

Contagious Joy

Part 17 – The Antidote to Anxiety

Philippians 4:6-9

August 9, 2009

Smithsonian magazine calls this the Age of Anxiety. Worrying is like a rocking chair, it gives you something to do, but it gets you nowhere. ~Glenn Turner

There are global worries that everybody on the planet worries about... the recession, war in the Middle East, terrorism, AIDS, extreme poverty; There are personal worries that you have every day... my 401(k), depression, alcoholism, a failing marriage, wayward kids, job security, and aging parents.

Do you have something that you worry about? You try to release it, but it always seems to creep back into your conscious mind. Is there a way to overcome it? Does the Bible speak to it? I've got great news for you this morning. There is an answer for anxiety!

Proposition: What is God's plan for dealing with worry and anxiety?

I. **Stop: Worry about nothing** (v. 6a) *Be anxious for nothing,*

Don't do it. It isn't helpful or profitable. In fact he leaves no room at all! Eliminate it!

A. The definition

1. Worry is interest paid on trouble before it comes due. ~William Ralph Inge
2. *Proverbs 12:25, An anxious heart weighs a man down.*
3. Worry is assuming responsibility that God never intended for me to have. It's playing God, trying to control the uncontrollable.

4. The word “worry” literally means to be pulled in opposite directions. Our English word “worry” comes from the German word *wurgen*, which means “to strangle” or “to choke”. Have you ever felt like your worries were CHOKING the life out of you? What do we worry about?
5. Application: Write on 3x5 card... we will come back to it!

B. The facts about worry...

1. Dr. Walter Cavert has done studies on worries. He discovered that:

- **40%** of our worries never happen

He worried about the weather, He worried about his health, He worried about his business, He worried about his wealth. She worried about the children, she worried about her clothes. She worried about the neighbors. She worried about her woes. They worried about their taxes, they worried about their pets, they worried about their future, they worried about their debts. They worried, still they worried, they worried, but alas, they worried about a lot of things...That did not come to pass.

- **30%** of our worries concern the past
- **12%** of our worries are needless worries about your health
- **10%** of our worries are insignificant or petty concerns
- **8%** of our worries are really legitimate concerns

C. Matthew 6:34 "Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough troubles of its own."

1. I've developed a new philosophy... I only dread one day at a time. Charlie Brown (Charles Schulz)

2. Today is the tomorrow we worried about yesterday.
3. **Insight: In order to not worry... live one day at a time.**
4. Whenever God asks us to eliminate something, he asks us to replace it with something else! What is it?

II. **Pray: about everything** (v. 6b-7)

but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.

A. **The Requirements: How do we pray?**

1. If you stopped worrying, realize how much free time you'd have! Pray during that time. If those people who say "I don't have time to pray" would spend their time praying instead of worrying, they'd have a whole lot less to worry about. Paul is saying, don't panic – pray!
2. "*In everything*" Some people think that God is only interested in you praying about spiritual things. God is interested in everything in your life.
 - *I Peter 5:7 "Cast all your cares upon Him". Phillips: "You can throw the whole weight of your anxieties upon Him, for you are His personal concern!"*
 - Any concern too small to be turned into a prayer is too small to be made into a burden. ~Corrie ten Boom, *Clippings from My Notebook*
 - **Insight: There is no problem that is too big for God's power or too small for God's concern.**
3. "*supplication/petition*" (NIV): Prayer, supplication and requests are all synonyms for the same thing! It is a specific, detailed request. Get specific with God. Tell Him exactly what you want and what you need. Most people pray too vague, too general. "God, bless my life." Don't pray general, vague prayers, but be specific. "God, I'm worried about..." Be specific about it.
 - **James 4:2 "You have not because you ask not."**

- Twenty times in the New Testament we are told "ask".
4. *With thanksgiving:*
- *Good News: "always asking Him with a thankful heart."*
 - *I Thes. 5:18 "Give thanks in all circumstances for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus."*
 - *Col. 4:2*
 - Thank Him ahead of time regardless of the result! How many of us whine instead of pray? Can you find the good in the midst of the bad? Develop an attitude of gratitude.
 - **Insight: There is always something to be grateful for.**
 - Remember: He has promised you that He won't send something your way that is too big to handle (I Cor. 10:13) and He promises that He has plan for those who trust Him (Ro. 8:28)

B. **The results:**

⁷And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

1. *"The peace of God":* **Peace is a byproduct of thankful prayer.**
 - Peace with God (Rom.5:1)
 - Jesus promised peace (John 14:27)
 - God will keep in perfect peace him whose mind is stayed on Him (Isaiah 26:3)
2. *Surpasses all comprehension:* Beyond human scheming and exceeding our natural/predictable conclusions! This peace carries us through the storms of life! (Jesus slept on the boat) not in avoidance of them!

3. *Will guard your hearts and minds...*" The word "guard/keep" is a Greek military term. It means a sentry guard, a garrison, or a detachment of soldiers. The city of Philippi was a Roman colony that was protected by the Roman legion. The people knew this word very well for they knew the Roman legion kept the peace in Philippi. Paul used the word that he knew everybody would know.
4. That's the way God will guard your mind and heart when you have a relationship with Jesus Christ and trust Him with everything in your life! Instead of worrying about everything, you pray about everything. **God will put a garrison, a sentry guard, around your heart and when worry comes knocking at the door, He will protect you with His peace.**
 - When you pray and trust God like this, it will exceed your wildest expectations!
 - It will keep you from being obsessed about the wrong things.

