

Appendix B

THE STORIES OF JENNIE AND ANNE

I have heard from many people like Jennie and Anne over the past several years. God has transformed these believers who struggled with the challenges of panic attacks, eating disorders, psychosis, bipolar behaviors, obsessive thoughts and compulsive behaviors, and many other manifestations of noisy souls.

I would warn you, however, that their transformations did not come without much time in the Word and much humility and transparency before God and others. Jesus said that if we try to save our life, we will lose it, but if we lose our life for His sake, we will find it (Matthew 16:24–25). In both of these cases God used a godly pastor and an understanding and supportive husband to help them through the rough times. I trust you will gain much hope as you see another testimony of how a believer has been “transformed by the renewing of [her] mind” (Romans 12:2).

From Jennie

“Here is my testimony of how God used *Quieting a Noisy Soul* to go from seventeen years on antidepressants to being completely drug free. If there is even one person who will be prevented from starting psychiatric medications or encouraged to stop them, all my years of suffering will have been worth it.

“I was unsaved and using drugs and alcohol to fill the hole in my heart where the Lord wanted to live. I started on antidepressants in 1990. On December 19, 1996 I realized I was a sinner, confessed every sin I could think of, and asked the Lord Jesus Christ to save me, help me live for Him, and take control of my life.

“My husband and I embraced our life in Christ and I thought my problems were over. I never thought to stop the medications because the

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doctors told me I would need them for the rest of my life. That was reinforced every time I tried to quit on my own, and the depression would come tumbling back worse than it had been previously. I was a registered nurse and trusted my doctors.

“Shortly after being saved I became pregnant with our daughter and had to stop the antidepressants. I was a brand new Christian so I did not know what to do when my depression returned along with the withdrawal symptoms. Throughout the pregnancy I struggled with the depression and started back on the drugs after my daughter was born. I had no idea that I was addicted.

“I was on antidepressants for fifteen years before I saw what they were doing to me. I cannot tell you how many doctors and well-meaning friends used the analogy, ‘If a diabetic needed insulin you would not think it was a sin to take insulin.’ I see now that was comparing apples with oranges. A diabetic is deficient in insulin; a depressed person is not deficient in Prozac!

“Antidepressants no more cure depression than a pain pill heals a broken leg. You could NEVER have convinced me a few years ago that I did not have a chemical imbalance that I had no control over. We tried moving, changing churches, having another baby, and yet nothing stopped the sense of hopelessness.

“On the outside my life was great. I had a wonderful husband, a terrific church, and was homeschooling two beautiful children—and yet, I was miserable. I could not stop the thoughts that my children and husband would be so much better off without me. As a Christian I knew I could not take my own life, but how I pleaded with the Lord to let me die.

“Every day I would wake up thinking, ‘How am I going to make it through this day?’ Every night I would promise myself that tomorrow would be better. However, each day was worse than the day before. The pain in my heart was so intense it was unbearable. I understood why people hurt themselves. It seemed like real physical pain would hurt so much less than the psychological torture I put myself through day after day.

“The self-loathing knew no bounds. I had a long list of causes of my depression—from my mother-in-law to multiple miscarriages to my failing health. The doctors told me repeatedly that a chemical imbalance

was the cause of my chronic major depression. I lived in fear that my children would inherit this chemical imbalance and dread each day as I did.

“My doctors put me on every antidepressant on the market, one after another. Each time my dose would get raised to the maximum level and eventually quit working, so they would try another. Finally, my doctors decided that one medication alone would not be enough for my severe case, so they decided I needed to try two together. The result was unrelenting migraines. I added medication for the migraines to the antidepressants. The extreme exhaustion from the medications and chronic fatigue led them to medicate me to wake me up. I had not slept well in years so they decided that a lack of sleep was my problem. They added medication to help me sleep.

“I started having anxiety attacks so they gave me drugs for that. Not surprisingly, my brain was all befuddled, and I could not concentrate so my doctors decided I had adult ADD and put me on medication for that.

