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## REPLACING ANXIETY WITH PRAYER

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Good morning. I hope you've been thinking more about how you can grace others? It's pretty much a daily occurrence that someone will do something that requires grace just as sure as you and I require God's grace daily! The very cool thing is, God's grace is already in place, ready to dispense, and ours can be, too, if we allow His Spirit to control us. Let's continue today where we left off in our verses yesterday. As we open His word, take a moment in prayer to ask the Holy Spirit to be your teacher.

As we read yesterday, let's read again Paul's words to the Philippian Church,

"Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice!

Let your gentle spirit be known to all men. The Lord is near.

Do not be anxious for anything,

but in everything, in prayer and supplication with thanksgiving,

let your requests be made to God.

And the peace of God that surpasses all understanding

will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus."

(Philippians 4:4-7)

We saw that the goal is - His peace which guards our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus, and to achieve that we need to keep a mindset of rejoicing (trusting and resting in the truths of who God is, and all He has promised to those in Christ) and forbearing (treating others in the grace we have received.) The third thing we need to employ in our walk in order to obtain His peace is PRAYER.

Look at verse 6 again,

"Do not be anxious for anything,  
but in everything, in prayer and supplication with thanksgiving,  
let your requests be made to God."

Easier said than done, huh? But girlfriend, if we can latch on to this process it can bring that incomprehensible peace that we long for.

The text says, *"do not be anxious for anything"*, that means, *don't allow your thoughts to keep producing anxiety by attempting to reason the how, what, when, where, and why of a situation.*

Oh, we are so good at that though, aren't we? We even find ourselves giving God advice, am I wrong? "Lord, if You would only...." or, "if You would just make this or that happen by..." Yes ma'am, we are fixers. We are solution finders, and for some reason we are sure that we could sort it all out if God would just do as we ask of Him. (Guilty.) But that's not the type of "prayer" God desires from us. No, He desires an intimate relationship with us that is rich because of our ongoing conversation with Him. In that type of relationship, He says we are not to be anxious for anything, not for one single thing. There's a better solution. Bring it to Him in prayer.

"But in everything, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be  
made known to God"

We're talking about making our requests known to GOD! Others may be sympathetic to our problems but none have the ability to give peace as He gives peace. When we lay it at God's feet and TRUST HIM with it, His peace enters in.

Perhaps you need a reminder that this God we pray to is the omniscient (all-knowing), omnipotent (all-powerful) One, omnipresent (all-present), He is just (there is nothing unfair about what He does), immutable (He never changes), He agape-loves you (Self-sacrificial

love that keeps on loving regardless of the response). He is righteous and holy (Perfect, No other like Him).

That means He is fully aware of your situation, every situation, nothing ever surprises Him, not even our attempts to tell Him how to solve our problems (He is omniscient, after all). AND He has promised to work all things together for the good to those who love Him and are called according to His purpose (Romans 8:28).

**If you find yourself fretting over things, remind yourself who your God is. Write down some of His character traits and any verses that come to mind, and use this as a reminder in coming days:**

Verse 6 tells us what we are to do - We are to let our requests be made known to God. Let's examine the three elements that are mentioned in the text:

~ "By Prayer" (tae)(pro-seu-chaе) = *by means of the formal petition addressed to someone in a higher position.* When we are addressing the Father let's be mindful of His character, who He is (and who we are not!)

~ "Supplication" (tae)(de-ae-sei) = *the specific want or need we ask God or entreat God for*

~ "With Thanksgiving" = *it is by means of a formal petition, addressed to someone in a higher position, in asking God or entreating God for the specific want or need, along with, and in the sphere of, thanksgiving.*

It is a fact that as we mature in Christ we should find ourselves fretting less and trusting more, knowing that God does not hold out on us, but rather is busy working things to our

good. Gratitude becomes a natural character trait as we are thankful for His work, thankful for His character that remains true, thankful for our relationship with Him in Christ. There is an unending amount of things to be thankful for when it comes to you and I being blessed to know God. Just to know He is faithful even when we are not. To know He is a covenant keeper, His promises (over 7000 of them in His word) are dependable and true. If that were not enough, we can be thankful for His great love toward us that sent Christ to die in our place. Our heart of thankfulness should precede and envelope our prayers as we give Him what is due. He is worthy of our thankfulness and we can count on Him answering our prayer.

"But what about when He doesn't answer prayer?" Oh, Sister, as our Father, He ALWAYS answers our prayers, we just need to learn to recognize the answers He gives.

Here's what I mean.

When we ask God for something our prayer consists of a petition and a desire. To understand the way God answers we must see the distinction between the two. The *petition is the specific thing we ask God to do*. The *desire is what we believe the petitioned thing will accomplish*. You see, behind every petition there is a motivating desire. God answers our prayers with those two aspects in mind.

