

Prayers  
*for*  
Freedom  
*over* Worry  
*and* Anxiety

Bruce Wilkinson



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## **PRAYERS FOR FREEDOM OVER WORRY AND ANXIETY**

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*Dedicated to all who long to leave worry behind  
and walk in ongoing peace and contentment.*

*May you find practical biblical answers and  
meaningful prayers within these pages.*

*May your prayer with us each day be exactly  
what you needed for that day!*

## Acknowledgments

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## Introduction



If you are like the rest of us, you struggle with anxiety and worry from time to time. Don't you? Since you do, how would you like proven Anxiety Answers that work every single time? I'm not overpromising or overstating the truth even a little.

Before we reveal those effective solutions to anxiety, however, how about a little self-examination? Pause for a moment, and let's do a little self-diagnosis by answering the questions below as honestly as possible.

1. You experience feelings of worry or anxiety this often:

- Numerous times in a day
- Maybe once a day or so
- A couple of times a week
- Once a week
- Hardly ever
- Never

If you checked "Never," then see if you can return this book and get your money back. Or give it away

to someone you know who has challenges with anxiety!

2. On a scale of 1 (very low) to 10 (very high), how strong and bothersome are your feelings of anxiety and worry? \_\_\_\_\_
3. Have you ever taken medicine or drugs to help you cope with anxiety? \_\_\_\_\_
4. When you feel anxious, how do you normally cope? Circle or check off the tactics that you usually use to relieve your anxiety:
  - At times, I use drugs to cope.
  - At times, I use alcohol to cope.
  - At times, I use pornography to cope.
  - At times, I overeat to cope.
  - At times, I slide into depression and sleep far too much to cope.
  - At times, I exercise to cope.
  - At times, I isolate myself from everyone else to cope.
  - At times, I overwork to cope.
  - At times, I watch TV and/or surf the Web to cope.
  - At times, I pray and read my Bible to cope.
5. How hard do you anticipate it will be for you to rid yourself of anxiety and worry?
  - I don't believe I can ever conquer my anxiety.



- I believe I will have to stay on anxiety drugs to be free enough.
- I believe it will take me years to conquer my anxiety.
- I believe it will take far too much effort and won't work.
- I believe if the solutions really work, I can be free of anxiety right now.

I'll never forget a three-minute conversation I had with a young man at a men's conference who lamented to me privately that he was totally unable to stop using pornography. I smiled and said, "Well, it appears that you have convinced yourself that there isn't any solution, and under no circumstance could you stop using pornography instantly. Am I right?" He nodded in agreement. I continued, "It's because your sex drive is so much stronger than most men's, right?" He nodded even more, sensing I understood his dilemma.

"So, if you were looking at pornography in your bedroom in the middle of the night and your mother unexpectedly walked in, what would you do?" He nearly shouted, "Man, I would shut down my computer instantly!" Then I nodded and nodded. He got it. Do you get it?

It's of great value to hold one simple Bible verse in your mind. In fact, you probably already know it: "Be anxious for nothing" (Philippians 4:6 NKJV). The words "be anxious" are translated from the Greek word *merimnao*. We'll come back to that word later, but right now focus on three important facts about that verb.

First, "be anxious" is in the present tense—not past tense or future tense. Why? No one can be anxious yesterday when it is today. And, it's just as impossible to be anxious in the future today. Anxiety only can occur in the present.

Second, “be anxious” is in the active voice, not the passive voice. That means that not “being anxious” is something you actively do yourself. Someone else cannot “be anxious” for you. Why not? Because 100 percent of anxiety dwells only within you. Even more striking is the fact that this verb is active, not passive. You are the only one whose action can lead to anxiousness, meaning no one—and nothing—can make you anxious. Not your spouse, your child, your parents, your boss, your government. Nope.

That’s why two people can experience the exact same crisis and one becomes anxious and the other doesn’t. One person responded by choosing anxiety, and the other person chose not to be anxious.

You and you alone are 100 percent in control of your anxiety. You are the only person who can activate anxiety within you. So with that in mind, it’s time to break free from the *big lie* that something or someone made you anxious.

Are you ready for the third fact about that verb “be anxious”? This final characteristic of the verb is the most important: It’s an imperative. God reveals a direct command to all of us: Don’t choose anxiety under any circumstances. If you do, you have chosen to sin. You have willfully chosen to activate your anxiety in direct disobedience to God’s will in your life.

As you know, God never commands us to do something unless we can obey Him. So, in contrast to the *big lie*, here’s the *big truth*: You have always been in total and complete control of your anxiety. At all times, and under every circumstance, you can always choose not to activate your anxiety. God granted that freedom to all of us. Please note: The only exception to this is if your anxiety is drug-related or chemical-related.

