

cope
in
HOPE



a gentle guide
for the
Heavy Heart

by Valerie Griffin

section 1:

**Do I have the need
or the right to cope?**

section 2:

How do I cope

when my heart is heavy?

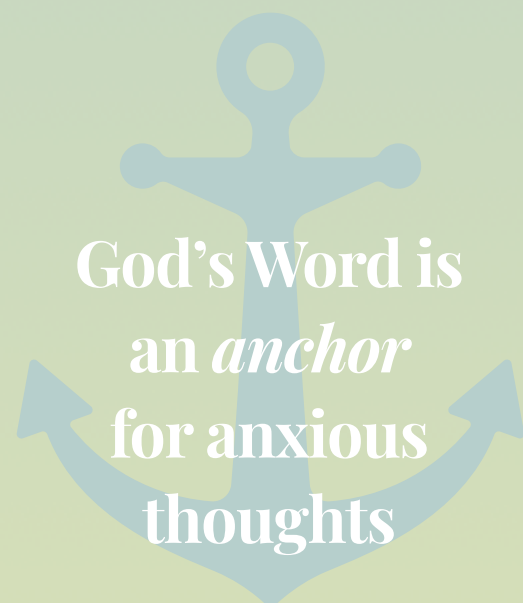
C

Create Calm

Anchor your heart to Truth

We strive for inner calm when the seas of uncertainty rage. God's Word is an anchor to temper our anxious thoughts. We are to dwell on what is "true, honorable, just, pure, lovely, commendable," and things that are of moral excellence and praiseworthy (Philippians 4:8).

The Bible tells us, "Do not worry about tomorrow, for each day has enough trouble of its own." Be mindful of running way into the future with your thoughts. Instead, prayerfully ask, "What do I need to do today?"



Finally brothers and sisters,
whatever is true, whatever is noble,
whatever is right, whatever is pure,
whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—
if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—
think about such things.

Philippians 4:8 NIV

Create a Calm Dwelling

When life feels heavy, we need to create a calm dwelling space for ourselves and our family. This doesn't mean tackling every home improvement project you've been putting off.

Simply focus on comfort and function.

It may look like cleaning off the chair in the corner of your bedroom so you can have a place to retreat to when needed. This is not the time to fuss over a Pinterest-worthy interior. Simply look around your space, noticing where it lacks functionality and comfort.

Home
is a *refuge*
when the heart
is heavy



For simple resources to renew your home and heart, download the [free ebook here](#).

Sometimes it's easier for me to create calm on the outside of me than inside.

I clear the countertops, light a candle, and vacuum the dog hair, and like magic, my outer world looks nice and tidy, thank you very much. But the inside of me spirals. The hamster wheel spins in my chest. My brain churns out a thousand thoughts running hundreds of directions at a million miles an hour. My jaw clenches. I am overcome by discouragement, frustration, and worry.

My attempt for outer calm to bring peace to my inner heart is a complete and utter failure.

So what can calm our hearts? In our everyday reality, how can we find the calm we so desperately crave? There is one tried-and-true way I know to experience peace when I feel like I'm taking the express train to crazy-town:

I talk to my friend Jesus about what I'm feeling.

Here's how to do it:

- Name what feels overwhelming to you. Don't just say, "All of it!" Name specifics. Acknowledge your exact struggle.
 - Are you irritated that no one helps you around the house?
 - Are you sad that you haven't had a coffee date in six weeks?
 - Are you at the end of your rope with trying to keep your kids quiet while your husband works?
- Once you've acknowledged what you feel, talk to Jesus about what's rumbling around in your heart. You don't have to stay stuck in discouragement, hopelessness, fear, or dread—because you have resurrection power in you.

In my life, I get frustrated trying to meet work deadlines while one daughter asks if she can use my phone and the other daughter can't remember the password for her online learning platform. I want to pull out my hair. My heart beats faster, and pressure rises in my chest. The only remedy I can think of is to open my mouth and let it out. Instead, I'm training myself (imperfectly!) to take a breath and whisper, "Help."

Jesus is not surprised this goal-achieving girl feels frustrated and overwhelmed. And he's not surprised by anything you're feeling either. He's ready and willing to help at the moment you ask. And out of his abundant riches, you receive grace upon grace.

Calm isn't the absence of chaos, but the presence of your Creator.

And nothing creates calm and brings peace like Jesus being on the scene and in your heart.

by Jill E. McCormick

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Obedience to the One

Obey is a word we don't really like. Toddlers don't like it. Teens don't like it. And even as adults, we tend to struggle with authority. As Christians, we are to obey the One of highest authority—God. When all seems uncertain (and we're unsure what to do), we find comfort in this: we can obey God.

