

DISCOVERY SERIES

# OVERCOMING WORRY

Turning Fear into Faith



**David Egner**



*introduction*

# Overcoming Worry

Turning Fear Into Faith

**T**here's much more than a smile in the quip, "If you're not worried, you just don't know what's going on." In a sense, worry shows that we are alive. But making light of our concerns only goes so far. When the sun goes down, restless thoughts about what might happen

can rob us of tonight's sleep and tomorrow's strength.

This booklet is adapted from material written by former RBC staff writer David Egner. Our prayer is that it will help you grow in your understanding of what Jesus taught His disciples when He asked them, "Why do you worry?"

*Mart DeHaan*

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one

## What Worry Can Do to You

In an interview for the *Day of Discovery* television series, author and speaker **Joanie Yoder** shared her story of how worry nearly ruined her life—until she found practical answers in unexpected places.

**M**y life was filled with anxiety and worry, but I was able to cover it up, like a lot of people do, until I had an experience that caused me to hit rock bottom. It was then that I was forced to face my anxieties, my fears, my dread, and my worries.

“Catherine Marshall<sup>®</sup> said that the greatest discovery we can make is to realize that our own strength is not enough. I experienced that discovery. I had nothing left of my own inner resources. I didn’t seem to have the strength, physically or emotionally, to go on.”

👉 Author **Catherine Marshall** (1914–1983) gained literary acclaim when she published a collection of her husband's sermons. Peter Marshall served as U.S. Senate chaplain at the time of his death of a heart attack in 1949. Catherine also wrote his biography, *A Man Called Peter*, as well as the novel *Christy*, both bestsellers.

"I had developed agoraphobia, which is a dread of open spaces—a fear of going out. For me, it was a fear of going into the supermarket. It was so intense that I would panic and go into a sweat. I was afraid that I would go totally insane in front of people—or, even worse, die.

"Sometimes I would interrupt my shopping, shove my cart into a corner, and run home. As soon as I was in the house, I had this sudden relief of being safe and secure again.

"I thought I was the only person who felt<sup>👉</sup> like this. My eating habits changed, my sleep was erratic, I was trembly and shaky, and I was generally anxious about life and all its responsibilities. I couldn't face anything. I felt I was all washed up by the time I was in my early thirties.

👉 A **phobia** is an exaggerated or irrational fear of an object, activity, or situation that poses little, to no real danger. Phobias provoke overwhelming levels of anxiety and intense reactions that dramatically impact a person's life. Gradually and repeatedly facing such fears has helped many overcome their phobias.

"There were underlying reasons for my difficulty. As I look back now, I realize that there were three reasons for my inability to manage life:

"One was extreme immaturity. I was underdeveloped emotionally to handle responsibility.

"Second, I had developed a bitterness habit. I didn't

really recognize it as such, because I felt I was always justified in feeling as I did. Mine was always a just cause.

"And the third reason, which I think is common to all of us, was a tendency to be self-sufficient. I tried to do everything in my own strength. And when I realized that I couldn't do it on my own, I felt I ought to be able to.

"Those three factors had a crumbling effect. It led me toward a breakdown that I needed. I think it's a breakdown we all need. It wasn't a nervous breakdown, but a breakdown of my self-sufficiency.

"From my own experience, and also in observing other people who are in this painful situation of running out of their resources, one of the characteristics is a need to control—the need to control life, circumstances, people, and unwittingly, God—because we feel afraid of what might happen. We feel that if we can control things and make things go a certain way, we will be less afraid.

"My problem was that I didn't feel in control of my self-protection—protection from the things that I was afraid of. So I began to build a cocoon around myself. That cocoon became as small as the word implies. I had a tiny space in which I felt safe and secure—the four walls of my house. In fact, I so cocooned my life that it contained a population of one—me."

**W**e may not all identify with Joanie's method of coping, but we all know what it is to face situations that make us uneasy, even panicky. Some of us lie awake at night thinking about the fate of a son or daughter. Others worry about job situations or health or a family

that is falling apart. Worry can show up in a throbbing tension headache. Others experience a pounding heart and shortness of breath. For still others, unrecognized fear lurks behind our tendency to overeat, overspend, or overuse anything that will deaden the pain. We all know what it means to face circumstances beyond our control.

Followers of Christ aren't immune to worry or its complications. Sometimes our spiritual beliefs seem to make matters even worse. We want so much for our faith to make a difference in our lives so that family members, neighbors, and co-workers see us trusting in the goodness and presence of God. We worry about letting them down.

