

FEAR AND WORRY

Frequent Issues in Counseling

September 13, 2015

Defining Terms

- ▣ Worry is a sinful concern about something –whether past or future.
 - Μερικνιάω comes from the root idea of caring for something and it can be good (1 Corinthians 7:32) or evil (Matthew 6:31).
 - “Worry is a good emotion (concern) focused on the wrong day.” Dr. Lou Priolo, “The Anxiety Journal: Helping People Overcome Worry”, JMM 1.1.
 - Worry and anxiety are not distinguished in the Bible, so we will not treat them separately.
- ▣ Fear is the alarm “caused by either a real or perceived presence of danger, evil, pain, or consequences.”
(<http://www.biblicalcounseling.com/blog/fear-and-worry>, accessed 9/12/15)
 - Fear is a frequent Biblical concept, e.g. אַרָּ and φοβέω.

What Do We Fear or Worry About?

- ▣ Plans failing
- ▣ Interpersonal rejection
- ▣ Social Embarrassment
- ▣ Physical Harm
- ▣ God's displeasure/wrath

Results of Fear and Worry

- ▣ Wasting one's life on lesser pursuits (Matthew 6:27, 33)
- ▣ Being burdened by trouble (Proverbs 12:25; Matthew 6:34)
- ▣ Being trapped in fear (Proverbs 29:25)
- ▣ Ignoring God's ultimate power (Matthew 10:28)
- ▣ Failing to depend on God (Philippians 4:6)
- ▣ Doubting God's promises (Hebrews 13:5-6)

Dissecting Worry

- ▣ When someone is trapped in patterns of worry, they need to understand what is really going on and how they can escape.
- ▣ Worry is sinful.
 - Philippians 4:6 – “Be anxious for nothing...”
 - Matthew 6:25, 31, 34 – “Do not be worried;” “Do not worry.”
 - Identifying worry as a sin opens up God’s path of grace, which is repentance and faith.

Dissecting Worry

- ▣ Worry is idolatry
 - Matthew 6:24-25 – “No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth.
For this reason I say to you, do not be worried about your life...”
 - Worry, often centered around the possessions and relationships of this life, exalts our trust in the temporary.
 - The opposite to worry involves a heavenly, eternal perspective (Psalm 73:25-26).

Dissecting Worry

- ▣ Worry is idolatry
 - Worry affects our view of the world (Matthew 6:22-23). It can darken our entire perspective.
 - A God-centered worldview is meant to give light and clarity to what we see (Psalm 119:105, 130).
 - Worry displaces our Master (Matthew 6:24). Rather than seeking to please the Lord, we seek to build our identity and confidence around something fleeting.
 - Faith in the Lord is an act of submission to Him that preempts worry.

Dissecting Worry

- ▣ Worry is unbelief
 - Matthew 6:30b-31 – “You of little faith! Do not worry then, saying ‘What will we eat?’ or ‘What will we drink?’ or ‘What will we wear for clothing?’”
 - Romans 8:32 – “What then shall we say to these things? If God *is* for us, who *is* against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?”
 - Seeking after the Lord, that is understanding, agreeing with and further His purposes, is the best way

Fear

- ▣ The Bible speaks of fear in both righteous and sinful ways.
- ▣ As a generalization, good fear has the Lord as its object (Proverbs 1:7).
- ▣ Sinful fear has lesser focuses, such as man (Psalm 56:2) and earthly calamity (Psalm 90:5-7).

Fear

“Love labors doing today’s tasks and is so busy that it has no time to worry about tomorrow. Because it focuses upon tomorrow, fear fails to undertake responsibilities today. Love leads to greater love—fulfilling one’s obligations to bring joy and peace and satisfaction and greater love and devotion to the work. Fear, in turn, occasions greater fear, since failure to assume responsibilities brings additional fear of the consequences of acting irresponsibly.”

-Jay Adams, The Christian Counselor’s Manual, 413

Fear

- ❑ 1 John 4:18 – “There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves punishment, and the one who fears is not perfected in love.”
- ❑ When a person is gripped by fear about a relationship, the root of their concern is usually, “Am I accepted in this relationship? Am I good enough?”
- ❑ A companion form of fear is the fear of death (Hebrews 2:14-15). Because death leads to man’s impending judgment before God, it highlights man’s lack of justification before God.
- ❑ Similarly, the fear of the consequences of sin demonstrates a lack of justification before God (Proverbs 28:1).
- ❑ The Scripture says that, through faith in Christ, God’s acceptance is full and complete (Romans 8:1-2).
- ❑ The solution for such fears is acquiring and dwelling in God’s justification of sinners.

Phobias

- ▣ Many fears involving natural phenomena, such as the fears of spiders, heights, tight spaces, germs, snakes, etc. do not pertain to any other sin problem.
- ▣ They might be part of a rightful fear (i.e. respectful concern) about a danger as well as an unnecessary worry for what could happen to me.
- ▣ Even when there is not a specific sin connected to a phobia, there is the lingering idea of unnecessarily fearing death (Hebrews 2:14-15).

Dealing With Phobias

1. Pray for God's strength and perspective (Philippians 4:6).
2. Rejoice (Philippians 4:4) in God's power over His creation (Isaiah 26:4) and circumstances (Ephesians 1:11).
3. Rejoice in God's goodness to believers (Romans 8:28-39).
4. Calmly identify true areas of concern and unreasonable ones.
5. Determine any secondary factors that influence this worry (e.g. sleep deprivation, hunger, social pressure, location, activity). Plan to avoid or disarm them.
6. Realize ways that your worry interferes with faithfulness to the Lord. Memorize Scripture and plan to overcome them (Philippians 4:8-9).

Your Questions

