

Equipped to win the worry war (part one)

Are you a worrier? I am! The word ‘worry’ comes from the Old English, meaning to choke or strangle. Anybody who has experienced worry probably has no difficulty identifying with that! It also carries the idea of being pulled in different directions. Worry can pull you apart and is so divisive. Have you ever noticed that worry divides your mind? You find you can’t focus on the task in hand 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 you feel 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.

Jesus tells us very plainly not to worry.¹ It’s interesting to note that he doesn’t offer this as a suggestion, but as a command. Jesus then gives a reason for what he is saying. Basically, we shouldn’t worry because God will take care of us. He gives examples of God’s provision for birds and flowers before asking, “*Won’t he more surely care for you?*”² Knowing that God cares about us is an important defence in our fight against worry.

Notice that Jesus says to his disciples, “*You have so little faith!*”³ Why do you think he says this? Well, when you think about it, we tend to worry about things when we don’t feel certain about them or when we’re unsure how things are going to turn out. Think about this verse: “*What is faith? It is the confident assurance that what we hope for is going to happen. It is the evidence of things we cannot yet see.*”⁴ When we don’t have the “*confident assurance that what we hope for is going to happen*”, we open ourselves up to worry. So, rather than concentrating primarily on getting rid of worry in our lives, perhaps we need to focus more on building up our faith. This realization came to me recently when I was walking round our garden. Let me tell you about it.

Most of our garden is under grass, with some hard landscaping for ease of maintenance. Neither of us are keen gardeners and, consequently, we don’t spend any more time than we need to in order to keep it in semi-reasonable shape. 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. For example, there were buttercups, daisies, moss, white clover, purple clover, and a host of other things that I didn’t have names for! Somewhere among these weeds was the grass that 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 be done about it? Given the enormous size of the garden, there was just no way that we could even begin to pull out these weeds individually. We knew from past experience that sooner or later new weeds would take root to replace the ones we had removed. Then it dawned on me - instead of the weeds crowding out the grass, perhaps the grass would begin to crowd out the weeds if we nourished it more! I couldn’t remember the last time we had added nutrients to the soil and it was very much in need of being watered. I realized that the best solution for our weed-infested grass was to feed it and spend more time tending it.

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? In part two, we’ll look at some practical ways we can do this.

¹ Matthew 6:25-30

² Matthew 6:28 (NLT)

³ Matthew 6:30 (NLT)

⁴ Hebrews 11:1 (NLT)