

2. The Lord is Near You

When the right person is with you, you have more courage. Imagine a movie scene in which all hope seems lost and the hero is fighting with his last ounce of strength. The enemy is too strong. You can see the anxiety on his face. It is just a matter of time before all is lost.

Then he feels something. The ground beneath him comes alive. He hears rumbling. Hoofbeats. The neighboring kings have banded together and are coming to the rescue with a vast army. Anxiety vanishes. Courage takes its place. The army is not there yet, but they will be soon, and the hero will be delivered. His strength returns. The enemy flees.

Great stories. Too bad that most of them are fantasies. But there is one story ...

GOD IS WITH YOU

These images can actually be found in the book of Revelation. They were borrowed by *The Lord*

of the *Rings* and many other movies. But the original story is true. They are about you and the God who is very near you, who hears, and who acts.

God is with you, and He usually brings an army of angels with Him.

Since His presence is hard to see, God promises you that He is near. And He makes that promise to you again and again because you probably won't believe Him the first ten times. This is what He says:

Do not be afraid, for I am with you. (Gen. 26:24, NIV)

Do not be afraid or terrified because of them, for the LORD your God goes with you wherever you go; he will never leave you or forsake you. (Deut. 31:6, NIV)

I will not forget you! See, I have engraved you on the palms of my hands. (Isa. 49:15-16)

I will never leave you nor forsake you. (Heb. 13:5)

And on and on. Think about people who love each other. They are always saying, 'I love you.' They can't help themselves. They want to say it. They like to say it.

God *likes* to tell you that He is close. He *wants* to be close to you. He made you to be close to Him. This is how He expresses His love, and this just happens to be the most important way He speaks to you about your worries.

Yes, this can be *really* hard to believe, so be careful to listen.

Listening to God is not always easy. Instead of speaking to you with a voice you can hear, He speaks to you in writing, as in a personal letter or a long text message. But that is not the hard part.

Here is the problem. When life is okay and you feel like things are under control, you don't need Him. When you don't need Him, you don't bother reading the Bible or listening to Him. Then, when life gets crazy, you think He is far away because you haven't learned how to listen to Him. You forget about His texts. You think they have no answers. So you try to control your own life. You get frantic. You feel out of control. You fall apart. Does this describe you? Either way, when things are good or bad, listening is not easy.

Anxiety and worry are a reminder to listen. That's your mission.

Your anxiety reminds you that you need Him, so anxiety is not as bad as you think.

When you read the New Testament, Jesus always had time for those who knew they needed Him. Both Jesus and His Father are glad to be needed. (Most parents are glad to be needed too.)

FAITH AND ANXIETY

Eyes that see, ears that hear. So it is time to hear more and see more. The Bible calls this faith. It is a gift that God gives to those who ask. What is faith? Faith is like glasses that God gives to help you see more clearly. Faith is earbuds that help you hear more than you can with your ordinary ears. God speaks to you in the Bible and His words open your eyes to see and your ears to hear.

Here is how faith works.

Look around you. You see life and light everywhere.

Listen more carefully. God has told you that He created all things.

Look around again—by faith—and you will see the artist behind it all. Life is everywhere because God is the Life. Light is essential for life and peace. It comes because God Himself is the Light.