

# SERVANT

**MAX LUCADO**

**ANXIOUS  
FOR NOTHING**

**MARK MAXWELL**

**A FEAR-FULL  
CONUNDRUM**

**ALUMNI IN ACTION**

**THE CHINA  
CALL**

**STANDING  
STRONG**

**GOD'S PRESENCE  
IN THE FIRE**

# A fear-full conundrum



## THE OTHER DAY, OUR TWO-YEAR-OLD GRANDDAUGHTER EDEN

was climbing from her change table onto a shelf that ran the length of the wall. Her father Andrew was there, enjoying the time with her and watching her show off her rock-climbing potential. Suddenly Eden launched herself at her dad, who quickly opened his arms to catch her.

“Be strong and of good courage!”

This charge was given to Joshua as he led the young nation of Israel into the Promised Land. At the beginning of each school year I quote those words to our students. The parallel to *our* context is that God often wants us to move into unknown space, whether that is a better location, a better vocation, or greater devotion. He invites us to step into the unseen in faith that he is there.

### Some fear is good. Fear protects us from threats and provides a reality check on our limits.

Fear is a negative force, shutting down creativity, opportunity and relationships, all of which, while risky, are often God-given openings. It is also true that much of what we fear is, in reality, what we *imagine* might go wrong, and we spend our time calculating odds of impending doom and escape routes or redundancies that will help us avert potential disaster. Yet the truth is that much of what we fear does not materialize. In fact, when things do go wrong, it is most often for reasons we had not anticipated.

So how do we combat fear? The simple answer is “with faith, good and reasonable faith.” We believe in a God who:

- is creative and whole-heartedly in love with us,

- brings good opportunities our way,
- is more than willing to help us.

And we believe in our own, God-given ability. My friend Bruxy Cavey, pastor of *The Meeting House* in Toronto, often says, “We run the ramp of reason before taking the leap of faith.” This is how we manage our many fears.

But some fear is good. Fear protects us from threats and provides a reality check on our limits. It helps keep us safe and provides us with the respect that is ap-

- Quenching his Holy Spirit (by my reaction to others),
- Moving ahead without his blessing (by my busy-ness),
- Working without his power and presence,
- Losing the support of his people,
- Forgetting to say “THANKS!” to him for the work he is doing on this campus,
- Forgetting to thank each of you for your partnership with us, especially in prayer,
- Forgetting to be thankful for our wonderful family, especially our grandchildren!

When Andrew was telling us the story of Eden jumping off the ledge, it was obvious that he was delighted to know that she trusted him and enjoyed playing with him. She never doubted that Daddy would be there for her, and she squealed with delight as she fell into his arms.

Fear beckons courage, if we are to act. In his great love, God invites us to step forward (take the leap) in faith with boldness. Let’s show him how much we love him and put him to the test. In the fear of the LORD, let’s press on with confidence and courageous trust.

I think he will laugh with delight.



Mark Maxwell is president of Prairie. He welcomes your comments. Send them to [mark.maxwell@prairie.edu](mailto:mark.maxwell@prairie.edu)

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Cover photo: [www.KarenJames.com](http://www.KarenJames.com)

## LETTERS

What a beautiful, heartwarming magazine. I thoroughly enjoyed a great reading experience. It was comforting to learn of an influx of Karen Christians from Southeast Asia into a dying church in the US. Prairie alumni Jim and Louise Morris spent many of their best years sharing the gospel with the Karen people in north Thailand. At first unresponsive, the Karen finally turned to their Heavenly Father in considerable numbers. God is building his church through his people and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. What a privilege in any age in any place to be part of what he is doing.

Margie Cormack, UK



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TOM DOYLE

# STANDING I

Osama knew the execution position well—captive kneeling, head bowed, hands behind his back. He had led his share of prisoners to the crest of the sandy hill east of the city of Idlib in northern Syria. But this time, he was the one struggling for breath under the black hood cinched tight over his head in the blistering desert sun.

From behind the three members of his firing squad, Commander Mahmoud Ramadan shouted the list of crimes Osama al-Jihadi had committed against Islam, punctuating each judgement with vicious laughter. Ridicule was standard procedure in the execution of an apostate. The commander's monologue ended abruptly in a single gunshot, and Osama crumpled to the ground. More rapid-fire shots followed, and blood once again soaked the sandy hill.

But it was not Osama's.

Late one night a year earlier, in the basement of a suburban home not far from the bloody mound, a cold-eyed man addressed a gathering of young males. Jabhat al-Nusra, the Syrian version of al-Quaeda, was now a threat to the Bashar Al-Assad regime that had looked so invincible just months before.

"When Bashar Al-Assad dies, we will crush the Alawites and slaughter all Christians!" The young man spoke resolutely, confident of his cause. "We owe this evil regime for what they did to our families. I will never give up the fight to liberate Syria from this illegitimate infidel." His listeners nodded. They, too, hated Assad who had too long oppressed them with his massive military and his despicable alliances with Russia and Iran. Shameless flaunting of power only enflamed the hostility against him.

"The one who has the plan for overthrowing the government will speak to you now." The leader gestured toward the basement's side entrance and fifty men leapt to their feet as Osama al-Jihadi marched through the door and surveyed the room.

"So these are my warriors?" The hint of a smile crossed Osama's face. "I like

what I see. We will take what is rightfully ours as Sunni Muslims. Cowards have led us but those days are over. Many of us here will die in this holy fight. But by Allah's strength, *so will Bashar Al-Assad.*"

When the meeting was over, Jamal al-Jihadi filed slowly out with the other men, smiling and bowing his head

toward his leader and uncle's son. The strong man of al-Nusra had no idea that every time his favorite cousin grinned, he was praying for Osama.

"Jamal, you have to get out!" pleaded his wife Safa. "My sister in Lebanon is ready for us. I don't care if Osama is your cousin. You're playing with fire. Surely he suspects something. These people are nothing but cold-blooded terrorists. How can you even go to the meetings in good conscience? You're a believer!"

Jamal closed his eyes, considering the fears of the wife he so adored. Their passionate dialogue had begun the instant he entered the kitchen, groggy from too little sleep after the late-night meeting.

"My dear Safa," he said, "when Jesus came into my life, I knew He called me first to our precious family, yet my heart is

## THE STRONG MAN OF AL-NUSRA HAD NO IDEA THAT HIS FAVORITE COUSIN WAS PRAYING FOR HIM.

in agony for my larger al-Jihadi family as well. I'm to stay here. This is my calling."

"I love you for being so brave, Jamal. But your family is involved in *terrorism*. Let someone else reach out to Osama."

