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How to Cast Worry Aside and Live a Tums Free Life

Based on the number of people who do it and how often they do it, we must like to worry!

The first question we need to ask ourselves is, “Is all worry bad?” The word for worry in the Greek is “*merimna*” and it means “anxiety, care, that which divides, distracts the mind, and which draws a troubled person’s mind in different directions.”

Sometimes the word is used of a helpful care or concern often in reference to being “concerned for the affairs of the Lord” or “concerned for the body of the church.” But mostly, it is used for unhealthy cares or concerns, which we call worry!

So I did some research about what people worry about. I found this one list of the top things men and women worry about:

Money	Sex Life	Winning
Children	Eating	How to make money
Power	Hair	Bills
Getting Old	Success	Job
Body	Family	Dying
Respect	Legacy	Health
Finances	Family Relationships	Personal Health
Getting everything done	Children	Current Events
Germs	Appearance	Work

By the time I finished reading these lists I was worried myself! And I am a champion worrier! If there was an Olympic team for worriers I would have been on it—probably a gold medal winner.



When I was in my mid 20's I worried about everything—so much in fact that I was eating two rolls of Tums a day. Then, one day when I was about 27-years old I went to the emergency room with severe chest pain, thinking that I was somehow having a heart attack. After several days' worth of tests, it was determined “no” I had not had a heart attack but that I had GERDs; Gastro Esophageal Reflux Disorder. There was so much acid in my stomach that it was literally washing up into my throat and eating away my esophagus.

The doctor told me the GERDs was caused mostly by the stress in my life. I worried about everything and the anxiety that I was living with as an everyday part of my life was causing my body to eat itself! The doctor went on to tell me if I didn't change the way I handled the stress and worry in my life, not only would I likely develop an ulcer before I was 30, I would quite likely have chest pain that was a real heart attack!

We worry about so many things, and most of them are a waste of energy! A study I found said that:

- 62% of what we worry about will never come to pass or is completely inconsequential.
- 30% of what we worry about happened in the past and can't be changed!
- 92% of the things we worry about are a complete waste of time because they won't happen or happened in the past!

We seem to be addicted to worry. Worry has a very real impact on our lives. It's like we have this big bag, and we throw all our worries into the bag. What are some of the things you worry about?

- Money
- Health
- Family
- Eternity
- Little/Big Things

After a while, the bag gets bigger and bigger, and heavier and heavier. And everywhere we go we are carrying this big bag of worry around with us. Pretty soon our bag of worry is so big and so heavy we crumble.

Worry impacts us physically, emotionally, and spiritually. Here are a few examples of how our big bag of worry shows up in our lives. See if any of these sound familiar:

- Worry causes fear of acting
- Worry causes us to make unplanned decisions
- Make harmful decisions



- Withdrawal
- Hesitation
- Physical sickness
- Depression
- Emotional problems
- Distrust
- Disbelief
- Spiritual backsliding

The list goes on and on!

Why do we worry? We think we have to manage and control everything in our lives and we are afraid we are going to fail! In fact, we know we are going to fail because we have failed in the past. Despite our past failures, we take control of our lives and push God to the side. Ultimately, we worry because we don't trust God to care about everything in our lives.

If ever there was someone who had a right to worry it was Paul. Paul is confined in a prison cell in Rome with the very real possibility of death around 61-62 A.D. He learns from those who come to visit him there is division among the believers in Rome. Then Paul finds out there is division among members of the Christian church in Philippi. He founded the church in Philippi on his second missionary journey just 10-12 years earlier, probably late 49 early 50 A. D.

Certainly, if anyone had a good excuse to worry it was Paul. Here he was in a Roman prison, guarded by Roman soldiers around the clock and there is nothing he can do to fix the problems he hears about except write a letter! So rather than worrying he writes the Philippians a beautiful joyful letter giving them encouragement, and instruction for living a life without worry!

Here's what Paul wrote to the Philippians:

⁴ Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice.

⁵ Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand;

⁶ do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.

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

⁸ Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.

