

Putting An **X** Through Anxiety

Breaking Free
From The Grip
Of Fear
And Stress



Louie Giglio

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Note: This book contains information that is intended to help the readers be better informed in dealing with change and challenges in life. It is presented as general advice using the author's experience and best judgment but is in no way to be considered a substitute for necessary care provided by a physician or other medical professional.

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Introduction

*My flesh and my heart may fail, but
God is the strength of my heart and my
portion forever* (Psalm 73:26 NIV).

I want to invite you to take a journey with me into the valley where the giant called anxiety looms large—threatening, taunting, intimidating, incapacitating, and paralyzing us with threats of doom and demise.

I know this giant well and have suffered defeat in the thick of this valley in years past. Yet I also know there is a way to overcome anxiety. I know firsthand that you can emerge on the other side of the depression and dread and live to tell about the Someone who is more powerful than whatever has a grip on you. It's not a quick fix I'll offer, nor a promise that you will easily escape the fight. I'd like to tell you about the Champion, the Giant Slayer who is on your side in this fight and in each and every battle you'll face in the days ahead.

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Before we take the first steps down this road, it's important not to oversimplify the issue of anxiety. This giant is real. And it can be deadly.

Anxiety and its cousins—panic, worry, fear, and dread—are complex. There are spiritual, mental, physical, emotional, genetic, and circumstantial factors that can cause us to fall into the grip of depression, pulling us away from those we love and shuttering our ability to deal with everyday life. To underestimate the problem, or blow it off with a, “Hey, shrug it off and bounce-back” mentality, is a mistake.

As well, anxiety is personal. I have heard stories of other people's struggles with anxiety and collapse that sound similar to mine, yet every person's battle is different, and every experience is unique. A one-size-fits-all approach isn't going to be helpful here.

But coming to terms with the formidable weight of this giant in no way diminishes the promises of God—you can live free from the demoralizing grip of anxiety.

It's imperative for you to know that you are not standing helplessly alone in your valley. God Almighty is with you, and He is fighting for you. In fact, He has already taken on every “Goliath” and won!

Throughout this journey together, we will aim to set our gaze on Him. We won't ignore that a behemoth called

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fear or worry or panic has its foot on our neck. But we will choose to lift our eyes and see Someone bigger and more powerful—Someone who loves us and plans to lead us back into the light.

1

You're Not Crazy

The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it (John 1:5 ESV).

When I was in the toughest stretch of my battle against depression and anxiety, I dreaded the night. I could manage, just barely, the days. I hated going to sleep because I knew a 2 a.m. wake-up was coming and that cloud of doom would be looming overhead. If you've been there, you know what I mean. The walls feel like they're closing in and the darkness seems suffocating.

What's worse is that after a few weeks of these early morning awakenings, you start thinking that you're losing your mind. You think you're going crazy.

While it may be true there is "crazy" in the equation—mental, emotional, or chemical instability resulting in erratic behavior or symptoms—it's important for you to know that you're not crazy. What's more, you're not the only one walking through what you are experiencing right now.

For the Spirit God gave us does not make us timid, but gives us power, love and self-discipline (2 Timothy 1:7 NIV).

The Enemy wants you to think the opposite. He wants you to feel like you are the only person alive who is in this bubble of darkness. He wants you to believe that power, love, and self-control are impossible outcomes for you. He wants you to believe there's no way out, no end to this misery. He tries to convince you that you will never be normal again.

A National Emergency

A big breakthrough for me in my personal journey with anxiety was hearing from a friend about a pastor I very much respected who had shared a message about his battle with depression. At the time, I had never heard of anyone who was dealing with a situation like mine.

I didn't realize what I would soon discover as I battled depression and anxiety—namely, that practically everyone I knew was either on an anti-depressant of some kind or knew someone in their family or close circle of friends who was. I honestly didn't realize that our nation was living in

YOU'RE NOT CRAZY

an emergency state of crippling anxiety. I thought I was a unique struggler trapped in a world of my own.

