

A Follow Up To The Worry Free Life

Welcome back to the Worry Free Life. So how are you progressing with what we covered two weeks ago? Anyone experience a change in worry level overall or a specific concern? Baptists need to hear something 7 times before it sticks. So we are going to look again at how to put Fret To Flight and reinforce the steps with real life examples to open our minds to how to utilize the concepts. The concepts are as much about building active trust as it is about losing worry. That active trust keeps us connected and engaged. Close enough to the situation that we can recognize God at work. Able to see subtle signs that keep us confident, signs that those not engaged will overlook. Like Elijah in 1st Kings 18 where he said I hear the roar of a coming storm when there wasn't yet even a cloud in the sky.

Starts with transfer of ownership. In 1st Pet 5:7, Peter says cast your care on Him. Cast is the physical action of propelling something away from you. A physical separation between you and your worries. Scott stated in last week's sermon – There's peace when you release. The worries are no longer in your possession, they are in God's. Paul says it in a more formal tone in Phil 4:6, by prayer and Petition present your requests to God. Petition – a documented plea to a higher power to take action on your behalf. We see a Biblical example of this petition approach in Nehemiah. Read Neh 2:2-4. So in vs 5 Nehemiah makes his plea to the King of Persia, the most powerful earthly king of the time. We see in vs 6 that this plea caught the king's attention and he was pleased so Nehemiah got bolder Read Vs 7-8. Look at the king's response in Vs 8. Boom! God's favor is released through an earthly leader. By prayer and petition - A plea to a higher power, earthly or heavenly may be just the key to help you past points of worry that you are contending with right now.

I've been walking out the Worry Free Life steps in significant financial matter. I filed an amended 2014 tax return this past February because I realized I had made a mistake. The correction meant a significant refund. It took four months for the IRS to get back to me. Throughout those four months, when worry would come I thanked God He was taking care of the situation. On July 18th I got a letter from the IRS saying they needed more information from me to verify my claim. Not exactly what I wanted to hear. I knew that I knew that I was right, but how do I the federal govt to see it? Reached out to someone with tax expertise who gave me a simple approach. Show them how A+B=C and they will process it. So I did that Wednesday July 20th, Callie and I laid hands on it and thanked God that He would work on my behalf to clarify the points and mailed it priority mail on Thursday July 21st. Tues afternoon July 26th, before I even received the return receipt I got a letter from the IRS that they had accepted my amended return and I would be getting my refund in 4-6 weeks! Boom. So who is it in authority or with expertise who you need to present your request to? Who can make a difference? [give time to pause and think] Get your petition to them!

A transfer of ownership is an act of humility. It's an acknowledgement that you can take it no further and you need help. So that means that it will not work in the presence of pride. Where you don't let go because you think you can handle it – OR – you don't want to admit you can't. Releasing ownership gives us the opportunity to listen. Repeat that. Once we acknowledge it's beyond us, we are much more apt to be attentive AND receptive to the help we need. What would have happened if I had not petitioned for help on my tax return? How can you tell you are struggling with giving up ownership? Do you have a sore spot from where you are continuing to bang your head on a wall for a particular issue? It's time for a petition!

How do we transfer ownership when it comes to a person or a relationship? It's the same approach – acknowledge that you cannot change the person or the relationship beyond your part in it. Your heart and your head need to hear the words from your own mouth – that it is beyond you and requires intervention from God. That acknowledgement itself will release pressure and doubt/worry. It's not a resignation that there is nothing that can be done. It's an acknowledgement that what needs to be done is beyond you, and thus not up to you. So you release and the Lord is able to bring in fresh hope and encouragement.

The next step in the Worry Free Life is our part: Do what is practical, reasonable. I received several questions regarding how to discern whether the actions you are taking are the practical/reasonable steps of preparation or if they are reactionary responses to fret.

