lip because happiness left us, we so desperately wish His voice to be big enough to bring it back. Or at least loud enough to order our gloom to go away.

I know this firsthand because I've been there. At 31, while I was enjoying my role as a mom to my 3-, 5-, and 7-year-old sons, an intruder came and robbed my happiness. It was called Retinitis Pigmentosa. The dreaded hereditary disease

dropped a black curtain over my days, leaving me completely blind.

Desperation

And in that darkness, I furiously wanted to tap the surface of my faith and make God large, super large to look down upon me and say, "I'm big enough to grant relief to your pain. I will give your sight back."

But He didn't. And so, I went to bed with wrinkled tissue in hand, trying to suppress my cries, hoping my husband wouldn't hear his blind wife sob her night away.

Hubby didn't hear me, and apparently, God didn't either. He seemed small, distant and aloof to my heartache.

The Rest of the Story

So, what happened? Some of you have already read my books and know the rest of my story. But let me remind you that the light shone in my heart when I took a long sigh and got quiet, really quiet.

Since my eyes stopped working, my hearing became sharper. With earphones securely on, I listened to God's Word. It was His voice speaking to me. So clearly, he repeated the verse in the book of Matthew.

He said that I was more than a fool. I was first looking to see again. I was obsessed in being a "normal" person. I sought first to be a sighted mom and wife. But His Word was saying, "Stop that nonsense. Instead, seek Me first. And guess what? All the stuff you're looking for will be added to you." (This is not a quote from the Bible, but rather, my bold paraphrase and interpretation of Matthew 6:33.)

Taking Action

And so I did. I put on my eyeglasses of obedience and began my

search—of Him. In doing so, I stepped back and realize that my blindness was no match to the size of His provision. My darkness was insignificant compared to the brightness of His light.

Then all turned around. All fit perfectly where it belonged. No more desperately seeking to see again. The eyes of my heart saw His promises with 20/20 spiritual vision. What glory!

Now What?

How sweet the truth that God is already large enough to conquer anything. That's why my seeking never stopped. Today I seek Him, with fervor, with diligence, with passion and with expectation.

Joy has been visiting each night, Hubby's respect and admiration repeats each time he says he loves me. My sons grew up strong, capable and loving.

And the things God said He would add? Well, He multiplied them instead.

How About You?

I write these lines because He's probably whispering the same to you: What in the world are you seeking? Are you searching what this world cannot hold? What it cannot give you? Or what it cannot answer?

"Seek Me," God says. "And watch; just watch how powerfully big and mighty I am. Watch what I will do."

Father, keep me humble enough to first and above all seek You. Keep me bold enough to declare the size of Your mighty power, perfect enough to meet my every need. In Jesus' name, amen.

- How big is God to you today?
- And what is first in your "seeking" schedule? {eoa}

Janet Perez Eckles *is an international speaker and the author*

of four books. She has helped thousands conquer fear and bring back joy.

This article originally appeared at .

Instead of Your New Year's Resolutions, Choose God's Divine Solution

I stood by the table piled with my books after addressing a large group at a women's conference. And right after I autographed her book, a sweet lady squeezed my hand. "Honey, I loved what you shared about what helped you get through the sorrow you experienced," she said. "I also have known tragedy. But the reason I made it through is because Jesus gave me the answer. He first became my comforter. Then He became my counselor. And He never left me."

There you have it: the wisdom of a heart turned from pain to peace. She didn't bother with resolutions. Instead she embraced the ultimate solution that carried her from day to day, from month to month and from year to year.

And as we begin this year, while the world is busy talking about their New Year's resolutions, let's welcome God's solution. It's powerful enough to change our outlook, our heart and our destiny. He promises to be:

- **Our Comforter.** When the burden weighs heavy, the load drains, He will whisper to our soul: "Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavily burdened, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn from Me. For

I am meek and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light” (Matt. 11:28-30).

