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Holding God's Hand

Meditations

TO RELIEVE STRESS,
WORRY AND FEAR



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INTRODUCTION

If you picked up this book, likely either you or someone you love is passing through rough times. Perhaps the problem is the constant stress and worry that are easy to feel in this chaotic world of ours. Maybe it is past hurts that left you broken and nag at you even today. It could be the weight of losing someone you loved or a dream you had dearly hoped for. Sadly, for a great many of us, it is all these things.

When we are worried and anxious, stressed, full of fear and uncertainty, certain things have a way of calming and reassuring us. The hand of a friend clasped in ours can ease us. A warm, comforting voice can settle us down. Some Scripture passages have a special ability to deeply still and soften us when the world seems altogether too much for us. Meditations, especially meditations rooted in Scripture and deep prayer, can be like the tender speech of God reaching out to us in our time of need.

When emotions overwhelm us, and life is painfully difficult, God stands ready to infuse us with his calm. So many of us struggle to find peace but don't know where to turn. When emotions overwhelm us, and life is painfully difficult, God yearns for us to entrust our troubles to his care. But so many of us struggle even to translate woes into words.

Each meditation in this book is meant to wrap you in the love of God, to help you truly feel God's presence in your time of need, to help you experience the only place that brings real peace: the welcome of God's outstretched arms.

The meditations can be read daily as devotions. However, they need not be read in order. Instead, you are invited to turn

to the topics that speak most to your struggle. In these pages, you will find meditations to help you when you are suffering from stress, worry, fear, healing past trauma, and loneliness.

Each meditation contains a prayer, a Scripture passage, and a short guided prayer journey. You are invited to awaken to the wonder of God within and to set foot on the road to a happier, more peaceful life and a deeper relationship with God.

The Love of God Calms Our Souls

*"With age-old love I have loved you;
so I have kept my mercy toward you."*

JEREMIAH 31:3

The love of God eases our stress and worry, calms us, and stills our souls. God loves us so much that there is no anxiety that cannot be relieved, no mourner who cannot be comforted. His love is the balm that can turn the very shadow of death into morning. May we dare believe this, though our faces be streaked by tears and our chests squeezed with stress.

By frequent meditation on God's forever embrace, we plunge ourselves more and more into his love, the greatest possible grace. How wonderful it is to contemplate the love of a God who forgets as he forgives and drops our selfish actions, when we confess them, into the bottomless depths of the ocean of his love. There they will never be found, remembered, or mentioned into eternity.

It is a spectacular love that nothing can ever halt, nothing can exhaust, nothing can interrupt! It will not let us go. It leaps the gulf of space and bridges time. We cannot earn it or climb a ladder to it. It is not our love that grasps God, but

God's love that grasps us. All he asks is our yes. Nothing can separate us from the love of God.

Prayer

Dear God, unwavering as the affection of a friend, genuine as the love of a mother, your love for me is unalterable. Bathe me in the warm and blessed glow of that love. Help me to trust in it and yield to it. Daily give me glimpses of your loving heart. May I take deep draughts of that love through prayer, sacrament, and Scripture.

May I sink down like a child on the pillow of your care.

Guided Meditation

Allow yourself to sit in stillness for a while. The love of God grows thick in your room, easing your muscles, relaxing your soul. Jesus comes and stands beside you, grasping your shoulder firmly with his hand. He tells you he wants to take you on a journey. In your imagination, he takes you back to the creation of the cosmos and Adam and Eve. He tells you without words that he is ever making you new, and because of the new and fresh love he gives, your life can be bright with happiness. He takes you to the scene where he brought Lazarus back to life. He lets you know he can restore you, too, when the anxiousness of fear, stress, and worry hold sway in your life. He takes you to his crucifixion and lets you know that is the depth of love he has for you. He carries you to his resurrection, where the brilliance of eternity will reign forever, and you, too, can enter into glory.

