

One Woman's Desperation Call to God Over 1 Timothy 1:7

At first glance, Kelly Balarie has it all together: happy marriage, adorable children, a popular blog and a new book rapidly gaining popularity.

She'd be the first to tell you her life is far from perfect, though. For years, anxiety lurked beneath the surface. Balarie stuffed her fears deep into her soul and allowed few to enter.

"Fear fighting was really my desperation call to God, and that's why I wrote the book," Balarie says of her new book, *Fear Fighting: Awakening Courage to Overcome Your Fears*. "I just struggled with constant worry, anxiety and fear."

Balarie says it all boiled over one birthday when her husband asked her point blank: "Kelly, what are you going to do with your life? I feel like you're so stuck."

While she admits the confrontation was uncomfortable, it was the motivation she needed.

"I was purposeless and passionless, and I was made for more," Balarie says. So she opened her heart and surrendered her deepest fears—quite literally.

But it wasn't a quick one-and-done healing. Rather, the conversation launched Balarie on a journey to become "fear less." Yes, that's two words: to fear less, not to be without fear.

It's a common misconception, Balarie says, to think Christians are completely without fear, anxiety, depression and other negative emotions.

"We're just rolling out the carpet of grace here," Balarie says.

In college, Balarie says she tried to be all things to all people and ended up running herself into a serious depression and eating disorder. One day, she says, she was on a run in the woods when God stopped her in her tracks.

"I just got hit by this, 'Kelly, are you going to keep running away from me in fear, or are you going to turn toward me in faith?'"

The encounter was the beginning of her journey of small steps toward healing. The path is what she wants to share with the church today.

Anxiety disorders affect nearly 20 percent of American adults today, according to the National Institute of Mental Health. Yet these same scientists suspect the actual total is much higher, since many people do not seek help for their disorders.

Ignoring anxiety and depressive disorders in the church is entirely too common. Balarie says we need to pulverize the idea that women in the church, especially, cannot ask for help when drowning in their own fears and anxieties.

"I hate to see women struggling," she says. "I feel like there are so many who came into church wearing a mask and saying ... 'Oh, I'm fine!'" when asked about their lives.

"I would rather just be like ... 'I need you. Can we do coffee? I'm struggling. I need to be reminded of God's goodness, maybe that you've been through this, too.'" Balarie says.

Seeking help is far more healing than "walking around dejected acting like we look good with our pearls on and our lipstick in our handbag and life is all goody."

Christian women tend to keep their masks on because they're afraid it may be sinful to experience the crushing anxiety that holds them back.

Balarie says the idea depression, fear and anxiety are sinful comes back to Matthew 7:1-2, where Jesus says not to judge lest you be judged in the same manner by the Father.

“In some ways, it’s not our place to be the taskmaster of people’s sins and what they’re going through,” Balarie says. “There’s something called grace and patience that we have to extend and receive and understand that God is working on us in His perfect timing.”

In her journey to fear less, Balarie says she’s embracing 2 Corinthians 3:17, which says, “Now the Lord is the Spirit. And where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.”

Breaking the chains of fear and anxiety is a journey, Balarie says. But small steps to fear can ignite a relationship with God and set women free of the bondage they hide.

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