

Problems people face

Worry



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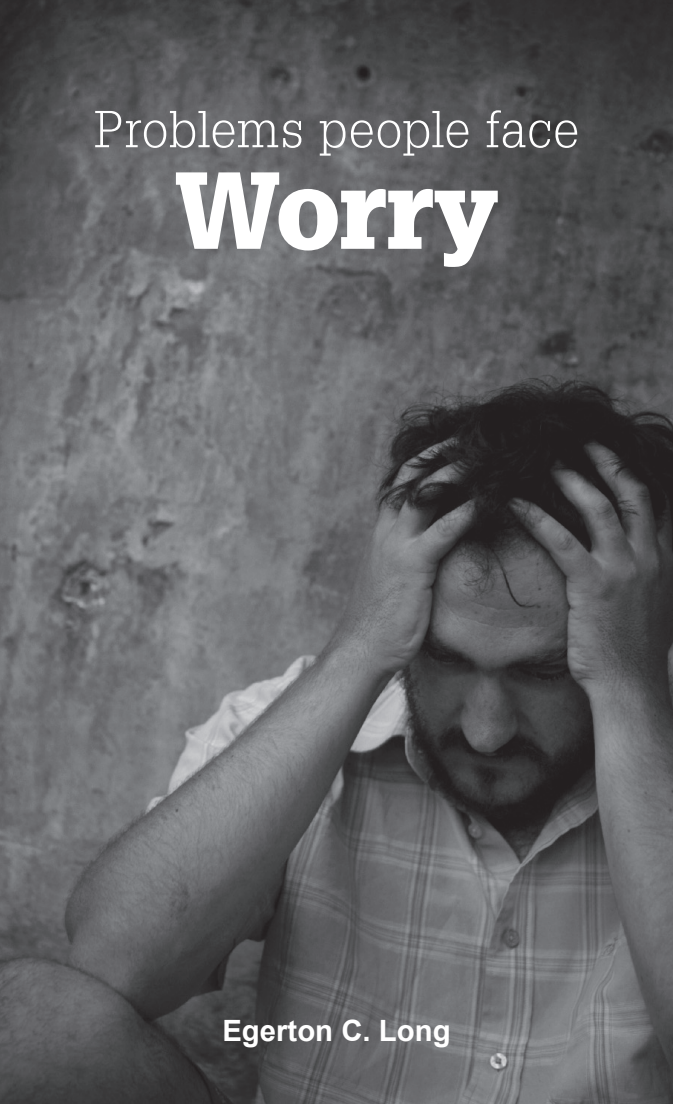
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Egerton C. Long

ON THE WORRY ROUNDABOUT?

Mark is a chronic worrier. He is very anxious for his teenagers to do well in high school but is constantly worried year after year that they may fail. He is anxious for his business to succeed so his family would always be provided for. But the slightest drop in sales causes sleepless nights and worried days. Sleeping tablets don't seem to help. Mark worries, too, about his health, about ulcers, headaches and a tendency toward having high blood pressure. He is in a perpetual state of anxiety. Yet, he is a Christian and knows God's Word.

His wife, Jane, is also concerned about Mark. Actually, she is really worried about him and his business. If it fails it would carry both of them down. When she worries, she eats and eats platters of fast food. Then when the bathroom scales shows the results, she worries about being overweight. But that means she has to eat more to satisfy her worries. She lives in a tragic circle of worry, a real roundabout.

Peter works for Mark but spends most of his time worrying about his job, especially when things go wrong. Mark often shows his feelings by picking on Peter. He takes his frustrations home and his wife becomes worried about the future of their relationship. And so it goes on. Where does it ever end?

DOES THAT SOUND FAMILIAR?

What about the words: tension, stress, insecurity, worry, anxiety, fear of the future, low self-image? Do they live near you? You've met each of them, haven't you? Are they all related to one another? They certainly seem to hang around together. What does each mean? Do they accurately describe the emotional state of many people today? Are there too many casualties of our present culture, our life-style, of life in the fast lane? If so, where do we go from here?

CAN WE DEFINE THE PROBLEM?

Do we need to define 'worry'? Each of us has had plenty of experience with it, haven't we? But what do we really mean when we say we are worried? Is it the same as being anxious? If we can define or diagnose the problem, we can find the antidote.

Worry is an abnormal concern or fear about our future or the future of others, particularly our family. It is a pessimistic look at the future. Sometimes it stretches back into the past as well to remind us of our past actions: did we do the right thing? One dictionary definition is 'to give way to anxiety, letting the mind dwell continuously on our troubles.'

Worry is much more than normal concern. That can often be beneficial. For example: an athlete may be anxious or concerned over the result of a

race or game. His concern or anxiety drives him to greater effort with the result that he performs that much better.

