

7 Days of Practicing Peace: Daily Devotionals for Managing Anxiety

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Day 1

Genesis 2:7 “the LORD God formed the man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being.”

Take a deep breath. Hold it for a few moments, then slowly let it out.

God’s science behind breath is amazing. In one inhale, we take in the elements designed to feed our lungs, blood, brains, and bodies. In one inhale, we absorb just enough oxygen to allow all of these to function the way God intended so that we can continue living. Just one minute without oxygen deprives our brains of necessary elements, so that even slightly extended periods of time without oxygen can create permanent brain damage and life-long consequences. In one inhale, God provides exactly what you need in that moment so you can live.

In one exhale, we get rid of toxins that would otherwise remain and kill the life inside of us. In one exhale, we shed those elements that threaten to destroy the very elements we need to live. In one exhale, God protects exactly what you need in that moment so can live.

In one breath, God provides life.

In *each* breath, God provides life.

Lord, thank you for my breath. Help me to remember that every time I remember to breathe.

Take time to breathe slowly today. Think of God and his gift each time you remember to do this.

Day 2

Psalm 19:14 “May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight, O LORD, my Rock and my Redeemer.”

What we say matters. What we focus (meditate) on matters. Making sure these things are pleasing to God matters. However, lest we think it only matters to God, what we say and meditate on matters to our own well-being. If I spend ten minutes of every hour focused on how things can go wrong, I will feel anxious by the end of the day. If I trade those ten minutes of worry for ten minutes of meditating on evidence in my past that God is faithful, I start to shed that anxiety and I’ve made my meditations pleasing in God’s sight. I’ve done something that matters to my well-being and something that matters to God.

In fact, if you look at any of the things that matter to God, you can see how they also matter to our well-being. God’s ways are good for us. God’s ways are healthy for us. So, take time today to make the “the words of [your] mouth and the meditation of [your] heart” pleasing in his sight. For his sake, and for yours.

God, help me to meditate on healthy things today. On your things. Instead of focusing on my worries, help me to focus on how you have been faithful to me.

Any time you find yourself worrying today, trade it for thoughts of God’s faithfulness in your life.

Day 3

Psalm 91:1 “He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty.”

The world has been a mess since that day humans decided we could do it on our own. It won't become a peaceful place until God's time comes as he says it will. That seems hopeless, but the amazing thing about following God is that he gives us his presence and protection *now*, even in the midst of the chaotic, fallen world. We don't have to wait until heaven to have peace.

The idea of dwelling in God's shelter might feel elusive, but I challenge you to consider this truth: Right now, if you are a believer in Jesus Christ as your savior, God is in you and all around you. His presence is not imagined, it is as real as your own breath. You can't see either, but they are there. If you go into a dangerous place, God goes with you. If you go into a lonely place, God goes with you. Regardless of where you go, you take with you the same God who created the trees and water and animals and heavens. This is the God whose shelter you dwell in, wherever you go. And that is why you can trust that it is restful in his shadow. Because no matter where you go, his shelter protects you as you rest.

Lord, help me to rest today in your shadow. Help me to remember that I am in your shelter always.

If you find yourself feeling anxious today, take a moment to picture a shelter around you. Then, remember that his presence is not imagined. He is real and he is with you, always.

Day 4

Psalm 91:2 "I will say of the LORD, 'He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust.'"

Speaking truths about God doesn't make them true. If I say, "God is my refuge," it doesn't make it true, I'm simply speaking what is already true whether I said it or not. So why

does the Psalmist talk about talking? Why does he say “I will say of the LORD” if it’s already true?

Speaking truths about God isn’t about changing God, it is about changing us. If I say, “God is my refuge,” I remind myself of his protection. If I say, “God is my fortress,” I remind myself of his safety. If I say, “He is my God in whom I trust,” I remind myself that I have chosen to follow a God who is fully faithful and trustworthy.

In an average day, I come across so many pieces of information that threaten to pull my attention away from truths about God. In doing so, my mind spends time on things that are not necessarily true, not necessarily comforting, and certainly not necessarily pointing me to Jesus. By speaking truths about God throughout my day, I redirect my thoughts on the one being who is true, comforting, and sovereign over everything. Speaking truths about God brings me peace even while I still reside in a frantic world.

