



“Give It to Me”

A Daily Devotional for Anxious Thoughts

Thinking Rightly

When anxiety hits, the hardest thing in the world to do is to simply *think rightly*. At its most basic level, our reality is based in our perception of what happens to us. How we think about what is happening to us tends to become what is *really* happening to us. What we *perceive* is real tends to become what *is* real. Perception (our thoughts) = Reality.

If you're struggling to follow, let me put it this way: If I'm in a group of people, telling them about how I broke my leg, and someone starts laughing, I might think they're laughing at my story. Maybe I get really upset and irritated that someone would find the breaking of my leg humorous. Or maybe I'm trying to be funny and feel a sense of accomplishment for making them laugh. Meanwhile, what actually happened is that someone behind me, unaware of their surroundings, walked straight into a wall. This is what I'm talking about. The person who laughed was not in any way laughing at my story. But for me, they were. And suddenly, my feelings changed. In a moment, my whole perception of what was happening changed. In a moment, my whole reality changed because that person laughed. In that moment, all that mattered to shape my reality was my thoughts on why that person laughed. *My perception was my reality*, regardless of the fact that the reason that person laughed had nothing to do with my story.

This is exactly what anxiety does. It changes our perception of reality. It changes the way we think. It changes our thoughts. The very nature of anxiety is that it tends to consume our thoughts and change our perspective on what is real and what is not. Often times, when we feel anxious, what isn't real *becomes* real. When we feel anxious, what we fear consumes our thoughts. Therefore, when anxiety hits, what we need most is to know how to *think rightly* about what is happening.

Thinking Rightly About Reality

Y'all, let's be real. What's happening across the world right now is crazy. It's unprecedented in our lifetime. Sometimes it feels like all of this is a practical joke, a massive production of The Truman Show or a page out of the Hunger Games. Sometimes, it is so real it doesn't feel real at all. And I'm sure we're all struggling with the same questions: *Is COVID-19 going to kill people I love? How concerned should I be about it threatening my own life? What's going to happen today? What's going to happen tomorrow? What's going to happen with the economy? What's going to happen with the job market? When will this end? What will the world look like when this is all over? How will I continue to provide for myself, my spouse, my family? If _____? What _____? How _____? Why _____? When _____? (I could go on.)* All of these are very real questions and very real concerns. And to experience concern, worry, fear, or anxiety because of these things is a natural response.

Fortunately, even though these questions and concerns are real, our God is all the more real. He is the God who created creation. He is the God who created reality itself. He is the God who knows all, sees all, is all powerful, and is in control of all things. And He is the God who loves you infinitely as well. If He did not love you, He would not have created you. If He did not love you, He would not have become a human *for you*, died *for you*, and rose again *for you*. He loves *you* infinitely. And He knows the answers to all of those questions above. He knows the answers to the questions you have not even thought to ask yet. As real as this pandemic is, He is all the more real still. And He is *really* in control.

Thinking Rightly About Anxious Thoughts

Anxiety is something we all struggle with. Being anxious is a normal aspect of this sin-broken world. And the very first thing I want to say to you is that if you feel anxious about anything *that is completely normal*. The internal struggles/problems we have are only exacerbated if we are convinced that: *I am alone in this struggle* or *I am the only one experiencing this* or, worse, *I should not be feeling this way because no one else is*. All of these thoughts are lies from Satan. You are not alone. You are not the only one experiencing anxiety. And the fact that you feel anxious is okay. Anxiety is a perfectly normal thing to have.

However, the second thing I want to convey is that the anxiety you feel is *real*. Your feelings are not invalid simply because they are negative. If you feel anxious, that is a real feeling, and a real feeling needs

a real answer. You are allowed to feel. I would go so far as to say (with a caveat at the end) that: *never* in Scripture does God condemn someone for their feelings, so long as the person brings those feelings before Him. If you want proof of this, go read the Psalms. Never does He condemn someone for *feeling* anxiety and *expressing* that to Him. He only condemns a person when they allow that feeling of anxiety to steer their thoughts and actions away from Him. What I'm trying to say is this: *just because you feel anxious does not mean you're sinning*. Anxiety is a real feeling – you are allowed to feel anxious. But because it is a real feeling, it needs a real answer.