“I kept trying to tell them that something was not right after the last medication change. I started acting in ways I had never known before. My husband was concerned about our children, and to my horror he would not allow me to homeschool any longer and put the children in a Christian school. I had failed in the most important job in my life! I had failed my children, my husband, and the Lord.

“Suddenly I had a new excuse for all my problems. I was left alone with all my problems. I spent all day soaking in my misery, and I sunk deeper and deeper into depression. I believed all the lies that my self-centered heart could generate: ‘You are a failure; you are crazy; your family would be better off without you; you can’t do anything right; you have no purpose; no one needs or wants you.’

“Three months later I ended up in my worst nightmare. I ended up locked up in a psychiatric ward. My husband thought he was putting me there to help me. The psychiatrist told me, ‘Psychiatry is about two things—drugs and talking, and I’m not here to talk.’ By the time I was discharged two weeks later I was on ten different medications. I could no longer read or write because I could not concentrate. I could not remember anything that happened from one minute to the next. In the

following weeks I asked my doctor repeatedly if I had suffered a stroke or a seizure because I felt like parts of my brain were gone.

“My children were suffering a great deal because of my dysfunction. God gave amazing grace to my husband during this time. My dear pastor told me, ‘I don’t know how to help you, but I’m going to try.’

He and his wife came to my house week after week ministering to me with devotionals on the joy of the Lord. I had never felt so loved, and yet I felt like even more of a failure because I did not have any joy. I could not concentrate enough to read my Bible and seriously doubted my salvation.

“Then one day my pastor gave my husband the *Quieting a Noisy Soul Counseling Program*. I received it gladly because I couldn’t read and this was something I could watch and listen to. From the first lesson I knew my life was going to change. I had hope!

“The lectures described me exactly. It was a gift from the Lord. I listened to the messages over and over and over. I listened to the mp3 audio files as I worked in my home, as I ferried the children to and from school, as I shopped, and during the countless hours that I lay awake at night unable to sleep.

“I prayed as David prayed in Psalm 139 that the Lord would search me and try me. Amazingly, I was able to memorize Isaiah 41:10, and I clung to it like a life preserver in a sea of despair.

“After a few weeks of listening, a light went on. I realized the medications were keeping my brain from understanding and enjoying a relationship with God. That day I decided I would go off those medications. I knew my pastor, my husband, and certainly my doctors would not want me to take such a serious step, but I felt like I needed to do it.

“So, armed with my STOP-THINK cards, my mp3 player, and my Bible (on mp3), I began. The withdrawals were scary to say the least! It became very clear to my husband and me that I was addicted to the medications.

“I spent the next two years listening to the sessions nearly 24/7 as I completely weaned myself off every one of those ten drugs. Every day I was growing stronger physically and spiritually. I began the painful process of reconciling with people I had wronged. I started to experience peace

and joy for the first time in years. [See note of caution on regarding drug withdrawal on pages 146–47 at this end of this testimony.]

“I would stumble and resist humbling myself, but the encouraging words of the sessions would remind me not to give up. There were times when I wanted to go back to the security of the drugs.

“I had to learn to deal with feelings I had not experienced for fifteen years. I had episodes of rage that scared even me. I thought maybe I really am mentally ill. Then I would remember the words of the sessions: ‘The Lord gives you more than you think you can handle because He wants you to trust Him. Your problem is spiritual; there is a cure, and His name is Jesus.’ So I would carry on.

“I can happily report that I have been off drugs for eighteen months now. I am still suffering from the effects of brain-damaging medications, however. I have a long way to go, but I spent seventeen years putting medication between my soul and a real relationship with Christ, so I feel like a babe in Christ.

“After three and a half years I am still learning from those same twenty-four lessons. They led me to the cross with my pain, and there I laid my burden down. Hopelessness is a spiritual problem, no matter how it starts, but I am here to say that because Christ used *Quieting a Noisy Soul*, it can end. If I can learn to function without medications and can experience joy and peace, then anyone can.