The results are costly. Anxiety divides our attention and subtracts from our energy. We don't know what to do with the concerns that wear us down.

In a sense, we worry because we are made in the image of God, given an imagination that enables us to see the good and bad possibilities of life. We're designed with the capacity to care about what happens to ourselves and to others.

The challenge is to learn what God has given us to help us deal with our broken world. Bad things happen and we're unsure of our own safety as well as the safety of our loved ones. So . . . we worry.

## **Worry Defined**

Worry is a feeling of uneasiness, apprehension, or dread usually related to negative thoughts of something that may happen in the future. Such possibilities may be important to think about, but those thoughts are healthy only if we are able or willing to do something positive with them.

Worry defeats us when it replaces wise action or needed rest with fearful emotion. Reacting in fear based only on our emotions will detract from the present while doing nothing to prepare us for the future.

Because stressful anxiety is an issue of the heart that costs far more than it gives, the wisdom literature of the world regards worry as a habit that none of us can afford. The Bible, however, treats worry as an emotion of choice that impedes our relationship with our Father in heaven.

The primary New Testament word for worry (*merimnao*) means "to be anxious, to be distracted, to have a divided mind."<sup>1</sup> It is an emotion and state of mind in direct opposition to trust. Anxiety becomes our alternative to relying on the faithful presence and provisions of God.

↪ **Merimnao** is the word Jesus used when He said, "Do not worry about your life" (MATTHEW 6:25). And Paul used it when he wrote, "Be anxious for nothing" (PHILIPPIANS 4:6).

All of us indulge in worry from time to time. Anyone who takes responsibility seriously can't help but consider what might happen. It's one reason things get done. People who claim they don't have a care in the world are either foolish or in denial.

Not surprisingly, many high achievers are worriers, driven not only by a desire to succeed but also by a fear of failure. But those who appear to be laid-back worry too. They simply show it in different ways.

When we are preoccupied with what might happen, we let worry superimpose a possible future on a real present. Such worries often arise out of one of four categories.

**1. Threats**—real or imagined—cause us to worry. There is no way to be completely safe from harm, yet all of us must determine the difference between being careful, being careless, and being consumed by fear. ▀

▸ One **common fear** is the fear of what others think of us. Too little concern can result in a loss of relationships and self-respect. But a focus on avoiding disapproval can create an unhealthy obsession over appearances. Such anxiety can make us so afraid of failure that we avoid taking the risks of candor and spontaneity necessary for good relationships.

**2. Choices** that could make or break us can be a source of worry. We may use delay tactics to avoid making a wrong choice. Most decisions don't change our lives in unalterable ways. But some do, and so we worry.

**3. Past experiences** buried and lost from our conscious memory can be a third, yet unrecognized, cause for worry. For some people, event-based anxieties are linked to the trauma of war, abuse, or an accident. For others, it's a series of negative experiences with parents, teachers, siblings, or peers that has left invisible scars.

**4. Medical conditions** can cause feelings of anxiety that do not respond to reason or spiritual insight. Some of these maladies include hyperthyroidism; hyperglycemia; prescription drug reactions; pituitary, adrenal, or parathyroid dysfunctions; and other hormonal, allergic, or chemical factors.

Such reasons show that even if some emotions are beyond our control, we need to find solutions that put our fears to work for us rather than against us.



two

## How Should We Deal With Worry?

God in His grace showed Joanie Yoder some practical ways to handle her worry. *She continues her story:*

**D**uring this time, I was a Christian. And even though I strongly believed in God, He had no perspective in my life. I was terribly unhappy. And even worse, I felt that I had missed the unique purpose for which God had created me.

"I had to hit rock bottom and come to the end of myself before I could discover the sufficiency of Christ

and allow Him to change me. God began to rehabilitate me according to what Paul described in Philippians 1:6, 'that He who has begun a good work in you [which starts at conversion] will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ.' The process doesn't take six easy lessons or six months but continues until 'the day of Jesus Christ.'

"Early on in my progress toward wholeness, God showed me four disciplines, which had a profound effect in my life: read, pray, trust, and obey. Read the Bible—something to feast on. Pray—Someone to feast with. This goes beyond the boundary of a little time of prayer. It goes out into the marketplace, out into our cars, out into our circumstances. Trust—trusting God for the things we cannot control. Releasing them, not into thin air but to God. Obey—God wants us to obey Him in the things we *can* control.

