

*Philippians 4:5 Let your forbearing spirit be known to all people. **The Lord is near.** <sup>6</sup> Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. <sup>7</sup> And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*

In the course of an average day, how many times do you become annoyed or anxious? When I monitor my own heart, I discover that this usually happens *dozens* of times a day. My plan gets interrupted, or a difficult person crosses my path, and I get annoyed. A loved one makes a poor decision, or a concern about my health or finances arises in my mind, and I become anxious.

I usually just repress these reactions and push ahead with my day – but these annoyances and anxieties tend to accumulate in my heart, and then later come out sideways in a foul mood, a sense of self-pity, or general touchiness toward others. More importantly, I find myself unable to show forbearance toward others, or to experience the peace of God guarding my heart and mind. What is my problem? Why is my experience so different from what this passage promises for me?

The answer is often embarrassingly simple. I forget that “the Lord is near.” This statement is the promise upon which Paul’s commands to show forbearance and reject anxiety depend. The Lord is near. That is, He is with me right now – not only *aware* of my annoyances and anxieties, but also *accessible* for help as my loving Father. My mind affirms this statement, but my instinctive heart reaction is to live as an orphan – as if I am on my own to muddle through my annoyances and anxieties as best as I can.



What does it look like to respond differently to our daily annoyances and anxieties? How do we appropriate this promise of God’s accessibility so that annoyance actually gets replaced with forbearance, so that anxiety actually gets replaced with peace? Here is what has been helpful for me; maybe it will be helpful for you.

First, we can ask the Lord to sensitize us to the early outbreak of annoyance or anxiety. These reactions often happen on a sub-conscious level, and by the time we’re aware of them they’re usually already in charge of our hearts. This is why David prays:

*Search me, O God, and know my heart;  
Try me and know my anxious thoughts;  
And see if there be any hurtful way in me . . .  
(Psalm 139:23,24 NASB).*

David knows that hurtful and anxious thoughts often ignite in his heart *without his notice*. But he also knows that the Lord is near, and that the Lord knows his heart better than he does, and that He can bring these thoughts to his conscious awareness. The sooner we’re aware that we’re annoyed or anxious, the sooner we can take them to God.

And that’s the second thing we can do with our annoyances and anxieties. Because the Lord is near, we can go to Him in prayer and simply pour them out to Him – like a young child who runs to his mother and pours out his troubles. The Bible calls this kind of prayer “supplication.” Supplication is pouring out our annoyances and anxieties by communicating them to God in a raw, unvarnished way. Paul urges this in Philippians 4:6 (“with supplication”), and the Psalms contain hundreds of examples of supplication, like this one:

*Give ear to my prayer, O God;  
And do not hide Yourself from my **supplication** . . .  
I am restless in my complaint and am surely distracted,  
Because of the voice of the enemy,  
Because of the pressure of the wicked;  
For they bring down trouble upon me*



*And in anger they bear a grudge against me.  
My heart is in anguish within me,  
And the terrors of death have fallen upon me.  
Fear and trembling come upon me . . . (Psalm 55:1-5 NASB)*

Later in this Psalm, David recommends this kind of prayer to his hearers: “Cast your burden upon the Lord and He will sustain you” (Psalm 55:22). Deliberate supplication begins to transfer the burden of our annoyances and anxieties to the One who can both bear them and sustain us.

Supplication leads naturally to petition – asking the Lord who is near for help with our annoyances and anxieties. Philippians 4:6 says, “Let your requests be made known to God.” God is accessible; what help do you want Him to give to you? The Psalmists often ask God to deliver them from their enemies, and to restore their hope and joy in Him. Such simple, almost child-like requests! But Jesus says that we should come to Him like children. And far better to ask the Lord who is near for this kind of help than to not ask. “We have not because we ask not” (James 4:2).

Paul promises that God will guard our hearts with His peace when we turn to Him in this way. The Psalmists delight to praise God for answering their supplications and petitions.

*I waited patiently for the LORD to help me,  
And He turned to me and heard my cry.  
He lifted me out of the pit of despair, out of the mud and the mire.  
He set my feet on solid ground and steadied me as I walked along.  
He has given me a new song to sing, a hymn of praise to our God.  
Many will see what He has done and be amazed.  
They will put their trust in the LORD. (Psalm 40:1-3 NLT)*

What annoyances or anxieties are plaguing you today? What will you do with them? Will you ignore them or try to fix them on your own? Or will you take them to the Lord who is near, pour them out to Him, and ask Him for help?