"We have been best friends since I was five," answered Jamal. "I love him like a brother. When he believes, we will have a modern-day Paul. I feel this in my heart."

That night the cousins shared a deep conversation about the future of Syria. When Osama talked about seeing Assad die a slow death, the sinister evil in his eyes was frightening. It was well past midnight when Jamal left through the

# IN THE FIRE

courtyard gate. “If he knew my secret,” he thought, “that evil would consume me in an instant. We need a miracle.”

He and Safa were asleep when shock waves nearly threw Jamal to the floor. He answered his ringing cell phone and a voice blurted out, “It’s Osama!”

“Is he dead?” He paused for an answer. “I’ll be right there.”

Little remained of the courtyard entrance Jamal had walked through just hours earlier. Paramedics lifted a stretcher through the open back doors of an ambulance and Jamal spotted Osama under the blood-soaked sheet. As the doors slammed shut, he wondered if he would ever see his cousin alive again.

Four hours later the al-Jihadi family sat in the hospital waiting room with no word on Osama’s condition. Suddenly a man dressed in surgical clothes stood in the doorway. “Osama survived the surgery and has been moved to intensive care,” he announced. “There was more damage than we thought. Even if he makes it through the next few days, he will be here for several weeks. I am sorry. Osama is in a medically induced coma to stabilize him. We can thank Allah that he is alive.”

Osama’s wife kept watch beside her husband for two days and then Jamal took her place. For an hour he said nothing. Finally, he leaned close and spoke quietly.

“Here you are in a coma and no one knows if you will survive or not. I know you can’t hear me, but Osama, I began following Jesus last year. I found a Bible and could not put it down. Every night in bed, I read under the covers by the light of my phone. Sometimes I would not even sleep. This Jesus loved people who were suffering. He took time for people—*especially sinners*.” Jamal paused, feeling foolish for talking so intimately with an all-but-dead body, and then pushed on.

“Seeing this loving Jesus, I had to come to grips with the depths of hate in my heart. Then I read where Jesus said, ‘Love your enemies.’ In the Middle East that is ludicrous. But I could not shake His message of love. So every time I come to see you I’m going to read the Bible to you. I’ll start now... ‘I have come that they might have life—’”

“And that they might have it more abundantly.”

Jamal started at the sound of another man’s voice.

“My apologies. You may remember me—Dr. Ahmad. I didn’t know you were a believer.”

Jamal stood up. “Of course I remember you! You were remarkably kind to my father. I haven’t told my family yet... other than my wife.”

The doctor nodded. “Not exactly the safest message to be spreading around Syria these days, is it? But we can pray. Your cousin is one of the most feared men in this region. Do you think he is open to anything about Jesus?”

Jamal looked at the floor. “I really don’t know. I wanted to tell him...”

Dr. Ahmad rested a hand on Jamal’s shoulder. “If Osama survives, let’s both tell him. It’s time to be bold.” For the next two and a half weeks, Jamal visited Osama and each day he read from the New Testament.

“He’s awake!” It was Dr. Ahmad’s voice on the cell phone. “He’s alert and asking questions. Can you come right away?”

When Jamal finally scurried into Osama’s hospital room, the first words from the man in the bed astounded him. “Jamal! My wonderful cousin! Thank you for coming to see me so many times.”

“Did your wife tell you I’d been here?”

“No. She didn’t have to. I heard you.

You prayed over me, and the words you read were like nothing I’ve ever heard before. I want to hear more.” The next day Jamal returned to the hospital. Alone with only his cousin, Osama hungered for more information about what he had heard during the coma.

“The words were from the Bible, Osama. It is the true Word of God and that’s why I read it to you. This book will turn your life around. My dear cousin, I challenge you to read it too. It will change everything.”

Osama began to read the Bible Jamal had given him and into his second week he returned to the Gospels. *What would it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul?* The words from Mark 8 shot through Osama’s heart. Laying the book face down on his chest, he closed his eyes and spoke softly. “I don’t want to forfeit my soul. Give me a sign, Jesus, if you’re real.”

A voice interrupted. “Good morning, Osama. I must say that you have improved dramatically in the last week.” It was Dr. Ahmad. The physician stepped to his patient’s bedside. “I’m happy to say you will be released soon. You have been given a second chance at life. Here is my prescription for full health. I ask you: *‘What would it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul?’*” As the surgeon left the room, Osama stared after him, paralyzed by his final sentence.

Three months later, familiar faces surrounded Osama once again at a meeting of the Jabhat al-Nusra, but he no longer stood at the front of the room. Instead he sagged in a chair, half dead from nearly three full days of beatings, and prayed silently that his newfound Lord would simply take his life.

(Continued on page 14)

## NEWS & VIEWS

### PREACHER OF THE GOSPEL

Billy Graham, 1918 – 2018

From his first crusade in 1955 to his last in 2013 at the age of 95, the one-time North Carolina farm boy preached the gospel to more than 215 million people, was a friend to kings and presidents, and founded an organization that continues to share the good news of Jesus Christ to this day.

His death in February marked the passing of an era as believers around the world paid tribute to a life of selfless service for Christ. Graham was accorded a public lie in honor in the US Capitol Rotunda, only the fourth private citizen and first religious leader to be awarded this distinction. Prairie's president Mark Maxwell and his wife Elaine were invited to attend the memorial service in Charlotte, NC, and counted it "an honor to represent Prairie's global community at a gathering in memory of a man whose life reflected the lordship of Christ."

Ron Nickel, Director of Prairie's Digital Media program, was asked to photograph every leg of Graham's final journey. Of all the events around the world that Ron has recorded, this one stood out. "Capturing the presidential ceremony in the Rotunda and seeing the thousands of people who lined highways and overpasses to honor Billy's legacy was humbling and overwhelming," says Nickel. "Photography has been my passion since I was a boy and to have the opportunity to cover one of the most significant funerals of our time—I am definitely blessed!"



Ron Nickel, Elaine and Mark Maxwell: sharing in a historic event



# YOUR GIFT TO PRAIRIE MAKES A DIFFERENCE

## EDUCATION FUND

*"Immersing myself in the scriptures has encouraged me to come back to Yahweh, my first love. I have started healing emotionally and am beginning to trust God when life and everything I do seems pointless. The love I've found here is slowly transforming me." – Prairie student*

God is making a difference in young lives here at Prairie but financial aid often makes the crucial difference between staying in school and dropping out early. This year a friend of Prairie offered a matching challenge of \$250,000 for scholarships in our Education Fund. To date we have reached 84% of our goal. Will you help put us "over the top" and make it possible for students to continue discovering God and building a strong foundation for their lives?