A student is anxious to obtain an 'A' or 'Distinction' in his exams. He studies harder and gains top marks. The driving force of normal or limited anxiety can help in many areas of our lives. Worry is usually extreme concern over something we think we can do nothing about, for instance the terminal illness of a loved one. Or it may be over problems like mounting hospital bills, or even day-to-day expenses. People can worry about everything or anything in their lives together with the regrets about yesterday and anxieties for tomorrow.

WHAT ABOUT FEAR?

Fear is first cousin of worry. But at times it can also be very beneficial. It has been said: 'Fear can protect us from harm and motivate us to positive action.' It is a built-in emotion everyone has. But when it develops beyond a certain limit, fear will adversely affect our actions, our behaviour or even our thinking. All of us are afraid sometimes. That is normal. Some people are afraid all of the time, which is abnormal. The two major fears most people have are fear of illness and fear of death. Fear of rejection and fear of failure are also very common. Remember the more you give in to your fears, the more they will grow.

WHERE DOES STRESS FIT IN?

Stress, tension and burn out are very familiar words today. Stress can cause serious breakdowns. The Australian Government, the largest employer in Australia, has stated that stress-related illnesses keep employees away from work longer than surgery or other illnesses.

Stress has many causes. Prolonged pressure to perform, whether the pressure is internal or external, overwork and even lack of rest or recreation may bring on a state of stress. It can be felt by very ordinary people in ordinary situations. For example, psychologists say there are too many choices on the shelves of our supermarkets and too many options for almost everything you can buy. The high variety available obviously involves decision after decision. And these 'demand decisions' can become a serious cause of stress for many people.

LET'S TALK ABOUT THE PROBLEM OF WORRY.

Worry is an inside job. It is interest paid on tomorrow's troubles before the interest is due. The word 'worry' comes from the Anglo-Saxon or Old English. Originally it had the meaning of 'choking or strangling'. It doesn't take much imagination to apply that definition does it? Have you sometimes felt worry to be like a stranglehold on your life?

In the New Testament the Greek word used for anxiety or worry has two root meanings. First it describes being pulled in two different directions. We know that experience don't we? Our hopes pull us in one direction while our fears pull us in the other. Our hopes say 'It won't happen.' Our fears say 'It will happen', so we anticipate the worst.

The second meaning of the Greek word could be 'to go round and round'. We are all familiar with this state of mind when we have been unable to think of anything else. We can't sleep because our mind keeps going round and round on the problem. This only makes every problem seem worse.

The word described above was used by Jesus several times in Matthew 6:26-28 & 31. It has been translated 'take no thought' or 'do not be anxious.' J.B. Phillips has it: '*Stop worrying and don't keep saying.....*'

WHAT CAN WORRY DO TO YOU?

Medical doctors will say that many patients coming to them for help are really suffering from anxiety in one form or another. But hardly any patients will admit it. They will describe their conditions in various other ways. High blood pressure, being stressed out, inability to sleep, ulcers, headaches are very often the results of anxiety and worry. Many patients in our hospitals

are suffering from illnesses brought on by worry. It can affect your thinking, your digestion, your judgement and your concentration. It can keep you from taking responsibility.

WHAT ELSE DOES WORRY DO?

We have seen how detrimental it can be to ourselves mentally, emotionally and physically. It can also be **damaging spiritually**. It can paralyse our spiritual growth and keep us from trusting God.

For a Christian, **worry dishonours God**. When we worry, we doubt God. And doubting our God is sin. We are questioning whether God knows where we are, what is happening to us, or what our future might be. But Christ said very plainly: *'Your heavenly Father knows....'* Matthew 6:32.

Worry can be detrimental to our **witness for Christ**. When the non-church person sees a Christian really worrying, he or she will conclude we are no different to them when faced with problems. Instead of peace, which is our heritage in Christ, anxiety, fear and distraction are seen in our actions and attitudes. What kind of a witness are we then?

WORRY ACHIEVES NOTHING.

Worry can be counter productive. Christ asked the question: *'Will all your worries add a single moment to your life?'* Matthew 6:27 (Living

Bible). Worry can have the opposite effect, by damaging our health rather than benefiting it.

Vance Havner, and American preacher, said: 'Worry is like a rocking chair. It will give you something to do but it won't take you anywhere.'

WHAT IS THE REMEDY?

WHAT CAN WE DO?

If acute anxiety or worry is your continuing problem, you need to listen to the words of Christ, particularly in Matthew 6. He spoke directly and plainly about worry and what you should do about it.

First, His overall message was '*Remember who you are in God's sight. You are God's child.*' He reminds us that the birds have their own special caterer- the Heavenly Father. If He does this for little birds, then why can't He take care of you and me? Never forget - if you are God's child, He has taken responsibility for your whole life.