Thinking Rightly About Anxiety

In order to defeat something, you must first understand *what* that something is. That's exactly what medical professionals around the world are doing with COVID-19 right now. Therefore, it is necessary to understand *what* anxiety is before addressing how to deal with it.

At its basic level, anxiety is the product of fear: fear of something happening that hasn't happened yet, fear of not being in control of something, fear of a specific object or person or place or... on and on we could go. Fear preys on our emotions and causes anxious feelings – a.k.a. anxiety.*

Yet what is it that we know about fear? *Fear is not from God*. 1 John 4:18 says, “*There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear.*” Just before this, in 1 John 4:7, it says “*Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God.*” If love is from God, and love is incompatible with fear, then fear is not from God. Fear is a consequence of the fall and a weapon which Satan uses to try and disorient us, to falsify our perception of reality, and to convince us of things that aren't true. Fear is the opposite of truth. Fear is the opposite of what is real. And as such, fear is the opposite of reality.

So where does that leave us? It leaves us with this: Anxiety is a feeling produced from fear. Fear is the real enemy here. Anxiety is simply the product which fear produces in us. When we feel anxious, we have a choice to make – do we give in to the feeling and allow fear to take over our reality, or do we choose to think rightly and to fight our anxious feelings and our anxious thoughts with the truth of God's Word?

Thinking Rightly About Anxiety and Jesus

As Christians, our constant aim is to imitate Christ in every aspect of our lives. Therefore, it is imperative that we understand this concept of anxiety in light of the person and work of Jesus Christ. So here's the question: *Did Jesus struggle with anxiety?*

My answer to that question is *yes*. Jesus did struggle with anxiety. Hebrews 4:14-15 says, “*Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.*”

Jesus felt every emotion that we feel: Jesus laughed. Jesus got angry. Jesus wept. Jesus experienced every emotion that we experienced or ever will experience. He was tempted just as we are tempted. He hurt just as we hurt. That is why Scripture can say “*we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses.*” Jesus Christ is able to fully sympathize with our weaknesses, because He has felt each and every one of them Himself – and that includes anxiety. Yet, Jesus did so without sin. And as such, Jesus Christ gives us a model, a perfect model, for how to deal with anxiety.

But where do we see Jesus dealing with anxiety? He does so in Matthew 26:36-46 – in the Garden of Gethsemane. If I could summarize the story: Jesus leaves His disciples to go and pray on His own. He is talking with His Father, one-on-one, for one final time before going to be crucified. He knows what's coming for Him. He knows He's about to be beaten black and blue, whipped till the skin on His back is stripped down to His backbone, mocked, cursed, spit upon, shamed, abandoned, and hung with nails on a cross to die a horrifying death. He knows He is about to take upon Himself the sins of the world – past, present, and future – David's murdering of Uriah, Judah's rape of Tamar, Paul's stoning of Steven... The weight of it all is upon His entire being. And in His agony, He falls on His face and cries, “*My Father, if it*

* *The use of the word “fear” may be misunderstood when compared to passages that talk about “the fear of the Lord” or “fearing the Lord.” In this Preface, fear is synonymous with terror / horror – an all-consuming feeling of helplessness – the kind of fear that is not healthy or good to have.*

be possible, let this cup pass from me...” The anxiety is palpable. The feeling of complete and utter helplessness pulsates through the page as you feel His heart beating faster and faster and faster. But then... without hesitation, He says, “*nevertheless.*” He says, “*nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will.*” He says, “Nevertheless, I give my will to You. Nevertheless, I give my anxiety to You. Nevertheless, I give my life to You.”

You see, anxiety comes. When the weight of the world feels like more than you can bear, anxiety comes. When “PANDEMIC” is plastered in red letters across everything you see, and the stock market is falling like a plane from the sky, and hospitals are overwhelmed, and people are dying, and society is coming to a screeching halt as the President gets on national television and says, “Everyone, stay in your homes!”, anxiety comes. But Jesus is there. In the midst of it all, He is there. He was there before the anxiety, and He will be there after it goes. And when anxiety comes, He is there asking you, “Give it to Me.” He says, “Give it to Me... Just as I gave My will to My Father – give your anxiety to Me. Give your thoughts to Me. Give your perception of reality to Me. *Give it all to Me.*” He says, “Let Me shape your reality. Let Me help you to think. Let Me be the lens through which you view everything that is going on around you. Let Me become your peace.”

