

OPENING REFLECTION

When I (Jenna) was growing up, my dad had school drop-off duty. And without fail, every morning as he slowed the car to a stop and we hurriedly unbuckled our seat belts, grabbed our backpacks, and threw open the doors, he would give the same exhortation: “Girls, have a good day. Laugh a lot. Learn a lot. And don’t forget who gave it to ya.”

I never thought much about the phrase growing up. My sisters and I would just robotically say it with him and then quickly yell, “Okay, Dad!” before slamming the car doors shut.

Laugh, learn, remember.

As a young girl I naturally did just that. Laughing came easily. Learning was fun. Remembering God as the giver of my day? It wasn’t always on my mind, but I never doubted God was with me and cared for me.

But then I started to grow up. And with growing up came more responsibility. And with more responsibility came anxiety. It wasn’t long before homework hours lengthened, friends hurt me, and I hurt them. Pretty soon I was taking my SATs, learning how to interview for jobs, paying bills. Marriage brought deep joy, but also deep struggles. Cancer invaded the family, and my heroes in life passed away. Babies were born—yet another level of worry.

The older I got, the less I naturally lived my dad’s exhortation to laugh, learn, and remember. The serious struggles of life squelched laughter. The joy of learning turned into pressure to achieve. And remembering God? The anxieties of life pushed out thoughts of him.

That’s why it’s hard for me to accept Paul’s words in Philippians 4:4, “Rejoice in the Lord always.” Always? How are we supposed to do that with the pain and anxiety of life?

In this session, we will see that rejoicing in the Lord does not mean we are in a constant state of excitement. We don’t have to carry a guitar around and sing worship songs all day. It’s not about plastering on a fake smile as we walk through a dark time. No, rejoicing in the Lord always is about a deep remembering.

Remembering that the Lord is here, always. Remembering that the Lord is in control, always.

Remembering that the Lord is not only the giver of your day but also the ordainer of every minute inside of it, always.

Remembering that amidst the pressures, pain, and anxiety in life, he is sovereign, always.

As we remember, I have an inkling we may discover the carefree child we used to be. Laughing a lot more. Learning a lot more. And not forgetting who is with us through it all.

Lucado, Max. *Anxious for Nothing Study Guide* (pp. 12-13). Thomas Nelson.