That's what our Enemy does. He isolates us so that he can elevate our struggles as being unique and unrelatable. But thankfully, God has given us the Scriptures that are full of shared struggles and overwhelming grace.

When I watched the message recommended by my friend and realized this other pastor had similar initial symptoms to mine—"crazy" physical symptoms—a layer of hope was deposited into my heart. Though things didn't change instantly, I now knew someone who had survived to tell about their walk through this valley, and I was comforted to realize I wasn't alone.

That's where we need to begin on this journey. You aren't crazy, and you aren't alone.

In the year 2020, more than 14 million American adults had at least one major depressive episode, representing 6 percent of all U.S. adults, according to the National Institute of Mental Health (NIH).¹ Add to that the COVID-19 pandemic, which caused unprecedented stress because of social isolation, which triggered a 25 percent increase in prevalence of anxiety and depression worldwide.²

Never Alone

It's one thing to say that you're not alone. It's another to name and know who is walking with you through the valley. When David penned the words in Psalm 23, he was facing life-threatening danger, yet we read a stunning account of calm confidence in his Shepherd. He described his trials like this, *"Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me"* (Psalm 23:4 ESV).

Two lines in this verse are calling out to you with hope:

1. "For you are with me."

No matter how deep the pit or how dark the night, you can take comfort in the truth that Someone is with you. God Almighty is near, and His presence is a catalyst for driving out fear. You may not be able to sense or see Him, but no darkness can hide His presence from you.

In another psalm David writes:

Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there. ...If I say, "Surely the darkness will hide me and the

light become night around me," even the darkness will not be dark to you; the night will shine like the day, for darkness is as light to you (Psalm 139:7-8,11-12 NIV).

2. "Even though I walk through the valley."

God is not leading you *to* the valley you're in. He promises to lead you *through* it. This current place of struggle you're in will not be the end.

Years ago when I was in the grip of depression, if you had told me that I would be writing and preaching about putting an "X" through anxiety—that I'd be in my right mind, functioning in my gifts, filled with the light of Jesus and powered by the wind of the Spirit, and encouraging others so they can come back from the brink of despair—I would have thought you were the crazy one.

That's how I know that our God won't keep you in the valley. He will lead you through.

Here I Stand

Even though I walked through that dark valley, here I am. By the grace of God, I now stand and declare that He is good and He can do all that He says He will do.

I say that not to boast in my own strength or my own power. It was and always has been only Jesus. If He did it for me, I am believing He can and will inject a dose of hope into your night. I didn't have an instant turnaround. It wasn't an easy or smooth path into healing. But, by His grace, I did come out of the night and into the light of day.

My bout was incapacitating for months, and following those months my anxiety didn't permanently go away. To be transparent, some days that lingering sense of anxiety still lurks over my left shoulder about sixty miles behind me. The difference is I now know what it is, where it's coming from, and I know it's not going to take me out.

I believe, by the power of Jesus' name, it's not going to take you out either. Peter describes that our Enemy likes to prowl around, roaring like a lion, seeking someone to devour—but Jesus is actually *the lion King*, and He is with you in the valley called the shadow of death.

So, as we begin, call out to Jesus now. Call on His mighty name. Thank Him that He is with you. Tell Him you believe He can lead you to the light again.

YOU'RE NOT CRAZY

If you would allow me, I'd like to speak that truth over your life today through this prayer:

Father, I lift up my friend who is reading this right now. I know You see them. I know You know them. And I know You have exactly what they need. You've never faced a problem that You couldn't solve. You've never faced a need that You couldn't meet. You've never needed a resource that You didn't have. So I pray that in Jesus' name You will meet them where they are. Provide them with exactly what they need today. Remind them that You are greater than anything or anyone standing against them. Encourage and strengthen their hearts. Allow this struggle to draw them nearer to You. Lord, we give You all the praise and glory forever and ever. Amen.