Though anxiety may come and threaten to shake you,
Jesus is there saying,
“*Give it to Me.*”

Day One

“Let there be light.”

Genesis 1:3

As the sun rises across the far horizon, all, again, is new. The dawn brings with it an indescribable feeling, an incomparable awe, an immeasurable hope. As the sun’s brilliance pierces the grey morning mist, and light breaks through the dark skyline, hope invades our hearts with warmth as His still, small voice whispers, *“Let there be light.”*

There’s no coincidence these words are the first spoken in Scripture. The earth was formless and void – darkness enveloping the deep. As God’s Spirit hovered over the face of the waters, there was no battle. There was no struggle. There was no clash against dark and light, chaos and control, evil and good. No. There was simply one spoken statement, *“Let there be light.”* And there was light. One spoken statement by our God, and all was made right. One spoken statement, and the chaos was gone. He took what was formless and created form; He took what was void – empty – and created life, simply with the power of His voice. How powerful is our God?!

So, when a world of chaos, confusion, and darkness feels as though it’s crashing down around us, remember. Remember that God has spoken and still speaks. Remember that Jesus Christ has risen from the grave. Remember that the first word has been written, and the final word as well, and the sentiment is the same. *“Let there be light.”* God has spoken and still speaks, and He says, *“Let there be light... Let there be light where there is darkness. Let there be life where there is death. Let there be a future where it feels like there isn’t one. Let there be hope where it feels like all hope is lost. Let there be peace where there is chaos. Let there be order where there is confusion. Let there be an eternity with Me where all, again, is new.”*

You see, this is our hope. *“Let there be light.”* It’s the dawn after the dark night; the calm amidst the storm; the victory at the end of the story; the hope when all seems hopeless. It’s the something out of nothing; the voice out of the silence; the healing when there’s hurting; the peace that stops the violence. It’s the Christ when there is crucifixion; the heartbeat of our Savior – after three days dead in the grave, He steps out in the dawn of a new day and states with absolute authority, *“Let there be light.”*

So, when pandemics and panics may come, He says, *“Let there be light.”* When finances fail, when your job is here one day and gone the next, when your health is at risk, when the only question you can seem to ask is *“What happens next?”* He is there. His Spirit is there inside of you. Jesus is there right beside you. And He says, in His still, small voice, *“Let there be light.”* Because no matter what, He will provide. No matter what, the dawn will come again. No matter what, the sun will rise across the far horizon.

Today’s Prayer

Father, You created light from the darkness and You bring life out of death.

You are the Author of Life and the Giver of Hope.

Holy Spirit, help me today to see Your light in my life, no matter how hard that may be.

Give me Your peace, Your comfort, and Your grace – as I give you my fears, anxieties, and burdens.

Help me to find comfort in Your all-powerful voice as it breaks through my darkness and says,

“Let there be light.”

Help me to remember that You make all things new, and to remember that no matter what I am facing, the dawn will come again.

In the name of Jesus Christ, the Name above every name, I pray this prayer today.

Amen.

Day Two

“Be still and know that I am God.”

Psalm 46:10

What does it mean to “know” someone? If I were to say I know you, what would that mean? Would it mean that I simply know your name? Are we friends? Are we close? Do I know your middle name? Your favorite color? Your favorite song? What does it take to *know* someone?

Here, God is saying this phrase – to know someone – in a deeply-personal, deeply-intimate way. When God says, “*Know* that I am God.” He is telling you to relate to Him in a way that we do with very few people in our lives. He is telling you to acknowledge Him for who He is – that He is your God, that He is your Father who made you, your Savior who saved you, and He knows everything about you: every thought you have, every pain you felt, every joy you experienced, every pointless-boring-dull moment you’ve had, every laugh, every tear, every breath, every fear, everything. He is telling you to come to Him, *knowing* Him in this way, for He *knows* you in this way.