- **Our Counselor.** Who reminds us, “Be anxious for nothing, but in everything, by prayer and supplication with gratitude, make your requests known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will protect your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Finally, brothers, whatever things are true, whatever things are honest, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue, and if there is any praise, think on these things. Do those things which you have both learned and received, and heard and seen in me, and the God of peace will be with you” (Phil. 4:6-9).
- **Our Captain.** When buffeted by rough waters of adversity, His Word speaks to our soul: “Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by your name; you are Mine. When you pass through waters, I will be with you. And through the rivers, they shall not overflow you. When you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned, nor shall the flame kindle on you. For I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior; I gave Egypt for your ransom, Ethiopia and Seba in your place” (Isa. 43:1-3).

Father, I look forward to a new year with you by my side. Challenges might come, bad news might increase and problems might multiply. But nothing will alter my security. I trust in your protection as my comforter, my counselor and the captain of my ship in the sea of life. In Jesus' name, amen.

What solution from the Lord can you count on in this new year?
{eoa|

Janet Perez Eckles *is an international speaker and author of*

four books. She helps thousands conquer fear and bring back joy.

This article originally appeared at .

The Supernatural Secret to Erasing Holiday Loneliness

In the midst of crowds and Christmas celebrations, our hearts can be lonely until we trust in Christ alone.

Recently at a gathering, a friend shared these episodes of reality.

The bush that Moses encountered was just an ordinary bush until it burned without consuming it. The staff was just a staff, until it turned into a snake. The rock was one of many, until Moses struck and water gushed out. The Red Sea was just a body of water, until God parted it for His people to cross on dry land. David's rocks were simple stones, until he used one to defeat Goliath. Mary was a humble peasant girl, until God touched her with a miracle.

See, that's how it works. Our life may be mundane, until we encounter the wonder of God's love. Our future might be a series of tomorrows, until the horizon of His riches appears. Our dreams might be elusive, until we believe God's power at work.

And when it comes to loneliness, it might be a dark emotion, until you lift our eyes to Jesus and grab His hand.

That's why His birth might be just an event, until we understand the reason. "'A virgin shall be with child, and will bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel,' which

is interpreted, “God with us” (Matt. 1:23).

Finding Your Spirit-Fueled Joy in the Midst of Gripping Loss

Like fog in the morning, the spirit of Christmas had vanished. Still, I shuffled in the garage. One by one, I retrieved the bins I'd stored the previous Christmas. While the aroma of sugar cookies wafted through the air and “Silent Night” played in the background, I began the decorating.

Placing the nativity scene as the focal point of our family room, I spread the rest of the decorations around the house: red and green candles, musical boxes with winter scenes and bright red poinsettias framed with green garland adorned with burgundy velvet bows. They all transformed our home into a lively winter land.

Next, I retrieved three stockings to fill the marked places above the fireplace; each embroidered with our sons' names: Jason, Jeff and Joe. Once Jason and Jeff's were hung, with tears burning my eyes, I clutched Joe's against my chest.

The empty stocking seared my heart. It had been years since Joe's tragic death.

Long years that his absence left an emptiness we can almost touch.

Christmas didn't call for a celebration. Not anymore. Not when you had a vital part of your life missing. Festivities didn't have the joy they should. And Christmas trees didn't emanate

the scent they should.

Actually, my days needed to erase Christmas, the birthdays, the holidays—as all ushered pain rather than delight. They reminded me of what I once had and now what I missed so terribly, like the air I breathed.

The world continues to celebrate; greetings of good wishes fill the room. But when tragedy turns your world upside down, no amount of cheer can bring clarity to the fog of sadness.

Strange, though, because often, it's the scorching pain that forces our eyes to open to a bigger picture. It did for me as I rewound memories of Christmas years ago.