- First and foremost, what does God's word say? Is it consistent with scripture? This will be a common theme in today's message. If it's consistent, roll with it. If it is not, don't. There may not always be a verbatim scripture to your proposed action, but look at the intent of that action and the side effects. How do they line up with the Word? For example, if you are faced with a significant financial situation, you may need to make adjustments to your spending patterns and expenses. God tells us not to spend money we don't have on things we don't need. But God's word does not say work 100% OT or take on a second job so that those you care about never see you. Disappearing from relational responsibilities to try to get more money is not a scriptural response. Using the Bible as a barometer is always a smart choice!
- Is the action well thought out...or a spur of the moment reaction? Is it a best practice, consistent with wise counsel? Or is it the latest buzz on social media. In 2012 I weighed 243lbs. I knew this was not good. Both my grandfather and my father had significant health issues which impacted their quality of life and placed significant burdens on their spouses to take care of them. Do not want that to be the case for me. So I needed to lose weight. And we all know there are some crazy, reactionary ways to lose weight. I didn't chose fad diet off social media. What are you supposed to do before starting any diet or exercise regimen? Talk to your Dr. That's exactly what I did. We discussed my goals and he did some blood work and was able to clearly target changes I needed to make. And they worked! I lost 25 lbs within four months and last week, four years later, weighed in at 195lbs for my physical. There are bona fide best practices out there...are your actions aligning to them?
- Ask God for discernment. This is especially helpful on actions that are intimidating or have significant impact. We need God's stamp of approval to be confident they will bear the fruit we are hoping for. Last year Wendi and I were considering our cash flow situation as we prepared to send Callie off to college. We realized we were spending too much on vehicles and needed to free up some of that cash to help pay for college monthly expenses. Wendi suggested selling our new Suburban and getting an old one to eliminate that car payment. That specific approach would not bear fruit in my mind. Getting a high mileage vehicle would create a different problem because of the high miles we were having to drive- we would hit serious mtc issues. However, I listened to what Wendi was saying because I agreed 100% we were putting too much in vehicle payments. So I asked God to show me what it was we needed to do. And He did. He enabled an alternate solution that freed up the money we needed on a monthly basis without creating more debt. If you are wondering whether the actions are practical or reactionary, ask God a sign. The difference between the practical and the unreasonable comes in discernment.

Step 1, Transfer ownership. Step 2, Do what is practical and reasonable. But what we do when fret shows up. It will come. And when it comes, it can steal your happiness and ability to enjoy life if you let it. And you can end up looking like my friend Worry Wart here. Worry Wart worries about everything, family, friends, will God's love ever end? Worry, like pain, can indicate something is wrong. Pain is an indicator that something physically is wrong and needs attention. Worry, too, indicates that something is wrong – not with the situation – but how we are handling it. Did you know that some of our worry is self-inflicted?

- You self-inflict worry when you look only to yourself to resolve an issue...and you realize that you are limited. Instant worry! We eliminate that by having the active trust in God. Proverbs 3:5-6 Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight.
- Compromise also self-inflicts worry. Isa 26:3 He keeps in perfect peace him whose mind is steadfast because he trusts in Him. If that is true, then so is the opposite. A compromised mind will be in constant worry because of instability. Compromise it erodes your confidence, clouds your mind from God's truth, and introduces doubt. You cannot transfer ownership in a state of compromise. God cannot take ownership of something that is contrary to his nature. The good news is you don't have to be a worry wart. You have full control and full authority to eliminate worry by eliminating compromise in your life.

We learned that when fret comes, regardless of the source:

Do not take action based on fret. Because God does not use fret as a motivation. How is that settling within you? Fret-motivated actions are often done with poor judgment and reckless. The "peace" you feel from taking action is short-lived but the side effects can be long lasting. Parable of the talents. The person with one talent was so worried he would lose it and face his master's wrath that he buried it. When his master returned he was not pleased and threw out the trustless servant. Fret based actions lead to waste.

From my oldest daughter Callie's personal testimony on worry [my dad called me out of the blue when he was just on his way home from work. I told him I was having a struggle about being prepared for school, but didn't mention any of the other issues that it had escalated into. He told me that he had dealt with a worry struggle to. He gave me one of his life verses, Phil. 4:6-7, that I then hung on my bathroom mirror. He told me that I needed to stop taking action from worry. Those words took the cover off my eyes and honestly changed my life. It made me realize that I needed to stop giving into worry and doing what it told me to do. No worry comes from God, so it has to come from Satan which I didn't even think about until then. I had to get through my head that nothing is perfect, and I don't need to be perfect. I also realized that I had been trying to get rid of my worry by watching TV, reading, or hanging out with friends to get my mind off it. What I really needed to be doing was to call out to the Lord because he tells us in that verse that he will give us an peace beyond our understanding. It was like I had changed myself up and had the key to unlock my the whole time, which was God, but I kept trying to unlock myself with those other keys such as watching TV to try to take my mind away. I don't even have to do something difficult and elaborate to find peace. I literally just have to stop myself and pray to God, thank him, and he will give me that peace.]

