

GREGORY L. JANTZ, PhD

Soul Care

Prayers, Scriptures, and
Spiritual Practices
for When You Need
Hope the Most



A HEALING DEPRESSION FOR LIFE RESOURCE



Soul Care

GREGORY L. JANTZ, PhD
KEITH WALL

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and Spiritual Practices
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Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.*

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Soul Care: Prayers, Scriptures, and Spiritual Practices for When You Need Hope the Most

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Designed by Jennifer Phelps

Published in association with The Bindery Agency, www.TheBinderyAgency.com.

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ISBN 978-1-4964-3466-1

Printed in China

25	24	23	22	21	20	19
7	6	5	4	3	2	1

I pray that God, the source of hope, will fill you completely with joy and peace because you trust in him. Then you will overflow with confident hope through the power of the Holy Spirit.

ROMANS 15:13

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Introduction

Hope is called the anchor of the soul (Hebrews 6:19), because it gives stability to the Christian life. But hope is not simply a “wish” . . . rather, it is that which latches on to the certainty of the promises of the future that God has made.

R. C. SPROUL

Feeling a little anxious? Worried? Depressed? You're not alone. In the thirty-plus years that I've been treating depression, I can't remember a time when free-floating anxiety and depression have been more prevalent. And it's no wonder. Look around. It seems everywhere we turn these days, we find uncertainty—economic uncertainty, political uncertainty. Even churches and other faith communities aren't immune. Every day, our smartphones keep us tethered to a relentless barrage of news and information coming at us faster than we can possibly absorb it. Divisiveness has taken over the airwaves and has turned social media into a veritable battleground pitting brother against brother and friend against friend. We're living in a world of extremes, and

all too often, we find ourselves trapped in the middle, feeling overwhelmed, isolated, and not sure who we can trust or who we can believe. Sometimes it feels as though all hope is lost.

The book you are holding in your hands right now, however, is your plan for hope. I call it *Soul Care* because that is exactly what it is: a plan for caring for your soul. But *Soul Care* is not simply a program to follow—it's a way of life. When practiced regularly, it can transform you from the inside out, shining light on the old things that no longer serve you and pointing to new ways of being that will.

As beloved pastor Charles Swindoll once said, “No matter how dark the clouds, the sun will eventually pierce the darkness and dispel it; no matter how heavy the rain, the sun will ultimately prevail to hang a rainbow in the sky.”¹

That's God's promise to us—and God always keeps his promises! But we have a role to play as well. Our job, quite simply, is to have faith.

Faith is not an ethereal “thing” that we simply try to grasp. It's an action verb—something we do on purpose. It takes effort and discipline. But I can assure you, the hope that's restored when you choose faith over

INTRODUCTION

despair is *real*. It's the priceless assurance that you are loved beyond all reason by a Creator who never takes his eyes off you.

In Jeremiah 29:11, we are told, “I know the plans I have for you,” says the LORD. “They are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope.”

In other words, God is willing and able to meet you exactly where you are and to carry you for as long as it takes to restore your strength. But having faith is *your* role to play. Faith is like a jolt of energy that activates our spiritual and emotional immune system as nothing else can. It's what enables us to actively complete the circuit of God's love by choosing to believe we are not alone—through sheer force of will, if necessary—when the night is at its darkest. Faith is what keeps our internal compass pointed north. Faith is what makes hope possible. And as we learn in Jeremiah, true hope comes when we have a plan.

The following pages will introduce you to nine spiritual disciplines that will help you focus your heart and mind on God; let go of the bitterness, pain, guilt, fear, and anxiety that have been holding you captive; develop a solid support network; and renew your spirit one day at a time. How you use this book is up to you. My

advice is to start small. Choose one discipline to begin with, and then when you're comfortable, add another. Spend time meditating on the Scripture verses. Let God speak to you through them. If you're able, commit them to memory so they'll always be top of mind when you need a quick jolt of encouragement. There is no wisdom greater than God's Word—and no promises more powerful. If you consistently work to incorporate these spiritual disciplines into your life, in time you will discover a life free from anxiety, filled with hope, and infused with the kind of beauty, joy, and meaning that only God can bring.

There will always be uncertainty and suffering in the world. But as a follower of Jesus Christ, you were not born to suffer or to barely survive. You were born to *thrive*. God wants you to experience healing in your life. He wants the sunshine to break through the dark clouds obscuring your view. He wants to send a rainbow of healing so you can experience once again the fullness and joyfulness he intended for you all along. Enjoy the journey.

Dr. Gregory Jantz



PART 1

The Spiritual Practices

PRAYER

There is not in the world a kind of life more sweet and delightful than that of a continual conversation with God.

BROTHER LAWRENCE

Perhaps the most important spiritual discipline to adopt in your daily life is prayer. Now, when I write “pray,” I don’t mean muttering a stream of rote, repetitious phrases you heard in church a long time ago. I’m talking about regular, honest, heartfelt conversations with the one who created you, who loves you, and who desperately wants you to know him as intimately as he knows you.

So what should you talk about? Everything! There is no problem too big or too small to go to God with for help. As Elisabeth Elliot once said, “If you believe in a God who controls the big things, you have to believe

in a God who controls the little things.”² Ask him for wisdom and guidance. Ask him to give you the courage and strength to get through the tough times. But don’t stop there! Tell him about all the wonderful things that are happening in your life as well. Thank him for the daily blessings of family and friends. Share your accomplishments, your dreams, and your goals for the future. Talk to him about every aspect of your life, good and bad. It’s so easy to get mired in negativity. Regularly scheduled prayer time provides a wonderful opportunity to reflect on and express gratitude for everything that is going *right* in our lives.