*⁹ What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me—practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you. **Philippians 4:4-9 (ESV)***



What should we do with worry? (v. 4-9)

Paul says in verse 4 we must “*rejoice in the Lord always.*” It is so important he repeats himself, “*again I say, rejoice.*” Paul says we are to rejoice always—in good times as well as bad. When the sun is shining and everything is rosy, and when dark storm clouds of life surround us.

“*Rejoice in the Lord,*” this is not a suggestion. In the Greek, this is an imperative, a command. I don’t know about you, but it’s hard for me to rejoice when I am carrying a big bag of worries around. When I am all bent over carrying my bag of worries it is hard to look up, and see God. Paul knew that worrying was a barrier to the young Christians in Philippi to be able to rejoice in the Lord, so he gives them three very clear steps to get rid of worry so they can rejoice.

Step 1: Right Praying (v. 6)

First, says Paul in verse 6, “*do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.*”

Let’s break that verse down. “*Do not be anxious about anything*” Don’t worry about anything! Nothing! Big or small, don’t worry about it! Not only don’t worry about it, don’t even give it a thought! It’s another command! Have you ever told a toddler reaching for the pot full of boiling water on the stove, “Stop!” That’s a command and you mean for them to stop and never do it again. But often they will say “Why?” And you say “Because I told you, that’s why.” But that’s not enough so eventually, you tell them because the pot of hot water will burn you. Paul does the same thing here, he tells them to stop being anxious about anything and then proceeds to tell them why. Paul knows it isn’t as simple as saying don’t worry because he knows we will still worry.

Well, what are we supposed to do instead? Paul tells the Philippians and us to replace worry with something else. The first thing we need to do impacts the condition of our heart: we need to replace worry with right prayer.

Look at the rest of the verse. Paul tells us, “*but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.*” In everything, we are to pray. Not just the big things in our life, but we are to pray about everything! But Paul says not just any prayer! Paul says there is a right kind of prayer: “*prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.*”

- **Prayer.** Our approach to God begins with prayer. Prayer carries the idea of adoration, devotion, worship. Prayer starts with having the right attitude!
- **Supplication.** The earnest, sincere sharing of our needs and problems with God (Jesus sweating drops of blood in the Garden, “*God, if it is possible take this cup from me.*” Hebrews 5:7).



- **Thanksgiving.** An attitude of the heart in which we express our appreciation and gratitude to God for who He is and what He has done for us.
- **Requests.** Speaks of definite, specific things we take to God.

So there you have the first step to getting rid of that big bag of worry: Replace worry with right prayer!

- **Prayer.** Come to God with an attitude of adoration.
- **Supplication.** Be sincere.
- **Thanksgiving.** Be appreciative and grateful for who God is and what He has done for you. And finally,
- **Requests.** Make requests that are specific.

Step 2: Right Thinking (v. 8)

The second step is to replace worry with right thinking. Paul says in verse 8, “*Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.*”

- **Whatever is true.** If Paul is telling us not to worry about anything then doesn't it stand to reason that worry is not from God? If not from God who then? Could it be Satan, the great deceiver? The Word of God is the truth. It is sharper than a two-edged sword (Heb. 4:12). Think about what is true!
- **Whatever is honorable and just.** As Christians, we should fill our minds with things that are honorable. We should think about honorable activities, not dishonorable ones. To be honorable and just implies the character of moral excellence.
- **Whatever is pure, lovely, and commendable.** Christians should fill their minds with things that are pure, not those tainted by evil. Such things are lovely and worthy of being commended to others.
- **Whatever is excellent and worthy of praise.** Paul summarizes right thinking by saying that we should think about morally excellent things: things that are honorable and just, pure, lovely and commendable in the sight of God. Those are the kinds of things that should fill the Christians' mind!

Step 3: Right Actions (v. 9)

It is not enough to have a pure heart from right praying, or even a good attitude from right thinking. We must also be **doers** of the Word. Being a doer of the Word, right actions is the third step in getting rid of worry.

Paul said in verse 9, “*What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me—practice these things.*” The word Paul uses for “practice” means to perform something repeatedly, to



make a habit out of it. In others words, it is not enough to learn and accept what Paul is teaching we must **do** them, habitually. James echoed that sentiment when he said “*Be doers of the Word, and not hearers only*” (James 1:22). We are to make a habit of being doers of the Word. Right actions, being doers of the Word, is the third step to getting rid of worry in your life.