"These four disciplines are very familiar. The whole idea of dependence on God is an obvious scriptural truth but an obscure truth experientially. We must actually practice them, not just know about them, talk about them, or believe fiercely about them. The blessing of being in a weakened condition and running out of our own resources is that it



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helps motivate us to actually do the things that we already believe.

"As I began to incorporate these disciplines into my daily living, I found that it cultivated an intimate relationship with Christ that developed confidence in Him. He began to prove His sufficiency to me at small levels. And as He continued to come through for me, I began to trust Him more and more.

"The four disciplines of reading, praying, trusting, and obeying interacted with one another. This interaction meant that there was something for me to do. But as I did, it set God free to do the things that only He could do. So I began to find less and less reason for worry. It became superfluous. I began to realize that whatever He led me to undertake, even if it were something that stretched me, He would come through for me."



*There is a way to root our lives in the truth of God's love, even when our feelings and emotions are telling us something different.*

**W**hat Joanie was beginning to learn about her fear and worry is that God can do more for us than anything we are feeling at any given moment. And there is a way to root our lives in the truth of God's love, even when our feelings and emotions are telling us something different.

The struggle with worry is not solved by simplistic answers or quick-fix remedies. Joanie learned answers from the Bible that help us grow beyond our worries and into a trusting relationship with the God who loves and cares for us.



*three*

## How Can We Put Our Worries to Work for Us?

**T**here are two kinds of worry: (1) a negative, harmful, crippling worry, and (2) a positive, beneficial concern. Negative worry is an anxiety that focuses our thoughts either on concerns that we can do nothing about or on matters that distract us from resting in God's ability to meet our needs. Jesus mentioned such worry six times in His Sermon on the Mount. He taught His followers to turn to their Father

in heaven, who wants us to trust Him one day at a time, even for the most common cares of life (MATTHEW 6:25–34).

Not all worry is bad. The Bible also speaks of a healthy concern that results in meaningful action and prayer. In 2 Corinthians 11:28, Paul spoke of his “deep concern for all the churches.” The word *concern* is the same Greek word he and other New Testament writers used when urging against self-consuming anxiety (PHILIPPIANS 4:6; 1 PETER 5:7).

↪ *The same Greek word (**merimnao**) is used in the New Testament for both meanings.*

Paul also told the believers in Philippi of his desire to send Timothy to them because he was concerned (same word) about their welfare (PHILIPPIANS 2:19–20).

So, how do we put our worries to work for us?

- (1) By letting worry turn our attention to God;
- (2) by letting worry turn us to the words of Jesus;
- (3) by turning worry into prayer;
- (4) by turning worry into practical choices.

## **Let Worry Turn Our Attention to God**

When we worry, we focus on possibilities that have not yet happened or are beyond our control. What we need to see is that this is our moment of opportunity. In the weakness of our fears, we have reason to look for the assurance of God's presence. This assurance comes when we turn our attention to God's character as revealed in His Word.

Nothing happens in this world that is beyond the knowledge and power of our God. The Scriptures declare,

"The LORD has established His throne in heaven, and His kingdom rules over all" (PSALM 103:19). He is God Almighty. He is the sovereign Lord of all.

When we worry, we are actually acknowledging the truth that we are not adequate to meet the demands of life in our own strength. This is our moment to remind ourselves of some important truths about God.

**1. He is everywhere.** There is no place, no matter how alone we may feel, that God cannot be. He is everywhere! (PSALM 139:7–12; JEREMIAH 23:23–24).

**2. He knows everything.** He knows how afraid we are, how bad we feel, and what scares us. The more worried we become, the more we act as if God were ignorant of our situation. We don't know the future, but God does; and He knows our needs (JOB 7:20; PSALM 33:13–14).

**3. He is all-powerful.** Worriers feel that no one has the power to stop bad things from happening—not even God. But God has limitless power and His own wise reasons for what He permits (GENESIS 17:1; 18:14; MATTHEW 19:26).

The cares of life that weigh on us so heavily need to be placed on the shoulders of the Lord. He is even more concerned than we are about our health, our work, our friends, our family, and our nation.

It was God who helped David kill the bear, the lion, and the Philistine giant. He protected David from the





*Worry is an expression of our fear of the future. It has been around since the garden of Eden.*

murderous rages of Saul. He kept him safe in enemy territory. Perhaps that's the reason David could write, "Cast your burden on the LORD, and He shall sustain you; He shall never permit the righteous to be moved" (PSALM 55:22).