Do not build scenarios. We dwell on all the possible negative outcomes...over and over again...and we start taking irrational actions that look silly to those around us. What if this happens, and then that happens, and then so on...pretty soon you're all dressed up in bubble wrap because you are paranoid that a paper cut is going to lead to an amputation. Edward Teller, one of the chief scientists for the atomic bomb, fretted significantly when they were preparing the initial blast test called Trinity that the explosion would set off a chain reaction that would set the atmosphere on fire.

We all do this to some extent. 94% of people have intrusive thoughts. But some of us struggle to a more significant degree. Where scenario building consumes you to the point of being overwhelmed, you are unable to let go and unable to find rest. Where worry manifests itself irrational fears that, even though you know are not accurate, paralyze or compel you to repeatedly take unnecessary steps or rituals just to find relief. We often refer to this obsessive or compulsive behaviors.

You are not alone. And you are in good company.

Studies show that 10-15 people here today deal with obsessive compulsive behaviors. That includes myself. I want to introduce you to the green toilet at my parents' house. One summer when we were leaving on vacation someone flushed the toilet and left and the water never stopped filling. The green toilet overflowed and we walked in from vacation to find the carpets in the back half of our house soaked. We fixed the faulty handle that caused the overflow...but from that point every time I flushed that toilet I would wait to hear the water shutoff. Before I left the house I would go back and check to make sure it was not running. In the middle of the night I would wake up and go into the bathroom and make sure it was not running. This lead to other irrational fears. Checking the curling irons to make sure they were off. Checking the lights to make sure they were off.

There are a number of folks here today who can relate to this. But I've got great news, I don't check the toilets, the lights, the curling irons anymore. Jesus didn't die so that I would be overwhelmed by worry, he came and died so that I would have life more abundantly. And you are going to leave here today with the upper hand on obsessive compulsive behaviors. Let's talk about how we can immediately gain ground on these behaviors and move their influence out of our lives.

1. Tell someone...today. Do not suffer in silence. As I mentioned, you are not alone. Those who care about you need to know so that they can stay with you on this. Ask you how things are going, and encourage you when things are tough.
2. Every time the scenario thought comes. Take captive every thought. Align it to the word of God. If it is not consistent, command it to be gone in Jesus' name. You have not been given a spirit of scenarios, but a Spirit of Power, Love and a Sound Mind.
3. Undesired behaviors are often based on wrong thought processes. This includes scenario building. Dwelling on the worst things that can happen is a wrong thought process. Scripture shows us a way to counteract that. As Paul tells in Phil 4:6-7 about how to deal with worry, he finishes it off with Verse 8. "Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable – if anything is excellent or praiseworthy – think about such things. Negative scenarios are not lovely, excellent or praiseworthy. So put this scripture into practice today and turn the tables on OCD."

4. Stand firm when the fret comes and do not take repeated action. Talk aloud as you do the action for the first and only time – “I have turned out the light and the house is not going to burn down.”

Additional tip: Compare the scenario with facts, with what is known to be true, laws of physics. Sometimes our frets come from our exposure to serious consequences but a lack of understanding of whether they could realistically apply to your situation. A house fire is serious, real life situation. But can it really start from you leaving the closet light on. No! The radiant heat from your light bulb cannot catch your clothes on fire if you leave the house. But in the absence of that understanding, we can make up some pretty extreme scenarios.

There are some industries where detailed, wild scenarios need examination. It's called probabilistic risk assessment. W-87 warhead from a Trident 5 ballistic missile dismantlement example. Airplane crashing not practical. The consequences of your worries are not world destruction so stop with the probabilistic risk assessment and realize that scenarios you are dreaming up are just not possible. Too many unrealistic independent actions would have to come together to materialize them.

I'm going to ask the prayer team to begin making their way down here. If relief from obsessive compulsive worry behaviors is something you desire, come get prayer this morning to help you put into practice what we've outlined.

I'm going to wrap up with a quick reminder on the last, and perhaps most effective step in walking out the Worry Free Life. Thanking God. By prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. Thanking God that he is on the case, that he is aligning resources, that he is moving hearts, that he is standing against the enemy. The results are immediately and lasting. Thanking God releases confidence and the peace that transcends all understanding. From Callie [A big part of my prayer is the thanking part. If I am worried about school, I thank him for my intelligence and work ethic. If I am worried about my health, I thank him that he will provide healing and restoration. If I am worried about a specific situation, I thank him for having that circumstance under control. I believe that the act of thanking him on top of asking for peace and casting my anxiety on him helps me to surrender to him, and it reassures me that He has the situations under control.]

Close out in prayer.