Back then, when our three sons, including Joe, were still young, I focused on providing a perfect Christmas, a perfect tree to wrap a perfect celebration. As a result, little things tended to roil in me, such as a light strand that refused to shine because of a burned bulb. Annoyed at the glitch, I promptly set off to resolve it —I fussed, I rearranged, plugged and unplugged until frustration grew hot in me.

How foolish and silly. I focused on that one bulb, dismissing the glow of the star atop the Christmas tree. I'd done the same with light bulbs that burned in my life—from broken relationships to shattered plans. Exerting tons of energy trying to fix them, I missed the star—the one that gave significance to my life.

Joe had left that radiance to my life. He'd been the star that should still shine in my heart. His sweet smile, his tender hugs and his sense of humor should be what sits atop of my life, casting off that glow to bring back the joy. To remind me that he's not gone—not from my heart, not from my mind, nor are the images of his spunky self gone.

When that void in our heart aches to be filled, it's the star of comfort that makes it whole. When bitter sorrow robs the

spirit of Christmas, it's the star of genuine love that whispers joy. When a health diagnosis shakes our world, it's the star of reassurance that shines the certainty of new tomorrows. When the economy robs our security, it's the star of endurance that ushers the radiance of expectations. It's the same star that never loses the brilliance of hope, incomprehensible hope, one we can only embrace when all strands of life burn out.

With eyes focused on the star, I hang Joe's stocking along with his brothers'; not empty anymore—but filled with sweet memories—his wit, laughter, his hugs and kisses.

God called that bright light His “Morning Star” to dispel our darkness, dry our tears and repair strands we cannot fix.

“I, Jesus, have sent my angel to give you this testimony for the churches. I am the Root and the Offspring of David, the Bright and Morning Star” (Rev. 22:16). {eoa}

Janet Perez Eckles is an international speaker and author of four books. She helps thousands conquer fear and bring back joy.

This article originally appeared at .

The Supernatural Way to Live Confidently in the Midst of Violence

My grandkids and I played a tossing game to see who would get the highest score. “Okay, Nana, it's your turn,” they said.

No problem. Though I can't see, I pretty much could judge the distance and I did quite well.

"Now," I said with a silly grin, "you two have to do the same as Nana. Let's see if you can do it blindfolded."

And they did. We laughed, we cheered each other and learned that a challenge is often a good thing.

But in real life, in our country today, we face a more serious and unpleasant challenge: to live peace-filled, happy and productive lives in the midst of violence.

"I decided to stop going to concerts or any place with crowds," a friend said.

"Me too," another friend said, "I was at a concert the other night. And I couldn't help it, but I kept looking to make sure I knew the exit at all times ... just in case."

How did we get to this place? Why is fear in the back of our minds?

It doesn't have to be that way. Though violence seems to get closer to home, making us all vulnerable, we have an option: live with confidence. To thrive with security and peace.

And here are the three choices to achieve that confidence even in the midst of a violent world.

1. **Choose whom to believe.** Do we shrink under the bad news that blare from the media, allowing anxiety to build and peace to vanish? Or do we believe in the reassurance Jesus declared for us now, today, and in the moment when He said: "I have told you these things, so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But be of good cheer. I have overcome the world" (John 16:33). He didn't prevent adversity, take out problems or remove difficulties. They're present, but so is His promise that He conquered all.

2. **Choose what to receive.** Rather than receiving the facts of the tragic occurrences, we receive instead, God's portion to meet our needs and His promise of what will make us strong. Here's what He didn't and did give: "For God did not give us the spirit of fear, but of power, and love, and self-control" (2 Tim. 1:7).
3. **How we choose to live.** Do we jump aboard the ship of anxiety and worry? If so, Satan the captain is sure to destroy our peace, steal our security and kill our joy. But Jesus' own words are reassuring: "The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full" (John 10:10).

Violence might continue, bad news may not stop and tragedy increase. But the fullness of life is ours, because Jesus promised. Because He proved it and because what He said long ago is alive and true today.