He is saying, “Stop everything you’re doing. Get still. Find quiet. Calm yourself. Calm your thoughts. Settle into a place somewhere – a chair, your bed, a porch swing while the afternoon breeze blows through your hair. Sink down into that place. And pray. Talk to Me as if you *know* Me. Pray because you do *know* Me. Pray because I am here. No matter what has happened, I am here. I always have been here, and I always will be here.”

You see, prayer is the lifeblood of our faith. Prayer is the means through which we communicate with God. It is the means through which we *know* Him. Think about it this way: if you had a friend but you never talked to them, how close would you really be to them? Prayer is the means through which we relate to God.

But towards what end? Why does God tell us to “*be still and know that I am God*”? How does this relate in any way to my present circumstances? Well, as for those with anxious thoughts, anxiety comes from a desire to control – to control our lives, control our surroundings, control anything and everything which affects us. When we perceive that this control is eluding us, that it is slipping away from our hands, anxiety strikes. Anxiety tells you that, while you used to be able to control your life, you no longer can. You are helpless. You used to be able to go out and walk around the grocery store without an invisible enemy threatening your life. You used to be able to do what you wanted, when you wanted. You used to have a job that supported your lifestyle and your family and your identity. You used to have good finances. You used to have security – financially, relationally, socially, personally. You used to have it. But then things changed, and now you don’t have control over *anything*. And how terrifying is that???

And then God comes in. He comes in with His calm, gentle voice. He comes in and He says, “Be still and *know* Me. Be still and *know* that I am God. Be still and *know* that I am in control. I have always been in control. I will always be in control. My child, you never truly did have control. That was always Me. And the deeper you know Me, the deeper you will know that *I am in control*. And the deeper you know that I am in control, the freer you will be to live as I have called you to be – regardless of what happens in the world around you. The deeper you know that I am in control, the more you are free from the chains of this world – from the anxieties you feel from knowing you are not. So be still, My child. Be still and *know that I am God.*”

Today’s Prayer

Father, You are in control. You have always been in control, and You will always be in control. Holy Spirit, help me today to know that You are in control. Help me today to know that You are good and that You are working everything for the good of Your children who love You. You are working all things together for my good – regardless of what is happening in the world around me.

I love You, my Father, my Savior, my King, and my God.

In the name of Jesus Christ, the Name above every name, I pray this prayer today.

Amen.

Day Three

Say to those who have an anxious heart, "Be strong; fear not! Behold, your God will come with vengeance, with the recompense of God. He will come and save you." Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped; then shall the lame man leap like a deer, and the tongue of the mute sing for joy.

Isaiah 35:4-6

Let's get a little theological. This passage is from the book of Isaiah. Isaiah was a prophet of God during the eighth century B.C. (that's 700 years before Jesus Christ was born) and he prophesied about many things that occurred well after his lifetime (the Babylonian exile, for example) But the thing which he prophesied about most is Jesus Christ. So, 700 years before Jesus was born, Isaiah was talking about Him, and talking about Him *in very particular ways*: that He would be born of a virgin, that He would die the way that He did – abandoned, pierced, crushed – a sacrifice for sins.

Why do I say this? Because our God is a God who *makes and keeps promises*. Our God is a God who says He will do something... and then *He does it*. And that's exactly what's happening here. God is saying to those of us who are struggling with anxious thoughts, to those of us who are struggling with what is going to happen in the future – "*Be strong; fear not!*" And why? Because *He is going to come and save us!* He makes promises to us. He promises to save us. Through the prophet Isaiah, He told us *exactly* how this was going to happen: "the eyes of the blind shall be opened...the ears of the deaf unstopped...the lame man will leap like a deer...the tongue of the mute will sing for joy." And guess what...

700 years after these words were written, Jesus Christ was asked by one of John the Baptist's followers, "Are you the one who is to come, or shall we look for another?" And then Jesus answered this person, "Go and tell John what you hear and see: *the blind receive their sight and the lame walk, lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have good news preached to them.*" (Matthew 11:2-5) Even 700 years after Isaiah prophesied, *God kept His promise*. God made a promise to save His people. He told them He would do it. He told them exactly how He would do it. And then He did it.