## ENCOURAGE AN ENCOUNTER

Prairie's impact is not limited to this campus. Inside the walls of two penal institutions nearby, inmates are enrolled in "Encounter," our one-year Bible immersion program. Currently, 37 students are taking classes. One writes, *"A year and a half ago, I was a raging drunk with no direction in life. I began to read the Bible and opened my heart and mind to Christ. I would never have imagined being nineteen months sober and enrolled in Bible college. I know there are more changes to come, but for now, WOW!"*

Each course costs \$1,500 per student, far beyond the ability of an inmate to pay. Will you join us in providing scholarships for these students? Your one-time gift can change a life.



## MONTHLY GIVING

As more doors of opportunity open, the need will continue to grow. Our dream is to build a team who will "Encourage an Encounter" with the living God for incarcerated men and women through regular monthly support.

PLEASE SEE THE ENCLOSED ENVELOPE TO INDICATE HOW YOU CAN BECOME PART OF WHAT GOD IS DOING BEHIND CLOSED DOORS.

## QUOTEWORTHY

### MARK BATTERSON

"We tend to view the goal as the goal, but in God's economy, the process is the goal. It's not about what we're doing at all; it's about *who* we're becoming in the process. It's not about doing great things for God; it's about God doing great things in us."

### BILLY GRAHAM

"When we preach or teach the Scriptures, we open the door for the Holy Spirit to do His work. God has not promised to bless oratory or clever preaching. He has promised to bless His Word."



### OSWALD CHAMBERS

"It is inbred in us that we have to do exceptional things for God; but we have not. We have to be exceptional in the ordinary things."



### MAX LUCADO

"At the beginning of every act of faith, there is often a seed of fear. Great acts of faith are seldom born out of calm calculation."

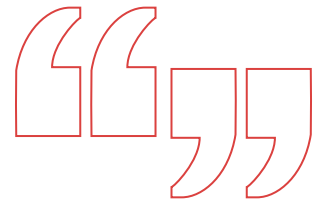
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## MEDITATION



"Whatever...the particular sacrifice God asks you to make, the particular cross He wishes you to embrace, whatever the particular path He wants you to tread, will you rise up and say in your heart, 'Yes, Lord, I accept it; I submit, I yield, I pledge myself to walk in that path and to follow that Voice, and to trust Thee with the consequences?' Oh, but you say, 'I don't know what He will want next.' No, none of us know that, but we know we shall be safe in His hands."

CATHERINE  
**BOOTH**  
CO-FOUNDER OF THE SALVATION ARMY



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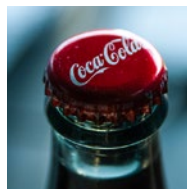
A walrus may have up to 700 whiskers on its snout and tusks up to three feet long.

*Seaworld*



June 5 is National Ketchup Day.

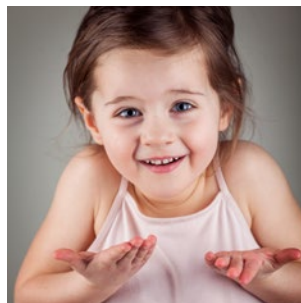
*Foodimentary*



There are now just two countries in the world where Coca-Cola cannot be bought or sold—Cuba and North Korea.

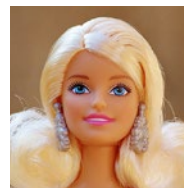
*BBC News*

## NOW YOU KNOW



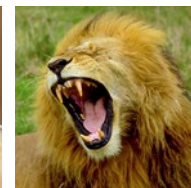
The average 4-year-old may ask over 400 questions a day.

*news.com.au*



If the original Barbie was a real woman, she would be unable to lift her head and would have to walk on all fours.

*Daily Mail*



A lion's roar can be heard from five miles away.

*Smithsonian*

# Weather wise

Thirty-two degrees below freezing is extremely challenging in the normal patterns of modern life. The car won't start, pipes freeze and burst, exposed skin is at risk for frostbite.

Yet our Explore Outdoor Leadership students were able to survive (and even enjoy) three days on a remote mountain lake, hours away from the comforts of indoor heating. Their ability to be prepared, resourceful and adaptable, and to work together allowed them to construct snow shelters for sleeping, build fires, and live well in very trying conditions.

The wilderness is a profound context for learning because it cannot be manipu-



lated; it can only be responded to. C.S. Lewis reminded us that God “whispers to us in our pleasure” but “shouts in our pain.” The wilderness, especially when it makes us uncomfortable, is a powerful context for revealing aspects of our nature and thinking that are in need of redemption. We can curse the cold, be grumpy, and complain bitterly; yet the weather persists and will change only in its own time. We can make choices regarding our attitudes, actions and decisions, but we cannot, no matter how hard we try, control the weather.

The cold has a claim on us. Accepting that claim, understanding the appropriate response, and being faithful to what the truth of the cold requires (shelter, fire, positive mental attitude) in order for us to

10:10), but since we are born post-fall, our bent is toward bitterness, rebellion and defiance. By nature enemies of God, we curse, ignore and deny him. But as with the cold, these actions can only lead to discomfort, pain and death.

Fortunately, by God's grace and intervention, we can respond appropriately to the liberating and life-giving truth of God. Freedom comes through submission and faithful obedience. This seems paradoxical, but is as true with God as it is with the cold. Insisting on our right to comfort, our own opinion, or our view of reality does not change God or the weather. God is, and he both empowers and calls us to respond to him in spirit and in truth. When we take on the yoke of Christ, we can be enslaved by nothing else.

**EXPERIENCE ADVENTURE**

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Prospective students & parents:  
Experience Explore for a day!

“ ” **When we take on the yoke of Christ, we can be enslaved by nothing else.**

survive gives life. To insist on our right to be comfortable, give in to bitterness, blame others, or simply quit when it hits -32 C are responses detrimental to all concerned.

God, too, has a claim on our life. The cold is hard to ignore because it confronts us in an immediate and visceral way. God's claim, while perhaps easier to ignore at times, is just as confrontational and of utmost importance. Unlike the impersonal cold, however, the claim of God is a claim for life. We were created, purposed and redeemed for a “life to the full” (John

Submission and obedience free us from a litany of tyrannies. The tyranny of our past is submitted to God's mercy. The tyranny of popular opinion is submitted to God's Word. The tyranny of our need to be right is submitted to God's wisdom and our need for control bows to God's goodness, allowing us to trust that he is at work in all things. It is there that we find freedom, peace and life. ❏

Dennis Landon is co-director of the Explore Outdoor Leadership program. Learn more at [www.prairie.edu/explore](http://www.prairie.edu/explore)



# Unafraid

Hands clenched and struggling to breathe, I stood on a small cliff staring down at the churning water. It made perfect sense to swim in some gentle rapids before we attempted more extreme white water and had a canoe tip over in the process. I was wearing a helmet and a life jacket too, but it didn't matter. Nothing was helping and panic threatened to overwhelm me.