“My struggles are not over. I may always have to fight those defeated thoughts. The difference is that now I have the tools to know how to use the Word of God to carry me through. I know how to ‘preach myself a sermon’ as the sessions taught me, instead of listening to the lies of my heart.

“I want to conclude my testimony with an overview of the truths God taught me over the past three and a half years. These truths stabilized my soul.

“The root of my problem was unbelief. I had to learn how to dig, dig, dig for truth. I had to stop listening to myself and start listening to God. It did not come easy for me.

“I was the person you talked about who said, ‘God loves everyone, but He does not love me.’ He showed me right out of the gate that I was not

believing Him. He reminds us repeatedly in the Word that He loves us and wants us to have peace. He forced me to admit to myself that if I could not believe that He loved me then how could I say that I believed the Bible at all?

“Once I was able to start accepting that, He started showing me ways that He loved me that had been there all along, but I had failed to recognize them. The rest came much easier.

“Next, the Lord taught me that because He loves me I could trust Him completely no matter what happened. I looked up every verse I could find about trust and how the Lord would take care of me and never leave me, and I meditated upon them. When I was in pain and crying I would pray for help to resist the urge to dwell on my misery. He would bring verses to mind that reminded me that ‘He was always up to something good in my life,’ and I did not have to see the good to know it was there.

“Then He taught me that peace comes from the knowledge of God. I thought I knew God, but I learned that you can’t just ‘know’ God and move on. To really know God you have to have a close, personal, ongoing relationship with Him. I had to study His Word, pray, and obey!

“If I was going to show God that I loved Him I needed to obey no matter what. That included the painful process of removing sin from my life. I quickly realized that using drugs to do for me what He wanted to do, for me was sin. My pet sin was dwelling on my misery and ruminating about what other people thought of me. I needed to shift my focus from myself and other people to the only One that really matters—my God.

“The Lord allowed me to be completely bedridden in order to focus entirely on Him. He showed me that I could obey Him even if I was not able to get out of bed. Through panic attacks the Lord taught me that He had not given me the spirit of fear. I learned to ‘track my thoughts, not my feelings.’

“I used the STOP-THINK cards to remind myself that ‘God is always good—always!’ and ‘God is always great—always!’ He showed me that I am never alone, and that He is always in control, and that no matter what, He never changes!

“Finally, the Lord showed me that this work is not going to end. Sanctification is an ongoing process that will require effort on my part every day of my life if I am going to stay at peace. I can tell you that no amount of effort is too high a price to pay for a quiet soul!

“I know now that it is okay to hurt, to suffer, and to fail, and that I cannot lose my salvation. I know that if I abide in Christ, His peace is always available. Hopelessness will remain a thing of the past if I keep my eyes focused on the Lord. I have hope because a loving God is in control of my life.

“If someone would tell me I would suffer for three years of drug withdrawal symptoms, I would have said, ‘Forget the whole thing!’ Within a week of realizing I was no longer having withdrawal symptoms I thought, ‘That wasn’t so bad. I would have gone through ten times that to be free from those drugs.’ My husband and I are reminded continually just how blessed we are that I am no longer in bondage.

“Thank you is not enough. How can I thank you for pointing me to the only true healing? How can I thank you for creating audio and video files so that I was never alone with my wicked thoughts, and for speaking comforting words into my ear as I drove that painful route to take my children to school each day when I knew that was not what the Lord originally wanted? There are not enough words to thank you for pointing me to God who gave my children and my husband their mother and wife back.

“We returned to homeschooling last year and we just started our second year back. I can remember things now; I can read; I can write; I have reignited friendships that I had ignored for years; I have started new friendships. I talk to my family across the continent on a regular basis now.

“I can feel pain for the first time in years—and I know what to do about it! I pray; I thank the Lord, and I meditate on Who He is and keep going. I know that the Lord will uphold me with the right hand of His righteousness. I can sleep—because my soul is quiet.”

Cautions Regarding Drug Withdrawal

Because of the serious side effects of withdrawal and of having to face all the problems of living that the medications mask, it is not advis-

able to attempt medication withdrawals without the cooperation and oversight of a physician and the support and understanding of family members close by. Jennie's nursing experience and the support of those around her were crucial to the success of her withdrawal.

