Praise for *Finding Quiet*

I thank God for *Finding Quiet*. Here J. P. Moreland, a first-rate philosopher, provides us with wise and deeply personal insights into anxiety and depression. In doing so, he gives us a most useful understanding of the functioning of the human soul. I highly recommend *Finding Quiet*.

RICHARD J. FOSTER, author of *Celebration of Discipline*

Finding Quiet is a remarkable book. I am grateful that J. P. Moreland researched the topic of anxiety and depression so deeply and then shared his findings through his own story. His personal vulnerability is both encouraging and convicting. Whether you wrestle with anxiety and depression yourself or know someone who does, this book is full of wisdom and practical steps that make it an invaluable resource.

SEAN MCDOWELL, Biola University professor,
speaker, author

Anxiety and depression are unfortunately far too common and can be highly severe, even life-threatening. J. P. Moreland's book is a personal, vulnerable, and instructive guide from his own narrative to what has helped him and to what can make a difference to the reader. His biblical references are especially enlightening. Highly recommended.

DR. JOHN TOWNSEND, *New York Times* bestselling
author of *Boundaries* and founder of the Townsend
Institute for Leadership and Counseling

Here's a masterpiece of scholarship, transparency, compassion, and profound guidance for all who struggle with anxiety or depression. My friend J. P. Moreland courageously opens his life so you can move toward healing and hope. This book will be a blessed breakthrough for countless readers!

LEE STROBEL, *New York Times* bestselling author

J. P. Moreland is not only a leading philosopher; he's also a man who has seen sore affliction due to stress and anxiety. In light of his candid account of his recovery from two nervous breakdowns, J. P. explains how broken people can find peace and wholeness through counseling, meditation, prayer, and medication. As a philosopher, he makes a strong case for his positions. I found especially helpful his argument for Christians taking medications that help with depression and anxiety. But he is more than philosophical; he's pastoral. He uses his experience and research to help mend wounded people. In this, he is like Jesus, who was given "a well-instructed tongue to know the word that sustains the weary" (Isaiah 50:4). This book will help me find some of the joy and serenity I've lost in recent years.

DOUGLAS GROOTHUIS, professor of philosophy at Denver Seminary and author of *Walking through Twilight: A Wife's Illness—A Philosopher's Lament*

Don't be fooled by the title. *Finding Quiet* doesn't minimize depression one bit or offer superficial solutions. Its well-researched ideas combine depth and practicality, providing a path to survive—even thrive—in living in the fullness of God.

JAN JOHNSON, author of *When the Soul Listens* and coauthor of *Renovation of the Heart in Daily Practice*

Finding Quiet is a wide-ranging and remarkably helpful analysis of the causes and solutions for anxiety and depression. It draws on the findings of modern psychology, the timeless truths of the Bible, and the author's own personal struggle with anxiety to provide a multifaceted remedy that will give readers genuine hope for dealing with their own anxiety and depression or helping others who face these challenges.

WAYNE GRUDEM, research professor of theology
and biblical studies at Phoenix Seminary

In his Sermon on the Mount, Jesus repeatedly enjoins us not to be anxious (Matthew 6:25–34). The apostle Paul reinforces this admonition when he writes, "Do not be anxious about anything" (Philippians 4:6). But *how*? Many of us feel powerless to banish anxiety from our lives. It just happens. And sometimes we find that the more we try to deal with it, the more anxiety we feel precisely because we cannot overcome it. In this practical, insightful, and immensely helpful book, J. P. Moreland imparts the wisdom he has acquired in his years of personal struggle with anxiety—an integrative wisdom coming from the fields of neuroscience, psychology, psychiatry, medicine, and philosophy. He combines this with a set of biblical spiritual practices that make a profound difference in the quality of one's life. If you struggle with anxiety, this book will give you hope.

CLINTON E. ARNOLD, dean and professor of
New Testament at Talbot School of Theology
(Biola University)

Finding Quiet is a deeply moving, honest, and helpful resource. J. P. Moreland writes from his heart and out of his personal experiences about his own pathway back from anxiety and depression to peace and joy. Make no mistake, this philosopher is also a soulologist who has written a book that is holistic, practical, and a must-read for Christians who are experiencing anxiety and depression. Here you will find an excellent complement to the process of Christian counseling and psychotherapy.

GARY W. MOON, executive director of the Martin Institute for Christianity and Culture and Dallas Willard Center, Westmont College, and author of *Becoming Dallas Willard: The Formation of a Philosopher, Teacher, and Christ Follower*

Finding Quiet

My Story of Overcoming Anxiety and the Practices That Brought Peace

J. P. MORELAND

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To Bill Roth—
deep, faithful, and devoted Jesus follower,
excellent Christian therapist,
respected professor of psychology,
and my close, intimate friend since 1975.
A man who is "steadfast, immovable,
always abounding in the work of the Lord,
knowing that [his] toil is not in vain in the Lord."

1 Corinthians 15:58 NASB

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Preface

The book you hold in your hands is an honest revelation of my own struggles with anxiety and depression, along with a selection of the significant spiritual, physical, and psychological ideas and practices that have helped me most. I am not a licensed therapist, and this book is not meant to be a substitute for professional psychological or psychiatric help. Rather, my intent is to come alongside you, my reader, as a fellow sufferer and to share my experiences and some ideas and practices that may be fresh and new to you. These ideas and practices have helped many, but my book is my own story, and everyone's experiences are unique. There is much to learn about dealing with anxiety and depression; may this book encourage you as you seek to meet your own mental health needs.