This Alberta farm girl had never played outdoor sports or gone backpacking in the wild, and had no intention of ever studying leadership. I'd grown up in a solid Christian home and really didn't think I needed something like Bible college to know God any better. But on the other hand, developing a stronger relationship with Christ might make it easier for me to share my faith with the friends who meant so much to me, so I prayed for guidance and paid a visit to Prairie College.

Strange as it may seem, the *Explore* wilderness program really appealed to me. I had always enjoyed working outside and somehow it just felt right, like it would help me reach my goal of becoming a stronger Christian. I would soon wonder what I'd gotten myself into.

At our camp in the mountains, it didn't take long for me to realize that I had a major problem with fear. I was terrified of heights, rapids in the rivers, speed on the mountain bikes—basically every outdoor skill we were learning in the program. There was no getting past it. How in the world had I ever thought I could do this?

Fortunately, thanks to the awesome community around me, a God who was with me, and a desire to learn, I began to think there might actually be hope for overcoming my fears. I even decided to go beyond the one-year program and pursue an Outdoor Leadership degree. In my second year the deeper issues underneath my fears came to light. Some valued relationships had been torn apart, causing the loss of other friends as well, and a dearly loved grandfather had passed away.

Harboring those hurts had made it difficult for me to trust others, but I discovered that I wasn't alone. God, my

team, my teachers and a friend walked with me through the healing process and through their loving care, I was able to let go of my brokenness and work on building trust again.

This spring my team and I set out for an eighteen-day backpacking trip in Death Valley, California. Before, this would *definitely* have been out of my comfort zone, but now I was looking forward to the experience. Carrying


for 48 hours of silence and reflection. Under the warm sun I was able to think through what it meant to be a friend and to trust, even in conflict. As the trip progressed I found myself growing by leaps and bounds, enjoying things that would have terrified me before.

I had definitely underestimated the impact Bible college could have on my life. Now, because of Christ, I can love others and show them God's truth. Con-

**Harboring those hurts had made it difficult for me to trust others, but I discovered that I wasn't alone.**

“ ”

70-pound packs, we trekked over sand flats, climbed dry waterfalls and mountains, and hiked through valleys and canyons, replenishing our water supply at desert springs. At the enormous sand hills of Panamint Dunes, we separated

trary to its name, Death Valley became life to me. I chose the way of trust and have found a deepening desire to pour myself into my relationship with God. I am becoming a leader. I am strong. I am safe. I am...unafraid. 





MAX  
ANXIOUS FOR NOTHING  
LUCADO

*The problem of anxiety ranks high on the list of distressingly prevalent issues in our culture today, as well as one of the costliest. In his book *Anxious for Nothing*, long-time pastor and author Max Lucado explores one of the most turned-to passages in scripture, *Philippians 4:4-8*, to discover practical steps toward comfort for an anxious heart: "Rejoice in the Lord always," says the Apostle Paul. "Let your gentleness be known to all men. The Lord is at hand. Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Finally brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things."*

**SERVANT: WHY DID YOU DECIDE TO WRITE ABOUT ANXIETY?**

**MAX:** My books often arise out of the sermons I preach at my church. I had a series of conversations with people struggling with anxiety and felt it was vital to address. My favorite go-to passage for myself on that topic is in *Philippians 4* and I thought: *That would make a great outline for a series on anxiety.*

**AS A PASTOR HAVE YOU SENSED THAT ANXIETY IS A RISING TIDE?**

Pretty much any research on this topic expresses dire concern, even more so because of our inability to effectively treat it. Even in the span of my ministry

it seems that young people especially are more anxious today than ever before. One psychologist claims that the average child today feels the same amount of anxiety as a psychiatric patient in the 1950s. It's where people are.

**WHAT'S CAUSING THIS?**

Researchers speculate that the Western world's environment and social order have changed more in the last thirty years than in the previous three hundred. Changes and new threats are imported into our lives every few seconds; we've barely processed one crisis before we hear of another. People also move around the globe faster and farther than ever before with

little difference between night and day. Most of all, we have removed God from the conversation. Without him, dealing with anxiety is like fighting a tornado with a toothpick. As a pastor, I can be a voice reintroducing God into the solution.

When we remove God from the conversation, dealing with anxiety is like fighting a tornado with a toothpick.

## WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN ANXIETY AND FEAR?

Fear sees a threat. Anxiety imagines one. Fear results in fight or flight. Anxiety creates doom and gloom. The apostle Paul is referring, not to the occasional worry, but to a life of perpetual anxiety. The *presence* of anxiety is unavoidable, but the *prison* of anxiety is optional. In this passage of scripture, he gives us a prescription for peace. First we are to “Rejoice in the Lord” and celebrate his sovereignty. Then I take my problem immediately to him, thanking him that he can handle it, and I focus my thoughts on the good things he has given.

## WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO “REJOICE IN THE LORD?”

It’s reminding myself that he is so much bigger than what I’m facing. If there’s no good God on the throne overseeing the affairs of mankind, if there’s no gracious Father who is full of perfect love, then I have no solution to the problem of anxiety. There are still anxious moments where I depend upon my ability to provide for myself rather than God’s ability to provide for me. But I have learned that instead of wringing my hands, I have to choose to fall to my knees, and let our loving God do the rest. Rather than seeking total control of your life, relinquish it. You can’t run the world, but you can entrust it to God. Peace is within reach, not for lack of problems, but because of the presence of a sovereign Lord. We can cave in to the pandemonium of life, or we can lean into the perfect plan of God and trust that he is not finished. When anxious thoughts come, as people of faith we can respond by filtering them through the presence of a good God. Others see the problems of the world and wring their hands. We see the problems of the world and bend our knees.

## HOW DOES PRAYER AFFECT ANXIETY?

Here is where we actually take action. As you sense the dark burden of anxiety welling up within you, cast it immediately in the direction of Christ. Unlike general prayer and worship, a “request” is a specific petition. We pray the particulars of our problems in a way that gives an opportunity to see God at work. Many of our anxieties are threatening because they are ill-defined and vague. God is our Father and he is moved by a sincere request. If we can distill the challenge into a phrase, we bring it down to size. As you pray in that

way and see him answer, God’s own peace will guard your heart and mind.