But how do we give our burdens to God? The answer to that is not in what we do, but in what we believe. Are we trusting in our feelings? Or do we believe, on the basis of what we see in the created world around us and on

the wisdom of the Bible, that our creator and sustainer is an all-powerful, trustworthy God?

But what if our fears are rooted in past experiences or medical conditions beyond our ability to understand or control? The answer does not contradict our faith. If, in the process of coming to terms with our fears, we sense a need for medical help or a wise counselor, this may be God's way of helping us trust Him in new and deeper ways.

Worry is an expression of our fear of the future. It has been around since Eden, when Adam and Eve hid from God among the trees and covered themselves with leaves. They were rightfully afraid of the consequences of their choice to eat the forbidden fruit (GENESIS 3:10). When God asked why they were hiding, Adam said, "I was afraid."

We can see what our first parents could not. If they had admitted their wrong and thrown themselves on the

mercy of their good and compassionate God, it would have been better than trying to hide from His presence.

Knowing that God is a good God—nothing evil can originate in Him—helps drive fear away, even when we have sinned.

David knew God's goodness and love by experience. That's why he could write that even in the darkest valleys of life, he feared no evil (PSALM 23:4). 📖

📖 *In Psalm 31, **David** wrote of terrible life experiences—being forsaken by his friends (vv. 11–12) and attacked by his enemies (vv. 13, 15). Yet he could say, “But as for me, I trust in You, O LORD” (v. 14), and “My times are in Your hand” (v. 15).*

Even as he wrote of war, famine, and evil men who pursued him, David said that those who trust in God “shall be satisfied” (PSALM 37:19). The basic meaning is that they will not tremble or be shaken. In the midst of the legitimate concerns of life, we need not quiver with fear.

God will sustain us by His power.

When we feel vulnerable, we become distracted by our concerns. God can sustain us during those worrisome times, not by promising that nothing bad will happen, but by reminding us that we were made to trust Him above all else. In a broken world, we have no guarantees except that God can be trusted, and that He wants us to draw on the depths of



*In a broken world, we have no guarantees except that God can be trusted.*

His love and grace in every circumstance that He gives or allows. We too can use worry as an opportunity to say, "Therefore we will not fear" (PSALM 46:2).

**He Will Never Leave or Forsake Us.** Worry is often a solitary burden. We tend to carry it alone. The more we worry, the more alone and helpless we feel. But if we are the children of God, we are never away from our Father's watchful eye and reach.

In Psalm 139, David assured us of God's presence when he said that God knew everything about him even before he was born (vv. 13–16). He could never escape God's Spirit (vv. 7–12). Morning or night, land or sea, heights or depths, God is there.

David also wrote, "When my father and my mother forsake me, then the LORD will take care of me" (PSALM 27:10). Many of us feared parental abandonment as children. Sometimes those terrible feelings return to us. Our fears close in on us from all directions. It's then that we need to remember the Father's promise that He will never leave or forsake His children.

Isaiah knew of God's ever-present care. The Lord said through him, "Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God" (ISAIAH 41:10).



*Our fears close in on us from all directions. It's then that we need to remember the Father's promise that He will never leave or forsake His children.*

Moses knew it. "By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king; for he endured as seeing Him who is invisible" (HEBREWS 11:27).

Joshua knew it. God said to him, "As I was with Moses, so I will be with you. I will not leave you nor forsake you" (JOSHUA 1:5).

The disciples knew it. Jesus said to them just before He ascended, "I am with you always, even to the end of the age" (MATTHEW 28:20).

We can know it too. When Jesus gave that promise to His disciples, He was also talking to us.

The next time worry starts to overwhelm you, turn to God and remember that (1) He's in charge, (2) He can carry your burdens, (3) He can take away your fear, (4) He can sustain you, and (5) He will never leave you.

## **Let Worry Turn Our Attention to the Words of Jesus**

In Matthew 6:25–34, Jesus challenged His followers to see that the opportunities of heaven are more important than the potential losses of life. He urged them to believe that if God takes care of the birds of the air and the flowers of the fields, He will take care of His children.

Living by faith includes our responsibility to work and to do what we can to provide for the needs of our families and ourselves. The apostle Paul said, "If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat" (2 THESSALONIANS 3:10). Jesus wasn't teaching that we are to become passive recipients. His point was that if we do what He gives us the time and strength to do, we don't need to fret, worry,

or be anxious about our needs.

Jesus understands our inclinations, so He reminds us that just like the natural world around us, we were not made to worry. Birds have to eat, but they don't get migraines obsessing about it. Flowers "wear clothes," but they don't have to be treated for ulcers. Their heavenly Father takes care of them.