A clinical psychologist read an earlier draft of the manuscript, and I incorporated his suggestions. Moreover, some of my thinking in this book reflects not just my training in seminary in pastoral counseling, which has been part of my ministry for more than forty years, but also the lessons I've learned over the years from close friends who are therapists.

If you suffer from anxiety or depression or another mental health issue, please know that I am a fellow sufferer, and I want you to improve. I pray you will find hope and help in the pages to follow.

I am indebted to Hope Moreland, Bill Roth, Becky Heatley, and Jim Duncan for reading an early draft of this book and providing me with helpful feedback.

Introduction

My Descent(s) into an Abyss of Anxiety/Depression

MAY 24, 2003, 2:30 A.M. On Friday afternoon, May 23, 2003, I had attended Biola University's graduation ceremony. School was finally over, and I was looking forward to a nine-month sabbatical to write, rest, be with my family, and do some traveling and speaking. Little did I know that I was about to face the worst seven months of my life.

I am not a light sleeper, but at 2:30 in the morning of May 24, I awoke dripping wet with sweat, my heart pounding through my chest, and my body filled with electricity and adrenaline. It was as though I sensed a large tiger in the house, and I went from room to room to see if something was wrong. The previous nine-month school year had been the most stressful time in my life, at least since early childhood. Yet something was happening to me that I had never encountered

before and of which I had no understanding. Unknown to me, I was having a severe panic attack.

My wife, Hope, woke up to ask what was wrong, and all I could tell her was that I was shaking, that electricity was running from the back of my head to my chest, and that I was very afraid but did not know of what. I decided to take a walk around our block, and I did so until the sun came up. That weekend I must have walked around our block a hundred times. Two specific thoughts were anxiety-producing for me, and I could not get them out of my mind. One thought was about a critic of me and my work who was spreading lies about my character. Eventually, he was identified and exposed by others, but I did not know this would happen. All I could think about were his attacks and the fact that my life's work would be undone. The second thought was that I was going to lose my job as a professor because of these false attacks, which would leave my family and me destitute. When you are anxious, you don't always think rationally, yet these thoughts seemed very, very real and dangerous to me.

As I walked all weekend, I battled with those thoughts, trying to find some distance and relief from them. On Monday morning, I had (of all things) jury duty. I was not called to serve, but for seven hours that day, I lay on the floor in the back of the jury-pool room and tried to read one of Dallas Willard's books. By midafternoon, I had fallen apart. I was in the midst of the most frightening, fragmenting battle for my sanity I had ever known.

MY BACKGROUND. To provide some context, let's flash back to my childhood. As far as anxiety and depression

are concerned, by the time I was seven years old, I already had two strikes against me: genetic ancestry and early childhood. I was born with a clear genetic predisposition to anxiety from my mother's side of the family. My maternal grandfather was a nervous wreck. I have memories of him visiting us and not being able to stay seated or keep from bouncing his legs and fidgeting with his fingers. He was very anxious, and when any of us would get near him, we couldn't help unintentionally internalizing his anxiety. My mother lived in fear and anxiety on a daily basis, as did her sister and brother. She and her sister were taking valium for the last twenty years of their lives, and my uncle self-medicated by drinking. And I have other relatives on my mother's side who have been on antidepressant or anxiety medication for years. I have two daughters. One looks like me and my mother, and the other looks like my wife and my biological father. Guess what—the former has my anxiety and is on medications and in counseling, while the other daughter does not need medication. My genetic predisposition is just that—a predisposition I inherited that does not determine my behavior, but it does make getting anxious a lot easier for me than for those without the predisposition, all things being equal.

My early childhood was traumatic. I learned how to worry by watching and absorbing my mother's constant fretting. After I got married and my mother was older, when my family and I went back to the Kansas City area to visit her and my stepfather—I kid you not—each door of their house had at least six locks on it, and they lived in a safe neighborhood. My mother looked at the world through the eyes of fear, and as I

explore in the next chapter, anxiety is partly a learned habit, and I learned from the best!

Besides that, my father contracted terminal cancer of the liver when I was seven months in the womb. When I was six weeks old, my parents left me at my grandparents' home, and my mother took Dad to Jefferson City, where a radical surgeon (someone who would perform a risky, untested surgery on a patient who had no alternative; there was no guarantee the surgery would work) worked on my father and removed the cancer, or so we thought. Eventually, the cancer came back, and Dad died when I was seven years old. I have vivid memories of his eyes being yellow and of him reaching for a glass of orange juice, only to miss the glass and spill everything on the floor. I asked my mother, "Daddy is dying, isn't he?" but she dismissed the question. I was not allowed to grieve but was constantly distracted with new toys and was not permitted to go to his funeral after he died. My father never found himself. He always wanted to be a coach, but being a salesman was the only way he could provide adequately for the family. He hated his job and was discouraged most of the time. From the time of the radical surgery until his death in 1955, he and my mother were also on constant alert for the cancer to return. The job and the cancer was more than he could take. He was a good man, but a depressed one.

Five years later, when I was in seventh grade, my mom remarried. My stepfather, Larry, was a good and decent man, but he did not know how to relate to a son (though he tried), and he did not know how to express or speak about emotions. I left for college in 1966 with a lot of fear about being able to handle

it. I also had a hole in my heart that could only be filled by finding real meaning in life. Fortunately, I found Jesus there in 1968 through Campus Crusade for Christ, and I joined the Crusade staff for five years.