## HOW IMPORTANT IS THANKSGIVING?

God’s ‘anxiety therapy’ always includes a large, delightful dollop of gratitude. It is a virtue that improves self-esteem and enhances relationships, quality of sleep, and longevity. That’s because gratitude and anxiety can’t share the same heart. What you have in Christ is greater than anything you don’t have in life. You have the living presence of Jesus within you. He can give you a happiness that can never be taken, a grace that will never expire, and he is a fountain of living hope that will never be exhausted. I pray with thanksgiving because I know God is big enough to handle my problem. There’s no need for me to carry this anxiety, so I let it go.

## YOU’VE SAID “PICK WHAT YOU PONDER.”

### WHAT DO YOU MEAN BY THAT?

Healing from anxiety requires healthy thinking. Your challenge is not your challenge. Your challenge is the way you think about your challenge. You can choose what you think about. Thoughts have consequences. Having given my concerns to God,

You can’t run the world, but you can entrust it to God. Peace is within reach, not for lack of problems, but because of the presence of a sovereign Lord.

I can focus and meditate on what’s good in my life and more than that, on Christ himself, who is true, noble, just, pure and lovely. Peace is the natural outflow of the indwelling presence of Christ. To the degree that I cling to him, love him, and turn to him, that fruit of peace is just going to *be*.

## DO CHRISTIANS STRUGGLE WITH THE MYTH THAT THEY SHOULDN’T EVER FEEL WORRIED OR EXPERIENCE ANXIETY?

Yes! We’ve been taught that the Christian life is a life of peace. Then when we don’t have it, we assume the problem

lies within us, and not only do we feel anxious, but we also feel guilty about our anxiety. It’s a downward spiral. So do we try harder? No. We hang tighter. The secret to fruit bearing and anxiety-free living is less about doing and more about abiding. Our only aim is to be at home in Christ where we are free to be our authentic selves. He is our permanent mailing address, our place of refuge and security. We know his heart and we rest in him. Our job is not to be the happiest person on the block. Our job is simply to abide in Christ.

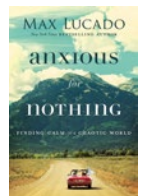
## SOMETIMES LETTING GO OF ANXIETY IS EASIER SAID THAN DONE.

Human beings are complex. Our souls are intertwined with our bodies and minds and I certainly don’t mean to leave the impression that anxiety can be waved away with a simple pep talk. In fact, for some, God’s healing will include the help of therapy or medication. If that is the case, do not for a moment think that you are a second-class citizen of heaven. Ask God to lead you to a qualified counselor or physician who will provide the treatment you need. It is not God’s will that you lead a life of perpetual anxiety, facing every day with dread and trepidation. He made you for more than that.

## HOW WOULD YOU ENCOURAGE SOMEONE WHO DOESN’T KNOW HOW THEY’LL SURVIVE LIFE’S CURRENT STORM?

As we do our part, God does his part. He bestows upon us the very peace of God, downloading the tranquility of the throne room into our world, resulting in an inexplicable calm. We should be worried, but we aren’t. We should be upset, but we are comforted. The peace of God transcends all logic, scheming, and efforts to explain it. Our goal is not to know every detail of the future. Our goal is to hold the hand of the One who does and never, ever let go. **ls**

To request your copy of *Anxious For Nothing* please see the enclosed envelope.





# The Presence

PAT MASSEY

**The tall Canadian stood bound and helpless as a gang of angry strangers held him at gunpoint and rifled through his possessions. Delays had forced the man and his travelling companion to stop for the night in a shabby inn that lay in a wild area frequented by outlaws. They were asleep when blows rained on the outside door and a rough crowd dressed in military garb burst into the room carrying flaming torches. There was no way to protect the girl who lay asleep in the other room, and suddenly she was dragged out with a rope around her neck. The mood was ugly and guns were cocked. Where was God? Was it his plan for two young lives to be snuffed out in this lonely place? Suddenly their captors shoved the prisoners into a dark room and fled into the night with everything they could carry.**

Marvin Dunn's family had moved from Saskatchewan in the 1920s to Three Hills, Alberta, where the miracle of Prairie Bible Institute was unfolding. He and his brother Gordon both attended Bible school and Gordon left for China under the China Inland Mission (CIM) in 1931. Marvin graduated and followed the next year. After language study, both men were sent to the southern part of Anhwei province along the Yangtze River basin.

Raised in China by missionary parents and trained as a nurse in England, Miriam Toop had returned to the land of her birth in 1940. World War II was in full swing and with Japanese troops controlling the Yangtze, she was unable to reach her assigned CIM station in South Anhwei. In September of 1942, the adventurous Dunn brothers succeeded in breaking through the Japanese lines to attend a conference. When they asked Marion to go back with them and help Gordon's wife deliver her first baby, she agreed that it was God's timing, and they set out with a caravan of hired carriers.

After a treacherous journey avoiding Japanese patrols and scrambling in the dark over mountain passes, they finally reached the safety of Free China. Anxious to get home, Gordon decided to hurry on ahead. The next morning the others waited hours for their carriers, a delay that would cost them dearly. Taking shelter that night in a remote inn, they were attacked and robbed of everything they owned. It was devastating, but despite their loss, God provided and three days later they finally reached their destination, exhausted but grateful.

The quiet woman's courage had not gone unnoticed and it was hard for the lonely bachelor to leave her and return to his station. The harrowing weeks on the road had also shown Miriam the wonderful qualities in this kind, godly man, and romance soon blossomed. On July 2, 1943, they were married and settled into a happy new life of ministry to the Chinese people.

Soon, however, due to the worsening military situation, the CIM ordered all missionaries in South Anhwei to evacuate.

It would be the first of many traumatic escapes that would ultimately take them as far away as Calcutta, India. When there were too many passengers for an available aircraft, their superintendent, Graham Hutchinson, insisted that he and his wife Elsie give up their seats so that the Duns, with Miriam heavily pregnant, could go first. Eight days later, the stunning news came that the plane carrying their friends had crashed, killing all on board. The news was heart-searching and humbling and Marvin and his wife felt God urging them to even more willing service for him.

In the unfamiliar surroundings of Calcutta, Miriam's fears were put to rest as God provided for the safe arrival of her little daughter. As they recalled the fears, the days of anxious travel, bombings and uncertainties, the new parents realized that God had led them all the way.

