

# Why Worry?



Why not?

by Janice Carleton



## **Which of you by worrying can add a moment to your life?"***Matthew 6:27*

My mom was the champion of worriers, so I learned from the best. In my mind and in my experience, it was simply a given fact that moms worry – no getting around it – *they are supposed to worry*. In fact, I think we are convinced that we aren't good moms *unless* we worry! My mom was sure that she couldn't help it, that's just the way she was.

I followed in her footsteps and worried about everything! I worried about my four children . . . would they have friends; would they do well in school; would they feel good about themselves; would they die young; would they make it to heaven? I worried about my marriage . . . would Jim find someone better than me and leave me; would we be able to share our faith? I worried about being a good mom and wife, about our finances, about making decisions, about the world, and about my health. Anything that you could possibly worry about, I worried about!

In any given situation, I imagined the worst outcome. If the phone rang, especially late at night, I imagined that someone had died. If I watched the news, I thought whatever bad things were happening would happen to me. I remember one night when Jim was out of town on business; the kids were in bed and I watched a breaking news story about a convict who had escaped from prison. He was being chased at that very moment west of Chico, which is exactly where we were living. They said he was armed and dangerous. About that time I heard a helicopter circling our property, so that's all I needed for my mind to begin imagining the worst possible scenario. "He's going to break in here . . . he'll torture us . . . then he'll kill us . . . and there's nothing I can do about it because we're out in the boonies and the neighbors won't hear anything . . . Jim will be so sad to lose his whole family!" Try to go to sleep after you've scared yourself half to death! Our thoughts can get way out of control if we let them.

I realized I shouldn't watch the news because I would be filled with fear and dread. I was consumed with worry and negative

thinking. All worry does is upset us and those around us. You can't worry and trust God at the same time. *Worry produces huge burdens for many of us – and usually, what we worry about doesn't even happen!* This means we are wasting precious time and emotional energy for nothing. Worry drowns out the voice of God.

I am forever grateful that God taught me that with His help I could stop worrying. He also showed me that when I did worry, I wasn't trusting Him. I kept thinking, "But I can't help it . . . it's just the way I am" (like my mom)! Worrisome thoughts definitely come into our minds all by themselves. But then it's up to us to notice that we've started to worry and to make a decision to change our thoughts. We can learn to replace our worry with praise and with thoughts of God's providence.

Here's an example of how to do this. Say your kids are out for the evening and the time has come for them to be home, but for some reason, they aren't there yet. The thoughts start to come: they're getting into trouble . . . they've been in an accident . . . they're dying somewhere and you'll never see them again. But once you realize you're worrying, you change your thoughts to these: they will be fine . . . there is a good reason why they're late . . . thank you, Lord, that you are with my kids . . . thank you that no matter what happens, you will help us . . . thank you for loving them more than I do! Thank you for giving me your peace and helping me not to worry. Thank you, thank you, thank you!

I remember when our second son Jerry was having bad headaches and he was scheduled for an MRI. As we waited for the test I started to worry about what this might mean . . . maybe he had a brain tumor, maybe there was nothing the doctors could do for him, etc. But then I chuckled and thought, NO! God is here with us, God has a wonderful plan for Jerry's life. No matter what happens, He will be with us and see us through. He is an "ever-present help in time of trouble." As soon as I changed my thinking, God's peace enveloped me and I stopped worrying. He loves us, and He will always be with us. We can face anything when we face it with God! (Jerry was fine, by the way, and his headaches eventually went away.)

I love what scripture says about worrying in 1 Peter 5:7: "Cast

all your anxieties on Him for He cares for you.” And in Philippians 4:5-7 we read: “The Lord is near. Dismiss all anxiety from your minds. Present your needs to God in every form of prayer and in petitions full of gratitude. Then God’s own peace, which is beyond all understanding, will stand guard over your hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus.” We don’t ignore our worries or pretend they don’t exist; rather, we take them to the Lord and give them to Him.

This verse is telling us that we can choose peace even when we are concerned that something bad might happen! The first step is to notice when we start worrying so that we can turn to God for help. When that first worrisome thought comes, say to yourself “Stop!” Talk to the Lord about it and then do what this scripture says. It says to dismiss it! Leave it with God. Dismiss all anxiety from your minds and then ask God for what you need thanking Him in advance. Once we do that, God’s peace can take over. It’s a tall fence that keeps worry at bay. When we let God’s peace reign, it guards our hearts and minds and we really can stop worrying. We can waste our lives imagining the worst and wondering what we’ll do if this or that happens, but we have a God who is worthy of our trust and who will come to our aid if we let Him.

It’s so awesome that we can change! I thought I was supposed to worry, that I couldn’t help it. But I *can* help it, and so can you, and that’s such great news! I’m still tempted to worry, especially now that I’m a grandma, but thank heavens I know how to change my thoughts and get back into God’s wonderful peace.

One night I woke up consumed with fearful thoughts for one of our grandchildren. The fear was so oppressive, I felt like I was being smothered by the weight of it. I prayed, but I couldn’t get her off my mind. Then I remembered seeing John, our oldest son, with his daughter Mayzie when she was just a tiny baby. She was crying and he was holding her, patting her on the back, and whispering in her ear: “Shh . . . Daddy’s here, it’s alright, don’t cry . . . you don’t have to worry, I’ll take care of everything. Shh . . .” and in a short time, she fell asleep on his chest.

