

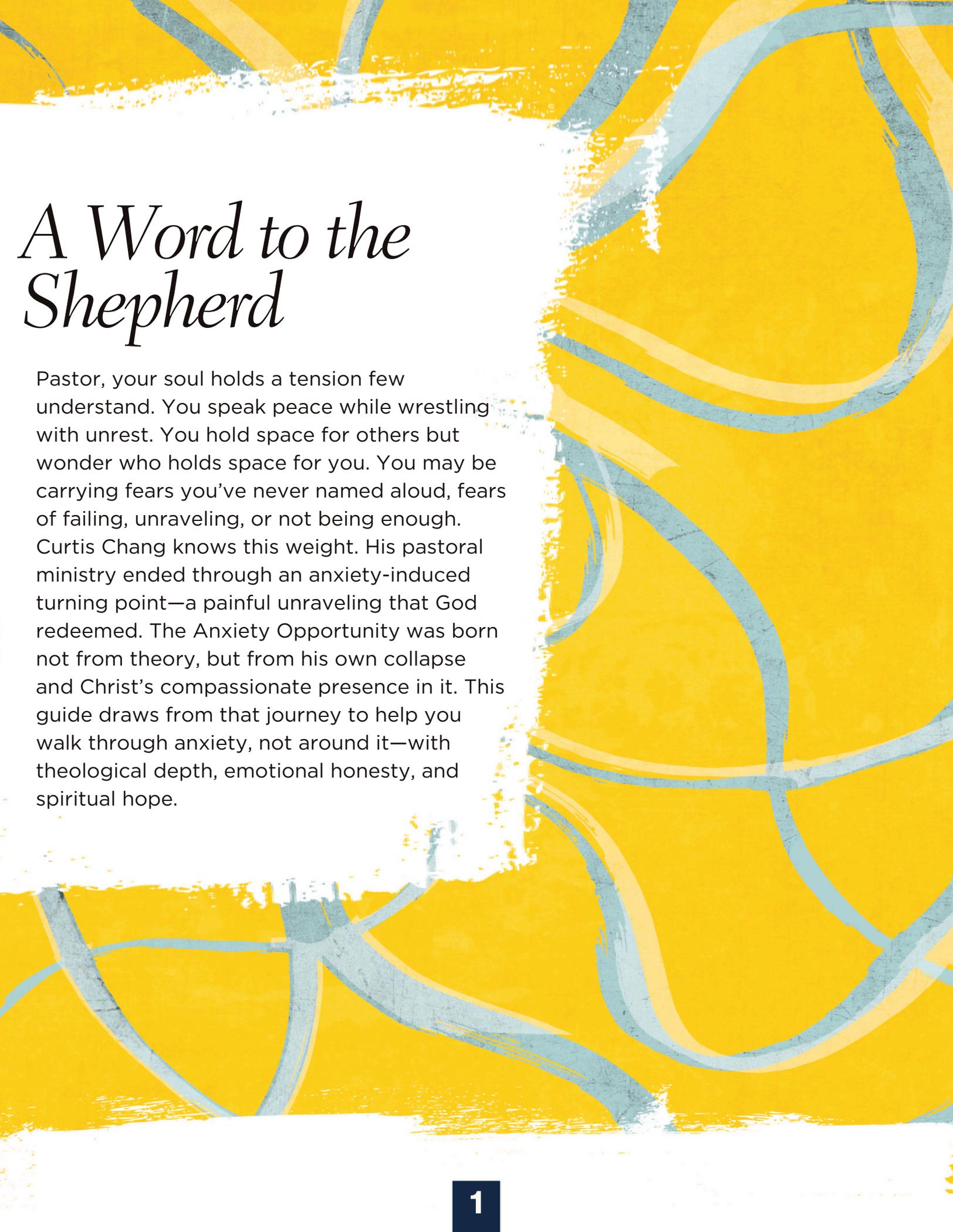
*The*

ANXIETY

OPPORTUNITY:

**A PASTOR'S GUIDE TO  
WALKING THROUGH  
ANXIETY**

*A practical guide for  
pastors based on The  
Anxiety Opportunity  
by Curtis Chang*

The background of the page is a vibrant yellow with large, expressive blue brushstrokes that create a sense of movement and depth. The strokes are thick and layered, some overlapping each other, giving the design a textured, artistic feel. The overall composition is dynamic and modern.

# *A Word to the Shepherd*

Pastor, your soul holds a tension few understand. You speak peace while wrestling with unrest. You hold space for others but wonder who holds space for you. You may be carrying fears you've never named aloud, fears of failing, unraveling, or not being enough. Curtis Chang knows this weight. His pastoral ministry ended through an anxiety-induced turning point—a painful unraveling that God redeemed. The Anxiety Opportunity was born not from theory, but from his own collapse and Christ's compassionate presence in it. This guide draws from that journey to help you walk through anxiety, not around it—with theological depth, emotional honesty, and spiritual hope.

