



CHRONIC JOY® DEVOTIONAL

Clinging to Christ Stability When Life Gets Squirrely

By Erin Burkhardt

Therefore, we who have fled to him for refuge can have great confidence as we hold to the hope that lies before us.

This hope is a strong and trustworthy anchor for our souls.

It leads us through the curtain into God's inner sanctuary.

(Hebrews 6:18b-19)

WHEN LIFE GETS SQUIRRELY

I smiled as a baby squirrel leaped toward me on the sidewalk. My little 10-year-old self was ecstatic to have a woodland creature come up so close. Keeping perfectly still I watched in awe as this adorable animal sat on my shoe and stared at me. I felt like Snow White!

Suddenly it dug its sharp little claws into my jeans and scrambled up my leg. Up it climbed until I could feel it clinging to the back of my neck. My excitement turned to fear. I froze, not knowing what to do next. Keeping my head perfectly straight, I continued on my route to school, not knowing whether I should ask for help or bring my new friend in for show and tell.

Before I could make up my mind, I heard a loud shriek from a nearby parent who then grabbed her child's backpack and began savagely whacking me as hard as she could. After a few good swings, the tiny thing let go and fled as fast as its poor little legs could carry it. I quickly disappeared into the school when I overheard the woman mention rabies shots...

I was always curious why a squirrel dared to come up to me; years later I learned that "Chippy" was probably lost, separated from its mother, or traumatized. It used me in a desperate attempt to be protected. It saw the first seemingly stable thing it could find and clung on for dear life.

I'm constantly reminded of how much I am like that squirrel, feeling lost and desperate in my life, looking for sources of stability but sometimes looking in all the wrong places.

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STABILITY WHEN LIFE GETS SQUIRRELY

With chronic illness, our lives can be chaotic. We hop from doctor to doctor, switch medications, adjust our lifestyles, and learn to adapt to our ever-changing situations. Our emotions are also in a constant state of flux. We are eager and determined one day, and anxious and defeated the next. It's easy to see the first or flashiest source of hope as our safeguard, but just as a human is no home for a baby squirrel, there is no replacement for Jesus in our lives.

There are wonderful tools out there to help us physically, emotionally, and spiritually. Some can do incredible things when applied to our lives, but if we find ourselves putting our hope in them more than in Christ, we are clinging to the wrong thing and will eventually be knocked off.

"Chippy" needed a solidly rooted tree where he could be safe and grow. In much greater capacity, we also need a safe, stable place. Jesus is our "tree," our strength and shield (Psalm 28:7), anchoring us in life, no matter our circumstances. When He is the anchor and center of our lives, we don't have to be afraid (2 Timothy 1:7) and we can use the freedoms and blessings given to us in a healthy and fruitful way.

Even if our lives get a little squirrely, we can always find safety in the arms of Christ.

QUESTIONS TO PONDER

- What are some blessings that have helped you in your health journey (support groups, a certain diet, medical interventions, friends/family, etc.)?
- Where do you first turn when life gets hard or a new challenge arises?
- Are there people in your life who may be a replacement for Jesus as your source of hope or protection?
- How can we encourage one another to live a life rooted in Christ?

PRAYER

Heavenly Father,
We praise you as Lord of all the earth! We thank you for your tender care for all your creation. We confess that sometimes we look for security in the wrong things when we should be seeking it in you. Thank you for your daily grace and mercies, granted to us through your death on the cross. Help us to see you as our stronghold, our hope, and our anchor that will never fail. Thank you for your abounding love that covers us and keeps us rooted amid the chaos of life. In Jesus' name, Amen

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