And that's why the level of confidence we possess is directly related on what we believe, what we receive and how we choose to live.

Father, grant me the ability to listen to your Word, to believe what you say and to live confidently under the shelter of your grace. In Jesus' name, amen.

What keeps you confident today? Please share your thoughts.

Janet Perez Eckles is an international speaker and author of four books. She helps thousands conquer fear and bring back joy.

This article originally appeared at .

Power to Pummel Your Destructive Panic Attacks

Temptation got closer, and I nearly succumbed to a low-grade panic attack.

Excitement was building in me as I sat at the gate in the San Francisco airport. The trip from Orlando had been long, but I was now closer to my final destination. Once I boarded that 30-passenger plane, I'd soon be in North Bend, Oregon, to keynote a ladies' event.

But that anticipation vanished when I heard the gate agent make this announcement. "We're offering a \$300 credit for any volunteers to stay, and we'll pay hotel and meals."

Gulp. Does that mean the plane is full? With white cane in one hand and my bag on the other, I was ready to board.

The airport escort who was to help me in the plane leaned toward me. "They are in big trouble because you, who needed assistance, should have boarded first. They didn't do that. And now no more passengers can board because the plane has reached the weight limit. Next flight isn't till tomorrow."

No way. If I missed this flight, I'd miss the event which had been booked one year in advance.

But before my heart would begin beating fast, I was distracted by the flare of anger from passengers to my right and my left. Cursing, ranting, accusing and nearly attacking the gate agent.

I could've joined the madness. Or I could've panicked, complained and demanded my right to board. But I learned that I must never, never give something or someone the power to rattle me.

How about you? Here are three stern instructions from God that keep us from granting power to external influences:

1. **Refuse to give the situation the power to control our thoughts.** All begins in the mind. We can choose thoughts that align with the victim mentality, thoughts of indignation or thoughts of dark defeat.

Or instead, go with this option: "... whatever things are true, whatever things are honest, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue, and if there is any praise, think on these things" (Phil. 4:8).

God's excellent plan for me to speak would prevail no matter the flight obstacle. That became my foremost thought.

2. **Refuse to give it the power to bring on worry and anxiety.** No one can make you worry. No one can make you frustrated. And still, no one or nothing can bring about anxiety ... unless you give it the power.

God says "Who among you by worrying can add a single hour to your life?" (Matt. 12:25, NIV).

3. **Refuse to give it the power to take over your emotions.** The world gives us reasons to be frazzled, and we receive it. Announcements at airport gates give us news that brings on stress. Sadly, we receive it. And others give us reasons to make our blood pressure rise, and what do we do? We give it the power by receiving it.

Good news is that victory comes when we refuse to give each of the above power. And, instead receive what Jesus offers: "Peace I leave with you. My peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid" (John 14:27, MEV).

Receiving His peace brings the most important solution—a calm heart. And with that peaceful heart I smiled big when the

airline attendant said, "C'mon Mrs. Eckles, take my arm, we're going to board you now."

Father, I confess. I'm tempted to burst into negative emotions when things don't go my way. Help me to remember that with You at work in me, I have all the power to conquer any attacks of panic, of fear or worry. In Jesus' name, amen.

When facing panic attacks, can you identify to whom or to what have you given power?

Janet Perez Eckles is an international speaker and author of four books. She helps thousands conquer fear and bring back joy.

This article originally appeared at .

The Surprising Solution to a Stressed-Out Life

Have you asked a friend lately, "How are you?" Their answer is usually something like "Busy; I'm so, so busy."

That might be your answer, too. I know mine could be as well. We're all ridiculously busy.

Strange though, a group of quails taught me just how crazy that is.

A lovely piano tune echoed through the house where I stayed during a recent trip. My friend's piano faced a window. And during one of his melodic tunes, a group of quails gathered outside.

Suddenly, the strangest thing happened. Each quail, big and small froze, no movement, no twitching. They turned to feathered statues.