If you are on psychiatric medication and are contemplating coming off them, consult your physician. If neither he nor you are aware of what is involved with withdrawal, consult *Your Drug May Be Your Problem* by Peter R. Breggin, MD, and David Cohen, PhD (Cambridge, MA: Perseus Publishing, 1999). Breggin, a secular psychiatrist, is spearheading a movement within the American Psychiatric Association to return to "talk therapy" and to abandon drug treatments for all psychiatric disorders. His clinic and many associated with it are treating every psychiatric condition, including psychosis, successfully without drugs (as successful as the world can accomplish without God). The secular literature against psychiatric drugs is increasing every day. See also www.GenerationRxFilm.com.

When encountering doctors who prescribe psychiatric drugs or people taking such drugs, it is important not to have a critical spirit toward them. If they knew a better way to handle the issues they are attempting to address with drugs, most of them would choose that better way.

For a Christian viewpoint read *Will Medicine Stop the Pain? Finding God's Healing for Depression, Anxiety, and Other Troubling Emotions* by Elyse Fitzpatrick and Laura Hendrickson, MD. Hendrickson is a biblical counselor who formerly practiced psychiatry.

In *Taking Time to Quiet Your Soul* I include extended footnotes on medications for anxiety and depression. Understand the risks and efforts involved before attempting to come off any drugs.

From Anne

"Since I was a little girl, I have struggled with anxiety. I became a Christian at a young age, but my relationship with God always felt distant. I was not growing spiritually, and worry, fear, and despair were my frequent companions. My mother took me to the hospital when I was eight years old because I had been experiencing many episodes of intense pain in my stomach that often left me unable to move. After conducting tests, the doctor finally concluded that the pain was stress induced. But my doctor, teacher, and parents could not figure out what was causing me to have such anxious thoughts.

“As a teenager, I started feeling angry as well as anxious, and I experienced many periods of depression. I would sometimes sit in my closet wailing and desperately crying out to God for help. When the pain did not disappear, I felt abandoned and unloved by God. I sought help in the church but left feeling extremely discouraged and alone. My relationship with my parents was deteriorating as well. When I was fifteen, I took some pills and left the bottle out for my parents to find. I desperately wanted and needed help.

“I started to see a psychiatrist and Christian psychologist, and things got worse as I was constantly put on one new medication after another and given first one and then a new diagnosis and then another. I had so many negative side effects from these drugs, and my depression and anxiety only worsened.

“When I was sixteen years old, I was unable to cope with the pressures in my life, and I stopped going to church and finally was unable to continue in school, so was forced to complete my high school classes in a homebound program. I had been a straight A student, but now I barely had the emotional energy to meet the teachers who came to my house. As I continually struggled with thoughts of suicide, I pleaded with my parents to find a place or person that could help me. My parents learned of a hospital in another state that provided Christian counseling. My parents were willing to do anything to help me, and they found the money to put me into the hospital. It was not at all what I had hoped for, and I couldn’t wait to leave after two weeks.

“A few months after coming home, I started doing something that I never thought I would do in order to cope with the pain that I was feeling inside. I started to cut myself. The physical pain of these cuts was the only thing that would numb my mental agony. Then when I was seventeen, I was so desperate to end my misery that I deliberately overdosed on one of my meds. It is amazing that I lived after losing consciousness, but God had other plans for me.

“I continued to struggle for several years with depression, eating disorders, and anxiety attacks, and I was unable to stay in college or keep a job for more than a few short weeks or months at a time. I even went long periods without seeing other family members or friends. I missed many holiday events with my extended family. I felt as though I was just rotting and wasting away in my parent’s house. For years, my parents

had been praying for me and asking God for help, but I still felt that there was a barrier between God and me.

“In my early twenties I had a few years during which I was able to function better, but I still felt as though God was far away from me and couldn’t hear me. I started dating Martin, one of my brother’s best friends whom I had known since I was thirteen years old. He knew of my struggles, and he was patient, kind, and supportive.