So, if you checked any of the other choices under question #5 except the last one—“I can be free of anxiety right

now”—you have been deluded into believing the lie. Remember that young man with the pornography problem? He was addicted until his mother walked in—then all of a sudden, he discovered massive already-existing reserves of self-control! He was able to stop instantly. As I continued my conversation with the young man, I smiled and said, “Maybe you should ask your mother to follow you around all day and night!”

Before going to the next section, take a big breath and say out loud, “I am always entirely free to choose not to respond to whatever life throws at me. I reject the lie that it’s ‘Just the way I am’ or that ‘I cannot help myself.’ Even if my life is in the pits, I have control over anxiety and worry.”

Let’s analyze anxiety for a few moments further. First of all, why do we say “I feel anxious” instead of “I think anxious”? It’s because all of us experience the *feelings* of anxiety. Therefore, too many of us assume that we cannot control our feelings, that we are helpless against the onslaught of anxious emotions. But once again, we are mistaken, since God instructs us to control our emotions. For example, consider these two commands: “Love one another fervently with a pure heart” (1 Peter 1:22 NKJV) and “Do not fear” (Luke 12:7).

One thing should be obvious at this point: All of us are much more in control of our anxiety than we may have ever imagined!

So what, then, is God’s answer to our anxieties and worries? Let’s take a look at each part of Philippians 4:6: “Be anxious for nothing, but in everything...” (NKJV). The contrast between *nothing* and *everything* is clear: God leaves absolutely no room for any person to have any anxiety of any kind at any time. We are to be anxious *for nothing*. At this point, if you are going to live a truly anxiety-free life, here’s an important point to notice: The rest of Philippians 4:6-8 actually reveals the supernatural

answer to all anxiety. God's answer, in plain language. You won't have to look anywhere else beyond this short Bible passage to find the answer.

In only three verses, God lays out three steps that, if followed, will work for you—100 percent of the time! In fact, if you are anxious right now, use them and experience a stunning victory in only a few moments.

*Step #1: What to do when you are anxious (your part)*

*Step #2: What God will do with your anxiety if you do your part (His part)*

*Step #3: What to do to become “anxiety-resistant” in the future (your future option)*

Let's examine these three steps in this short passage so you will be able to find quick relief for all anxiety.

### **Step #1: What to Do When You Are Anxious**

*Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God (Philippians 4:6 NKJV).*

Anytime you start to feel anxiety, remember these words: “Let your requests be made known to God.” The first step is to pray—that's the reason why my editor and I have written this book, *Prayers for Freedom over Worry and Anxiety*, for you.

I'm sure you have tried praying about your most difficult anxieties in the past—and I would anticipate that your response might be, “Yes, I tried prayer, and it didn't work.” Would you like to know why it didn't work? The reason is, you must follow the specific instructions in this verse and not skip any step—then

you will discover the amazing experience of victory every single time.

It's like making a cake and forgetting one critical ingredient. The result is a cake that flops! Yes, you made the cake, but one or more of the necessary ingredients was missing. No matter how carefully you made the cake, no matter how sincerely you wanted it to turn out right, and no matter for whom you were baking the cake, the cake flopped.

This verse contains three specific ingredients for enjoying God's amazing answer to your worry and anxiety.

First, you must pray to God about your situation.

Second, you must not only pray; you must supplicate. *Supplication* is a translation of the Greek noun *deesis*, which is different from just praying. It means "to ask or entreat God because of a specific need." The specific need is the very situation or person that is triggering your feelings of anxiety. To supplicate means asking God to intervene in the face of your situation.

Third, and perhaps most important of all, you must thank God for the very thing that is surfacing your anxiety. This step is counter to what we want to do, isn't it? Why would we thank God for the very thing that is the source of our turbulent, negative emotions? What a powerful secret! The moment you thank God for this opportunity, you exercise your trust in Him and obey His command not to sin with anxiety. By flipping it over and thanking God for that difficulty, you demonstrate your faith in His power.

Anxiety cannot exist in the presence of gratitude!

By presenting God your requests with thanksgiving, you are practicing 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18: "Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you" (NKJV). Once again, the words are in the present active imperative. This is only tested when something

occurs in life that we strongly dislike, and it's hard to find any reason to "give thanks." Since this is a command, you and I both realize that we can choose to obey, but it's not always very easy.

This just happened to me in the last 40 minutes. As is often true, the Lord seems to enjoy putting me through numerous tests on the very truth for which I'm either teaching or writing a book. He wants my communication to be a bit more real and visceral because I had to struggle through the very issue over which I'm trying to help someone else to experience victory.