And God makes the same promises to us today – to save us, to heal us (though this healing may not come in the way we expect), to give us a hope and a future. He is the same God who is good and is constantly working all things for the good of those who love Him and are called according to His purposes. He is the same God who sent Himself to die in our place – to die in your place. He is the same God who created you because He wanted you. He is that very same God.

He is the God who still speaks, just as He spoke through Isaiah, just as He spoke in His Son Jesus Christ, and says, "Be strong, my child. You don't have to worry. You don't have to worry because I am your God. I have already come to save you. I did so in my Son. And I will keep coming to save you for as long as you live. I am the same God who made blind eyes to see again, deaf ears to hear again, paralyzed legs to walk again, mute tongues to speak again, and *dead hearts to beat again*. And if I can bring life from death, I can hold you safe even when nothing makes sense." So, hold on to His promises, for He will be sure to keep them – after 700 years, after two thousand years, always.

Today's Prayer

Father, You make and keep promises. I know this because Your word says it.

I know this because You have done so even in my own life already.

Holy Spirit, help me to remember those moments where You have kept Your promises to me.

Help me to truly understand that You keep promises – even when I cannot see it right now.

You are truly good always. And You will bring forth life from death in my life.

In the name of Jesus Christ, the Name above every name, I pray this prayer today.

Amen.

Day Four

"In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world."

John 16:33

This paradox of a passage is one of the most hope-filled yet hard-to-hear passages in all of Scripture. In the same breath, Jesus says that we will have tribulation – that pain is promised to us, that hardship and heartache are inevitable – and yet even so, we have an all-surpassing hope because *He has already overcome the world*. In the same breath, Jesus breaks our false sense of security – a security found in health or happiness or money or status – and then reconstructs a true security for us, a security found *in Him and in what He has done*. In the same breath, Jesus crucifies us on the cross with Himself and then brings us back to life again in Himself. In the same breath, Jesus Christ acknowledges our pain as real, and then gives us the answer in overcoming it – an unwavering hope that *He has already overcome it for us*.

In the middle of this paradoxical statement Jesus says two words, two words which define our present reality: *"Take heart."* You see, this is where we find ourselves. We find ourselves in the middle. We are in the middle of this paradox, where tribulation is coming and is here, and yet has already been dealt with and defeated by Jesus. It's what we call *the already-but-not-yet*. It's the middle of a battle that is ongoing and yet already won. It's the middle of a promise of new life which is here already and yet not here completely. We still suffer. We still fall. We still sin. We still die. And yet, Jesus has defeated suffering. He has defeated sin. He has defeated death.

And so, we *take heart*. There is something profoundly comforting about these words. And it's because, in these words, we find the essence of our faith. In fact, to *take heart* is quite honestly the definition of *faith*. Our faith, the *Christian* faith, is multifaceted. It's more than "believe-ism" – wishing upon an unseen, undefined, uncertain future or believing in some ethereal universal power. It's a faith founded in the physical and the spiritual. It's a faith founded in all aspects of our lives: our past – that Jesus Christ has come and died and rose again, our present – that Jesus Christ is always with us in everything that we face, and our future – that Jesus Christ will come again in glory and usher in an eternity where there will be no more suffering or sin or death. It's a faith where we learn to *take heart* – to take heart in what He has already done and yet will do. Because as we know, "faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen." (Hebrews 11:1)

And this is the call of the Christian: When all of life is crashing down around us – we say, "Take heart." When nothing seems to make sense, when you lose your job, when you lose your health, when you lose your loved one, when the economy crashes, when an unseen virus threatens everything we see – we rest in the *hope* of Jesus Christ, the Author and Perfecter of our faith.

So, when tribulation comes, we know that *He is there*. When tribulation threatens to overcome us, He is there saying, *"Take heart in Me*. Take heart in the fact that no matter what happens, *nothing* – whether death or life, or angels or rulers, or things present or things to come, or powers, or height or depth, or anything else in all creation – *can separate you from Me and My love for You*. Take heart in the fact that when life feels like it is more than you can bear, I am right there beside you, begging you to give your burdens Me. Take heart in the fact that I am *real* and that I *really* came and that I *really* died and that I *really* rose again. Take heart in the fact that no matter what you face in this life – *I have already overcome it*." This is our faith.