# Step 1: Name What's Real

Anxiety often hides under layers of shame. As a pastor, you may feel pressure to appear strong, faithful, and composed—even when anxiety is eating away at your peace. But as Curtis writes, *“I didn’t recognize the depth of the anxiety that was driving me...Or I didn’t have the words to express it”* (pg. 4). The first movement toward healing is naming what is true, not for others, but before God. You are allowed to be anxious. You are allowed to name it.

## PRACTICES

- Write a private confession: *“I am anxious because...”*
- Say aloud: *“I am feeling anxious. That does not make me unfaithful.”*

## PRAYER

*Lord, here is what I’m anxious about. I bring it into the light with You.*

# Step 2: Release the Blueprint

When ministry feels uncertain, we instinctively reach for a plan, a “blueprint” we hope will secure the future. But Curtis warns, *“Anxiety pulls us into the future and convinces us that if we had the right plan, we could avoid loss”* (pg. 24). As pastors, we often feel responsible to foresee everything. But spiritual maturity invites us to want the Architect more than the architecture. You don’t have to fix the future. You are simply called to trust the One who already inhabits it.

## PRACTICES

- Ask: Am I praying for a plan, or for God’s presence?
- Write down what you’re trying to control—and release it to God.

## PRAYER

*Jesus, I release the ‘perfect plan’ I’ve tried to create. Help me trust You as the Architect of my life and ministry.*

# Step 3: Return to the Present

Ministry often pulls you into imagined futures: the next sermon, the lingering conflict, the future of your church. But Curtis reminds us, *“You cannot feel anxious when you are fully present”* (pg. 32). Anxiety kidnaps us into tomorrow; God meets us today. Returning to the present moment is not avoidance—it is surrendering to where grace is already at work.

## PRACTICES

- Step outside and observe nature for five minutes.
- Ground yourself: 5 things you see, 4 things you hear, 3 things you can touch, 2 things to smell, and reflect on 1 truth about God.

## PRAYER

*Lord, bring me back to this moment. You are here. That is enough.*

# Step 4: Breathe with Jesus

In a locked room full of fear, Jesus breathed on His disciples and said, “*Receive the Holy Spirit*” (John 20:22). Curtis writes, “*Breathing embodies how the Holy Spirit is with us for every present moment of the ‘Now’*” (pg. 37). For pastors, breath often tightens when anxiety takes hold. But intentional, prayerful breathing is a way to return to God’s presence, not through effort, but through embodiment.

## PRACTICES

- Try a breath prayer: Inhale “*Prince of Peace,*” exhale “*Still my soul.*”
- Breathe slowly while reading Matthew 6:25–34 multiple times.

## PRAYER

*Holy Spirit, breathe peace into my body, my mind, and my ministry.*

# Step 5: Observe the Thought, Don't Become It

Anxious thoughts can sound like truth, but they are often just echoes of fear. *“There’s a difference between having a thought,”* Curtis writes, *“and becoming that thought”* (pg. 56). As a pastor, you may internalize every criticism or spiral into the fear that you’re not enough. But you can learn to name the thought without letting it name you. You can say, “This is not who I am. I am held by God.”

## PRACTICES

- Name your thought loops: The *I’m-Failing Loop*, or maybe The *What-Will-They-Think Spiral*.
- When you notice these loops, say: *“There it is again. I give it to You, Lord.”*

## PRAYER

*Lord, I see this thought rising. Help me remember it is not who I am. I belong to You.*

# Step 6: Grieve What Feels Lost

Anxiety often flows from grief, both anticipated and real. Curtis reflects, *“My hyperventilation in the pumpkin patch parking lot was not me sinning; it was me groaning for transformation”* (pg. 17). As a pastor, you carry quiet losses: dreams deferred, people who left, ministries that ended. These deserve to be mourned. Jesus weeps with us—not just over what’s lost, but over what still aches inside.

## PRACTICES

- Name your losses: maybe a person, a dream, a former season.
- Write a personal lament, get honest with God as David does in the Psalms.

## PRAYER

*Father, I lay these losses before You. Teach me to grieve in hope.*

# Step 7: Accept the Invitation of the Dark Night

Spiritual silence is not always a void. Sometimes, it is God's invitation into deeper formation. Curtis describes a season where, *"Words and concepts about God were inaccessible during the dark night... but God was still present in the silence"* (pg. 40). As pastors, we often equate silence with failure. But in the dark, God may be doing His most tender, unseen work. This is not the end—it's a holy descent that leads to resurrection.

## PRACTICES

- Sit in silence for five minutes daily, repeating a word like *"Jesus"* or *"Here."*
- Resist the urge for answers. Let presence be enough.