God, help me to speak truth about you throughout my day. Thank you for being my refuge, my fortress and my God, in whom I trust.

Put today’s scripture in a place where you can see it all day. Speak it aloud throughout the day, remembering the protection you receive from your God.

Day 5

Psalm 9:1 “I will praise you, O LORD, with all my heart; I will tell of all your wonders.”

Think of something God has done in the past for you. Perhaps a surprising moment of joy, an unexpected moment of safety, or a moment of peace that was beyond understanding. Once, my husband and I were driving along a busy freeway in a very light snow flurry. It wasn’t

sticking to the ground, but the roads were starting to get slick. Suddenly, a car tried to take a last-minute exit when it lost control and spun across our lane in front of us, in front of the car next to us, behind the car next to them, and finally stopped on the shoulder, unharmed. We kept driving (because it would have been unsafe to do anything else) but we were shocked at how many cars had just survived what should have been a multi-vehicle accident. We immediately thanked God for safety we didn't realize we had needed!

Just writing the story reminds me of God's goodness. It helps me to relive the moment where God so obviously intervened and protected me, and this memory helps me to trust him in whatever worries might otherwise try to interfere with today. In our difficult times, we struggle to speak of God's goodness. But what if that is exactly what we needed in those moments? If we spent time talking about the things God has done, would we have time to worry? Time to fret? Time to feel down? What if we spent an entire day speaking all the things that God has done? Or just an entire hour? Or even an entire minute?

The more time we talk about what God has done, the less time we talk about what he hasn't done or worrying about what might happen in the future. The more time we talk about what God has done, the less time we spend in fear. And, the more time we talk about what God has done, the more we re-experience those moments of joy, of peace, of fulfillment, and the more we realize he is going to do it again and again. Remember, the God of yesterday is the God of today and tomorrow and every day after.

Lord, help me to tell of your wonders and remember the ways you have been faithful.

Amen.

Take time to remember God's goodness today. When worry tries to dominate, trade it for memories of his faithfulness.

Day 6

Psalm 23:2 "He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters."

Some of the Psalms sound so peaceful but feel so far away from my current reality. When this happens, I have found it helpful to spend time imagining myself in peaceful pictures described in scripture. Today's verse comes from the well-known Psalm 23, a passage about recognizing my need of God above all else. In this passage, the Psalmist describes green pastures and quiet waters.

Close your eyes and picture green pastures and quiet waters. Use your five senses in this space. What shade of green is the grass? What does it smell like? What do you feel? Is it sunny or cloudy? Can you hear the quiet waters? Spend two minutes imagining this place.

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Did you do it? What was it like? When your mind wants to take you to unsettling places of anxiety, set those thoughts on a shelf. Maybe they will need to be addressed later, maybe not. But for now, set them aside and give your mind a break by imagining yourself back in today's passage.

Lord, thank you for scripture that inspires peaceful thinking. Help me to keep this peace throughout my day.

When you find your mind ruminating on anxious thoughts, set them aside and return to your imagination of green pastures and quiet waters. May these images restore your soul.

Day 7

John 16:33 "In this world you will have trouble."

Jesus is brutally honest about the hardships to come for us. He doesn't avoid the difficult truth that "in this world you will have trouble." But he also bookends this with two important truths:

"I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."

What things has he told them? This verse appears in the book of John after a long discourse from Jesus to his disciples about both the difficulties they will face and the faithfulness of God. "These things" are supposed to bring peace in Jesus. "These things" might allude to "I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am" (14:3b), or "You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it" (14:14), or "If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you" (15:7).

As for the last part, Jesus proclaims, "But take heart! I have overcome the world." Not "I *am going to* overcome the world," but Jesus *has* overcome the world. It has already been done. While we are still stuck in the construct of time, God sees the whole existence from beginning to end and it has already been done.

So, Jesus says with confidence after all this: "I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."

Lord, thank you for your promises that I can ask you for things. Today I ask for ..."

Ask God for what you want today. Trust as you remain in him and his words remain in you, your requests will be received.