The war had ended and the Duns, now a family of five, were visiting England and Canada when Communism began to spread its tentacles throughout China. The western part of the country remained

free, however, and young people were still offering to come and serve the Lord there. Forty-nine recruits were soon ready to sail and Marvin and Miriam were asked to begin a language school. An unknown path lay ahead, but God had protected them and provided in so many ways that they knew he would always be present and they could rely on his love, no matter what. In the summer of 1949 they arrived in the Nationalist capital of Chungking. The political picture was dark: Communist armies were marching westwards and Chungking was an obvious target. Only God knew what the future would hold.

Travelling by truck to the hill country northeast of the city, the missionaries feasted their eyes on the beauty around them. Majestic mountains lay on the far horizon and terraced rice fields covered the plains below. What a gift God had provided! Foot travel was the only means of ascending the steep slopes where rented bungalows awaited. The students began to arrive and on November 13, the Western Language School was officially opened.

As Communist forces pressed forward, the capture of Chungking seemed imminent. The school was alone on the slopes, across the river from the city in an impossibly dangerous situation. As people from the

## Marvin set out for the city, never dreaming that the unthinkable was about to happen.

village below began fleeing into the hills, the Dunns committed their small community to God and made preparations, storing up food for the time when ordinary buying and selling would be impossible. Nationalist paper money was almost worthless by this time and the merchants demanded silver dollars. Regardless of the risk, Marvin would have to travel to the city to replenish their supply. He left quietly before light one morning, never dreaming that the unthinkable was about to happen.

Classes were underway when the sound of gunfire echoed across the hills. Suddenly Nationalist soldiers were setting up a machine gun behind the kitchen, sending a hail of bullets into the valley below. Terrified, Miriam hid her three little ones under a table covered with quilts. Opposing guns were getting closer and soon the campus was overrun with

soldiers dressed in battle green with a red star blazing from each cap. They searched the houses, then set up their own machine gun and sprayed the rice paddies below.

Students were coming down the path for lunch when a hail of bullets tore through the trees. They threw themselves to the ground where they remained pinned for over an hour before it was safe to move. Sporadic firing broke out again, but finally all pockets of resistance were silenced and a column of victorious Communist soldiers marched past.

There had been close calls. Some Nationalist soldiers and an injured man slipped into one bungalow for water during the fighting. They were spotted and bullets hit the house, narrowly missing two students who were kneeling to assist the victim. Bullets slammed into another house, ricocheting off the pillars. One smashed through a window and buried itself in the wall just over the bed of one of the women who had left the room only minutes before.

Over in Chungking, Marvin went about his business, oblivious to the two armies blasting away with guns on his familiar hillside. Even if he had known, it would have been suicide to attempt to

cross the river and return home. But Miriam's frantic prayers for her husband did not go unheard.

Around 2:00 in the afternoon groups of Communist soldiers returned to the valley to eat their noon meal. The other army followed a similar tactic and retired to eat their rice. It was just at this time that Marvin began his climb up the hill.

Everything was abnormally quiet and it was not until he was making the last ascent to the bungalows that he saw several dead soldiers on the path and realized he was in no-man's land. The time of prayer that evening was filled with awe and gratitude. In spite of the fighting and death all around them, none of the staff or students had suffered bodily harm. God's love and his promises came alive in a new way.

Communist authorities were occupied with enforcing control of the area, but change was bound to come. Strong foundations of trust in God needed to be made sure and worship services in the isolated little chapel at the top of the hill became very meaningful. The school term ended on May 31, 1950, and news of thousands of Chinese coming to Christ made the young people eager to move on to their assignments. But when weeks slipped by with no permission, another winter of isolation loomed ahead.

There were rumors of disappearances, midnight arrests and executions, and Communist officials accused the missionaries of spying, condemning those who cooperated with the Chinese church. Since they were obviously putting their Christian brothers and sisters at risk, the mission decided that it was time to leave China. That was easier said than done and Marvin often had to deal with the complicated regulations. Unfounded accusations, threats and false arrest brought even more stress and without God's intervention, things would have been grim. But hindrances were overcome in amazing ways and the school slowly emptied. On

August 5, 1951, the Dunns said farewell to their beloved hills for the last time.

It was hard not to question. Nearly two years of their lives had been spent cooped up on the hills.

Thousands of dollars had been expended. Illness had hit some. Emotional tension

had affected others. Was it worth it?

In the difficult experiences that the students had passed through, unforgettable lessons had been learned. Miraculous answers to prayer had deepened their faith and they had discovered for themselves that God really could give peace and patience in trying situations. No, the two years had not been wasted, for each one had come to know their Lord better. That included Marvin and Miriam Dunn who knew now with certainty that the One who had been ever-present through wars, revolutions and danger could be trusted to walk with them, no matter where he led in the days and years to come. ❧



Marvin and Miriam Dunn

Rahman al-Awani, the new group leader, spat out a command and two thugs wrestled Osama from the chair and dragged him down a dank hallway. They slammed him, face down, on the floor by an office door. The commander stepped close and bent over. "This can all end today," he hissed at the prisoner. "Tell me who gave you the Bible and give up this treacherous conversion story and freedom can be yours. Surely you don't want anything to happen to your family."

"I do not accept your offer," Osama whispered. "You can kill me but I will not deny Jesus."

## "YOU CAN KILL ME," WHISPERED OSAMA, "BUT I WILL NOT DENY JESUS."

An hour later, Osama drifted into consciousness. He had passed out after being deposited on the floor of a prison cell. Now another voice he did not know was speaking to him.

Mahmoud Ramadan leaned his back against the wall just out of view. "I must say I'm impressed by your faith. You were a rising leader in al-Nusra and threw it all away. Why did you even tell them about leaving Islam? I have never seen

such resolve. With the beatings you've been given, most prisoners would confess to anything. All you have to do is say the words. You don't even have to believe them in your heart. Don't you see? I'm trying to help you. This could get me killed, but I see something in you I admire. Please, Osama, just say you've returned to Islam."

It was Osama's turn. "My Savior did not deny me. I won't deny Him in my heart. And I won't deny Him with my lips."

The man spoke again. "I am in charge of your firing squad tomorrow. You have no more chances. But..." The voice paused. "You will be taken in a van to the execution

site outside of Idlib. After you're put in the death position, I will say a few words. When you hear the first shot, hit the ground like a dead man and *do not move*. When you hear the van drive away, get up and walk east. Within a few miles, you will find the Syrian Army. Surrender and they will not kill you."

"Why are you doing this?" Osama asked.

No one answered. The voice was gone. The next morning, Rahman al-Awani

relished the chance to mock the prisoner one more time. "What a pity to think of what will happen to your family now. Take him away!"