If you’re not used to talking with God or you aren’t sure how or where to start, try writing him a letter or pairing your prayer time with another activity like going for a walk. Whatever you do, don’t overthink it! God isn’t concerned with eloquence or fancy language. He just wants to hear from you. So be yourself. Before you know it, you’ll be looking forward to your daily quiet time with God. You may even start talking with him throughout your day! Nothing soothes the soul and quiets the mind like quality time spent in the company of a dear and trusted friend. So get into the habit of giving yourself a daily dose of hope. God would love to hear from you!

Scripture to Soothe Your Soul

Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done.

PHILIPPIANS 4:6

I tell you, you can pray for anything, and if you believe that you've received it, it will be yours.

MARK 11:24

When you pray, go away by yourself, shut the door behind you, and pray to your Father in private. Then your Father, who sees everything, will reward you.

MATTHEW 6:6

Are any of you suffering hardships? You should pray. Are any of you happy? You should sing praises. Are any of you sick? You should call for the elders of the church to come and pray over you, anointing you with oil in the name of the Lord. Such a prayer offered in faith will heal the

sick, and the Lord will make you well. And if you have committed any sins, you will be forgiven.

Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The earnest prayer of a righteous person has great power and produces wonderful results. Elijah was as human as we are, and yet when he prayed earnestly that no rain would fall, none fell for three and a half years!

JAMES 5:13-17

Pray then like this:

“Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name.
Your kingdom come,
your will be done,
 on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread,
and forgive us our debts,
 as we also have forgiven our debtors.
And lead us not into temptation,
 but deliver us from evil.”

MATTHEW 6:9-13, ESV

PRAYER

We are confident that he hears us whenever we ask for anything that pleases him. And since we know he hears us when we make our requests, we also know that he will give us what we ask for.

1 JOHN 5:14-15

At that time you won't need to ask me for anything. I tell you the truth, you will ask the Father directly, and he will grant your request because you use my name. You haven't done this before. Ask, using my name, and you will receive, and you will have abundant joy.

JOHN 16:23-24

Morning, noon, and night
I cry out in my distress,
and the LORD hears my voice.

PSALM 55:17

If you remain in me [Jesus] and my words remain in you, you may ask for anything you want, and it will be granted!

JOHN 15:7

The Holy Spirit helps us in our weakness. For example, we don't know what God wants us to pray for. But the Holy Spirit prays for us with groanings that cannot be expressed in words.

ROMANS 8:26

Wisdom to Awaken Your Spirit

Our prayers may be awkward. Our attempts may be feeble. But since the power of prayer is in the one who hears it and not in the one who says it, our prayers do make a difference.

MAX LUCADO

Prayer does not mean simply to pour out one's heart. It means rather to find the way to God and to speak with him, whether the heart is full or empty.

DIETRICH BONHOEFFER

Our prayers lay the track down which God's power can come. Like a mighty locomotive,

PRAYER

his power is irresistible, but it cannot reach us without rails.

WATCHMAN NEE

There are parts of our calling, works of the Holy Spirit, and defeats of the darkness that will come no other way than furious, fervent, faith-filled, unceasing prayer.

BETH MOORE

You can do more than pray after you have prayed; but you can never do more than pray until you have prayed.

A. J. GORDON

The reality is, my prayers don't change God. But, I am convinced prayer changes me. Praying boldly boots me out of that stale place of religious habit into authentic connection with God Himself.

LYSA TERKEURST

If you believe in prayer at all, expect God to hear you. If you do not expect, you will not

have. God will not hear you unless you believe He will hear you; but if you believe He will, He will be as good as your faith.

CHARLES SPURGEON

Prayer does not mean that I am to bring God down to my thoughts and my purposes, and bend His government according to my foolish, silly, and sometimes sinful notions. Prayer means that I am to be raised up into feeling, into union and design with Him; that I am to enter into His counsel, and carry out His purpose fully.

D. L. MOODY

It matters little what form of prayer we adopt or how many words we use. What matters is the faith which lays hold on God, knowing that He knows our needs before we even ask Him. That is what gives Christian prayer its boundless confidence and its joyous certainty.

DIETRICH BONHOEFFER

PRAYER

Prayer does not influence God. Prayer surely does influence God. It does not influence His purpose. It does influence His action.

S. D. GORDON

Prayer is the way you defeat the devil . . . reach the lost . . . restore a backslider . . . strengthen the saints . . . send missionaries out . . . cure the sick . . . [and] accomplish the impossible.

DAVID JEREMIAH

Prayer for Hope and Healing

Lord, there are so many things happening in my life right now—some good, some difficult—and sometimes I fall into the trap of feeling as though I have to face all of them by myself. What a relief it is knowing that you are always there, always listening, and always providing whatever strength and wisdom I might need. Your Scripture is a constant reminder to me that I should not “worry about anything, but rather, pray about everything.” Thank you, Lord, for being a constant companion, for never tiring of my complaints or cries for help, for your patience when I struggle to say or do what is

SOUL CARE

right, and for lifting me up when I am struggling to stand on my own. I treasure the time we spend together every day, Lord. Your faithful presence, thoughtful guidance, and unending love are gifts I value beyond measure. Thank you, Lord, for our time today, for all that you have already done in my life, and for all we have yet to do together.

In Jesus' name, amen.