After that, I went to Dallas Seminary, married my precious wife, Hope, halfway through seminary in 1977, and moved to San Bernardino, California, where we lived from 1979 to 1984. During that time, I taught at Crusade's seminary; my wife gave birth to our two precious daughters—Ashley and Allison (now married, in their mid-thirties, and with five children); and I did an MA and a PhD in philosophy under Dallas Willard. We moved a few times before settling in Yorba Linda, California, in 1990, and I have taught philosophy at Biola University ever since.

Throughout these years, I was anxious and depressed from time to time, but not in any way that made me unable to function. That is, until 2:30 a.m. on May 24, 2003, when all hell broke loose.

BACK TO 2003. For seven months, I experienced daily panic attacks and felt intense anxiety except when sleeping. I could not see the world as it really is. I spent a lot of time for the first month or so lying on the couch because I did not have the energy to get up. I was afraid of irrational things. I was in fear every time I checked my email, and my heart would start pounding every time the phone rang. I could not drive on the freeway—it was too much stimulation. I could not attend my grandchildren's soccer games, and for about six weeks, I could not have them in my home.

I wanted to be left alone, so I often curled up in a ball and

worried about everything. I can remember wanting desperately to get out of my own skin, but I was stuck in it. I never seriously contemplated suicide, but many times I asked God to kill me in an automobile accident or in some other way. I thought my whole life had been a waste, and I saw no purpose for living. I wanted to die so the pain would go away.

I started weekly therapy with a good Christian therapist, and I went to our primary care physician, who prescribed an antidepressant medication. This was a good decision, but it can be a complicated affair choosing to go on medication and which caregivers to consult about it. In my case, the dosage prescribed by my primary care doctor didn't help. Two months later, a friend said I should see a psychiatrist, since they are specialists in medications and brain chemistry. Sometimes the cost of seeing a psychiatrist is prohibitive or one may not be accessible, and there are times when one's primary care team may offer better guidance on medications than a psychiatrist. But in my case, I needed to try something else. My psychiatrist significantly adjusted my dosage. The medication, my therapy, my friends, and lots of Bible reading and prayer helped, and the day after Christmas, my anxiety and depression lifted. I was "well," but the whole experience left me a broken man and a different person. It had been a terrifying seven months. I continued in therapy and stayed on medication while easing back into my job, still fearful of a relapse. I felt relatively normal for the next ten years until May 11, 2013.

MAY 11, 2013. Since I had been feeling better for so long, I foolishly took on far too much work for the school year of

2012–2013. On top of that I worked with my psychiatrist to lower my dosage to a smaller amount. I did not know it, but I was a sitting duck for a relapse. It happened late in the afternoon on May 11, 2013. When you are prone to anxiety, stress is enemy number one—*But not for me*, I thought. After all, I was a distinguished professor and Christian "leader," whatever that means. Surely all this panic attack business was behind me. I think the weekly activities of university teaching helped suppress any growing anxiety. But with just one week left in the spring semester, having just presented a philosophical paper at a high-level academic conference, I walked to my car to go home—and boom! Seemingly out of nowhere, I was hit with a relapse of panic, terrorizing fear, and high-level anxiety. I can remember thinking, *Please, God, not again! I can't take another period of anxiety like I did in 2003*. But I did. This time, the gruesome period of anxiety and depression lasted five months.

I immediately tried to slow down, but when things were quiet and I had nothing to do, my mind found fears on which to obsess. I got back on a higher dosage of antidepressant medication and started back into therapy. I was in serious trouble all summer and dreaded the day the fall semester was going to start.

I tried to teach my classes but was horrified by being in the classroom. I got to the point where I would go to the empty classroom in which I was about to teach an hour before class, walk around the room, stand at the lectern, and try to convince myself that there was nothing to be afraid of. But it didn't work. Two weeks into the semester, I had to drop out and stop

teaching. I thank God that my department chair and dean were able to find people to cover for me so the classes could continue. I was embarrassed and discouraged, and I didn't know who I was.

The low point came in early October when I joined a two-week anxiety-depression group at a nearby hospital. I am an advocate of group therapy, and my therapist friends value it. But for some reason or other, I wasn't into it this time. My heart and mind were elsewhere. I went to the hospital each day from 8 a.m. until 4 p.m. There were about twenty other people in the group, most of whom were very different from me and I couldn't relate to them. I felt like a fish out of water.

One afternoon it hit me—at the very time I was in my group of sad people who looked like they were at the end of their lives (most had been in the group for months), my classes were being taught by other people and Biola was chugging along without me. From my anxiety-ridden, skewed perspective, the contrast between my group and my life at Biola was so stark that I simply started crying and could not stop. I was at rock bottom again.

After the two-week group ended, I went home, and a few days later, God spoke to me. He told me he never wanted this to happen to me again, and while he would be with me, I needed to see the future weeks and months as a learning pilgrimage. I needed to learn all I could about anxiety and depression and begin to practice daily what I learned. So from mid-October until mid-January, I read—no, devoured—at least forty books, both secular and Christian, on the psychology of anxiety and

on formative spiritual principles. I learned a ton and took detailed notes on the most helpful points.

This approach might not have worked for everyone. All I can say is what I learned and began to practice changed me in a way that I intuitively knew was different. I was becoming a different person, and my family and friends noticed the difference. The chapters to follow are a condensation of the very best and most helpful things I discovered. I know for a fact they worked in my life. How do I know?