Here's what happened. On Tuesday, I lost my small Day-Timer calendar for the entire year. It recorded scores of important meetings that I had forgotten to make a copy of in case I did misplace it. I panicked, knowing I couldn't remember even half of all the events, meetings, deadlines, and speaking engagements. So I did what anyone would do—I emptied my computer case and briefcase; looked through the drawers of my desk; checked my dresser, my jackets, my shirt pockets, and my car and trunk; called the office in case I had left it there; looked in all the drawers in the kitchen and through all my course materials; etc.

My anxiety increased every day. Then my loving wife Darlene checked everywhere as I repeated all of these steps a second and third time. I prayed, but no help. Darlene prayed, but no help. My sister Pat prayed, but no help. The next day, my anxiety had doubled again. I looked again, prayed again, and felt irritated that God did not help me the way He had in the past.

Today is Saturday, and I had to make a couple of telephone calls just to make sure I wouldn't miss some important meetings with my team next week at the Teach Every Nation offices in Atlanta, Georgia. At lunch today, my anxieties had nearly reached the panic level about missing a meeting or conference call. But as I walked out of the kitchen on the way to my home office to finish this chapter so I could meet the Monday

deadline, I took stock of my situation and realized I was filled with anxiety.

As I walked down the three stairs into the garage, I thought, *Practice the answer for all anxiety*. It occurred to me that I'm not thankful in the least for this crisis, and I also felt a bit irritated that heaven would not at least give me a hint about the location of my lost Day-Timer. When my foot hit the garage floor, I started forcing myself to thank the Lord. I thanked Him for the frustration, for my lost calendar, for not knowing what to do, for the potential of disappointing others by missing meetings, and more. I thanked Him all the way through the garage to my office door. By the time I opened that door, my anxiety had disappeared! And, I forgot about my missing calendar.

I sat down on my chair, opened my computer, and started cleaning some dishes off the corner of the desk. Right there—I couldn't believe it—the calendar was under a plate. Now, I know I had looked on my desk at least five times. If you had been there, you would have heard me laughing and laughing! I told God, "I get it! This little anxiety test—which I had failed for 4.5 days in a row—was a reality check." After praying and thanking God for the very issues that I felt anxious about, and after naming them one by one, I experienced the next part of the verse. I was sure that heaven was exploding in laughter with me at God's lesson plan for this chapter!

## **Step #2: What God Will Do with Your Anxiety If You Do Your Part**

When you pray and make your requests known to God with thanksgiving regarding your anxiety and its causes, then something quite remarkable occurs in response: God promises you a supernatural response. God hears these kinds of prayers and promises to always answer them. Unlike many of our

prayers—to which God may respond with a *no* or a *not yet*—God always answers *yes* to this particular prayer. Read Philippians 4:6-7 to see His clear and direct promise for you:

*Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds through Christ Jesus* (NKJV).

When you are filled with anxiety and pray with thanksgiving about that very discomfoting circumstance, then God supernaturally intervenes in your life and gives you a priceless gift: “the peace of God.” God doesn’t increase *your* peace; instead, He gives you *His* peace. His peace overwhelms all your anxiety and literally destroys it by replacing it with His supernatural peace.

But you must recognize one shocking fact: Even after God grants you His peace, the underlying cause of your anxiety and worry hasn’t changed! What *did* change was your mental and emotional response to that situation. The causes of your anxiety are still present. Since nothing external changed, how can you experience God’s gift of His peace? The answer lies in the power of God’s peace—His peace is so strong that it “surpasses all understanding.” How exactly does that work?

The word “surpasses” is translated from the Greek word *hyperecho*, which literally means “to hold above, to be above, to be superior to.” God’s peace enters your life because you met God’s universal requirement—prayer, supplication, and gratitude—and He responds by surpassing your anxious thoughts and feelings with His sovereign peace. His peace is so far above and superior in its positive power that it drowns all your negative fears and worries. God wipes them clean; He erases the words *your anxieties* off the blackboard of your soul and writes



*MY PEACE* in big, all-capital letters, leaving no trace of your worry.

I described the replacement of your anxiety with His peace as “supernatural” because God’s peace *simply isn’t natural*. It’s above—“super”—natural. You cannot explain why you now are filled with peace because God’s peace surpasses all your understanding. The peace you feel isn’t your peace or any other person’s peace, but rather God’s supernatural peace. You called out for God’s help, and God responded with His gift.

