

CHILL

A SlimBook by Mike Breaux

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Recognizing God's Peace in the Midst of Chaos

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*To Nanna and Pap,
your home has always been a place of peace for me.*

Introduction

As I sit here writing at a coffee shop there are flats screens all around the place tuned to CNN, Fox News, MSNBC, and ESPN. Aside from the "Plays of the Week" segment on SportsCenter, I feel surrounded by bad news.

Foreclosures. Lay-offs. Plant closings. Store closings. School shootings. Bankruptcies. Bail-outs. A new strain of flu. Iraq. Iran. Afghanistan. North Korea. Typhoons. Tsunamis. Earthquakes. Tornados. Hurricanes. Politics. Dang!

Someone recently counted in a national newspaper, some form of the words "at risk" used over 2,300 times in one day's news. Just watch your local news. Right before they go to a commercial break it's, "Can you really trust your kid's popsicles? A new alarming study, when we come back."

And then during the commercial some new drug is being promoted and the disclaimer for the possible side effects is longer than the actual commercial. I

looked up the disclaimer of a certain drug that shall remain nameless and this is what it said:

"If you, your family, or caregiver notice agitation, hostility, depression, or changes in behavior, thinking, or mood that are not typical for you, or you develop suicidal thoughts or actions, anxiety, panic, aggression, anger, mania, abnormal sensations, hallucinations, paranoia, or confusion, stop taking (blank) and call your doctor right away. Also tell your doctor about any history of depression or other mental health problems before taking as these symptoms may worsen while taking (blank). Some people can have serious skin reactions while taking (blank), some of which can become life-threatening. These can include rash, swelling, redness, and peeling of the skin. Some people can have allergic reactions to (blank), some of which can be life-threatening and include: swelling of the face, mouth, and throat that can cause trouble breathing. If you have these symptoms or have a rash with peeling skin or blisters in your mouth, stop taking and get medical attention right away. In clinical trials, the most common side effects of (blank) include: Nausea, sleep problems, constipation, gas, and

vomiting. These are not all the side effects of (blank). Ask your doctor or pharmacist for more information.

Can I get a prescription for fear?!

Max Lucado writes in his book *Fearless*, "When fear shapes our lives safety becomes our god. When safety becomes our god, we worship the risk-free life. Can the safety lover do anything great? Can the risk-averse accomplish noble deeds? For God? For others? No. The fear-filled life cannot love deeply. Love is risky. They cannot give to the poor. Benevolence has no guarantee of return. The fear-filled cannot dream wildly. What if their dreams sputter and fall from the sky? The worship of safety emasculates greatness. No wonder Jesus wages such a war against fear."

Fear is like that big dude in the Middle School hallway. Remember him, the tough guy who had been shaving since fourth grade? The one that made you hesitate and go down the other hallway and take the long way to your class? Except instead of just your lunch money, fear will steal your dreams,

dampen your passion, challenge your contentment,
and suck the joy out of your life.

God hates to see that happen to anyone. He doesn't want to see anyone bullied like that. With his strong love, he wants to stand with us, help us face those fears, and walk down those hallways. In these next few pages, I want to share some things I've been learning about God's peace and perfect love. How when we partner with the Prince of Peace, we are able to live the kind of full and fearless life he intended for us to live. I'm hoping that you will hear God say to you in the next few minutes, "Peace, be still. Chill."

Chapter 1

The Panic Button

There is an underlying uneasiness about the days in which we live that is stronger than I've seen in my lifetime. Anxiety disorders cripple so many people (about 40 million adults) these days. Panic attacks and chronic worry deeply affects so many students and children.

I saw someone tweet this the other day:

"Worry is a thin stream of fear trickling through the mind. If encouraged, it cuts a channel into which all other thoughts are drained."

That's the way it goes, isn't it? Maybe for you right now, worry is the thing that is draining all your thoughts, all your peace, and all your energy. Perhaps what started as just this thin trickle of fear has now turned into a raging river of anxiety that's got you living with your head barely above water.

You'd like to relax, lay on your back and float, but you can't see how.

The Ancient Greek word (*merizo*) that the Bible uses for anxious means "To be pulled in different directions."

Does that describe anybody you know? Have you said recently, "Oh man, I feel like I'm being pulled a thousand different directions"?

Well, it's my hope and prayer that during the time it takes you to finish this short read, you will feel the arms of God wrap around you, and you'll hear him whisper to you, "Come on. Chill."

By that I don't mean he's saying, "Go grab a Corona and find a beach," or "find the nearest hammock and take a nap." Don't get me wrong, I love the beach and hammocks, but I need to hear God say to me in the middle of my day "Come on, Mike, settle down... stop stressing out...stop freaking out. Take your hand off the panic button; take a deep breath, slow down. Peace, be still."

Peace by the world's definition is the absence of conflict. But by God's definition, it is confidence and calm right in the middle of conflict. Jesus (the one called the Prince of Peace) once said to a group of stressed out followers—with their hand poised to push the panic button—"I am leaving you with a gift—peace of mind and heart. And the peace I give is a gift the world cannot give. So don't be troubled or afraid." (John 14:27, NLT)

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To that same group he said (John 16:33, NLT), "I have told you all this so that you may have peace in me. Here on earth you will have many trials and sorrows. But take heart, because I have overcome the world." CHILL.

He's telling us today, "Hey, listen, you're going have some tough times. This life is hard. You live in the middle of a fallen world and you will be surrounded by flat screens reporting terrible news. But you will also have peace in the middle of chaos. Peace in the middle of conflict. Peace in the middle of a climate of panic. CHILL."

I'm telling you that his peace is real, indescribable, and amazingly available. I'm learning to take my hand off the panic button and rest in him like he invites all of us to.

I love the way the Message paraphrases the words of Jesus in Matthew 11:28-30:

"Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me and you'll recover your life. I'll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me—watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won't lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you'll learn to live freely and lightly."

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I've resolved that no matter what happens to me in this life—no matter how daunting the headlines are, no matter how tough the economy gets, no matter what kind of storms blow into my life—my response

to fear is going to be faith. I want to unconditionally trust Jesus, the Prince of Peace.

In his book *Ruthless Trust*, Brennan Manning says, "To trust is to be convinced of the reliability of God." I'm more and more convinced.

Trust was not some concept way out on the edges of Jesus' teaching, it was at the heart of everything he taught. In fact, out of all the commands that Jesus gives in the Gospels, which one do you think he gives more often than any other? Yep, some form of, "Don't be afraid, take heart, be of good cheer, don't panic, take courage, don't let your hearts be troubled." That tells me that he acknowledges our very real struggle with fear, but also calls us to a deeper trust. He tells us, "Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in Me." (John 14:1, NIV)

To trust is to be convinced of the reliability of God.