AUGUST 3, 2015—THE START OF A MEDICAL NIGHTMARE. In June 2015, my routine blood work showed that my PSA was extremely high. My doctor referred me to a urologist, who did a biopsy on my prostate gland and told me that half of it was filled with cancer. Thankfully, none had penetrated the prostate wall, so on August 3, I had a radical prostatectomy to remove my prostate gland. The surgery took five hours, and I needed two blood transfusions during the operation.

For the next two years, I was to get a PSA blood test every three months to check on how things were going. After such a surgery, one's PSA should stay below .05. If it gets to .21, that is a good indicator that surgery did not get all the cancer and that radiation would be needed. My readings (two to three months apart) were .03, .04, .29, .38, .31, .39, and .51. When my PSA reached 1.5, my urologist said I was having a relapse of cancer, so in the fall of 2017, I received thirty-nine radiation treatments along with Lupron injections that help to starve the prostate cancer cells. As I write this, it will take about a year before I will know if I'm prostate cancer-free.

Then in late January 2014, I started to get out of breath after doing simple activities like bringing in a small bag of groceries. After a general blood test, my doctor told me my iron levels were lower than any patient he had seen in twenty years. He almost sent me to the hospital for a blood transfusion. He told me it had to be due to internal bleeding, so I had a colonoscopy in March, and a very large tumor was discovered in my cecum (the area at the junction of the small and large intestines). Another five-hour surgery removed a massive tumor that involved thirty-one lymph nodes. Only one node was cancerous, but it had penetrated my colon wall, and I would need to have six to seven weeks of chemotherapy. Every other week, I'd get infused with three different cancer-killing drugs for about six hours at the cancer center. Then I wore a pump for forty-eight hours that was inserted into a port from my chest to my heart, and it continued to pump chemo into me.

My health situation deteriorated further. During a routine visit with my dermatologist, the doctor cut out a strange-looking lesion on the back of my left arm. None of the labs could diagnose it, so they sent it to Harvard and to UCLA, which came up with the same diagnosis: I had a very rare skin cancer (it usually occurs around the eyes, and only 120 cases have been reported in the US in other areas of the body) called a sebaceous carcinoma that was caused by a rare disease known as Muir-Torre syndrome, a form of Lynch syndrome. None of my doctors had heard of it. It is a rare, highly malignant, life-threatening cancer. If it metastasizes, it is virtually a death sentence.

I didn't know how long the lesion had been there—three months or three years. Surgery was scheduled immediately, and I now have an eight-inch scar on the back of my arm and a large scar under my arm.

I also got a squamous cell carcinoma on my forehead. It was deep, and while I have a hole in my head (as many have told me for years), I now required another surgery. The wound was kept open, and I wore a large bandage on my forehead for two and a half months.

What's the point of all this? During a two-year period, I contracted four cancers, had four inpatient surgeries and one outpatient surgery, and was on chemotherapy for seven months. Yet I was the happiest, calmest, and most peaceful I had been in years! I had virtually no anxiety at all. I am not exaggerating. My close friends, my wife, and my daughters regularly commented they couldn't believe how peaceful and happy I was throughout it all. The reason was that for about two years, I had been practicing the things I'd discovered.

My deepest hope and prayer is that what I share in the pages to follow will give you hope and confidence and will prompt your own healing journey. Remember, if you or a loved one struggles with anxiety or depression, I am one of you. I know exactly what it feels like, and I know the frustration in your heart and the longing to get better. So I offer what follows with the hope that what encouraged and helped me may also encourage and help you. May God make it so. As a transition to the book's first chapter, I offer you a word of encouragement. Chapter 1 may be a bit difficult for some readers in that

it is somewhat theologically heavy. Some may need to read it twice before proceeding to chapter 2. But please read it carefully, because it provides a spiritual framework within which to better understand mental health.

One final point: While anxiety and depression are different, one can cause the other, and they often occur together. And treatments for one are often effective for the other. As psychologist Deborah Glasofer notes, "Do not despair if you think you suffer from separate, co-occurring anxiety and mood symptoms . . . There is an overlap in effective psychotherapies for these problems; similarly, a group of medications known as selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs) are among those that have been shown to be helpful with both anxiety and depression."[1]

In what follows, I will often speak of anxiety alone. This is for the sake of convenience, and while I have suffered from both anxiety and depression, I am more familiar with the former. But you may understand that much of what I learned about anxiety applies equally to depression.

Chapter 1

Human Persons and a Holistic Approach for Defeating Anxiety/ Depression

Extrabiblical Knowledge

It was a very hot Southern California afternoon in August 2007, but thank the Lord, I was preaching in a nicely air-conditioned church with about one thousand people in attendance. The pastor was gone on vacation to Europe. I had preached at this church four times previously, and I was enjoying the morning immensely. While making a point in my message, I rather offhandedly mentioned that I was on an antidepressant, and I urged people who were struggling with anxiety/depression to check out this avenue of help. Well, my point was like teeing off a golf ball in the shower: It quickly ricocheted right back at me! As soon as the service ended, two elders rushed me into a back room and told me in no uncertain terms that their church did not believe in such medications. I was never invited back.

