



You Can Become Worry Free

Do You Know of Someone With a “Worry” Problem?

Last year about this time the landlord of the house we were renting wanted to sell it and gave us sixty days to move. Our two children living at home were still in school and we had far fewer people to ask to help us move than ever before. I was starting to feel my age and I felt a considerable amount of dread having to move again. We were tired of all the moves we had made in recent years, but we didn't think we had enough money to buy a home. That first week of sorting through what we should do and if it was time to move completely out of the area and resign as pastor was quite troubling to all of us but to me it was a monumental weight on my shoulders. I felt like there were just too many people who would be impacted by the decisions we had to make that it was unbearable. For the first time in years, it seemed like worry was about to sweep me away. I was losing weight and struggling to keep my focus on the normal responsibilities I had as pastor. The truth is, that I faced a moment of crisis that was bigger than trying to find a place for our family to relocate. It was a fork in the road regarding worry and somehow I needed to resolve the conflict in my heart.

As was mentioned before, 1 John 1: 7 is the key to understanding psychology and the emotional and psychological health available to all who put their hope in Christ. **If we walk in the light as he himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin.** (1 John 1: 7 CSB) Let's take a look at how this applies to a common struggle we face and perhaps one that has impacted the quality of your life, worry. The fundamental basis of worry is the loss of hope. Worry is fueled by the belief that something won't work out like we want, that our plans will collapse, or some key part of our lives is on the verge of falling apart. The total loss of hope is the final stage of worry and can become if not addressed despair. There is a classic example of this in Scripture. A widow in the village of Zarephath was suffering along with the entire region a severe drought that ushered in a famine. The Lord had sent the prophet Elijah to her, promising him that the widow would be able to provide for him. When he approached her with God's plan, she demurred. **"As surely as the Lord your God lives," she replied, "I don't have any bread — only a handful of flour in a jar and a little oil in a jug. I am gathering a few sticks to take home and make a meal for myself and my son, that we may eat it — and die."** (1 Kings 17: 12 NIV) This poor soul had already moved past worry and even dread to despair. She had no hope of either her or her son surviving. Despite the fact that God had a plan for their survival, she was oblivious to it as her worry cut her off from any sensitivity to God's hand in her life.

Worry, when it intensifies can turn to outright fear. This is the phase before despair where hope is not all gone but fading fast. It is very difficult to turn back from fear and even tougher to leave behind despair. When the disciples were in a fishing boat out on the Sea of Galilee, Jesus was sleeping in the front. A storm developed and soon it turned ugly. From a casual observation of climate change to worry that it was getting rough to outright fear that they were about to lose their lives, a dramatic change in circumstances resulted for them in a corresponding change in outlook. The disciples had only one answer for their great distress. They turned to Jesus. **The disciples went and woke him, saying, "Lord, save us! We're going to drown!" He replied, "You of little faith, why are you so afraid?" Then he got up and rebuked the winds and the waves, and it was completely calm.** (Matthew 8: 25-26 NIV) Perhaps you also have felt the same level of desperation those disciples experienced. Did it need to come to that though? Jesus seems to imply it didn't.

The last time I mentioned John D. Rockefeller, it was regarding his mother's great faith. Her son though did not think as she did. Despite his unprecedented wealth, Rockefeller lived in worry. By the time he was 53,

Rockefeller looked old and haggard. Despite being richer than anyone else in the world, his diet digressed to just some sips of milk and a few crackers each day. He was suffering from extreme levels of stress created by worry. Consider this example from his life. He shipped \$40,000 worth of grain across Lake Erie. He did not buy insurance for the shipment. It cost too much....in his mind. \$150. That night a colossal storm ripped across the lake. Rockefeller was so worried about losing the grain that in the morning, his partner came to the office and there was John D. Rockefeller pacing back and forth across the room. "Hurry", Rockefeller trembled, "Go find out if we can get insurance for the shipment if it isn't too late!" George Gardner scurried across town and was able to successfully get the insurance. When he returned, there was Rockefeller, even more upset and ranting. While Gardner was gone, Rockefeller had gotten a telegram informing him that the shipment of grain had arrived safely. The richest man in the world was distraught because he had wasted \$150 on insurance he didn't need. It made him so sick that he had to go home and crawl into bed. Imagine that! At the time he was making more than \$500,000 a year!

Worry was wrecking John D. Rockefeller and doctors told him that he did not have much longer to live if he didn't make some dramatic changes. At age 53, insomnia and indigestion were destroying Rockefeller all because of worry. What did he do? He retired. But more than that, he took a right turn spiritually and changed course. Rather than thinking about how much money he could get, he put all his thoughts on how he could bring happiness to others. Doctors told him that if he were to survive, he had to make a determination. "Avoid worry. Never worry about anything, under any circumstances." He spent the rest of his life, forty-five more years living by that maxim. God was in charge, and he trusted in Him to make his life right. Worry is amazingly easy to conquer if we decide to walk in the light. The principle is quite clear. Let's take a look at it.

Jesus famously made this declaration. **"And why do you worry about clothes? See how the lilies of the field grow. They do not labor or spin."** (Matthew 6: 28 NIV) The approach to life is simple. God takes care of little insignificant flowers; he will take care of you. This should be your new mantra in life. "Since God takes care of little flowers, I know He will take care of me." Consider this dramatic moment described in the Gospels. After Jesus had been mercilessly beaten, His body bloodied, the Crown of Thorns shoved onto His head piercing certainly His skull, the barrage of insults flung at Him by the soldiers and religious leaders and the betrayal by His friend, He stood before Pilate who made this proud assertion after Jesus stopped answering the Roman governor's questions. **"Do you refuse to speak to me?" Pilate said. "Don't you realize I have power either to free you or to crucify you?"** (John 19: 10 NIV.) Without a hint of concern, not an ounce of dread, our Savior made something clear. **Jesus answered, "You would have no power over me if it were not given to you from above. Therefore the one who handed me over to you is guilty of a greater sin."** (John 19: 11 NIV) Even in the midst of the most horrifying moment of His life, Jesus Christ walked in the light, and it kept Him free of worry and at peace.

Worry gets the best of you when you set your mind on what will happen later. Jesus made it crystal clear what you should do with your thoughts. **Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.** (Matthew 6: 34 NIV) You can plan for tomorrow. You can organize your thoughts about tomorrow. You can even set resources in place for what you hope to accomplish tomorrow. If though you want to walk in the light, you have to decide you won't worry about tomorrow. In Jesus' own words, here is the strategy He followed when He faced the brutal Pilate. **But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.** (Matthew 6: 33 NIV) What turned Rockefeller's life around? He took his eyes off what had mattered most to him and looked about to see who he could help and love. What kept Jesus resolute and able to be unfazed by the threat of Pilate? He fixed His mind on what the Father wanted and that was to provide salvation for the people of the world. There are two principles that you must decide rule your life if you are to be worry free and walk in the light. *1. Since God takes care of little flowers, I know He will take care of me. 2. I will focus on how God wants me to love those He puts in my life and let Him bless them through me.* If you walk in the light and keep your mind focused on Jesus, you can be worry free.