All of a sudden I sensed God whispering in my ear: “Shh . . . it’ll be alright . . . Daddy’s here.”

I said, “But Lord, what about . . .”

And He said, “Shh . . .”

I tried again, “But . . .”

And He said “Shh . . .”

And I fell peacefully back asleep, letting him take care of all the what-if’s that were worrying me.

When the what-ifs bombard me now, I quote my favorite scripture verses or sing a song or pray St. Faustina’s simple prayer, “Jesus I trust in You.” Or I pray The Surrender Novena.<sup>1</sup> It has nine days of reflections ending with a simple prayer, All of these can help us leave our worries with God.

Let’s try a little prayer experiment now. Close both of your hands into fists. Now close your eyes and imagine that you are holding onto whatever is worrying. You can put more than one worry in there – be sure to hold on tightly. Now pray the surrender prayer 10 times opening up one of your fingers from your fists with each prayer. “O Jesus, I surrender myself to You, take care of everything!” After the 10th prayer notice that your hands are open to release your worries to God. Don’t your hands feel lighter too? When we open our hands in prayer we signify the letting go of our wills and what we think we want or need to being open to God’s plan. It’s good to be docile and let the Lord have control of our lives. What a great way to live! Whenever you feel yourself grabbing those worries back, open up your hands again and ask God to take them from you and let Him take care of everything!

Another powerful weapon against worry is praise! Praise takes our minds off of ourselves and puts our focus on God and who He is for us. When we are immersed in praising God, it is impossible to worry or fret. Our minds are lifted up to God above our problems and we are drawn into the very courts of heaven where the angel and saints are also praising Him. As our hearts are filled with thanksgiving for all God is, we experience joy and peace in His presence.

Music is so important in the spiritual life – it actually changes

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1 The Surrender Novena can be purchased at [fullofgrace.com](http://fullofgrace.com).

the atmosphere around you! If you are feeling down or upset, crank up the praise music and see how your mood changes. Fill your homes with holy music – whatever kind you like! You can even dance before the Lord as David did in the Old Testament.

If you still aren't convinced about being able to stop worrying, let's talk about who God is for a moment. I recently listened to a pod-cast by Fr. John Riccardo and he shared some ideas to help us get a grasp on the enormity and power of this God who we place our hope in.

We know God created the stars, but do you know how many are there? There are 100 billion stars just in our galaxy. 100 billion. And there are 100 billion galaxies in the universe. So that's 100 billion times 100 billion stars. That's a lot of stars! And how big is the universe? It is 46 billion light years across. Obviously that's really big, but how can we begin to wrap our brains around that size? He said to imagine a sand castle where each grain of sand is one star. Then imagine that the sand castle is 5 miles long, 5 miles wide, and 5 miles high! What would that look like? If you stand at the traffic circle over here on High School and look down Madison all the way to the water that is one mile. So 5 times that and then 5 times as wide and 5 times as high. Another way to try to picture it is our island is approximately 5 miles wide and 10 miles long, so take half of Bainbridge and go 5 miles high and there you have it! That is a REALLY BIG sand castle!

A little more perspective... Our sun is a small star. Any idea how many earths can fit into our sun? 960,000! But the biggest star known so far is called the Big Dog and it can hold 7 quadrillion earths. Is your brain hurting yet? Just a little more. What's a quadrillion? Well, if you start counting it will take you 12 days to count one million seconds. To count to a billion seconds will take 31 years, a trillion 31 million years and to count to a quadrillion will take 31 trillion years. Is this mind-boggling or what? So what's the point?

The point is that the God who created this amazing universe and who keeps it running every day is massive beyond comprehension.... And yet... this great big God has His eye on you and your life is in

His hands. So relax! He's got this! He knows what He's doing. He knows what's going on in your life and it will all turn out for good in the end. Even with all of the beautiful things God has created in this world, you are his favorite! He is crazy about you.

God is in control, and He can help you face anything this life has to throw at you. It's so awesome that we can change! I thought once a worrier, always a worrier. But that's not true. You will be tempted to worry again but you don't have to go there! Just remember this: *There are simply no benefits to be gained by worrying.* Not only is it fruitless, but it can also be harmful, both physically and spiritually. Because of the stress it puts on the body it can cause ulcers, migraines, depression, sleep disturbance, and heart problems. I pray from now on that you will worry less and trust God more. Let's worship not worry!

## Quotes on Worry

“Worry is like a rocking chair - it's something to do,  
but it doesn't get you anywhere.”

“Worry drowns out the voice of God.”

“Worry is having a conversation with yourself about things you cannot change. Prayer is having a conversation with God about things that He can change.”

“Worry is a misuse of the imagination.” Dan Zadra

“Whatever is going to happen will happen,  
whether we worry or not.” Ana Monnar

“Don't lose today by worrying about tomorrow!” John F. Herbert

“Worry does not empty tomorrow of its troubles,  
it empties today of its strength.” Corrie ten Boom

“Pray, hope and don't worry. Worry is useless.” Padre Pio

“You're worried about what-ifs.

Well, *what if* you stopped worrying?” Shannon Celibi

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