The disciplines of psychiatry and psychology are widely rejected by evangelicals. As one Christian leader put it, "True psychology ('the study of the soul') can be done only by Christians, since only Christians have the resources for the understanding and the transformation of the soul. Since the secular discipline of psychology is based on godless assumptions and evolutionary foundations, it is capable of dealing with people only superficially and only on the temporal level . . . Scripture is the manual for all 'soul work.'"[1]

In stark contrast to this approach, consider the words of

John Wesley: "To imagine none can teach you but those who are themselves saved from sin, is a very great and dangerous mistake. Give not place to it for a moment."[2] In valuing extrabiblical knowledge, our brothers and sisters throughout church history were merely following common sense and Scripture itself.

Repeatedly, Scripture acknowledges the wisdom of cultures outside Israel—for example, Egypt (Isaiah 19:11–13), the Edomites (Jeremiah 49:7), the Phoenicians (Zechariah 9:2), and many, many others. The remarkable achievements produced by human wisdom are acknowledged in Job 28:1–11. The wisdom of Solomon is compared to that of "all the people of the east" and "all the wisdom of Egypt" to show that it surpassed that of people with a longstanding, well-deserved reputation for wisdom (1 Kings 4:29–34). Paul approvingly quotes pagan philosophers (Acts 17:28), and Jude cites the noncanonical book Assumption of Moses in Jude 9. The book of Proverbs is filled with examples in which knowledge, even moral and spiritual knowledge, can be gained from studying things (for example, ants) in the natural world. Once Jesus taught that we should know we are to love our enemies, not on the basis of an Old Testament text, but from careful reflection on how the sun and rain behave (Matthew 5:44–45). We can and must cultivate a Christian approach to anxiety and depression, but in that tilling we may also include the study of extrabiblical knowledge that supplements and does not contradict Scripture.

I believe naysayers make two mistakes: (1) They have seen abuses of "all truth is God's truth" and have thrown the baby

out with the bathwater, and (2) they fail to see the implications of a biblical view of the human person for developing and sustaining mental health. Regarding the first mistake, "all truth is God's truth" has sometimes been used as a slogan to justify revising the Bible to fit a claim to truth that is not within a legitimate interpretation of Scripture. When it comes to psychology, a believer must always check what one hears against biblical teaching and the wisdom of a group of mature believers. But the abuse of something does not determine its legitimate use. Indeed, "all truth is God's truth" has been horribly abused, but with proper caution, there is so much good, helpful, and true information from the field of psychology and psychiatry that we would be foolish not to appropriate it.

Regarding the second mistake, I believe the naysayers have a faulty, or at least an underdeveloped, view of the Bible's teaching about the functional, holistic nature of human beings. Let me explain.

Healing Anxiety/Depression and the Human Person

Several months ago, my wife and I attended a spiritual formation class at our church. The speaker mentioned the "self" and the "ego" as part of her lecture. A class member's hand shot up: "How does the self or ego relate to the soul and spirit?" An older gentleman immediately followed with a comment: "I've been a Christian for thirty years, and I have no idea what a soul is. No one has ever taught on the subject."

As Dallas Willard said in many of his lectures and writings, without an understanding of the soul and the body and their relationship to each other, it is impossible to think deeply and helpfully about spiritual formation and growing as a disciple of Jesus, and that includes ways to defeat anxiety.[3] For example, according to Willard, if one does not understand the deep connections between the brain and emotions, one will most likely address anxiety as a purely spiritual or psychological issue, leaving out entirely the importance of factoring in issues involving the brain. It is precisely these topics and more that I will address in this chapter.

The Human Soul

Put very simply, the soul is an immaterial substance or thing that contains consciousness and animates/enlivens the body.[4] Consciousness is what we are aware of when we introspect. It consists in sensations (pain, the taste of a lemon), thoughts, beliefs, desires, memories, acts of free choice, and so on. As I will show later in the chapter, these are in the soul, not the brain.

Further, the soul is fully present at each point of the body. In this way, the soul is to the body as God is to space—entirely present at each point. This is part of what it means to say that the soul animates, makes alive, makes sentient the body. That's why you don't lose, say, 10 percent of your soul if your arm is cut off, or 50 percent of your soul when half of your brain is removed in surgery.

This is important to know because many of our emotions

and sensations, including anxiety, reside in certain parts of our bodies—we feel the anxiety there—because our soul is at those places and is the literal container of the emotions or sensations. And as we will see, gaining victory over anxiety includes cultivating the ability of noticing: being aware of the different feelings/sensations and their locations in the embodied soul.

Finally, the soul contains what is called faculties. At any given time, the soul has a number of capacities or abilities that are not currently being actualized or used. To understand this, consider an acorn. The acorn has certain actual characteristics or states—a specific size or color. It also has a number of capacities or potentialities that could become actual if certain things happen. For example, the acorn has the capacity to grow a root system or change into the shape of a tree.

Likewise, the soul has capacities. I have the ability to see color, think about math, or desire ice cream even when I am asleep and not in the actual states just mentioned. The adult human soul has literally thousands of capacities within its structure. But the soul is not just a scrambled collection of isolated, discrete, randomly related internal capacities. Rather, the various capacities within the soul fall into natural groupings called faculties of the soul.

In order to grab hold of this, think for a moment about this list of capacities: the ability to see red, see orange, hear a dog bark, hear a tune, think about math, think about God, desire lunch, desire a family. The ability to see red is more closely related to the ability to see orange than it is to the ability to think about math. We express this insight by saying that the

abilities to see red or orange are parts of the same faculty—the faculty of sight. The ability to think about math is a capacity within the thinking faculty—the mind. In general, a faculty is a compartment of the soul that contains a naturally resembling family of related capacities.