Hold on to God's Hand

*They that hope in the Lord will renew
their strength, they will soar on eagles' wings;
They will run and not grow weary;
walk and not grow faint. ISAIAH 40:31*

There is something grounding and calming in holding hands with another person. Holding someone's hand can express love and boost fortitude. A mother may take the hand of a child who is receiving an injection from a doctor to lessen the child's fear of the needle. Hands held by couples can be an electric sign of devotion and commitment. Someone holding your hand when you are distraught can soothe you and let you know that everything will be okay. A chaplain holding the hand of the bed-bound and sick can lift their spirits and let them know that God cares.

What would it be like for you to hold God's hand? I imagine it would be an invigorating stream of calm and love spreading from your hand to every particle of your body and the whole of your soul. It would quiet your distress and warm your soul. When you are stressed and the storms of worry have taken over, that handclasp with God can finally quiet down your spirit.

Any time anxiety troubles you or fear bends you over with worry, you can reach out and fasten your hand to God's hand. When your vitality fades and helplessness takes you over, grip the hand of the one who can always help.

When Jesus walked the earth, the touch of his hand comforted and healed. Only in heaven will we know how many hands he held. Jesus said, "I came so that they might have life and have it more abundantly" (John 10:10). His hand conveys that life.

Prayer

Dear Lord, I hand over to you my tension, my fears, my stress. Soften my heart with your nearness. Shine your light along the roads I take. And always, in every place, may I soothe, comfort, and cherish others in the way that you soothe, comfort, and cherish me. As I face my anxieties, help me become an emblem of your healing, a quiet presence along the way, one who comforts others with your love.

Guided Meditation

Sit relaxed in your chair. Notice your inhaling and exhaling breath. The very act of breathing reminds you of the breath of the Spirit. When you breathe in, imagine the peacefulness of God entering with your breath, deeply relaxing you. When you breathe out, visualize negativity, fatigue, anxiety, worry, and tension being breathed out. The muscles of your face grow loose and relaxed, deeply relaxed. God's love unties the tight muscles of your chest and torso. Your arms and legs grow limp with God's ease. Sit there calmly. Jesus comes and stands beside you. He clasps your hand, and you feel the vigor of his love as he rejuvenates you.

Worry Less and Pray More

*Have no anxiety at all, but in everything,
by prayer and petition...make your requests
known to God. PHILIPPIANS 4:6*

We humans worry. We worry about everything...home, family, health, war, the pandemic, our job, and finances. We fret about the future.

When we worry, it causes us harm. It damages our physical and mental health, lessens our productivity, affects our love and care for others, and makes it hard for us to think efficiently. Worry immobilizes us. As a result, we do nothing or even do something foolish.

You may ask, does this mean I shouldn't be concerned about things? Yes, of course you should. But there is a vast difference between worry and concern. Authentic concern moves you to constructive action.

When we concentrate on our problems, we worry, but when we concentrate on God and his love, we replace the worry with peace. We need to look at where our focus is. Focusing on the details of the bad makes it hard to see the vast good.

Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Then you will experience God's peace. Tell your needs to God, perhaps even list them.

When you are in the middle of the storms and thunder of worry, turn your heart and mind toward Jesus by telling him what is going on. Let him fill you with his warmth. He can whisper in your heart, "You are my beloved. I treasure you. I am larger than your worry. I have a plan for you. I am leading you. I am directing you. Don't be afraid of the future; I am already there. I hold you in the palm of my hand."

Prayer

Dear Lord, it is so easy to worry, yet no amount of my worrying is going to change things. The bottom line is that you, Lord, are in charge. Teach me to worry less and pray more. When worries come, Lord, guide me in turning them over to you, one by one. Help me to center my heart on your goodness and wonder. Guide me to Scriptures that lead me into your loving care.

Guided Meditation

As you are seated, the peace of God gathers all around you and flows within you. Rest...relax awhile. Now you notice a big gunny sack filled with heavy stones sitting beside you. You have to carry that sack around wherever you go. The stones are your worries. Jesus comes and stands in front of you. You see a look of concern and compassion on his face. You relax even more, growing deeply peaceful. You touch the very hem of his garment and feel his love radiating within you. Jesus looks down at the gunny sack full of stones sitting beside you and says, "Give those to me." Each stone represents a worry. You pick up a heavy stone, name a worry, and place it in his hand. He takes the stone into his heart, where it disappears into that living flame of love.