Why? Their keen ears had picked up a pitch from the piano that mimicked that of a hawk. As a defense mechanism, they instinctively freeze in place.

That night I reflected on that rare reaction by those cute quails. And I vowed I would follow their example.

More than once a day, I would stop my insane busyness and be still. I'd pause enough to listen to God's Word. I'd not move until, in my soul, I felt His presence. In my heart, I'd hear His whisper. And sense His voice in my ear.

Not only our ears, but our whole being needs a quiet break, away from the busy and away from the stress.

Are you game? Let's give it a try. When we want victory, pause. When we want results, stop. When we want solutions, freeze—He's about to reveal something huge.

When the Egyptians chased the Israelites, God was about to do something big as well. That's why Moses gave the same advice to the Israelites as they ranted, complained and shook in fear.

We do the same, don't we? When stress, demands, conflict, illness, disappointment chase us, we grumble, too.

That's why Moses' words ring true today as they did back then: "But Moses said to the people, "Fear not! Stand firm! And see the salvation of the Lord, which He will show you today. For the Egyptians whom you have seen today, you shall never see again. The Lord shall fight for you, while you hold your peace" (Ex. 14:13-14).

While they were still, God did something huge. He fought on their behalf. He delivered them from danger. He did the

impossible. He supernaturally parted the Red Sea so His people could cross on dry land and be free of the Egyptians.

Why wouldn't He do the impossible in our lives today? He would. He will because He can. When we're still, the path to a better life is revealed. A renewed panorama appears. A fresh answer is found. And best of all, when we learn from the quails, and stop, He turns the busy to the best.

Father, show me to the quiet spot of my day. May I be faithful to seek You for strength, for wisdom and for serenity. In Jesus' name, amen.

How will you stop your crazy-busy and find a calming moment?

Even in Tragedy, Here's the Godly Gate to the No-Worry Zone

How can we help but worry? So many tragedies and so much that come at us, so much out of our control. So, how do we find that freedom from worry?

Did you notice that some people who have fame, money, prestige, good looks and possessions end their lives tragically? Could it be they mistakenly entered through wrong gate?

Hurricane Irma left holes in the screen closure of our swimming pool, a perfect entrance for wild creatures.

It didn't take long before that happened. Our grandchildren squealed with excitement when they saw one of those four-

legged creatures few feet away from them. We watched the squirrel go from here to there.

“She doesn’t want to play. She wants to get out,” my grandkids said.

Her bushy tail followed her as she scurried from corner to corner, trying to find the way out. Hubby opened both screen doors wide to make her exit easier.

But she dashed right by the opened doors until she spotted the same hole she used to come in. Silly squirrel. She missed the wide-open doors.

She must have known if she took the same small opening, the territory would be safe and familiar.

We’re the same way, aren’t we? We always choose the familiar.

And sadly, rather than finding reassurance, peace and security, we end up scurrying from here to there heading to the familiar worry spot. But pitifully, we miss the gate God had opened for us.

Maybe it’s time we begin looking for the correct gate that leads to the no-worry zone, here are three ways to help make the journey easier.

1. Recognize there are always two choices: one that fuels our emotions and one that echoes God’s direction.
2. Store in your heart God’s truth that says that you’ll never add an hour to your life by worrying.
3. Listen closely to God’s whisper to give you the answer, the path and the destination when trapped by worry.

“Enter at the narrow gate, for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who are going through it, because small is the gate and narrow is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it” (Matt. 7:13-14).

Father, open gates are all around us, luring us. They beckon us to enter into the world's traps. Teach me to be among those few who trust rather than worry, who believe rather than fear and to seek you rather than end up lost. In Jesus' name, amen.

What gate will you choose to enter today? {eoa}

Janet Perez Eckles *is an international speaker and author of four books. She helps thousands conquer fear and bring back joy.*

This article originally appeared at .