RENEW & RESTORE BIBLE STUDIES

Finding Freedom Anxiety & Stress

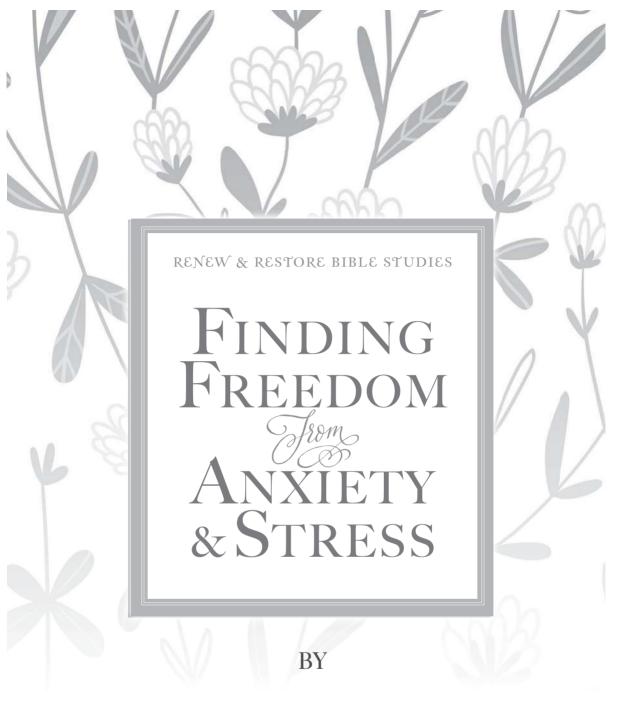


FINDING FREEDOM FROM ANXIETY AND STRESS



Renew & Restore Bible Studies

Finding Freedom from Anxiety and Stress Managing Your Emotions



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Finding Freedom from Anxiety and Stress

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INTRODUCTION

"Consider the lilies, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; and yet I say to you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. If then God so clothes the grass, which today is in the field and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, how much more will He clothe you, O you of little faith?" Luke 12:27–28 NKIV

The words echo back to us from years gone by. We first heard them in Vacation Bible School or from a dear Sunday school teacher—the voice of Jesus calling us to consider the lilies. The lesson is a simple one: don't worry. If God gives the flowers such pretty petals, dressing them more grandly than wealthy King Solomon could manage, He will provide for our needs, too.

Unfortunately, the call to consider the lilies is too often forgotten, left on a dusty shelf somewhere. Probably right next to the old plea to stop and smell the roses. We're too busy to stop. We're too rushed to consider. Our to-do lists are long. Our calendars are booked. Our time is money. We can't keep up.

We are busy people. We have responsibilities at work. We have responsibilities at home, at church, at school. We have responsibilities within our communities. We care for the needs of our parents, spouses, children, siblings, employers, friends. And it isn't enough to simply see to these things. We strive for perfection, yearning to "have it all." Most days, it is more than we can handle. Our hearts are overwhelmed. We are stressed out. We are worried. We dread tomorrow.

In the midst of all this everyday turmoil, our hearts long for a place of peace. We know God has promised us rest. We know He says we don't have to worry about tomorrow. He promised to calm our fears. Yet we barely have time to whisper a prayer, let alone study our Bibles. If you have been struggling, come. Let's carve out some time to explore the Scriptures and find some practical guidelines for laying aside our worries and fears, our stress and anxiety. You really can discover a place of peace.

THE PURPOSE OF THIS SERIES

The *Renew & Restore Bible Studies* are designed to help you connect with God through His Word, give Him your burdens and troubles, and experience the healing power of His promises. Whether you are studying individually or with a group, this book will give you the chance to reflect on key Scripture passages and consider how they apply to your life and circumstances. So pull out your Bible and a pen, and get ready to enter into quiet time with God.

FOR LEADERS

If you are leading a group through this study guide or engaging in individual study, please see the Leader's Guide at the back of the book for suggested answers and insights to the reflection questions.

SESSION 1

Start at Home

A prayer of one overwhelmed with trouble, pouring out problems before the LORD. LORD, hear my prayer! Listen to my plea! Don't turn away from me in my time of distress. Bend down to listen, and answer me quickly when I call to you. For my days disappear like smoke. PSALM 102:1–3 NLT

Sometimes we don't realize how busy we really are. Because we're right in the middle of living our lives, it feels quite normal. Sure, if we stop to think about it, we could stand to slow down our hectic pace a little, but there's just a lot going on right now. As it is, we don't get everything done in a day that we want to, so it doesn't make sense to slow down even

Session 1

more. Besides, we can handle it, right?

Oftentimes for me, I don't realize how busy my life has gotten until I visit my parents' home. They still live in the old brick farmhouse where I grew up. It's situated on ten acres, near a quaint little Scandinavian town. Whenever I go back for a visit, I'm amazed at how quietly they live.

They have to drive to the next town to do any real shopping. The closest fast-food restaurant is twenty minutes away. So is the nearest freeway. Usually, though, they just stay home. Dad keeps a vegetable garden, and Mom has a rose garden. They eat their own fruit and vegetables in season and can the leftovers. They sit and watch the birds that visit their feeders. The pace of their life is steady. Their home is a quiet haven from a busy world.

We know from the Bible that "God is not the author of confusion but of peace" (1 Corinthians 14:33 NKJV). Although we don't all desire to live out in the country, we each want our home to be a place of peace, a respite from the daily confusion that surrounds us. So how can we cultivate this restful space in the midst of our hectic lives?

 In the space below, or in the page at the end of the session if you need more room, list out the responsibilities that you regularly see to. How many hours do you work? What are your responsibilities around the home? What activities do you attend on a regular basis? How are you involved in your community? Who depends on you?

Start at Home

2. Look at the list of the people you are responsible for and the jobs you must do. Do you feel overwhelmed by all these responsibilities? Do any of them (or all of them put together) make you feel stressed or anxious?

3. In the midst of all this business and busyness, what would you say are the most important things in your life? Can all of them be found on your list?

Session 1

4. Fear, anxiety, and stress are not a part of God's plan for our lives. What is His plan for us? Read Jeremiah 29:11–14. What promises do these verses make?

5. Look at David's prayer in Psalm 102:1–3 at the beginning of this session. How is he feeling? What parts of this passage resonate with you?

Start at Home

6. When God made you, what did He have in mind for His workmanship? Look in Ephesians 2:10. What do you think these good works could be, and how might you fulfill them in your own life?

DIGGING DEEPER

When our responsibilities and stresses threaten to overwhelm us, God can offer us shelter from the storm. He wants to be our safe haven in the midst of the chaos. Let's examine a few Scriptures that explore both our connection with God and the true meaning of home. If you are in a group or own multiple Bible translations, look at how different translations add new meaning to the text. Which passages stand out to you, and in what ways could you implement the messages in your daily life?

- Psalm 91:1-2
- Proverbs 3:33
- Isaiah 28:16
- Isaiah 32:18
- Matthew 7:25
- John 14:1–2

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Session 1

PONDER & PRAY

Are you feeling busy? Is the busyness too much to handle? As you pray this week, follow David's example and cry out to the Lord. Pour out your heart before Him and tell Him about the strain you are under. Ask God to help you see what is important to *Him* in your days. Then ask God to guide you in organizing your time. His leading and inspiration will turn you to the path He has prepared for you.

Start at Home

Additional Notes & Prayer Requests