The underlying cause of worry is identified in Jesus' statement, "O you of little faith" (MATTHEW 6:30). With those few words He reminds us that being burdened down with care can reflect a lack of trust in Him. Too

often we don't really believe that He is present, knows what we need, and wants to shoulder the burdens of our life. On far too many occasions, we stop short of trusting Him to care for our needs—even though He promised that He would. Our eyes shift from heaven to earth and from the strength of God to our own limited resources.

Jesus also shows us that worry comes down to a matter of priorities. We worry about food and clothing, about competing, and about controlling the future, instead of concentrating on what is most important. So He said, "Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you" (v. 33). Exercise faith. Give priority to God, and you'll lay up treasures in heaven.

When we listen to Jesus, we realize that getting a handle



*Too often we don't really believe that He is present, knows what we need, and wants to shoulder the burdens of our life.*

on our worries requires our choice and God's grace. Our worries are eased by a deep confidence in God. Even though concerns remain, the obsessive, anxious, desperate feelings are undermined by a real faith and hope in the Lord.

Are we obsessed with worry about our work, our financial security, our retirement, our health? These are all real issues. But in the presence of Christ, they become less threatening.

## Turn Worry Into Prayer

Few of us have endured the kind of problems encountered by the apostle Paul. Yet in spite of all the threats on his life, the beatings, and the imprisonments, he wrote to the Philippians:

Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus (PHILIPPIANS 4:6–7).

There are three words used by Paul in Philippians 4:6 that describe what we are to be doing instead of worrying.

**“Prayer.”** Paul began with the most common word for talking to God—*prayer*. It refers to prayer in general and is most likely related to the worship aspect of prayer. When we pray, we are to consciously express our awareness of God's greatness, goodness, and presence. Such prayer lifts our spirit in adoration, devotion, and reverence. Recognizing God as sovereign Lord, we bring our anxious concerns and worries to Him.

**“Supplication.”** Next, Paul used the word *supplication*, or request. These are our earnest desires, our desperate cries for help. These requests can be for ourselves or for others.

When we are worried, we need to take that worry to God. Ask for His help. Earnestly petition Him. The God who told us to ask, seek, and knock will give, help us find, and answer (MATTHEW 7:7–8).



*It helps to calm us when we remember how God has cared for us in the past.*

**“Thanksgiving.”** Sometimes we become so concerned with our problems that we forget the gracious ways God has worked in the past. We fail to see that He has dealt with us according to His grace and mercy and has met so many of our needs. It helps to calm us when we remember how God has cared for us in the past.

When we pray as an alternative to worry, we are removing the burden from our shoulders and placing it on the broad shoulders of Almighty God. And when we trust Him with our cares, we can thank Him for being the kind of God who loves us, understands our problems, and has the power to answer our prayer.

## **A Practical Approach to Worry**

The apostle Peter wrote to people undergoing intense persecution and offered this alternative to worry:

“Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God,

that He may exalt you in due time, casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you" (1 PETER 5:6–7).

Two steps are involved in this process:

**Accept What We Cannot Change.** Instead of emotionally unraveling, or avoiding reality by denying our worry, we can humbly accept that these circumstances are part of our life. We don't have the right to dictate the terms of our own happiness. We need to have an appropriate sense of who we are, and then be willing to accept as much or as little as God gives in the present moment.

**Give to God What We Cannot Change.** Peter's words also encourage us to put our helpless feelings of worry into those same all-powerful hands. He urges us to cast our cares on God, entrusting ourselves to the One who cared enough for us to send His Son to die for us.

Such counsel goes against our own inclinations to act on what we can see. It runs counter to our natural desire to rely on our own ability to think or to act through our problems. It challenges our inclinations to self-sufficiency. It helps us to remember that we were not made for ourselves. We were made to prayerfully discover our need for one another and above all for our Father in heaven.



*We need to have an appropriate sense of who we are, and then be willing to accept as much or as little as God gives in the present moment.*

We alone know whether or not we have been practicing prayerful reliance on the Lord or trying to carry a heavy burden on our own. Others don't know the extent to which we are living under the weight of concerns we've been too proud or ashamed to talk about. We alone know what we need to bring to the Lord and leave with Him.



*four*

## What Worry Can Do for You

**W**hen it comes to worry, at least two things help distinguish us as followers of Jesus: what we are concerned about and what we do with our fears.