How do you know this will happen to you? The word for “surpassing” is the participle *hyperecho*, and it is in the present active form—which means that when you pray/supplicate/thank God, then at that very moment (in the present) God acts on your behalf. You don’t generate your own peace; God actively gifts His peace to you right then, in your present difficult moment. How gracious of our God!

Remember my anxiety over my lost calendar? As soon as I prayed, asked God for help with my anxious thoughts, and thanked Him for my terrible situation, guess what happened? God immediately poured out His peace into my emotions and thoughts. How long did that take? The amount of time it took to walk from one side of the garage to the other. A mere few seconds. I didn’t ask Him for peace, but I did thank Him for the situation.

You don’t need to ask God for His peace, but if you meet His requirements, He will always respond by keeping His end of the arrangement. But recognize the surprising fact that my calendar was still lost! His peace is granted even when the problem persists. My emotions were supernaturally transformed in mere seconds. Underscore in your mind this truth: Anxiety is your response to a situation, and not the situation itself.

As a person who has practiced this passage many times over

the decades, I give you my affirmation: This truth has always worked in my life. Why? Because God keeps His word for anyone who meets His requirements!

You might think that God's peace would be His "final answer" for our anxiety and worry, but amazingly, He goes beyond what we could imagine. Read the rest of verse 7: "and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." Even as I write this to you, I'm once again stunned by the gracious kindness of God. His peace is not only granted instantly, but also His peace positions itself to guard you from new anxiety attacks on the same issue. The peace of God stands as a powerful protector in this area of your life. In fact, God's stated promise is that His peace will "guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."

The words "will guard" are translated from a very specific Greek word *phroureo*, which is a military term meaning "to keep by guarding, to keep under guard." This verb is used to describe a garrison of soldiers who provide protection against any and all enemies. This same word is used twice in 2 Corinthians 11:32: "In Damascus the governor, under Aretas the king, was guarding the city of the Damascenes *with a garrison*, desiring to arrest me" (NKJV).

Once God pours His peace into you, you'd better be on guard for anxious thoughts and feelings lest they return, right? Nope. I don't know if you are ready for the rest of God's remarkable revelation, but the verb *phroureo* is in the future active indicative form—not the present tense. In other words, God not only gifts peace to you at that moment (present tense of surpassing), but He continues to actively take responsibility for guarding that gift of peace. Nothing can destroy or weaken it in the future. God gives His peace in the present, then guards your heart and thoughts into the future.

This passage reveals the twofold response of God to our anxieties. First, God pours out a surpassing peace into our lives in the present; and second, God stands guard to ensure His peace remains in your life in this area.

Please remember this seminal fact: The cause of your anxieties hasn't changed. What has changed is your response to that situation. You chose to delegate your anxieties to the Lord and affirm your thankfulness for whatever God is doing in your life through that difficulty. Since the underlying cause of your anxieties hasn't changed, won't your anxious thoughts soon flood back? Read again about the two specific areas where God's peace will stand guard for you: "[He] will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." God will protect you in the future from both thoughts and feelings about this specific area. Once again, God does more than we could think or imagine!

### **Step #3: What to Do to Become "Anxiety-Resistant" in the Future**

For those who desire to become "anxiety-resistant" in the future, the next verse lays out how to achieve that wonderful state of ongoing peace in all areas of your life. In normal situations, all our anxieties are rooted in our thoughts, which then give birth to our anxious feelings. Unless your physical body in some way is off-balance, anxious feelings can only develop from anxious or fearful thoughts. Therefore, the key to a life free of anxiety is to take your thoughts captive, not permitting any thoughts that would be outside of God's will for you. Look at the characteristics of anxiety-free thoughts, as seen in the next verse, Philippians 4:8:

*Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are*

*of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things* (NKJV).

The verb “meditate” is a future imperative—meaning that since you now have peace in the present, make sure to guard against falling into another mindset that generates anxiety for you. How? By focusing your thoughts on the true, noble, just, pure, lovely, good, virtuous, and praiseworthy. When you obey God’s command to think/meditate on the positive rather than on the negative, guess what will be impossible? An anxious thought! If you have no anxious thoughts, then you will have no anxious feelings! But, if worrisome and anxious thoughts and feelings do creep in for whatever reason, you now know exactly what to do!

With that in mind, you can understand why my editor and I structured this book, *Prayers for Freedom over Worry and Anxiety*, the way we did. Along with our publisher, we researched and selected the key topics that people are anxious and worried about, and treated each one with the same fourfold structure:

1. Preparing Our Hearts for Prayer
2. Pursuing God’s Presence in Prayer
3. Practice of Prayer
4. Personal Prayer Thoughts, Answers, and Reminders

We hope and pray that this little gem of a book will be a great help to you personally. May your life not only experience the blessings that God promised when you fulfill His prerequisites, but even more than that, we pray you will become so “anxiety-resistant” that you will rarely experience an anxious feeling in the years ahead.