An unknown poet has said it well:

Said the robin to the sparrow, 'I should dearly like to know

Why those anxious human beings run around and worry so.'

Said the sparrow to the robin: 'It must be they have

No heavenly Father, such as cares for you and me.'

WHAT ELSE DID CHRIST SAY?

He said: *'Do not be anxious about tomorrow.'* Matthew 6:34. He was saying: 'Worry focuses on tomorrow.' It could be paraphrased: 'It is wrong to let tomorrow's problems tear you apart today.'

His message is clear: **Live one day at a time, tomorrow belongs to God.** Christ was not saying: 'Don't do any planning' but 'Don't do any worrying.' Worrying often includes thinking and planning but sadly leaves God out of our plans.

James also spoke about planning: *'You do not even know what will happen tomorrow.... You ought to say: 'If it's the Lord's will, we will live and do this or that'* (James 4:13-16). Let God revise, even scrap your plans and then hand you back **what He has planned.** When you do that you can pour your energy into today and deal with today's problems today. Learn to live one day at a time. THEN...

DEVELOP – PRACTISE YOUR FAITH.

Faith is not a passive, inactive emotion which we can only talk about or sing about. It is something we need to exercise in the ordinary

circumstances of life, as well as in the crises. Faith is trusting your Heavenly Father to keep His Word and to see you through every situation. Remember the promise: *'Never will I leave you, never will I forsake you'* (Hebrews 13:5). The next verse in the Living Bible says it so well: *'That is why we can say without any doubt or fear, 'The Lord is my helper and I am not afraid of anything that mere man can do to me'* (v6). When fear or worry knock, let faith open the door and tell them to go.

The need for us to practise our faith is beautifully illustrated in the story found in Luke 8:22-25. Read it for yourself. The disciples were in the boat in a storm on the Lake of Galilee. It is so easy for us to identify with the disciples in that situation. They asked: *'Lord don't you care?'* How many times have you felt like asking that question yourself?

What did Christ say to his anxious, worried disciples? *'Where is your faith?'* He rebuked them for worrying, and for being in a state of terror and alarm while He was there in the boat with them.

Martyn Lloyd-Jones wrote: *'It is the typical reaction of a non-Christian to be depressed, agitated, alarmed, frantic, not knowing what to do.'* The Christian is different because he has something which the non-Christian does not possess. It can be called faith and can be

summed up in the words of the Apostle Paul: *'I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation'* Phil.4:12.

The Bible is full of stories of men and women like Abraham and Sarah who put their faith in God in a time of real testing. They could have given way to anxiety and worry. They simply trusted God and He did not fail them. And He will never fail us.

So first, learn to live one day at a time. Secondly, practise your faith. THEN....

PRAY ABOUT THE PROBLEM.

Again Paul has a word for us: *'Do not be anxious about anything but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God'* Philipians 4:6. Almost every word for prayer in the New Testament is used in that verse.

In other words, tell God **everything**, your doubts, your fears, your worries. Name the problem to God. Ask Him to deal with it. While God already knows about your situation, prayer opens the door for Him to handle it in His own way, even as to how He answers our Prayer.

1 Peter 5:7 says: *'Cast all your anxiety on Him because He cares for you.'* Another version says: *'Throw back on Him the burden of all your anxiety for you are His personal concern.'*

Peter's words have the meaning of putting your cares once and for all in God's hands and leaving them there.

LEARN TO BE THANKFUL.

Remember the verse in Philippians also says '*With thanksgiving.*' Did you overlook that? We often do. But what can you thank God for in the midst of a major problem? First you can thank God that He is there in that situation with you. That is always important. Remember the verse from Hebrews: '*I will never leave you or forsake you.*' Count on God's presence and thank Him for it.

WHAT ELSE IS THERE IN 'THANKSGIVING'?

Next- you can learn to thank God that good can come through the problem! Why? Because Romans 8:28 tells us that '*in all things God works for the good of those who love Him,*' including you and your problems. Your faith in God will enable you to ultimately thank Him for this assurance. While you are facing your problem you may not feel like thanking anyone. You may not see how it could ever work out for your good, but God says it will.

Just remember two things - first, Paul is not saying that only good things will happen to us. Plenty of bad things do, too. But whatever it is, God can over-rule for our good.

Secondly 'our good' doesn't necessarily mean a better living standard or an easier life. Look at the next verse - God wants to use the circumstances of our lives to help us to grow more like Christ. That is what God is interested in.

You can also pray that you might handle this problem so that others can see God is working for you and in you. That could be one of God's purposes in allowing this problem to come into your life.

ARE YOU SAYING – HOW COULD I DO ALL THAT?