When the concerns of our heart show our love for others or bring us to our knees in recognition of what only God can do, they help us (PSALM 119:67; 2 CORINTHIANS 11:28). But when our worries preoccupy us or weaken our trust in the Lord, we are letting them work against us.



*Worry can either bring us to the Father in heaven, or it can drive us away from Him.*

Like doubt and fear, worry can either bring us to the Father in heaven, or it can drive us away from Him.

One important example is the way we think about our own mortality. It can bring us to the Lord, or it can feel so threatening that we put it out of our mind.

Yet as Jesus Himself taught us, we can allow our fear of the inevitable to help us to trust in Him. While encouraging His

disciples not to worry about the small issues of life, Jesus said:

*"Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell" (MATTHEW 10:28).*

Behind that loving warning was the fact that Jesus wants us to let Him take that worry on Himself. By dying to pay the penalty for our sins and then by rising from the dead to prove it, Jesus earned the right to say: *"Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life" (JOHN 5:24).*

A decision to let the ultimate worry bring us to the One who died for us is the first step. From then on,

every concern of life, regardless of how troubling, can help us to care for others or trust the Lord for what He alone can do.

↵ Widowed in 1982, **Joanie Yoder** often wrote about the true hope found only in Jesus Christ, whom she learned to depend upon completely. She regularly contributed to the devotional *Our Daily Bread* from 1994 until her death in 2004. Readers often commented that they found her to be “one of them” as she openly shared her struggles.

*Joanie Yoder* ↵ concludes her story:

**G**od eventually led me out of the cocoon that I had built around myself with a population of one. He did this by involving me in the leadership of a neighborhood Bible study. I believe I was able to minister to the women in the group effectively because they realized I needed Christ as much as they did. So I wasn't a threat. I was an encouragement to their growth.

“God then led my husband and me overseas. One day we met a drug addict on the London subway, and we brought him home to live with us. Through him, and a few others that we brought home to live with us, I had my moment of truth. Up until then I had felt somewhat apologetic that I had to depend on God for things that many people do with very little effort. But through my involvement with these drug-dependent people, I realized that their cure, as well as mine, was not

independence. The key was in being God-dependent.

"Through my experience with drug addicts, I discovered that dependence on God was something for which we were created. I also learned that what had been effective in a crisis was effective all the time. So I found that I could offer to a drug-dependent person a radical, shocking remedy. They had been taught to get rid of all the dependencies in their lives. But I was able to show them that the answer was in moving from drug-dependence to God-dependence—not replacing drugs with God, but moving to the one dependence for which we were created.

"How do you think people prefer to be won to Christ, assuming for discussion's sake that they want to be won to Christ? Would they prefer to be won through strong people who look like they don't know what it is to be weak? Or would they prefer to be won through weak people who have discovered how to be strong?

"I believe that without exception they would prefer the latter. Although we may think we are doing God's service and impressing people for God by coming across as



*Would people prefer to be won to Christ through strong people who look like they don't know what it is to be weak? Or through weak people who have discovered how to be strong?*

strong people, we may be depriving them of the last hope they had that God might have something for them. This is because their reaction is not, 'Oh, that's for me!' Instead they say, 'I could never be like that.' But if they see a weak person who has learned to be strong and is still learning to take that strength from God, they will be filled with hope. They will say, 'Wow! If that works for her, maybe there's something in it for me.'

"Except for the truth that we're all unique creations, I'm very ordinary. I identify with the average person. This is not only a fact; it is also my heart's desire. Without Christ I would be a dead loss. In fact, I was introduced this way in a meeting once. They said, 'This is Joanie, who without Christ would be a dead loss.' At one time, that kind of introduction would have appalled me. But God has brought me to the place in my life where He's allowed me to be a spectacle of weakness so that I can testify to others what God can do in and through human weakness. So if He can do it in and through me, why not them?"

"Dependence on God is the theme of my life. My story is about a woman who had nothing in herself but found everything she needed through a life of dependence on God. It's not a sad state of affairs to have to depend on God—it's God's perfect



*To be spiritual  
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of God.*

design. The creature becomes his or her very best when depending on the Creator. I used to depend on God as a last resort. Now it's the first thing I do!

"The beginning of progress in my spiritual life was a rock-bottom experience. I didn't look good. I didn't feel good. But it was the most spiritual moment in my life. I hope this is an encouragement to others who are at that point. So often we think that to be spiritual we must always be on top. That's not true. To be spiritual is to come to the place where there's nothing of us and all of God."



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