“Not many months after we were married, I started to struggle again, and Martin often felt helpless to counsel me or to provide solutions. On my own I decided to go off my medications (after 10 years of being on many different ones), and the withdrawal symptoms were very difficult. I had times where I experienced intense rage, and I often felt that I might lose control. After a short time of doing better, I became pregnant. My husband and I had not found a church yet, but we felt a strong desire to find a church home before our son was born. We found a wonderful church and made some important changes in our lives. I still felt uneasy about being a mother and having a little person depend on me while I still struggled to cope with different pressures.

“Immediately after my son was born, I couldn’t sleep at all, and I was very anxious. The nurses and my doctor were concerned about my anxiety and insomnia, and things went downhill when we took our little baby home from the hospital. I had only slept three hours in four days, and I was physically and mentally exhausted. The baby would not sleep and cried and cried during the night. I was consumed with worry and fear, and I could not get any relief from the relentless, desperately anxious thoughts. I couldn’t handle being around my son, and I felt that I was losing my mind. I felt physically ill, and my thoughts tortured me night and day.

“My dad took me to a hospital, and some wonderful nurses took me under their wings and spoke encouraging words to me. I was given sleeping pills and sent home. The pills barely helped, and I could still sleep for only two or three hours at night. I was sent to a psychiatrist who started me on an antidepressant and anti-anxiety drug. The anti-anxiety medication only knocked me out for a couple of hours, and then the mental torture began as soon as I woke up. My parents had to come help us with our son because I could not take care of him. The anxious thoughts were crippling, and I felt such despair during

this time. There were times that I would literally writhe on the floor because nothing would stop those agonizing thoughts, and I could no longer just shut down or turn to cutting to relieve my pain. I felt like a hunted, tortured animal.

“My husband called our pastor and asked him to come to our house. I had great doubts that he would be able to help me, and I almost refused to meet with him. I am so grateful that I did because the message he shared with me changed my life.

Some of the women in our church had been meeting together and watching the series *Quieting a Noisy Soul*, and my pastor sat down in our living room and had us watch session 17—‘Overcoming Your Anxiety and Fear, Part 1.’

“[You] described how my emotions were just reacting to my thoughts and that my thoughts and conclusions were affecting my feelings and my body. [You] said, ‘Worriers meditate on the uncertainties that could happen rather than the certainties of what God is like and what he promises.’ That’s exactly what I had been doing my entire life! I wanted to feel safe and secure, and if I felt that God wasn’t providing that, then I turned to other ways of coping. It was so destructive, and I robbed myself of the opportunities to rest in God’s presence and His truths.

“So often in the past, I let my circumstances and fears drive my life, but I needed to ‘cling to the things that are true about God no matter what is happening to you.’ I had been told by doctors that I should change my behavior or thoughts to more ‘positive’ ones, but that never worked and left me feeling so defeated. As [you] said, ‘You don’t talk yourself into this frame of mind by human logic; you submit yourself into it by affirming divine truth.’

“[You] provided many verses to be committed to memory, and I put those verses around my house. I clung to them as if my life depended on them, and it did! I was the weary and burdened person in Matthew 11:28-30. I had Isaiah 41:10 on my fridge, and I felt so comforted to know that God was carrying me. My pastor came to the house and shared these truths with me. That very night I was able to sleep through the night—something I hadn’t done since my son was born! I had never experienced peace like that before, and I was hungry to know God. 2 Peter 1:2–3 talks about how we can experience this peace when we

know God. I had such hope! As [you] said, ‘We will not despair if we know God well and are content with what He has provided because we have found Him to be more than enough for us.’

“My battle with anxiety and fear was far from over, but I finally had the weapons to fight it. At first, I had to recite the verses every minute of the day just to get through it. I had to take every thought captive and turn them over to God (2 Corinthians 10:5). I was told that this would be a process, but God would grant me victory! After a few weeks, I found that I wasn’t constantly tormented by thoughts, and then I had months where I was free.