We are now in a position to map out the soul in more detail. All the soul's capacities to see are part of the faculty of sight. If my eyeballs are defective, then my soul's faculty of sight will be inoperative, just as a driver cannot get to work in his or her car if the spark plugs are broken. Likewise, if my eyeballs work but my soul is inattentive, say, I am daydreaming, then I won't see what is before me either.

The soul also contains faculties of smell, touch, taste, and hearing. Taken together, these five are called sensory faculties of the soul. The will is a faculty of the soul that contains my capacities to choose. The emotional faculty of the soul contains one's abilities to experience fear, love, and so forth.

Two additional faculties of the soul are of crucial importance. The *mind* is that faculty of the soul that contains thoughts and beliefs, along with the relevant abilities to reason with them. It is with my mind that I think, and my mind contains my beliefs. However, if my brain is damaged, it will affect my ability to think, recall memories, and so on.

The *spirit* is that faculty of the soul through which the person relates to God (Psalm 51:10; Romans 8:16; Ephesians 4:23) and is able to be directly aware of God, demons, or angels.[5] Before the new birth, the spirit is real and has certain abilities to be aware of God. But most of the capacities of the unregenerate

spirit are dead and inoperative. At the new birth, God implants or activates capacities in the spirit. These fresh capacities need to be nourished and developed so they can grow.

Think about a chest of drawers. Each drawer is a different compartment of the entire piece of furniture, and in each drawer is a group of resembling items—socks in one drawer, T-shirts in another; underwear, sweaters, and so on in their own drawers. In the same way, you are your soul (if you weren't, when you died and left your body, awaiting the future general resurrection, it wouldn't be you any longer!), but your soul has a number of "compartments" within it. You have a mind, a will, a body, and so forth.

Each of these compartments or faculties affect each other in very complicated ways. How you think can affect how you feel, and vice versa. What you believe affects what you choose, and vice versa. Your self-talk affects your mood. All of this means that there is a purely psychological aspect to all of one's faculties, as well as a distinctively spiritual aspect to each. Thus, based on a biblical understanding of the soul, we see that a holistic approach using therapy and spiritual development is crucial in alleviating the pain of anxiety.

It would be a profitable exercise to write down all of the faculties listed above and brainstorm how each one can affect the others. For example, in addressing anxiety, it may be important to train one's mind in a certain way, since the mind affects the faculty containing your feelings. Certain habitual patterns of self-talk trigger anxiety. If my mind constantly entertains fearful thoughts about the future, this will affect my

emotional faculty by creating anxiety. But how about the soul-body connection? Do they affect each other?

The Body and Its Relationship to the Soul

The human body is an ensouled biological structure. This crucial point is best explained with an example. Suppose I had salt and a glass of water. If I put the salt in the water (and it dissolved), I would have salted water. If I could take the salt out of the water, there would be plain water left. In the example the salt = the soul, the salted water = the body, and plain water = a human corpse.

Note that the body is not merely a physical object. A body without a soul is, indeed, a mere physical object, and as such it is a mere corpse. It was a body, but no longer. The soul can exist without the body, just like salt can exist without salted water. But a body cannot exist without the soul, just like salted water cannot exist without salt. Remember, the body includes its physical, biological aspects—organs, cells, and so forth—but it also includes the soul fully present at every point where the body exists in order for it to be a body.

Two Crucial Implications for Addressing Anxiety/Depression

The implications of this cannot be overstated for developing a way—especially a Christian way—of addressing anxiety. Here I mention two: (1) The brain/nervous system can, in many cases, be helped by various anxiety-reducing medications prescribed by a psychiatrist or a primary care physician

(e.g., antidepressants), and (2) the formation of habits that restructure the brain, the heart muscle, and other body parts can exchange the habit of being anxious with the habit of resting in peace and joy. These two implications are not exhaustive and are not meant to replace your professional care team's individualized strategy for you. But they were invaluable to me as I sought to better understand anxiety.

Regarding the first implication, while in the body, the soul needs the body to be functioning properly—the eyes, the brain, the nervous system—for it to work. The soul cannot see without the eyes working (at least while one is embodied). The emotions, including peace and joy instead of damaging anxiety, and the mind cannot work without the brain and nervous system working properly. Thus, anxiety is closely related to what is happening in the brain and nervous system. This means that antidepressants and other medications prescribed by a primary care physician or psychiatrist can, in many cases and under the proper guidance, return the brain to a more normal chemical balance so that anxiety is lessened or taken away altogether. It is important to realize that no one should feel the least bit embarrassed, unspiritual, or of little faith if one needs to take medications. Indeed, the idea of availing oneself of such help follows quite naturally from a holistic biblical anthropology.

Regarding the second implication, habit formation, we all know what it means to learn some particular activity—for example, to play golf or the piano. Consider golf. We start by becoming motivated to learn and by reading about how to play or by watching, say, a golf video. Yet no one in his or her

right mind would stop at daily reading and videos! Practice is required.

Yet this is exactly our standard evangelical view of growing spiritually and psychologically and, by extension, of defeating anxiety. We think that if we hear the Bible preached once a week (twice if we're really committed!); if we read a bit of the Bible each day, as well as books on spiritual and psychological health; and if we listen to inspiring Christian music (the really committed even *sing* this music once in a while!), we'll really grow and anxiety will leave us. These activities are helpful and needed, but sufferers know they are not enough if one is dealing with anxiety.

