

## Anxious for Nothing: An Interview with Max Lucado about his book [Anxious for Nothing: Finding Calm in a Chaotic World](#)

### **What's the difference between anxiety and fear?**

Max Lucado: Anxiety and fear are cousins but not twins. Fear sees a threat. Anxiety imagines one. Fear screams, get out! Anxiety ponders, what if. In Philippians 4:6 Paul wrote “be anxious for nothing.” He wrote the phrase in the present tense, which implies an on-going state. It's the life of perpetual anxiety that Paul wanted to address. The Lucado Translation is, “Don't let anything in life leave you perpetually breathless and in angst.” The presence of anxiety is unavoidable, but the prison of anxiety is optional.

### **Do Christians struggle with the myth that they shouldn't ever feel worried or experience anxiety?**

Max Lucado: Yes! We've been taught that the Christian life is a life of peace, and when we don't have peace, we assume the problem lies within us. Not only do we feel anxious, but we also feel guilty about our anxiety! The result is a downward spiral of worry, guilt, worry, guilt.

You long to be “anxious for nothing.” You long for the fruit of the spirit. But how do you bear this fruit? Try harder? No, hang tighter. Our assignment is not fruitfulness but faithfulness. The secret to fruit bearing and anxiety-free living is less about doing and more about abiding.

Our aim—our only aim—is to be at home in Christ. He's not a roadside park or hotel room. He's our permanent mailing address. Christ is our home. He's our place of refuge and security. We're comfortable in his presence, free to be our authentic selves. We know our way around in him. We know his heart and his ways. We rest in him, find our nourishment in him. His roof of grace protects us from storms of guilt. His walls of providence secure us from destructive winds. His fireplace warms us during the lonely winters of life. We linger in the abode of Christ and never leave.

Don't load yourself down with lists. Don't enhance your anxiety with the fear of not fulfilling them. Your goal is not to know every detail of the future. Your goal is to hold the hand of the One who does and never, ever let go.

### **What does a life without anxiety look like?**

Max Lucado: With God as your helper, you'll sleep better tonight and smile more tomorrow. You'll reframe the way you face your fears. You'll learn how to talk yourself off the ledge, view bad news through the lens of sovereignty, discern the lies of Satan, and tell yourself the truth. You'll discover a life that's characterized by calm and will develop tools for facing the onslaughts of anxiety.

It will require some work on your part. I certainly don't mean to leave the impression that anxiety can be waved away with a simple pep talk. In fact, for some, God's healing will include the help of therapy and/or medication. If that's the case, do not for a moment think that you're a second-class citizen of heaven. Ask God to lead you to a qualified counselor or physician who'll provide the treatment you need. This much is sure: It's not God's will that you lead a life of perpetual anxiety. It's not his will that you face every day with dread and trepidation. He made you for more than a life of breath-stealing angst and mind-splitting worry. He has a new chapter for your life. And he's ready to write it.

**You write that God's sovereignty gives Christians an inside track to peace. How?**

Max Lucado: Sovereignty is the term the bible uses to describe God's perfect control and management of the universe. He preserves and governs every element. He's continually involved with all created things, directing them to act in a way that fulfills his divine purpose. That's why the most stressed-out people are control freaks. They fail at the quest they most pursue. The more they try to control the world, the more they realize they cannot. Life becomes a cycle of anxiety, failure; anxiety, failure; anxiety, failure. We can't take control, because control is not ours to take.

The bible has a better idea. Rather than seeking total control, relinquish it. You can't run the world, but you can entrust it to God. This is the message behind Paul's admonition to "rejoice in the Lord." Peace is within reach, not for lack of problems, but because of the presence of a sovereign Lord. Rather than rehearse the chaos of the world, rejoice in the Lord's sovereignty, as Paul did. Sovereignty gives the saint the inside track to peace. Others see the problems of the world and wring their hands. We see the problems of the world and bend our knees.

**How does prayer affect anxiety?**

Max Lucado: Peace happens when people pray. "Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you" (1 Peter 5:7). Casting is an intentional act to relocate an object. Let this "throwing" be your first response to bad news. As you sense anxiety welling up inside you, cast it in the direction of Christ. Do so specifically and immediately. Find a promise of God that fits your problem, and build your prayer around it. These prayers of faith touch the heart of God and activate the angels of heaven. Miracles are set into motion. Your answer may not come overnight, but it will come. And you will overcome.

**Can gratitude calm frayed nerves?**

Max Lucado: Gratitude is a mindful awareness of the benefits of life. It's the greatest of virtues. Studies have linked the emotion with a variety of positive effects. Grateful people tend to be more empathetic and forgiving of others. People who keep a gratitude journal are more likely to have a positive outlook on life. Grateful individuals demonstrate less envy, materialism, and self-centeredness. Gratitude improves self-esteem and enhances relationships, quality of sleep, and longevity. If it came in a pill form, gratitude would be deemed the miracle cure. It's no

wonder, then, that God's anxiety therapy includes a large, delightful dollop of gratitude. The anxious heart says, "Lord, if only I had this, that, or the other, I'd be okay." The grateful heart says, "Oh, look! You've already given me this, that, and the other. Thank you, God."

### **How do our thought patterns shape our perspective on life's difficulties?**

Max Lucado: There are many things in life over which you have no choice. But the greatest activity of life is well within your dominion. You can choose what you think about. You can be the air traffic controller of your mental airport. You occupy the control tower and can direct the mental traffic of your world. Thoughts circle above, coming and going. If one of them lands, it's because you gave it permission. If it leaves, it's because you directed it to do so. You can select your thought pattern.

For that reason, the wise man urges, "Be careful what you think, because your thoughts run your life" (Proverbs 4:23). Do you want to be happy tomorrow? Then sow seeds of happiness today (count blessings, memorize bible verses, pray, sing hymns, spend time with encouraging people). Do you want to guarantee tomorrow's misery? Then wallow in a mental mud pit of self-pity or guilt or anxiety today (assume the worst, beat yourself up, rehearse your regrets, complain to complainers).

Thoughts have consequences. Healing from anxiety requires healthy thinking. Your challenge is not your *challenge*. Your challenge is the way you *think* about your challenge. Your problem is not your *problem*; it's the way you *look* at it.