The Bible tells us to love God and love others, and very practically—we love when we are patient, kind, not rude, and not self-seeking (see 1 Corinthians 13:4-5). For most of us, living out the 1 Corinthians definition of love 24/7 is challenging, especially during difficult circumstances.

Yet, we can control our responses. It's not easy, but how we respond to others is within our control. Perhaps you are like me and don't always respond in the most loving way or obey God's instructions in every situation. Seek your loving Father in your weakness. Ask him for strength and endurance to reflect him. Focus on one aspect of Jesus' character today (his love, patience, grace, mercy, compassion, forgiveness) and strive to emulate him. He is with you and will help you. Trust and obey.

Look
up
to
respond
well



Not a shadow can rise,
Not a cloud in the skies,
But His smile quickly drives it away;
Not a doubt or a fear,
Not a sigh or a tear,
Can abide while we trust and obey.
When we walk with the Lord
In the light of His Word,
What a glory He sheds on our way;
While we do His good will,
He abides with us still,
And with all who will trust and obey.

*Trust and obey,
For there's no other way
To be happy in Jesus,
But to trust and obey.*

Trust and Obey

lyrics by John Henry Sammis

O | Obedience to the One

My natural coping mechanism when struggling is to help everyone with everything.

I want to ignore the rise of the distress in my mind and soul, so I will do pretty much anything to keep distracted. I run to busyness. I use the distractions of fulfilling others' needs instead of focusing my eyes on the One who meets my needs.

My disobedience to God is not in my action of helping others—it is my reliance on self to cope.

My main concern with the way I naturally cope is that I don't run to God first. I long to follow Jesus' example. He always consulted God by retreating to a quiet spot to make sure he was walking in obedience with God. What I need to do is sit, listen, and resolve what is stirring up the anxiety. I need to bring it into the light and, most importantly, bring it to Jesus.

I'd like to give you an example of what this looks like for me to bring it to Jesus. I find a quiet place (sometimes my closet or front porch if all the people are home), take some deep breaths, and speak out loud or write out what feels heavy on my soul. I then ask God this question:

"What good would you have me do today—for your glory, not mine?"

The answer will look, sound, and feel different each time, for each day is new. One of my girls might come to me and ask to play or read. I might be frustrated because things aren't going my way and realize I just need actual rest, like a nap, and God refreshes my soul in those 20 minutes. I know these brief examples might sound crazy, but they are straight from my real life. I have learned—and I am still learning—to recognize these small moments, listen to the quiet Voice, and notice the tug to do the good he has set before me.

When you are suffering, do good.

When you have plenty, do good. We are called to do good because God is good. When we don't see the purpose or life feels too small, may we remain faithful and obedient to the One who was faithful to us first.

I meditate on these verses when I cannot find the words to express my distress: Psalm 19; 1 Peter 4:19; 1 Peter 3:13-17; 1 Corinthians 10:23-11:1; Ephesians 4:17-23.

by Heather Seeger

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P Prioritize God's Promises

There's a long line of fears waiting behind our thoughts.

For me, it's helpful to open the door to the fear. If I don't, it keeps knocking like an obnoxious vacuum salesperson, and I can't focus on anything else. So I let the fear in—to see how big and bad it really is. Sometimes once I acknowledge it, my fear seems relatively minor. Sometimes, I feel it's such a small thing, yet it looms heavy on my heart. And sometimes that fear runs in, and we play hide-and-seek as I struggle to clearly define it. Once I do, though, I can deal with it.

Defining a fear gives it a framework, so we know its size and substance.

Then, we can apply a promise to it.

Getting to the promise is essential. The Bible gives us ample reasons to hope. In the book of Psalms, King David opened the door to his fears, then laid them out before the King of Kings. David praised his God in the midst of his fear, and we can do the same—by prioritizing the promises of God's Word every time fear knocks on the door.



FEAR

Financial Strain

Isolation & Loneliness

Inability & Weakness

The Unknown & Unexpected

Opinion of Others

Difficulties or Death

PROMISE

God Provides

God is with me

God strengthens me

God is sovereign

God knows my heart

Nothing can separate me from Christ

PASSAGE

Matthew 6:33; Psalm 145:15-16; Luke 2:24

Hebrews 13:5-6; Zeph. 3:17; Matt. 28:19-20;

Psalm 46:10; 2 Corinthians 12:9; Proverbs 3:5-7

Jeremiah 29:11; Colossians 1:16-17; Romans 8:28

1 Kings 8:39; Galatians 4:10; Psalm 118:8; Proverbs 29:25

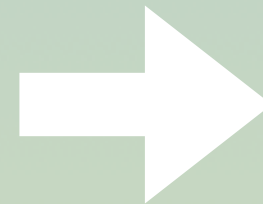
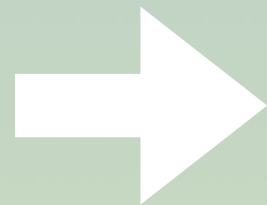
Romans 8:35-39

P Prioritize God's Promises

When my heart is heavy, fear is near.

