

A Reflection on Renaming Anxieties, excerpt  
*Naked Spirituality*, by Brian McLaren  
Pages 116-120.

“Anxieties can gray the whole sky like cloud cover or descend on our whole horizon like fog. When we rename our anxieties, in a sense we distill them into requests. What covered the whole sky can now be contained in a couple of buckets.

So when we’re suffering from anxiety, we can begin by simply holding the word *help* before God, letting that one word bring focus to the chaos of our racing thoughts. Once we feel that our mind has dropped out of the frantic zone and into a spirit of connection with God, we can let the general word *help* go and in its place hold more specific words that name what we need, thereby condensing the cloud of vague anxiety into a bucket of substantial request. So we might hold the word *guidance* before God. Or *patience*. Or *courage*. Or *resilience*. Or *boundaries*, *mercy*, *compassion*, *determination*, *healing*, *calm*, *freedom*, *wisdom*, or *peace*. . . .

Along with our anxieties and hurts, we also bring our disappointments to God. If anxieties focus on what *might happen*, and hurts focus on what *has happened*, disappointments focus on what *has not happened*. Again, as the saying goes, revealing your feeling is the beginning of healing, so simply acknowledging or naming our disappointment to God is an important move. This is especially important because many of us, if we don’t bring our disappointment to God, will blame our disappointment on God, thus alienating ourselves from our best hope of comfort and strength. . . .

Whether we’re dealing with anxieties, wounds, disappointments, or other needs or struggles, there is enormous power in simple, strong words—the words by which we name our pain and then translate it into a request to God. *Help* is the door into this vital practice of petition, through which we expand beyond our own capacities and resources to God’s. . . .

Through this practice of expansion and petition, we discover something priceless: the sacred connection can grow stronger through, not in spite of, our anxieties, wounds, disappointments, struggles, and needs. The Compassionate One is our gracious friend, and we don’t have to earn anything, deserve anything, achieve anything, or merit anything to bring our needs to God. We can just come as we are.”