Right now you are probably saying: 'That all sounds wonderful but I don't see how I could actually do it. One way it sounds too easy, the other way it sounds too hard.' Let's think about this illustration:

Ben is really worried about his wife's health. She seems to be chronically ill with very little chance of improvement. He also feels very insecure about his present employment. He has no cash reserves. His children aren't able to help. Then he reads Philippians 4:6. It challenges him to pray about his problems instead of worrying and to trust God afresh in his situation. So he prays:

'Lord, this is Ben. I've just read in your Word that I should tell you everything. So here I am. I've got a sick wife. I don't know how I'm going to pay

the hospital bills. I don't know if I will have a job after this month. I'm really worried about all this, Lord. What can I do? What can you do Lord?

I'm ashamed to say this but I've got real doubts about everything. But all the same Lord, I'm truly thankful; that I do know Jesus, and that you're here with me now. You've helped me many times in the past. I'm so glad for your promises. Will you help me to trust you?

Will you please take care of my wife, my job, and my family? Thank you, Jesus. I am going to leave it all in your hands. I thank you that I can.

Amen.'

You say: 'Would God hear a prayer like that?'

Yes, He would and He would answer it. He is our personal, loving God and Heavenly Father. The first result of that prayer would be peace in Ben's heart as he tells God his problem, puts his faith to work and trusts the Lord with the whole situation. God can do the same for you. Peace is the first result of trusting God and of exercising your faith. Peace is your heritage as a child of God. It will become a reality as you trust Him.

The Psalmist David found this to be wonderfully true. When he was in a cave of Adullam he wrote a wonderful Psalm - the 34th. Read it for yourself, especially v4: *'I sought the Lord and He answered me, and He delivered me from all my fears.'* God can do the same for you. Ask Him.

It has been said:

‘Prayer is an acknowledgement of God, an evidence of faith. Prayer is keeping company with God and putting my hand into God’s hand, trusting in His loving guidance. Worry is forgetting about faith and means I am taking things into my own hands.’

‘Prayer leads through the door of faith into the presence of God. Worry keeps me away from that door.’

Where prayer rules the life, victory over worry is the result. You may have to hold on to God in prayer. But think of God as being right there with you, holding your hand. The answers may or may not come immediately. Give God time to answer in His own time and way. He will. You can trust Him.

TIME FOR REVIEW.

Can we review the various steps to victory over worry? Call it the **remedy for worry** if you like:

1. Remember who you are – God’s child.
2. Learn to live one day at a time.
3. Practise your faith.
4. Pray about your problems. Be persistent in prayer.
5. Learn to be thankful for God in that situation.

REMEMBER GOD'S PROMISES.

It will help you as you pray and as you practise your faith, to look again at some of God's many promises. When you pray claim God's promises. Look them up, mark them in your Bible, and learn to repeat them to God. Here are three you should know concerning faith and trust:

Isaiah 26:3, Proverbs 3:5-6, John 14:27.

There are many more. Look for them as you read your Bible.

FREEDOM FROM WORRY IS POSSIBLE BECAUSE GOD IS FAITHFUL.

You say, 'That all sounds easy, but it won't work for me.' Why not?

Suppose you go to a medical doctor and explain your problem. He diagnoses it, and prescribes some tablets. On your way home, you go to the pharmacy. You look at the tablets and say to yourself: 'They won't work for me.'

You call the doctor in a few days to tell him you are no better. He asks: 'Did you take the tablets I prescribed for you.'

'No, I didn't think they would do me any good.'

What would he say? 'I can't do anything more for you, until you take the tablets I have prescribed for you.'

Christ says: 'I've given you a prescription for your problems, for your worry. Will you take it?'

Remember the remedy. Go back over the various steps:

1. You are God's child and you matter to Him.
2. Plan for today, not tomorrow, with God.
3. Practise your faith, not your fears.
4. Pray about your problems, inviting God to move into your circumstances in a new way.
5. Be thankful you have Him and can trust His Word.

Will you do this?

Will you ask God to help you do it?

Now?

Step out by faith in Him.

He will never fail you.

HOW TO RECEIVE JESUS AS YOUR SAVIOUR

If God has been speaking to you as you have read this booklet and if you are willing now to take Jesus Christ as your Saviour, here is what you should do:

Confess – tell God in your own simple words that you are a sinner, needing a Saviour. (Read Romans 3:23)

Accept – tell God that you see Jesus Christ your only Saviour and will accept Him now. (Read Romans 6:23)

Believe – that Jesus Christ has saved you because you asked Him to do so. (Read Romans 10:13)

If you have made this decision today then sign your name here and tell someone else what you have done. Join a church where you can hear God's Word preached and have fellowship with other believers.

I acknowledge myself to be a sinner in God's sight.

I accept Jesus Christ now as my Saviour.

I thank Him for saving me.

Date _____/_____/_____

NOTES

NOTES

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