Think of it like this. The intensity of anxiety or depression varies on a scale from light to severe. At some point on the scale, the intensity level is too high, and one may benefit significantly by including medications in one's approach.

Returning to the golf analogy, what is missing in this strategy? Practice, practice, practice. The really great players are those who keep practicing over the entire course of their careers. To learn golf, we go to a golf instructor at a driving range, and, focusing on specific movements under the instructor's direction, we repeat those movements over and over until a habit is formed. The same thing is done in learning how to play the piano, speak French, make pottery, or learn math. Sometimes we repeat a practice exercise that is not good in itself but is merely a means to getting good at the craft. One practices piano scales, not to get good at the scales, but to get good at playing complex musical scores.

So far, so good. But what does this have to do with flourishing as a follower of the Lord Jesus and replacing anxiety with peace and joy? A failure to answer that question—indeed, a failure even to ask it—has resulted in disaster for the church and countless disappointed, powerless, anxious, and depression-filled Christians. So we need to ask, What, specifically, does learning to play golf or the piano have to say to us about cultivating an anxiety-free life? Let's turn to Scripture to formulate an answer to this crucial question.

A number of New Testament texts seem a bit odd at first glance. It's hard to know how to take them if we do the right thing and interpret them literally. (Note: emphasis added in these texts below.)

> Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your *bodies* as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship.
>
> *Romans 12:1*

This verse is unpacked earlier in Paul's letter:

> Even so, consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus. Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its lusts, and do not go on presenting the *members of your body* to sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and *your members* as instruments of righteousness to God . . .

I am speaking in human terms because of the *weakness of your flesh*. For just as you *presented your members* as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness, resulting in further lawlessness, so now *present your members* as slaves to righteousness, resulting in sanctification.

Romans 6:11–13, 19 NASB

Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize. Everyone who competes in the games *goes into strict training*. They do it to get a crown that will not last, but we do it to get a crown that will last forever. Therefore I do not run like someone running aimlessly. I do not fight like a boxer beating the air. No, I *strike a blow to my body and make it my slave* so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize.

1 Corinthians 9:24–27

Therefore *consider the members of your earthly body* as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry.

Colossians 3:5 NASB

Train yourself to be godly. For *physical training* is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come.

1 Timothy 4:7–8

As mentioned above, at first glance, these texts—especially the italicized words—may seem a bit puzzling, but as we will now discover, they express insights about human nature, anxiety, and flourishing that are so deep that, once again, the insights of the Bible expose the shallowness of our own culture in breathtaking fashion. Properly understood, we will see that presenting two members of your body—your brain and your heart muscle—to God as instruments of righteousness (which includes emotional flourishing and overall health) can be important in replacing anxiety and worry with deep peace and joy. Learning how to present my brain and heart muscle in this way was a major source of transformation for me. Research has supported the idea that this can work.[6]

To understand this biblical teaching, we must first clarify four concepts: habit, character, flesh, and body.

A *habit* is an ingrained tendency to act, think, or feel a certain way without needing to choose to do so. The way a person writes the letters of the alphabet is not something he or she needs to think about. It is a habit, and one concentrates on what one is writing, not on the habitual style of handwriting used. *Character* is the sum total of one's habits, good and bad. Penmanship character is the sum total of one's good and bad writing habits; it is one's handwriting character.

Biblical terms such as *flesh* (*sarx*) and *body* (*soma*) have a wide field of meaning. Depending on the context, they can mean many different things. Sometimes *flesh* and *body* mean the same thing, but in the passages above, there is a unique and important meaning for each. *Body* is pretty obvious. In contrast

to the soul, it refers to one's living, animated physical aspect. The body can be seen and touched, and it is composed of tissue, skin, and bone, as well as various organs (e.g., the heart) and systems (e.g., the nervous system). The *flesh* in these texts refers to the sinful tendencies or habits that reside in the body and whose nature is opposite that of the kingdom of God.[7] Flesh also seems to consist of powers that can dominate the soul and one's free will. In this case, flesh reigns over the soul.

To understand these more fully and to appreciate their importance more deeply, let's return to the example of learning to play golf. What I am about to say may sound a bit forced, but I mean for it to be taken quite literally.

When a person plays golf, he or she has a "golf character," that is, the sum of good and bad habits relevant for playing golf. One's "golf flesh" is the sum of one's bad golf habits. Where do these bad habits reside? They dwell as ingrained tendencies in specific body parts, particular members of the body that can be triggered unconsciously without one choosing to activate the habit(s). One's golf game may be weakened by bad habits in the wrists, the shoulders, or somewhere else. One may have good habits in one's legs, but bad habits—golf flesh—residing in one's shoulders. Golf flesh resides in the specific members of one's body.

How does one develop a good golf character? Not simply by daily golf readings coupled with regular exposure to motivational golf music. No, one must present one's members to a golf instructor at a driving range as instruments of golf "righteousness" instead of following one's golf flesh as an

instrument of golf "unrighteousness." These are not figures of speech. They are literal indeed. By so presenting one's members, one gradually gets rid of bad golf habits and replaces them with good ones.

How does one present one's members to a golf instructor? Two things are involved. First, one must dedicate oneself to the pursuit of golf righteousness (to getting good at golf) and choose to submit as an apprentice to a master-teacher. Second, one does not simply engage in a one-time act of dedication to the master-teacher. To "present one's body" to a golf instructor requires repeatedly engaging specific body parts in regular activities done over and over again, with the instructor in charge, and practicing different movements.