“One vital piece of information that I learned is that this is something that has to be a part of my life every single day. I cannot take a vacation from meditating on God’s truths without experiencing severe and debilitating consequences. When I accept that He is more than enough for me no matter what is happening in my life, that’s when I can rest and feel His joy.”

The letter below is from Anne’s husband, Martin.

“There’s little to compare to the helplessness of watching a loved one ‘walk through the valley of the shadow of death.’ My wife’s extended valleys included periods of seclusion from the outside world, self-inflicted physical wounds to temporarily escape her emotional torment, and angry outbursts at those closest to her. She had gone through years of secular psychiatric treatment including prescriptions to a full array of psychotropic medications beginning in her midteen years. None of this stopped the anxiety, frustration, depression, and feelings of inadequacy that plagued her thoughts. The lack of substantive help only heightened the hopelessness of the dark valleys in which she lived.

“After the birth of our oldest son, those same coping mechanisms culminated in a complete functional breakdown, often finding Anne lying prostrate on the floor, tormented with crippling anxiety. Postpartum care for the anxiety-induced insomnia included the highest dose of sleeping pills and tranquilizers which yielded only minimal sleep. Psychiatric care consisted of yet another antidepressant prescription. Nothing seemed to help . . . and Anne slipped ever deeper into the dark swamp of depressive anxiety.

“I would plead with God in prayer to release Anne from the darkness but the days wore on to weeks and I found my own hope in our Savior severely tested.

“One particularly dark Sunday morning, with tears once again freely flowing, I begged God for help from the solitary heights of the mountain behind our house (Psalm 121). When I came home later that day, Anne had resolved that it would be best to leave me and our son and admit herself to a psychiatric hospital. With pain, confusion, and fear I wondered if this was, in fact, God’s answer to my prayer.

“I had been talking to our pastor and called once again. He offered to come to the house the next morning to meet with us. With hopeless agreement I set a time all the while wondering what good it would do. Modern secular psychiatry had been unable to do anything in well over a decade to help Anne and now watched helpless as my wife spiraled into the depths of despair. What could a meeting with our pastor do at this point? But I guessed it couldn’t hurt . . .

“That Monday morning, I was again asking for God to heal Anne as she was crippled with anxiety. I thought of the father in Mark 9 who pled with Jesus on behalf of his son to ‘have compassion on us, and help us.’

“And although I hadn’t verbalized it, I knew Jesus’ follow-up question of ‘If I can?’ was just as valid for me as for that boy’s father. I was brought to my knees knowing my belief in the sovereignty and character of God had been shattered and I could do nothing but pray the father’s cry, ‘I do believe; help my unbelief!’

“Our pastor came later that morning and began addressing Anne’s anxiety using the STOP-THINK cards [you] talk about in the program, and we watched video session 17 which specifically deals with anxiety. As Scripture was unpacked by *Quieting a Noisy Soul* and applied to Anne’s life, the thick veil of anxiety and depression that darkened her thoughts was torn by the power of God’s truth.

“The rest of that day we referred to the STOP-THINK cards and utilized other scriptural tools outlined by [you] to remind us to ‘cling to the things that are true about God.’ Not only was Anne’s attitude changed, she was actually able to sleep through the night for the first time since our son was born!

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“In the days that followed, the anxiety dwindled as we worked through other sections of *Quieting a Noisy Soul* and applied the biblically focused approach to applying scriptural solutions. God had emphatically answered my prayers for us while giving us a fresh vision for who He is.

“Since then, we’ve often commented that life has thrown us many ‘real’ stresses. These circumstances have served to reinforce the effectiveness of the *Quieting a Noisy Soul*’s principles both when actively utilized and when we’ve become lax and then are forced to return to the biblical insights.

“*Quieting a Noisy Soul* offers a biblically focused and effective approach to dealing with the very real and very crippling effects of anxiety and depression as well as offering a renewed hope for facing everyday struggles of life. Thank you so much for pointing us to our Savior!”