**The Predator Named Worry**

*Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own. Matthew 6:34*

God tells us not to worry. Why in the world would He do that? I can tell you why, because worry can make you sick. Worry, gone out of control, can kill you! Ever hear the old saying “Don’t worry yourself to death?” Well, there is truth to that statement.

The word *worry* first appeared in Old English as the word *wrygan*, which meant not to just fret but to strangle. Strangle! When I started to think about worry in this way I couldn’t believe how true that definition was. Did you know that the symptoms of a panic attack are difficulty breathing, dizziness, feeling faint, racing and pounding heart, chest pain, intense feelings of dread, and feeling like you are going to die? Does that sound at all like how you would feel if you were being strangled? Fascinating isn’t it?

God designed us to have a flight or fight response to danger so that it would protect us when real fear is near. He did the same thing with animals in the wild to help them with survival. It is a way for us to get away from something of harm or get ready to fight the thing that is threatening us. The problem with worry is the fear is not really before us, it is in our imagination. We worry about what is to come but what we are thinking about hasn’t even happened yet. So, our body automatically ignites the stress response made to help us survive a real threat. Our muscles tense, our heart rate changes and our breathing becomes more rapid and then we are ready to run or fight something. But when it is only worry that has caused this reaction there is nothing real to run from or to fight. So we sit there ready for action that will never take place. This is stress.

This is why we so often see people come to the doctor’s office with sore backs, necks, and the inability to sleep. Of course you would not be able to sleep or rest if you were in fact getting ready to run from something or fight it. It is also why we see people with multiple stomach issues; more blood is going to the large muscles instead of the bowels during this automatic body response. If less blood is going to the bowels all sorts of issues can happen, indigestion, constipation, bloating and so on. It only makes sense, you don’t need your bowels to be moving when you are going to be running from something or fighting it.

The funny thing is we try to run from and fight our worries. We run from our worries by planning our place of relaxation. It could be anything that we long for when we say, “I just need to get away.” It might be a vacation, a day off from work, or even a glass a wine or a beer.

We can’t really fight our worries – instead we end up fighting with the people around us. Generally, we start to manipulate the situation that has caused the worry by trying to control the people around us and that starts fights and arguments. We can try to control the people at work, our kids or spouses and friends.

I want you to think about this a minute. Let’s say you are worried about your house not selling fast enough, so you start fighting with your husband to clean up the yard more, or repaint the family room. We can show our disappointment in them as if the situation is their fault. We might even withhold love from people if they do not meet our demands. All because of worry, an invisible fear.

We could in fact even do this with God. We might turn to prayer when we worry, but if we aren’t careful, we might be asking Him to help us the way we want help. So in a sense we are trying to control God. That isn’t a prayer of faith but more like asking a genie to supply our wishes. If He doesn’t do as we ask, we withhold our love for Him or think He is unloving and uncaring.

When we try to run from or fight our worries it usually helps temporarily. But we still have to face the stress and worry because it isn’t gone—and honestly, it could even be worse after our attempts to fight or escape it. We could get back from our “get away” from work only to have more on our desk. The wine only helped numb us to the fear and when those effects wear off we now need more wine. As you can plainly see, this could cause even more issues and give us more things to worry about.

If we try to control others with our fight response, we will destroy our relationships. Destroyed relationships leads to loneliness, and being alone is a dangerous place to be when you are a worry wart because now you have even more time to think about your troubles – real or made up ones. If stress from worry is not dealt with, it could cause heart disease, stroke, major depression and ultimately death. Hence, don’t worry yourself to death.

I know this all sounds hopeless but it is not! God has given us the answers to this terrible thing called worry. He says don’t do it!

We need to allow our knowledge of God filter our thoughts. So the first thing we need to do when worry strikes is pray. Not a prayer that says, do this Lord, but a prayer that says, YOU are God and I am not. It is a prayer that thanks Him for His care and love and affirms our faith in Him. We can then look at the fear in the light of God. Ask yourself, is this even real? Can I fight it? Can I run from it? If the answer is no, then we dump it. We dump the worry and say; “God, in the light of who YOU are, this is not a real fear. I trust YOU!”

Nothing is a real fear when we have God by our side. What can harm us? What can anyone or anything do to us when we have God? Can even death destroy us? No. We don’t have to run, we don’t have to fight we can in fact stand still and let God be God. Our job is just to believe and keep believing – standing firm in faith.

Most of the things that we worry about never happen. What we are doing is believing a lie about the future and making it be real before we even know if it is going to be real. Don’t let your body prepare to run or fight over something that is not there. I will tell you who is there, God. And with Him, we have nothing to fear. Even if the worst happens, God will be there. He is God, He is able and He is telling you, not to worry, do not fear, stand still and know that He is God.

I could go on and on about worry. Believe it or not this is just a nut shell! But I hope this little morsel helps you to see the cause and effect that worry has on our lives. Don’t let worry strangle you! Worry could kill you! Maybe we need to start seeing worry as a real predator and not just a thing we do.