For example, one may present the members of one's body, say, the wrists, to the instructor by practicing over and over again a specific wrist movement, a particular swing. The result of such habitual bodily movement will be the replacement of bad habits that dwell in the wrist with good habits. The golf flesh that resides in the wrists will give way to golf righteousness in those members. Later, the instructor may require the habitual presentation of other members, say, the hips, to replace bad habits that reside there.

A golf discipline is a repeated golf exercise, a bodily movement involving specific body parts, repeated over and over again, which is done for the purpose of getting rid of golf flesh and gaining golf righteousness in one's body. The important thing is this: a golf discipline is done repeatedly not to get good at the discipline, but to get good at the game of golf.

The parallels with becoming good at life (e.g., having a steady life of peace, joy, and little or no anxiety) should be clear. When one offers one's body to God as a living sacrifice (Romans 12:1), it involves not only a one-time act of dedication, but a habitual, repeated bodily exercise (1 Corinthians 9:24–27; 1 Timothy 4:7–8) involving specific body parts (Romans 6:12–13, 19), resulting in putting to death one's bad habits (Colossians 3:5), i.e., removing the flesh that resides in those body parts and replacing them with a righteousness that comes to reside in the members of one's body. A Christian spiritual discipline is a repeated bodily practice, done over and over again in dependence on the Holy Spirit and under the direction of Jesus and other wise teachers in his Way, to enable one to get good at certain things in life that one cannot do by direct effort.

In the same way that "golf flesh" resides in specific body parts, for example, the wrists, so sinful habits often reside in specific body parts, for example, anxiety primarily in the brain and nervous system, gossip in the tongue and mouth, and lust in the eyes. A spiritual discipline is a repetitive practice that targets one of these areas in order to replace bad habits with good ones in dependence on the Spirit of the living God.

Here is a specific application to anxiety, and one of the most crucial lessons I discovered: In some ways, anxiety is a learned habit that, through repeated flesh-forming activities (e.g., engaging in "what if?" thinking about the future and exaggerating what might happen if the "what if?" actually happens), forms grooves in the brain, heart muscle, and nervous system that trigger uncontrollable anxiety.

In neuroscience, the saying is, "Neurons that fire together wire together." In other words, repeated anxious thoughts, feelings, and actions cause certain neurons to fire together, and this repetition causes certain neurons to wire together to form ingrained circuits. Like muscle memory, these circuits are habit-triggering grooves. These anxiety-inducing grooves can be significantly eliminated and replaced by grooves that change the brain's circuitry, which, in turn, automatically trigger emotions of peace and joy. This replacement requires, among other things (e.g., a sense of community), repeated practice of certain activities that will be explained later.

How Conscious States Like Anxiety Are and Are Not in the Body

Before summarizing this chapter, I want to explain how conscious states—e.g., thoughts, memories, sensations—are and are not in the body. To begin with, it is important to say that here the methods and findings of neuroscience are unable to address the question and, in general, are largely irrelevant to important questions like, Is there a soul? Is consciousness physical or immaterial? What is anxiety itself?[8]

To see this, consider the discovery that if one's mirror neurons are damaged, then one cannot feel empathy for another. How are we to explain this? Three solutions come to mind. Each is fully consistent with all the scientific data, so those data cannot be used to decide which solution is more reasonable: (1) A feeling of empathy is the very same thing as the firings of mirror neurons; (2) a feeling of empathy is a genuinely immaterial state of

consciousness in the brain that is caused by the firing of mirror neurons; or (3) a feeling of empathy is a genuinely immaterial state of consciousness in the soul—not the brain—that is caused by the firing of mirror neurons in the brain. No empirical scientific datum can pick out which of these three is correct. That issue is a philosophical and theological one, not a scientific matter.

Now consider a music CD (it would be more technically accurate to employ one of the old black vinyl records, but for communication purposes, I'll go with a CD). Strictly speaking, there is no music in the CD; there are only grooves. But if the CD is not damaged, when placed in the right retrieval system, the grooves trigger musical sounds. Remember, the body is an ensouled physical structure. The soul is fully present at each point of the body. Thus, for a human body to be a body, it must have a soulish and a physical dimension to it.

Now certain grooves associated with memories, thoughts, anxiety, and so forth are formed and stored in the physical dimension of the body. The physical aspect of the body is brute matter, and it cannot literally store conscious states. Brute matter is just the wrong type of thing to possess consciousness. But when these grooves are triggered, whether spontaneously by getting hit in the knee or by the mind searching to bring back a memory, the conscious state will obtain in the soulish aspect of the body. Since the soulish aspect of the body is just the soul being fully present at each point in the body, it is the soul that has conscious properties, not the physical body.

In the following chapters, I will refer back to points discussed in this chapter. I have found them to be crucial.

Bullet-Point Summary

- Extrabiblical knowledge is helpful for defeating anxiety and depression.
- The Bible's holistic, functional view of humanity implies that we should launch our attack against anxiety and depression by using tools that address all aspects of ourselves (e.g., medication to address the brain, psychology to address the mind or emotions, and biblical, spiritual practices to address the spirit).
- One of your faculties (e.g., the faculty of emotion) can impact positively or negatively other faculties (e.g., the faculty of desire, choice, mind).
- Anxiety and depression are related to what is happening in the brain, and medications may be of real help in treating them.
- Anxiety and depression are significantly formed habits residing in the brain and body, and they can be largely replaced with peaceful and joyful habits by regularly engaging in the right repetitive habit-forming exercises.