As Osama stumbled from the van and marched to the crest of the hill, he could see nothing, but the stench of rotted blood told him where he was. The voice from the night before laughed loudly as he read the charges against the Christian. His theatrics sounded convincing.

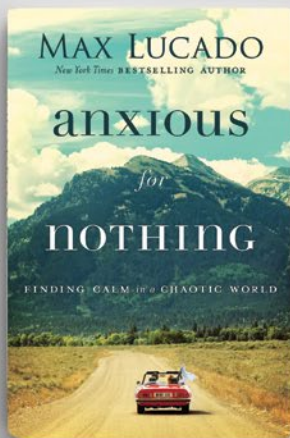
*For me, to live is Christ, thought Osama, and to die is...*

A single shot from an AK-47 stopped his silent proclamation and Osama crumpled to the ground.

*More shots followed and Osama lay still until he heard the van drive away. Then he rose up, and finding the members of the firing squad lying dead around him, he fled the scene and surrendered to the Syrian army. In the safety of a monastery, Osama studies the New Testament and prays for his family in Lebanon. God's miracles have kept alive this hero of the faith.*

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### ANXIOUS FOR NOTHING

Max Lucado

Anxiety is part of life, but it doesn't have to rule. Beloved pastor and author Max Lucado delves into a well-loved scripture to give a practical prescription for dealing with stress and anxiety—major mental health issues that are draining our pockets, destroying our productivity, and robbing our lives of hope. Reflecting on the promises of Philippians 4:4-8, he offers a roadmap for

battling with, and healing from, anxiety and discovering the freedom to enjoy the "peace of God."

### STANDING IN THE FIRE

Tom Doyle

Believing that today's headlines should motivate Western Christians to action—not freeze us in fear—Doyle shares first-person stories from heroes of the faith in Syria, Turkey, and other Middle Eastern countries. Read how they live as victors instead of victims despite overwhelming danger from the Taliban, ISIS, and other terrorist groups. *Standing in the Fire* demonstrates the church triumphant through the lives of believers who stand courageously for the faith in a climate of fear.



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# Missile to paradise

## WHAT WOULD YOU DO IF YOU HAD NINE MINUTES TO LIVE?

This past January, my wife Ramona and I were in Hawaii where I was speaking. I know, I know. It's a tough life. All that sand in your shorts. We were enjoying an early breakfast on the ninth floor of our hotel when suddenly at 8:07 AM the world went crazier than a cageful of monkeys.

A zillion cellphones buzzed and a message flashed onscreen: "Ballistic missile threat inbound to Hawaii. Seek immediate shelter. This is not a drill." Now I'd be a liar if I told you my first thought was *Yippee!* I have a family. Grandkids. A ministry.

Pandemonium breaks loose below us. People panic. Some scream. Others flee through the streets. Tearful goodbyes are said. Underground parking lots fill.

"It's from North Korea," says someone. "It takes a ballistic missile 20 minutes to get here." Eleven minutes have come and gone.

With nine minutes left to live, Ramona and I descend nine flights of stairs. A lady is carrying a Bible. "That's a good book," I say.

"The best," she smiles, "especially this morning." Call us delusional, but we stop and talk about heaven, about the Good News of Christ's love.

"We're in God's hands," we agree. With six minutes left of our lives, Ramona and I turn west onto Lewers Street and toward the Pacific.

A hundred thoughts flood your mind when you have five minutes to live. *The kids. Is there anything left unsaid? No. They know we love them. That we're ready to go. They know where the will is.*

"I wonder if we'll see the missile," I say. "Let's watch."

At four minutes I'm thinking about Kim Jong-un. I'm not confident he can hit a basketball hoop from five feet. Can he



pinpoint this tiny island 7,500 kilometres away? Stranger things have happened. Well, maybe not.

Three minutes left and a man stops us. He's furious at world leaders. "We can't put our hope there," I say. "Our hope is in Jesus." I'm braver than normal. What's he gonna do? Kill me?

With two minutes left to live it's important to know that your worldview works. I'm happy to report that Christianity does. I'm a little jittery, but filled with peace. For many, fear reigns. One lifts a manhole cover and pushes a child below.

**With two minutes left to live, it's important to know that your worldview works. I'm happy to report that Christianity does.**

I hold my wife's hand and say, "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth gives way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea." One minute to live and we are laughing. There are the mountains. There's the sea.

My watch says time's up. I pause. "We're still here," I say.

"Shoot," says Ramona. We laugh again. Most of her family is in heaven, and there are days she'd love to see them, but today isn't that day.

It takes a whopping 38 minutes for authorities to issue a retraction. Someone hit the wrong button. Oops. How prominent *is* this button? Did they hire a bit of a joker? What if his eyesight wasn't up to par? Maybe he pushed the button thinking it said, "Go for lunch," when it said, "Go for launch."

It's too early to go for launch, so we continue our walk along Waikiki Beach. I've never seen it so empty, but people are beginning to return. I want to yell, "Don't go back to the way you were. This is not the land of the living. It's the land of the

dying. Are you ready? You have one life to live, one story to tell. Write it well."

Perhaps our lives need more missile scares. We'd be a little more aware that we're not here long. A little more prepared to share the hope of Christ.

At 10 AM a friend emails to ask me if we're OK.

