

THE CURE FOR ANXIETY

(Luke 10:38-42)

Read the following quotes aloud and answer the questions that follow.

“The Lord is at hand. Have no anxiety about anything,” Paul writes, who was evidently in prison at the time and with good reason to be anxious about everything, “but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.”

He does not deny that the worst things will happen finally to all of us, as indeed he must have had a strong suspicion they were soon to happen to him. He does not try to minimize them. He does not try to explain them away as God’s will or God’s judgment or God’s method of testing our spiritual fiber. He simply tells the Philippians that in spite of them—even in the thick of them—they are to keep in constant touch with the One who unimaginably transcends the worst things as he also unimaginably transcends the best.

“In everything,” Paul says, they are to keep on praying, come hell or high water, they are to keep on asking, keep on thanking, above all keep on making themselves known. He does not promise them as a result they will be delivered from the worst things any more than Jesus himself was delivered from them. What he promises them instead is that “the peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”

The worst things will surely happen no matter what—that is to be understood—but beyond all our power to understand, he writes, we will have peace both in heart and in mind. We are as sure to be in trouble as the sparks fly upward, but we will also be “in Christ,” as he puts it. Ultimately not even sorrow, loss, death can get at us there. (Frederick Buechner, *Whistling in the Dark*)

Our lives often seem like over-packed suitcases bursting at the seams. In fact, we are almost always aware of being behind schedule. (Henri Nouwen, *Making All Things New*)

What a circus act we women perform every day of our lives. It puts the trapeze artist to shame. Look at us. We run a tight rope daily, balancing a pile of books on the head. Baby-carriage, parasol, kitchen chair, still under control. Steady now! This is not the life of simplicity but the life of multiplicity that the wise men warn us of. It leads not to unification but to fragmentation. It does not bring grace; it destroys the soul. And this is not only true of my life, I am forced to conclude; it is the life of millions of women in America. (Anne Morrow Lindbergh, *Gift from the Sea*)

I find He never guides us into an intolerable scramble of panting feverishness. (Thomas Kelly, *A Testament of Devotion*)

We are indeed caught in a web of false expectations and contrived needs. Our occupations and preoccupations fill our external and internal lives to the brim. They prevent the Spirit of God from breathing freely in us and thus renewing our lives. (Henri Nouwen, *Making All Things New*)

The endless cycle of idea and action,
 Endless invention, endless experiment,
 Bring knowledge of motion but not of stillness,
 Knowledge of speech but not of silence,
 Knowledge of words, and ignorance of the Word.
 (T. S. Eliot, *Choruses From ‘The Rock’*)

REMEMBERING

1. What quote caught your attention because it occasionally applies to you?

REFLECTING

2. When you get pulled in different directions by “many” things, what “important” things tend to get lost or dropped?

Read [Luke 10:38-42](#) and the Henri Nouwen quote and answer the questions that follow.

As Jesus and his disciples were on their way, he came to a village where a woman named Martha opened her home to him. She had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord’s feet listening to what he said. But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made. She came to him and asked, “Lord, don’t you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!” “Martha, Martha,” the Lord answered, “you are worried and upset about many things, but only one thing is needed. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her.”

Jesus does not respond to our worry-filled way of living by saying that we should not be so busy with worldly affairs. He does not try to pull us away from the many events, activities, and people that make up our lives. He does not tell us that what we do is unimportant, valueless, or useless. Nor does he suggest that we should withdraw from our involvements and live quiet, restful lives removed from the struggles of the world. Jesus’ response to our worry-filled lives is quite different. He asks us to shift the point of gravity, to relocate the center of our attention, to change our priorities. Jesus wants us to move from the ‘many things’ to the ‘one necessary thing.’ (Henri Nouwen, *Making All Things New*)

DISCOVERING

3. What’s one principle you learned from the story of Mary and Martha that could be useful to you?

CONNECTING

4. How might your principle be useful in the week or season ahead?

RESPONDING

5. What is one specific step you could take in the next 48 hours to act on this principle?