

Anxiety-Reducing Prayer Plan



Of all the commands in Scripture, I've disobeyed this one most often:

Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus (Phil. 4:6–7).

I'm astounded when I think about the hundreds of hours I've spent fretting about tomorrow. What makes this even more ludicrous is that much of what I concern myself with rarely materializes.

However, God has used this verse to begin chipping away at my worries. He has taught me several things about anxiety in general—and about Himself in particular. What is probably obvious to many, wasn't as obvious to me: when the Lord gives a command, He graciously provides not only the means through which to obey it but also a description of the blessing that will result.

The Command

Do not be anxious about anything. It's a straightforward command. We're not to worry about anything, big or small. Straightforward, however, doesn't always mean easy.

I've learned that to worry less I need to first know more about the Person to whom I'm surrendering my concerns. Among the Lord's many attributes, two stand out for me:

1. He is in control: “Kingship belongs to the Lord, and he rules over the nations” (Ps. 22:28, ESV). God’s power to follow through on His promises builds our trust in Him.
2. He wants what’s best for us: “We know that for those who love God all things work together for good” (Rom. 8:28, ESV). His desire to exercise that power binds the trust that power builds.

The Means

In every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. While I’ve understood the importance of prayer for a long time, I didn’t really know how to pray. Prayer is more than telling God our needs. He already knows all of them. He is looking for something far more precious: our heart, our vulnerabilities. Prayer is, in part, a plea for mercy and grace, a plea that He will show Himself as the loving, sovereign Master He is.

The Result

The peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. As I’ve made myself more vulnerable in prayer, something extraordinary has happened. The Lord has begun using this means of obedience to make another means of obedience—Scripture—come alive. Rather than simply knowing who God is I’m starting to feel who God is as I read His Word. My affections are starting to catch up with my beliefs.

As I pour out my heart to the Lord, He fills it with an anxiety-reducing assurance of who He is. I still worry, but the emotion’s intensity and shelf life have greatly decreased. Peace pushes out fretting. And for that I am grateful.

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