Today's Prayer

Father, You are real. You are here. You are with Me.

Holy Spirit, help me today to see the true reality behind my present circumstances.

Help me to Take Heart, no matter what I face.

I believe, I really do. But please, please help my unbelief today.

And in all circumstances, I will praise You – for You are good, no matter what.

In the name of Jesus Christ, the Name above every name, I pray this prayer today.

Amen.

Day Five

“Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.” And he who was seated on the throne said, “Behold, I am making all things new.”

Revelation 21:3-5

What we need to understand about this passage is this: *It’s really going to happen.* This passage is as *real* as our current reality. There *really* will be a day where God will dwell with man. There *really* will be a day where He will wipe away every tear from our eyes. There *really* will be a day where death will be no more. There *really* will be a day where there will be no more mourning, or crying, or pain.

The reason that we need to understand this is because all too often we read this and similar passages and (without even realizing it) fail to connect this almost too-good-to-be-true depiction of the future with our own reality. But the truth is that these events are just as real as the one’s we are currently going through. This future is a future which is coming, and nothing – not sickness or Satan or darkness or death or trials or tribulation or *anything in this world* – can keep it from happening. There is a future that’s already made. There is a future day where all is made new. And *this is it.*

THIS IS OUR HOPE. THIS IS OUR FAITH. THIS IS OUR GOD. Maybe you can’t tell from my use of all-caps, but this is a *BIG DEAL.* It’s a big deal because it means that now we know where things are headed. We know what’s going to happen. *We know the future.* No matter what happens right now, *this future is coming.* No matter what happens right now, Jesus Christ has already defeated death. No matter what happens right now, Jesus Christ has already made this a reality. No matter what happens, because of Jesus Christ, we have this hope that *will never fail.*

In fact, Jesus Christ is already there. He is *literally* already there with us in this future day where all things are made new. This may be hard to understand, so I’ll put it this way: We live in the *already-but-not-yet.* We live in the *not-yet,* yes. But we also live in the *already.* It’s the *already* where death has been defeated, sin holds no power over us, and Jesus Christ reigns as King. And this passage *is the already.* Right now, we see in a mirror, dimly; then we will see fully, face to face. Now we know in part; then we shall know fully. This is the ever-approaching day where we will see these things happen with our very eyes. And nothing can stop it from being a reality.

This is the true dawn that will come across the far horizon. This is the day where we will truly *know* God for the rest of eternity. This is the day where God will save us *once-and-for-all-time.* This is the day where Jesus Christ will finally, fully *overcome the world* – the day where death will be swallowed up in victory and we will walk with Him into eternity, saying “Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?” This is the day where anxious thoughts will be no more, and Jesus will no longer have to say, “*Give it to Me.*” for we will be with Him *forever.* Amen.

Today’s Prayer

*Father, You are so very good. You are always working all things for my good.
I know this because You are always working things toward this future day
where death and pain are no more, and all is made new.*

Holy Spirit, help me today and always to keep my eyes focused on this true reality.

*Help me to remember, when life is overwhelming,
that this is where I am headed – and nothing can stop this from happening.*

Keep my eyes fixed on You, always.

Thank You for the gift of life today and the future gift of eternal life with You.

In the name of Jesus Christ, the Name above every name, I pray this prayer today.

Amen.

Conclusion

A Note from the Author

Hi there. My name is Corey White. So far, I've tried to intentionally mute my voice and name from this devotional because I want this to be something that anyone can read and put themselves into and find their own voice and experiences in. If you've made it this far, congratulations. I can't believe you actually read all of this. If you would permit me, I want to tell you a little about myself in these final pages – just so you know who's been writing to you.

I am a 25-year-old (guy) who is (at the time of writing this) a few weeks away from graduating with a Master of Divinity from Beeson Divinity School in Birmingham, Alabama. Because of the Coronavirus, I'm finishing my last month and a half of the program from the comfort (and discomfort) of my living room couch. Writing this devotional has been one of the hardest spiritual challenges of my pastoral-life so far. Going through this quarantine period, I have felt my spiritual life and my soul become more and more dry the longer I am isolated from (what used to be) normal life – maybe you can relate. But I wanted to write this because I felt the desire to create something specifically designed for those who may be struggling in this time of unprecedented worldwide panic, with the hopes that this devotional might possibly outlast this “momentary affliction.”

