

is WORRY choking your faith?

by Florence MacKenzie

Are you a worrier? I am. After all, there often seems good reason to worry. Am I not being irresponsible if I don't worry in some situations? Could it be that, by worrying, I'm actually making it less likely that the thing I'm worried about will happen? Is worry, therefore, serving a useful function? The answer, of course, is NO!

The word *worry* comes from the Old English, meaning to choke or strangle. It also carries the idea of being pulled in different directions. Worry pulls you apart. It's very divisive. Have you ever noticed that worry divides your mind? You find you cannot focus on the task in front of you because worrying about something else distracts you and divides your attention. Worry also divides your will. It's hard to make even the smallest decisions when you're worried. One minute you're making one decision, the next you're pulled in the opposite direction and are considering making a different decision. Worry also divides your emotions. Sometimes it appears you're in control of your feelings; at other times worry pulls your emotions in all sorts of directions so you end up not really knowing how you feel.

I was reading in Matthew's gospel recently where Jesus gave some straight talk on worry to His disciples. He told them not to worry about everyday life; or about having enough food, drink and clothes; or about tomorrow. He concluded his teaching on worry by commenting on what little faith His disciples had. This made me wonder about the connection between worry and faith. Did they have a problem with worry because they had a problem with faith? If so, might the same be true of me? Perhaps if my faith were stronger and healthier, worry wouldn't have such a stranglehold over me. This realization came to me when I was walking around our yard. Let me tell you about it.

We live in a house with a large outdoor area which is mostly made up of grass. Neither my husband nor I are keen gardeners and, as a result, the quality of our grass is less than perfect. As I looked at the grass on my recent walk-about, I could see all sorts of things growing there that we hadn't planted, like moss, clover, dandelion, and lots of others I couldn't name! Somewhere among these weeds was the grass we had planted but it was being crowded out by these invaders. That's when it hit me – the unwelcome weeds taking over our grass *were like worries that choke the life of faith in us.*



But what could we do about it? Given the huge size of the yard, there was no way we could pull these weeds out individually. We knew from past experience that new weeds would soon take root to replace the ones we had removed. I had recently read that the key to controlling weeds is to keep the grass as healthy as possible. So, instead of the weeds crowding out the grass, perhaps the grass would begin to crowd out the weeds if we spent more time tending it by feeding and watering it regularly. From that point on, growing a healthy lawn became our main gardening goal! Do you see how this relates to the need to focus more on building up the "grass" of our faith rather than concentrating primarily on getting rid of the "weeds" of worry in our lives?

But how might you do this? Why not try these "faith-builders":

- **FOCUS** on the truth that it is impossible to please God without faith (Heb.11:6).
- **FIX** your eyes on Jesus on whom your faith depends from start to finish (Heb.12:2).
- **FEED** your faith by reminding yourself of the many promises found in the Bible.
- **FILL** unoccupied moments with praise to God, for example, while stopped at a red light or standing in line at the grocery store.
- **FREE** up a few minutes each day to appreciate how blessed you are – and then thank God for this!
- **FOLLOW** through on replenishing relationships by getting in touch with people who will refresh you spiritually and emotionally.
- **FINISH** the day by thanking God for the faith He has given you and ask Him to show you how you can keep translating it into action.

Let's make it really hard for worry to choke our faith!