The Result of Replacing Worry—Peace (v. 7 & 9)

The result of replacing worry with the right kind of prayer, the right kind of thinking and the right kind of actions results in what? This is the best part! Paul says if we do this we will have the peace of God! Wow! But, what is the peace of God? Paul says in verse 7, “*And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*”

- **The peace of God** is different than the peace of this world. The peace of God comes from knowing God is in control.
- **Surpasses all understanding.** This peace is a gift from God; it cannot be understood by those who do not know Him.
- **It will guard your hearts and minds.** “Guard” is a military term referring to a garrison of soldiers that surround a city to protect it. Your heart and mind (emotions and thoughts, choices and attitudes)—the whole person is protected.
- **In Christ Jesus.** Christ is the source of the power. He alone enables us to conquer worry and anxiety.

I want to tell the story of two people that I learned just in the last few days to illustrate the peace of God. The first is my friend mine, Helen. We worked together developing a ministry to business people. Her husband lost his battle with a rare form of cancer and went home to be with the Lord in heaven on a Saturday morning. Her husband Scott was in his late 40’s and he left behind a loving wife and two adorable, teenage daughters. At Scott’s memorial service, Helen spoke of her love for her husband, and the joy she has in knowing that now he is resting peacefully in heaven with our Lord and Savior. Here she is, suddenly a single mother of two teenagers who now, in the midst of losing her life partner, has to think about making house payments, and providing for her girls—their education, their clothes, and everything else! Despite this burden, there was not a hint of worry in her voice. Sadness yes, but not worry.

The second person is a 57-year old woman. My wife and I were driving to Rancho Santa Margarita, a community near us a few weeks ago and we noticed several police cars by the bridge that connected the two communities. The next morning, I learned that this woman had committed suicide by jumping off of the bridge. Police interviews with the family indicated that she had been so worried about her finances and poor health, she decided the only way to solve her problem was to jump off the bridge.



One person faced one of the most difficult losses imaginable, and yet had the peace of God in her heart. The other person chose suicide to end the inner turmoil that gripped her soul.

Paul repeats himself in verse 9, “*What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me—practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.*” He’s saying if you learn and accept what you have heard and seen by his example, you will have the peace of God.

Conclusion—What should we do?

What are we to do about our worries? Peter writes in 1 Peter 5:7, that we should “*cast all our cares on Him because He cares for us.*” The word for cast means “to throw” upon someone else. We are to throw our cares and worries upon God because he cares for us! We are to take all our cares and concerns and not just lay them, but throw them at the foot of the Cross. Trust God!

Let’s recap:

- a. We need to rejoice in the Lord. Always!
- b. We need to turn everything over to God.
- c. We need to replace worry with right praying: prayer, supplication, thanksgiving, and requests.
- d. We need to worry with right thinking: whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute.
- e. We need to replace worry with right actions. It is not enough to have a pure heart or to have head knowledge, we must also be doers of the Word.

The right kind of prayer is our heart. The right kind of thinking is our head, and the right kind of living is our hand. The peace of God comes when the heart, head, and hand are all focused on God. With the peace of God to guard us and the peace of God to guide us—why worry?

Remember that big bag of worry we were talking about? God never intended for us to carry that bag around with us! We need to take that bag of worry off our shoulders and hand it over to God!

We need to come to God with our bag of worry, and say “Here Lord, you take this!” Most of us come to God with good intentions, and start to unpack the bag. But one of our worries, maybe its “family,” is too hard to let go of, so we tell God, “You can have these others, but I’m going to keep this one!

Others of us will unpack the bag, but we keep the bag! And tomorrow we start to fill it back up again! No! You give it **all** to Him—bag included, so you won’t be tempted to fill it up again!

Are you like me eating a couple rolls of Tums a day because of your worries? Are you tired of carrying that bag of worry around? You know what needs to be done right?



- Replace worry with right prayer to focus our hearts on God.
- Replace worry with right thinking to focus our heads on God. And,
- Replace worry with right actions to focus what we do with our hands on God.