He actually answers prayer four different ways:

God may answer *Yes To The Petition but No To The Desire* - remember in Numbers 11:4-34 when the Israelites were tired of eating manna, and they called out to God. God answered yes to their *petition* for a different food, and sent quail, so much quail that they got sick of it. He had yes to the petition, but their *desire* was that a different diet would make them happy, that was a "No". They weren't any happier with the new diet than with the old.

Sometimes God answers, *No To The Petition but Yes To The Desire* - we ask God for something believing it will give us the happiness we desire. God says no to the petition but brings about the happiness in another way. This is illustrated in Genesis 18 and 19 by

Abraham's petition to God to spare Sodom and Gomorrah so his nephew Lot might be saved. God said no to the petition. He did not spare Sodom and Gomorrah. But, He said yes to the desire and spared Lot.

At times God answers, *Yes To The Petition and Yes To The Desire* - (by the way, these seem to be the only answers we recognize and appreciate.) This is illustrated in John 11:39-44 where Jesus prayed and petitioned the Father to raise Lazarus from the dead, His desire was that the bystanders would see the power of God and believe. The Father answered yes to both. He raised Lazarus from the dead, and received the glory for it.

Other times, God answers, *No To The Petition and No To The Desire* - That is an answer. It may not be the one we want but it is an answer. And if it's the answer we get then we must learn to trust God to know what is best for us and the situation. But in every No/No situation it is best to take a little check of why He may have answered No on both counts. We may find that it's because we are carnal (sinful state).

**Read the following verses and see what insight is there:**

~ Psalms 66:18. Is it because we are carnal and out of fellowship with Him?

God does not obligate Himself to answer the prayer of a believer out of fellowship.

~ James 4:2-3. Was the petition or desire selfish? Do we ask amiss as described?

What's the motive behind our prayer?

~ James 1:5-7. Is it a lack of faith?

Faith in God is essential - believe He is able to do what He promises. But know that God is not a puppet to respond to our bidding, He is a loving Heavenly Father who knows what we need, knows what will bring us joy and what will be profitable to us.

~ Proverbs 21:13. Is there a lack of Compassion?

This is a basic principle of God in watching over the welfare of His children.

~ Job 35:12-13. Is Pride a factor?

Pride is the number one enemy of God. Pride heads God's list of abominations found in Proverbs 6:16-19. Take a look.

~ I Peter 3:7. Is there a lack of harmony in the home?

God has told us that there needs to be a positive response to our proper roles in the family structure in order to prevent our prayers from being hindered.

~ I John 5:14. Is it incompatible with God's will?

If we are making sure all the above is in check, it shouldn't be hard to pray as Christ did, "Thy will be done."

Also, sometimes what seems a No/No answer is really a *Not Now* answer, those times require waiting on the Lord. If you have gone through the check list above and the Lord hasn't convicted you in any of these areas, it truly may be just a *Not Now* answer. Then wait on the Lord! He's not done yet!

As we harmonize all these Scripture passages together we begin to understand the commitment God has made to us concerning prayer. When we were born into the family of God, through our faith in Jesus Christ, we were placed in the status of "adopted sons" and given the privilege of drawing on the family account (that's a mighty big account, by the way.) If we will follow these guidelines - Praying with supplication and thankfulness, we will be able to draw on the tremendous assets of God.

As Oswald Chambers said, "*as His children we may boldly approach His throne of grace but may it never be with impertinence.*"<sup>1</sup> Praying to the Father requires that we first must be His child, only those who are born again in Christ Jesus qualify as His. There must be a relationship with Him through Christ (John 14:6) and our fellowship must be intact (1 John 1:9). Apart from that He may hear but would in no way be obligated to answer, any more than you are obligated to answer when someone else's child comes and asks you for you to

give them something. Or, similar to you not giving your child what they want when they haven't been obeying.

**Now, the question is, do we trust God to answer our prayers? Do we trust Him with the answer He has given us? Or do we doubt Him because His answer was not what we wanted?**

**Close today's study with writing out Psalm 84:11.**

Now, BELIEVE IT! When we are praying according to these things, the peace of God will guard our hearts and minds as we are in Christ Jesus.

REVIEW

- ~ Remember who God is
- ~ Approach Him in thankfulness
- ~ Prayer consists of a petition and a desire
- ~ God answers our prayers -
  - Yes To The Petition but No To The Desire - Numbers 11:4-34
  - No To The Petition but Yes To The Desire - Genesis 18& 19
  - Yes To The Petition and Yes To The Desire - John 11:39-44
  - No To The Petition and No To The Desire - Psalms 66:18, James 1:5-7, 4:2-3, Proverbs 21:13, Job 35:12-13, I Peter 3:7, I John 5:14
- ~ Don't fret, don't ask amiss. Align your will with His and see what God will do.