The fog of uncertainty, fear, and altered daily activities settled heavily in my heart the first two weeks of pandemic life. Some of my anxiety with COVID-19 revolved around food shortages. A few days after I recovered from the shock of seeing empty shelves at the grocery store, I named one of my fears. I knew God could and would provide for us, but I needed to delve into my feelings before my heart fully received his promise. The naming process is often challenging because it takes intention to stop and acknowledge my emotions, and sometimes I feel silly or unspiritual. But, when we are specific about our fear, we can respond accurately.

Once I named my fear, I responded rationally, listing the truth about my circumstances. Yet a rational response isn't always enough because our emotions are often irrational. We need a solid foundation to place our feet on, especially when our feelings make us wobbly. Now, we are ready to prioritize an applicable promise to our situation.



Open the door to fear so you can see it, then clearly define it.

What is true about your circumstance?
List the facts.

Find a promise in God's Word that speaks to your fear.

example

"I'm worried my family will not have enough food."

"We have plenty of food in the pantry, and the store has food, too."

"God provides for my needs."
Luke 2:24

your turn

*Take a few minutes to go through this process.
The table on the previous page lists common fears and applicable promises to help you.*

E

Enjoy Encouragement

encourage

1. To inspire with courage, spirit, or confidence
2. To stimulate by assistance, approval, etc.
3. To promote, advance, foster

Do you need a bit of courage to face a new normal?

What about a dose of confidence as you step in an uncertain direction?

Do you hope to look back on this season and know you promoted God and his goodness?

That is the work and gift of encouragement.



**Offer the gift of
encouragement
to yourself
and others**



But encourage each other daily, while it is still called today, so that none of you is hardened by sin's deception.

Hebrews 3:13 CSB

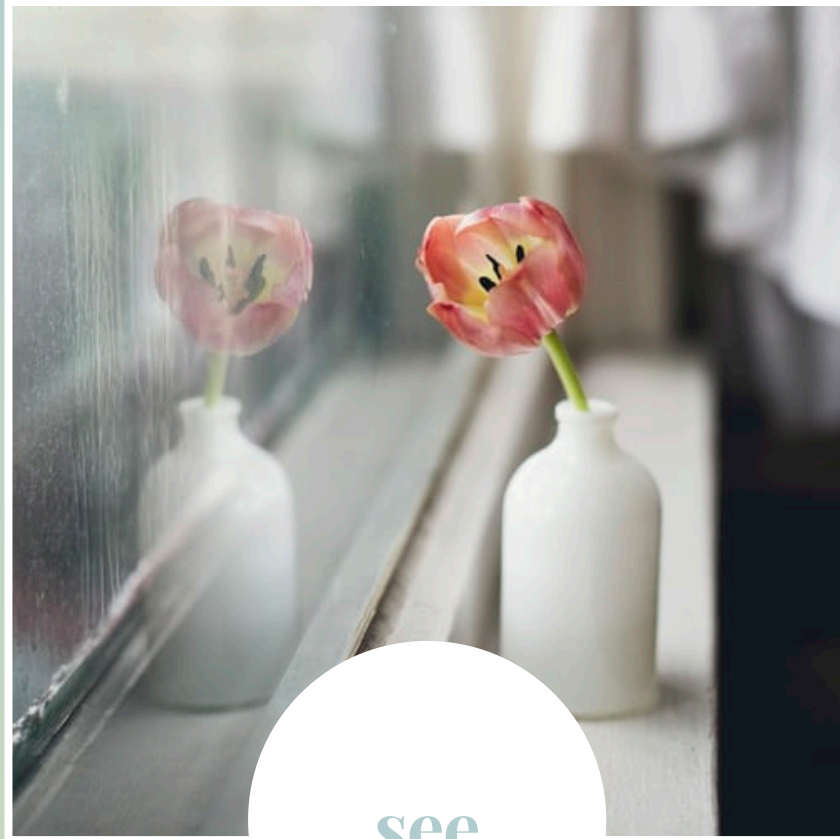
Have you seen the effects of deception creeping into your thoughts? Our enemy wants to extinguish our hope—and he uses whatever he can to do it.

But we do have hope!