"Yeah," I reply. "But trust me, it's been a blast." 📧

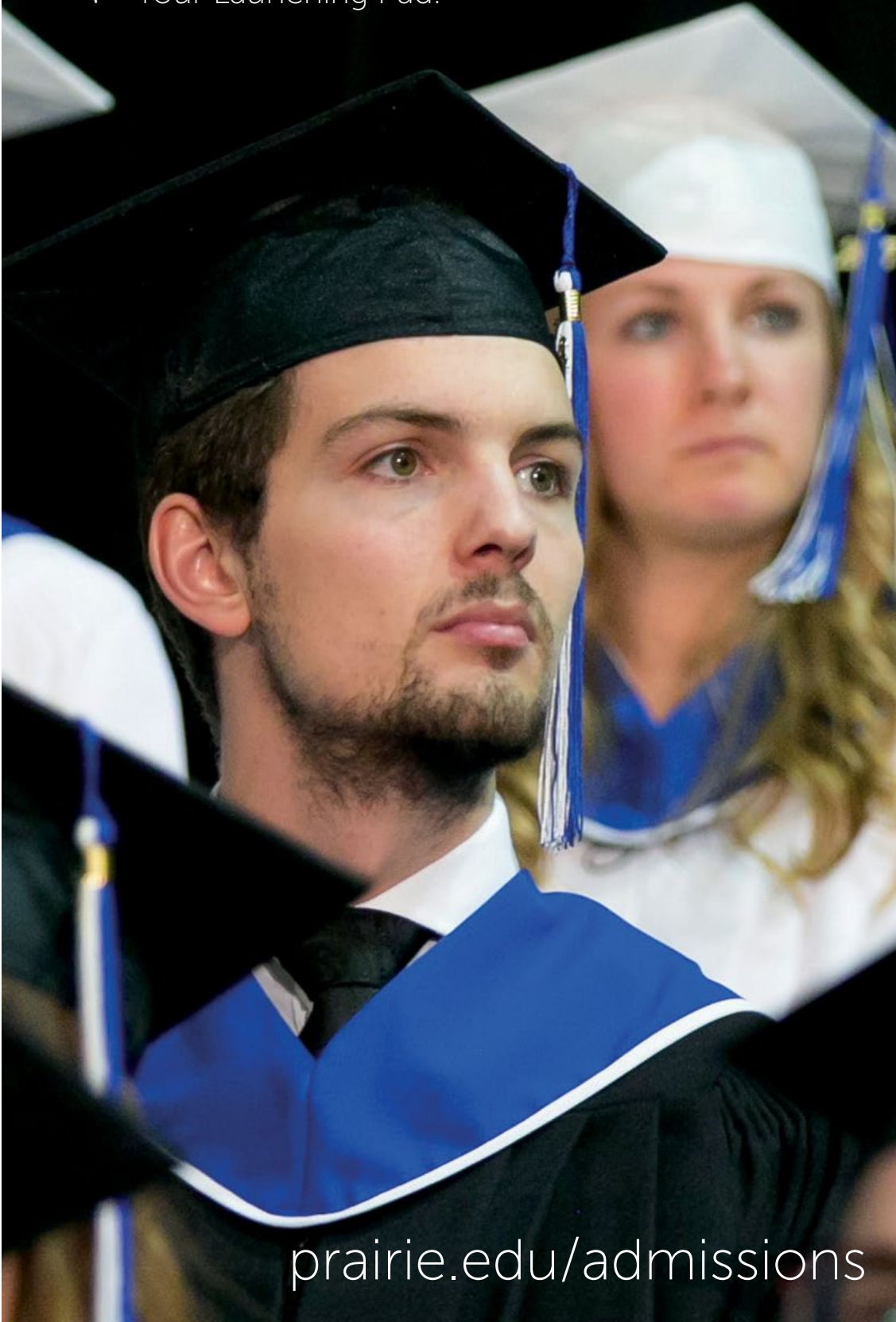
Phil is a Prairie alumna, an author, radio host and speaker. Visit him at [philcallaway.com](http://philcallaway.com)





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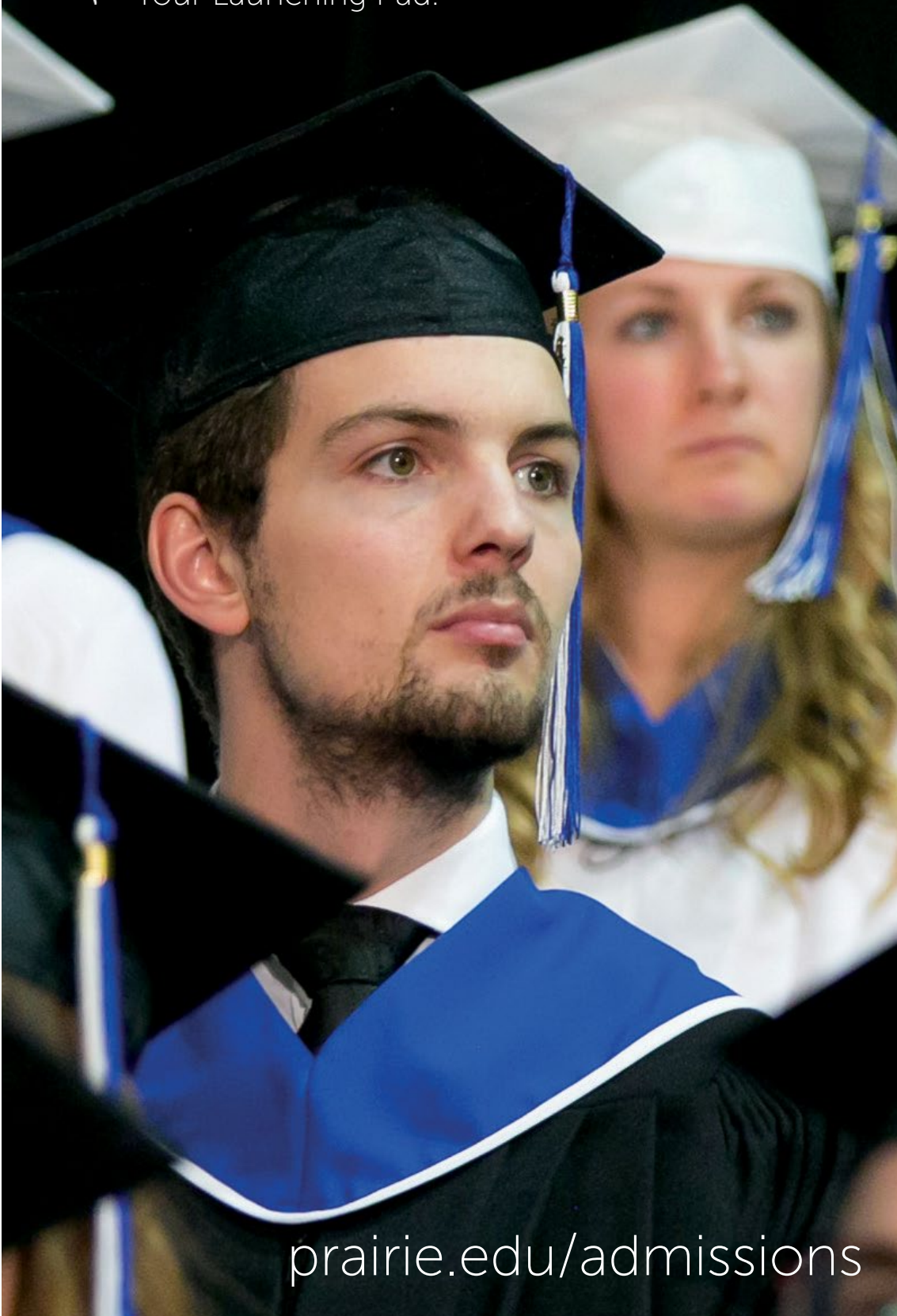
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