## PRAYER

*Even in the dark, I trust You are here.*

# *Going Deeper: Two Conversations Every Pastor Needs*

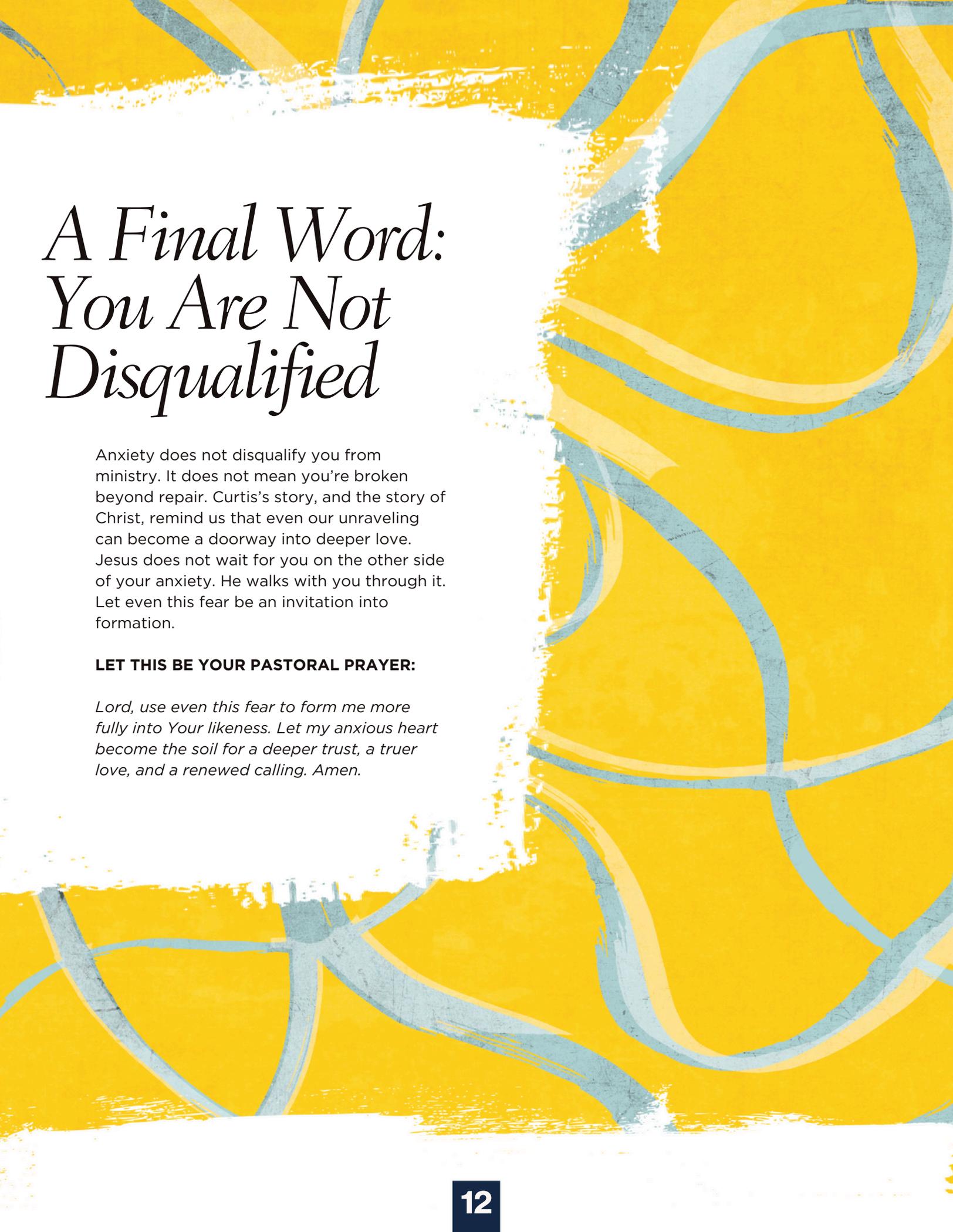
Anxiety is not meant to be carried alone. These two episodes from *the Good Faith podcast*, hosted by Curtis Chang, offer soul-level solidarity for pastors and ministry leaders. Listen during a walk or Sabbath time. Reflect afterward: What resonated most deeply? What did it stir in you?

## **WHEN PASTORS HEAD FOR THE EXITS WITH DAVID FRENCH**

*Curtis and David French name the cost of ministry in high-anxiety times and explore the emotional and spiritual wear pastors carry.*

## **THE SECRET LIFE OF PASTORS WITH DR. MARK TURMAN**

*A raw conversation on why so many pastors are stepping away—and what might create a more sustainable future for those called to lead.*

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# *A Final Word: You Are Not Disqualified*

Anxiety does not disqualify you from ministry. It does not mean you're broken beyond repair. Curtis's story, and the story of Christ, remind us that even our unraveling can become a doorway into deeper love. Jesus does not wait for you on the other side of your anxiety. He walks with you through it. Let even this fear be an invitation into formation.

**LET THIS BE YOUR PASTORAL PRAYER:**

*Lord, use even this fear to form me more fully into Your likeness. Let my anxious heart become the soil for a deeper trust, a truer love, and a renewed calling. Amen.*