**When we encourage ourselves or another with truth,
even in seemingly small ways,
we fan the flame of faith in our hearts.**

E

Enjoy Encouragement



see

In what area(s) is the enemy trying to deceive you?

- Your significance & worth
- God's love for you
- The goodness of God
- God's sovereign plan
- Christ's victory
- The power of Jesus
- The truth of the Bible



scripture

Choose one struggle from column 1 and do the following:

- Look up several scriptures and read the promises that squelch satan's deception.
- Write one verse on a card and memorize it.
- Create a personal praise playlist around the theme.



share

Reach out to a friend and share your struggle. Allow someone else to offer you the gift of encouragement through your vulnerability. By simply saying, "Would you pray for me in this area?" — you are giving yourself and another the gift of encouragement.

E

Enjoy Encouragement

We are not designed to live in solitude.

While my introverted self has enjoyed the extra time at home caused by this pandemic, I have realized that solitude isn't all it's cracked up to be. This time has increased my gratitude for the deep, honest relationships in my life. My family and close friends have supported me through the loss of my grandfather and through my roller coaster of emotions that this virus has caused.

My deepest friendships are with those I open my heart to the most.

Only then can I receive encouragement and acceptance.

Only then is the invitation extended for others to be authentic with me, giving me the opportunity to encourage them as well.

What an honor it is for someone to trust you with their truest self.

I've found the same to be true with my relationship to God. Only when I am honest, laying out my ugliest sins or deepest desires, can God provide the forgiveness, acceptance, and encouragement that my heart requires. My daily habit of reading God's word, along with my close friendships and small kindnesses by neighbors, have been my lifeline that I know will see me through to the end of this journey.

If your heart lacks encouragement, I have three recommendations for you.

First, seek God with a posture of humility and honesty. Pray, read the Bible and listen to what God is trying to teach you.

Second, reach out to your friends. Send a text or a Voxer message, or schedule an on screen meet-up and allow your true self to surface as you offer vulnerability and encouragement. It is likely that your friends are desiring this connection just as much as you are.

Third, find ways to help others. Doing acts of kindness will encourage you (and them) more than you know.

Encouragement induces the most beautiful effects in places where the light shines through.

by **Cassie Lynn Douglas**

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*You are not alone.
We pray this gift has encouraged
and equipped you to hold on to
the hope of Jesus. He loves you,
and he is with you in your
present struggles.*

May the God of
HOPE

fill you with all

JOY & PEACE

as you *trust* in him.

Romans 15:13

Featured Hope*Writers



Cassie

Cassie Lynn Douglas is passionate about encouraging you to love God, live better, and shine your light. She's a wife and mom and loves to make her family laugh by impersonating their labradoodle, Bailee.

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Jill E. McCormick is passionate about sharing common-sense grace with the try-hard girl. She's a wife and mom, and she frequently listens to podcasts while walking her puppy, Islay, whose Enneagram type is yet to be determined.

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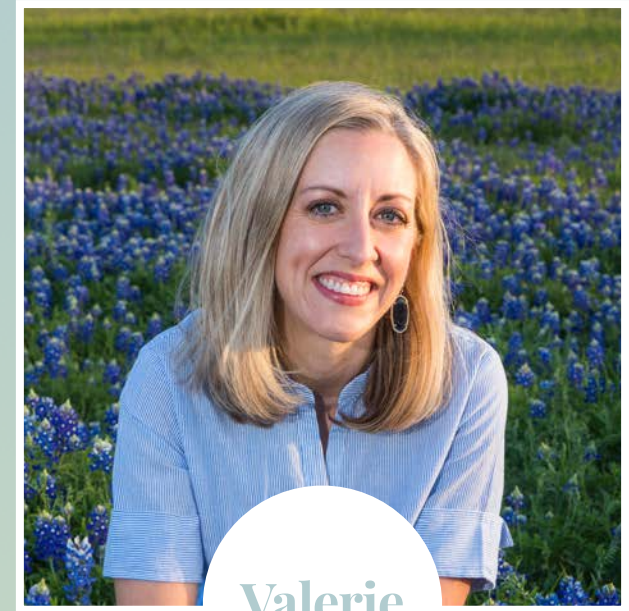


Heather

Heather Seeger is passionate about encouraging you to do the good God has set before you. She's a wife and mom, and she embarks on adventures of all kinds: exploring, creating, or traveling to Burundi, all of which are fueled by coffee.

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Valerie

Valerie Griffin is passionate about inspiring renewal in your heart so you can enjoy the beauty of dwelling daily with your Creator. She's a wife and mom, and she unashamedly assumes no responsibility of nurturing the family fish.

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