Breaking Free

The Lord is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer; my God is my rock, in whom I take refuge, my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold. I called to the

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*Lord, who is worthy of praise, and I have been saved
from my enemies (Psalm 18:2-3 NIV).*



What comes to mind when you hear the phrase, "You're not crazy" or "You're not alone"?

Do you believe that God promises to lead you *through* the valley not just *to* it? Why?

Lord, I thank You for Jesus and for the power of the empty tomb. No matter what my circumstance is, there is a cross and an empty tomb in my story, and because of that I know that You are good and I can choose to praise You. Praise You in the middle of the storm. Praise You on the mountaintop or the valley low. Praise You with the weapon of worship. God, even if I can't see it, I'm going to believe it. I'm going to speak it out. I'm going to praise You because You've already done enough for me to know that You are good. I believe that You're going to be there for me and You won't let me down. Thank You for Your continual kindness to me. In Jesus' powerful name I pray. Amen.

Declare:

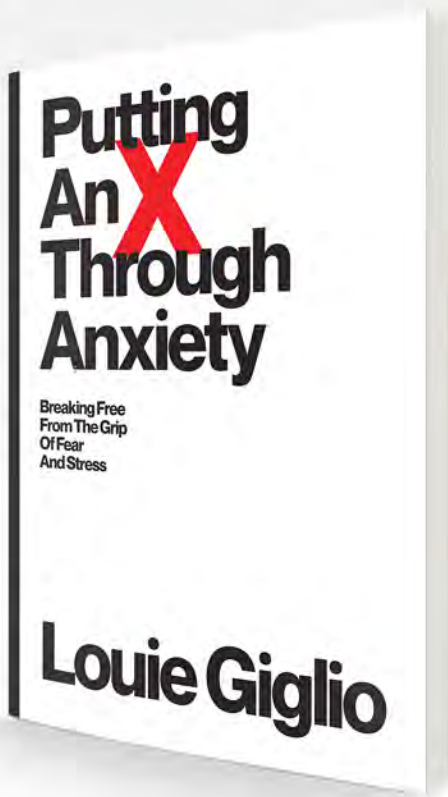
- *Even darkness is not dark to You, and the night is as bright as the day. Darkness and light are alike to You* (Psalm 139:12 NASB).
- *Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil* (Psalm 23:4 ESV).
- *Then one of the elders said to me, "Do not weep! See, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has triumphed"* (Revelation 5:5 NIV).

Endnotes

1. "Major Depression: Prevalence of Major Depressive Episode Among Adults," *NIH*; January 2022; <https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/statistics/major-depression>; accessed August 28, 2022.
2. COVID-19 pandemic triggers 25% increase in prevalence of anxiety and depression worldwide," *World Health Organization*, March 2, 2022; <https://www.who>

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.int/news/item/02-03-2022-covid-19-pandemic-triggers-25-increase-in-prevalence-of-anxiety-and-depression-worldwide; accessed August 28, 2022.



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About the Author

Louie Giglio is pastor of Passion City Church and original visionary of the Passion movement, which exists to call a generation to leverage their lives for the fame of Jesus.

Since 1997, Passion Conferences has gathered collegiate-aged young people in events across the US and around the world. Most recently, Passion hosted 50,000-plus in Mercedes-Benz Stadium and 1 million people joined online.

Louie is a national bestselling author of more than a dozen books including his newest release, *Don't Give the Enemy a Seat at Your Table*, as well as *Goliath Must Fall*, *Indescribable: 100 Devotions about God & Science*, *The Comeback*, *The Air I Breathe*, *I Am Not but I Know I Am*, and others. As a communicator, Louie is widely known for messages like "Indescribable" and "How Great Is Our God."

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An Atlanta native and graduate of Georgia State University, Louie has done post-graduate work at Baylor University and holds a master's degree from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. Louie and Shelley, his wife, make their home in Atlanta, Georgia.