I'll spare you the details, but this writing comes from the storehouse of my own suffering, my own anxiety-inducing experiences, my own physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual battles – all of which God has seen fit to take me through. And I truly *know* that God allows us to experience suffering for the sake of knowing Him deeper and being able to love others deeper in the midst of their own suffering. That's the whole point of anything we go through in this life.

And to that end, I want to finish this devotional with a reflection on a Scriptural image. It's an image that God has used time and time again to bring me to the place where I am fully dependent upon and content in Him. This image is a fitting end to this devotional revolving around the issues of anxiety and uncertainty, because it refocuses our hearts and minds on the solution to these struggles – *we are only truly content in life when we are fully content in Him.*

To circle back around to the preface, we are only truly able to *think rightly* when our thoughts are focused on Him and filtered through *the reality of His character*: that He is all-knowing, all-powerful, and in control of all things... and that *He loves us infinitely*. He wants us to be fully content in Him, because then and only then are we truly *free*. That's why God continually asks us to do one simple thing: “*Give it to Me.*”

The Altar

The altar has been an image for me that has served as a reminder and, at times, a visual representation my walk with Christ as He calls me deeper into His service. Throughout my life, I have felt God's call to take my desires and my will and to put them on the altar. He reminds me constantly of Abraham and Isaac. And if you would permit me, I want to briefly retell the story (found in Genesis 21 and 22) here:

God gave Abraham a son – the one thing that Abraham wanted most in life *and* a thing God had promised Abraham to have – only to ask Abraham to put this most treasured possession, this ultimate gift, this truly good and promise fulfilling son, *on the altar*. And then, furthermore, God told Abraham to raise the knife – to raise the knife to the point of dropping it on his son and killing him. God called Abraham to the absolute end of himself. He called him to take the most meaningful and good and right desire in his life and to put it on the altar and to go to the point of mentally and physically and spiritually assenting to *putting it to death*.

This is exactly what God is calling each of us to do for Him. That's what it means to die to yourself, to pick up your cross daily and follow Him. He has called us to put things on the altar, to put idols on the altar, to put good and right desires on the altar, to put things that are truly gifts from Him on the altar, and to raise the knife. And sometimes... sometimes He will call us to drop the knife on it. Sometimes He will tell us to put it to death. He does that with idols all the time. But sometimes He asks us to do it even with good things, with the desires of our hearts that are good – like the desire for good health, the desire for a job, the desire

to see our friends and family, the desire to have a stable economy, the desire to live in a world that isn't at the constant threat of a pandemic.

He asks us to put those desires on the altar, those good and right and wonderful things. And sometimes He tells us to drop the knife. Because, as He reminds us, *He can raise the dead*. He can bring life out of death. *Nothing is outside of His control*. Sometimes, as we are about to drop the knife, He provides a goat – just as He provided a goat to Abraham at the last second. But sometimes, the knife plunges... and we are led to the end of ourselves. And it's there that He is able to finally be our All-in-All. And sometimes, He brings that dead thing back to life. Sometimes, He does. But sometimes, He doesn't. Yet in all circumstances, *He is good*. And that is how He leads us to be fully content in Him. By asking us, over and over and over again, to put it on the altar, to "*Give it to Me*." Because only when we are truly content in Him, are we truly free.

put it on the altar

put it on the altar
please, *Give it to Me*.

do you trust Me?

yes?

good.

put it on the altar

I know, I know, you're scared.

you just got what you want.

do you want it?

yes?

good.

put it on the altar

you can't see, but I can

because I am I Am.

do you believe?

yes?

good.

put it on the altar

raise the knife – yes, it's hard.

I know 'cause I did it.

Give it to Me.

yes.

good.

put it on the altar

this idol is your death.

I am Life. you'll be free.

do you trust Me?

yes?

good.

put it on the altar

I feel your hurt, your pain.

your tears are Mine as well.

feel My heartbeat.

yes.

good.

put it on the altar

let go. let go. let go.

you can do this, I know

because I Am

and

I Will Be.

put it on the altar