

When Anxiety, Depression Terrorize You

It occurred to me the other day that I haven't written much about anxiety and depression. If you've read some of my earlier posts, you know that I experienced severe anxiety and depression about five years back, which was ultimately what God used to bring me to Christ. Prior to this, I had been able to get through everything on my own, but I couldn't seem to get myself out of this one. Honestly, I think God needed to present something to me that I had absolutely no control over for me to finally turn to Him. And though I would never want to return to this terrible place, I am thankful that God did what was necessary to bring me to Himself.

But it was such a horrible, dark place to be, and I didn't know any other person who had been through what I was experiencing, which made it even more frightening. I would have given anything to simply talk to someone who had been there, someone who had made it out on the other side. Someone who was "normal" again.

When I was there, I think I just about lost all hope that I would ever be normal again. I questioned whether or not I was going crazy, and I actually feared I would end up locked away in some asylum somewhere. It was truly unbearable—unbearable beyond words. And with time, it only got worse.

Just when I thought my depression was the worst it could possibly be, I would plunge even deeper into my pit of darkness. The anxiety raged like a storm within me. Mentally, my mind seemed to spin out of control with fear. Fears were stacked upon fears unceasingly.

As one fear settled, another would take its place, and I'd feel as if my whole being were being plunged into the pit of

hell. Thought after irrational thought entered my mind, as if planted there by another, which would send me into a tailspin of fear that wasn't manifested only in my mind, but in my body as well. Physically, symptom after symptom began to show up.

First I had the headaches that remained day and night for months on end. Then my heart was acting funny to the point that I went to the emergency room because I thought I was having a heart attack. Then I experienced panic attacks that left me feeling like I couldn't breathe in enough air.

Irrational panic would strike suddenly out of absolutely nowhere. But even when I wasn't having a false heart attack or panic attack, I was never at ease, and I found myself saying over and over, "I just want to feel peace. How do I find peace?"

I thought I was going to die, and I was terrified of dying. Yet at the same time, I found myself thinking it would be easier to die. I don't think I was suicidal or anything, but the level of suffering I experienced made a small part of me want to give up and die. But I couldn't give up. I was a mommy and a wife. My family needed me, and so I fought. I fought like never before to get better.

I tried everything that worldly experts tell you to try. I tried eating better and exercising more. I tried therapy. I tried meditation.

I tried a stress management class. I tried yoga. I tried reading self-help books.

I tried implementing the lessons taught in *The Secret*. At one point, I was even considering going to a Buddhist retreat, if you can imagine that! And when all else failed, as a last resort, I tried medication, but it only made things worse.

There were times I thought I was on to something, but ultimately all these worldly solutions turned out to be a

bunch of foolishness. They were all man's attempt to attain happiness apart from God, which is something that, quite simply, cannot be done.

I was desperate, but nothing worked. Nothing was making me better. And so with all other options exhausted, I finally called my friend Sarah and asked about her church. I figured it couldn't hurt to give church a try.

So, I went, and to my surprise the pastor's message spoke to what I was struggling with in that exact moment. As a non-Christian, I left thinking, "*The sheer probability of that happening is just crazy!*" It blew my mind. I went back the following Sunday. It happened again, and it continued to happen over and over until I finally understood that God was showing Himself to me, and I believed.

Now, I'd like to tell you that my anxiety and depression vanished the day I gave my life to Christ, but it didn't. It took time. But over time, it did subside little by little until one day it simply wasn't there anymore.

But I don't believe this would have happened had I not poured myself into seeking God like I had. In my desperation, I took every opportunity I had to seek God through going to church, going to a women's Bible study, listening to sermons on podcast, listening to Christian music and reading my Bible. If I wasn't actively taking care of my family, I was actively pursuing God, and I believe God honors our pursuit of Him. Scripture tells us that if we draw near to God, He will draw near to us. It's a promise, one God is faithful to fulfill.

Anxiety and depression are terrible. You feel alone. And if you're anything like I was, you think you're going crazy and will possibly never recover. But you need to know that God intends to pull each of us out of our pits, just as He pulled me out of mine.

I would have given anything to have been able to talk to

someone who had gone through was I was going through. Someone who had made it out on the other side. Someone normal! So if you or someone you know are in that place, please don't hesitate to contact me with your questions.

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