III. Think: Focus on the positive

⁸Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things.

A. Your mind ...is a gift from God.

1. Dwell on: *Logizomai* means more than just entertaining thoughts; it means "to evaluate," "to consider," or "to calculate."
2. **Worry forces us to focus on the wrong things!** If we focus on those things, we will be discouraged, depressed and disillusioned. It will wear you down! **Worry often gives a small thing a big shadow.** ~Swedish Proverb
What builds you up?
3. Your mind is capable of storing over 100 trillion thoughts. You have been given by God the freedom to

choose what you think about. What you think affects the way you feel; the way you feel affects the way you act.

4. *Proverbs 4:23: we must, be careful what we think, because our thoughts run our life.*
 5. "Sow a thought, reap an action... Sow an action, reap a habit. Sow a habit, reap a character... Sow a character, reap a destiny."
 6. Illustration: **There has God to be a horse down there.**
- B. **7 qualities that will change your life!** Choose to focus on the positive vs. the negative. Our minds usually go to the worst case scenario, we over exaggerate the consequences or blow things out of proportion. Worry generally moves us in to the realm of the subjective feeling, instead of the objective facts. Paul says you want to ponder something. Think about how these qualities are being developed in your life.

Psalm 19:7-9 ...parallels these things Paul lists in v.8.

1. **True:** *The judgments of the LORD are true;* What is true is found in God (2 Tim. 2:25), in Christ (Eph. 4:20, 21), in the Holy Spirit (John 16:13), and in God's Word (John 17:17). We always start with truth because Satan bombards us with lies. *John 17:17 Your word is truth!* The next 7 qualities flow out of this one!
2. **Honorable:** Noble, dignified, worthy of respect. Semnos (to revere or worship) *⁷The law of the LORD is perfect, restoring the soul;*
3. **Right:** Just or righteous. In harmony with God's standards. *⁸The precepts of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart;*
4. **Pure:** Morally clean and undefiled *The commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes. ⁹The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever;*
5. **Lovely:** Pleasing or amiable; kind; sweet gracious. Only time it is used in the NT.

6. **Good Repute:** Highly regarded, thought well of. Only use here in NT. *The testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple.*
7. **Excellence:**
8. **Praiseworthy:** *they are righteous altogether.*

C. **What dominates your mind?**

1. What do you think about the most? If you don't like the way you're headed, change what you think about. Change the direction of your thought life.
2. Change your "stinkin' thinkin" (Zig Ziglar)

D. **Insight:** Whatever I think about is what I am becoming.

1. *Proverbs 23:7 "As a man thinks in his heart, so he is."*
2. What you feast or focus on affects how you feel!

IV. Learn: Glean from someone else's experiences (v. 9)

⁹The things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things,

A. **Paul's example:**

1. *Practice:* prasso; repetitive action
2. Paul was the perfect example of someone who knew how not to worry and keep things in perspective. In fact in the next section he talks about what contentment really is all about.
3. He reminds them that part of the answer is to practice what they already know. Many of us spend too much time stewing and not enough doing. Paul knew that one key to peace is to DO... to put into practice the principles of God's word.
 - *James 1:2 says, we must... be DOERS of the word and not hearers only.*

- I am sure many times he had talked about trusting God, etc.

B. **A four-step mentoring process...**

1. **Learned: Absorb it.** Involve instruction and discipling. What is he teaching me?
2. **Received: Acknowledge it.** Technical term for receiving revelation. Will I believe it?
3. **Heard: Accept it.** What do others say? Does it need to be repeated? Say it again!
4. **Practice: Apply it.** Now go out and do it! Will I live it?

C. **Remember: God's peace is a promise, not a possibility!**

And the God of peace will be with you.

1. There is a promise of guaranteed peace of mind. People are looking everywhere for peace of mind. They try exercise, pills, alcohol, massage, therapy, stress management seminars, listen to tapes, read books – anything to give just a little peace of mind.
2. Paul says, God's peace is a gift to you. It is a gift that cannot be explained, duplicated, fabricated, or understood. It is the sense of peace that comes over your life.
3. What's got you worried? Finances? The economy? Your health? Your marriage relationship? Your kids? Your career?
4. **What makes you anxious, that raises the worry level in your life? Do you have an anxiety addiction? Are you ready to hand it over? What will you do?**
5. Application: Go up to the cross and pick up a card and pray for someone else's worry. It will get your mind off your own and you will be helping someone else. Call them this week and ask them how it is going!

Table Talk:

1. List 3 things that you are worried about? Why?
2. When we rationalize our “anxieties,” we convince ourselves that somehow our worries are unique. Really? Talk to God this week about it!
3. How does “worry” compete with your view of God’s sovereignty?
4. What scripture from this week’s sermon was most meaningful to you? Why? 😊
5. If you have something you would like me to pray with you about, would you email me this week? Or Facebook me if it isn’t too personal! I will pray for you each day this week as Cheryl and I prayer walk our neighborhood. Here is my email if you don’t have it: john@moorparkevfree.com.

John Erwin ■ Senior Pastor ■ Moorpark Evangelical Free Church