With prayers for God’s surpassing peace,  
Bruce Wilkinson  
President, Teach Every Nation

## Unknown Health Issues



### Preparing Our Hearts for Prayer

Unknown health issues can often plague our hearts and our minds more than the known ones. The what-ifs provide no boundaries or limitations, leaving our thoughts to wander deeply and freely in worry. Before we know it, we've diagnosed ourselves with a serious disease and are planning for the worst. We don't want to succumb to this what-if anxiety every time we experience a very normal ache, pain, or abnormality. Have you ever asked yourself:

Is the lump cancerous or simply a swollen lymph node?

Is the pain in my chest heart disease, a heart attack, or one too many pieces of pizza?

Is my kidney inflamed, or is my appendix about to burst?

Wait, where is the appendix anyhow? And *where are* my kidneys?

In today's world, with such easy access to all sorts of media, information, medical websites, forums, and even our friends' and family's health statuses, we have no lack of possible

outcomes for any discomfort we may feel. They say that ignorance is bliss, and when it comes to unknown health issues, that may very well be the case. With the rise of health and illness information at our fingertips, too much knowledge may be contributing to our worry or even worsening our stress. That is not to say you shouldn't follow up with a trained medical professional if symptoms persist, but you should also be mindful that "for as he thinks within himself, so he is" (Proverbs 23:7).

Did you know that worrying about your health can actually worsen your health? Identified impacts of worry and anxiety on the body include: stomach pain, acne, weight gain (slower metabolism), body aches, hair loss, loss of libido, heartburn, and more. This is because when you worry, your body releases hormones called cortisone and adrenaline that are provided by God to equip you for real danger. The only problem with worry is that your body cannot tell the difference between real or perceived danger.

Because worry arouses a feeling of impending doom, your body responds by elevating your hormone levels—even though the "danger" is something you only imagined! When these stress hormones are free to roam in your bloodstream over a prolonged period of time, they can become toxic to your glands, heart, digestion, and nervous system. This can eventually lead to real health issues and real damage to any number of systems and organs in your body. Our bodies simply weren't designed to remain in a constant state of alert, otherwise known as "fight or flight" panic, any longer than what's necessary to trigger an appropriate response to danger.

So what's the antidote to worrying about unknown health issues that seem to lurk around every corner? We can overcome consistent worry and anxiety by intentionally seeking a mindset of peace through prayer. Yes, you should follow up on any

ongoing physical symptoms with a trained professional; but in the meantime when there are no diagnosed ailments, try to live in peace rather than a heightened fear of what may happen in the future. Rather than having the cells in your body washed over by a constant flow of cortisol, wash them with the Word of God, which will bring life to your bones and joy to your heart. If you are not a fan of reading Scripture (or even reading at all), there are free audio versions of the Bible available through a variety of useful apps in the app store. Listening to, meditating on, and ingesting the truth of God's Word is one way of replacing thoughts of worry with thoughts of victory and life.

### **Pursuing God's Presence in Prayer**

Beloved, I pray that in all respects you may prosper and be in good health, just as your soul prospers (3 John 1:2).

A joyful heart is good medicine, but a broken spirit dries up the bones (Proverbs 17:22).

Blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD and whose trust is the LORD. For he will be like a tree planted by the water, that extends its roots by a stream and will not fear when the heat comes; but its leaves will be green, and it will not be anxious in a year of drought nor cease to yield fruit (Jeremiah 17:7-8).

### **Practice of Prayer**

Gracious heavenly Father, Your Word tells me that I am blessed when I put my trust in You. This trust keeps me from fear and worry when difficulties come. Your Word also says I will not be anxious in a year of drought. Trust is a powerful

weapon against worry and anxiety. Strengthen my trust in You, Lord. Increase my capacity to trust. Remind me of Your presence in such a way that joy fills my heart.

About this particular pain, symptom, or health concern—I ask that You will do one of three things. One, please remove the symptoms (aches, pain, lump, etc.) entirely and quickly. Two, please give me insight into what it truly is. If it is minor, help me treat it myself using a healthy diet, hot packs, or over-the-counter medicine. Or three, Lord, give me the courage to seek professional medical help to diagnose my symptoms quickly. Please lead me to the best doctors, and give them Your wisdom on what is wrong. Please help them to treat me, so that I may be cured quickly. Thank You, God, for answering my prayers. In Christ's name, amen.





