

Putting Faith Back Into Your Future

Worrying about the future is big business and a big burden.

We ask our kids what they want to be when they grow up. Tiger moms and dads pressure their kids to perform at a high level at very tender ages in order to get little Johnny and Jenny out in front of the future. In the process, we are creating kids who are paralyzed by the prospect of not meeting expectations.

Case in point, I asked a high school senior the other day what her college plans were, and she walked away from the whole group. In her mind, it was easier to excuse and embarrass herself than to take on her future. This obsession with controlling the future is getting out of hand, and adults are no better.

We are constantly peering into the crystal ball, planning ahead, forecasting, imagining what may be and dreaming of new realities and how to avoid potential pitfalls. But what happens when my future fails to meet my own, someone else's or culture's expectations?

Answer: It becomes a burden.

Not meeting forecasts, getting behind on "the plan," missing goals, dates and deadlines can be consuming. Uh-oh—What now? Is the solution to become better planners, make more task lists—properly prioritized—work harder, smarter and longer—constantly chasing the unknown?

The fact is that we are all afraid of the unknown. In the precarious space between the known and unknown, we spend a lot of energy trying to discern the unknown, predicting and protecting ourselves from the unknown at the expense of the

present.

Don't get me wrong, planning ahead is a valuable skill. Wise people always think ahead. But trying to *control the future* can also become an idol, inhibiting us from loving God and loving others. Few would ever say they actually are trying to control or predict the future, but watch what happens when unplanned disruptions to the "plan" occur. The emotional response says it all without saying it explicitly.

What does God say about worrying about the future? He says, "I've got this. Give Me tomorrow, and rely on Me today."

God used King Solomon to tell us exactly how we can actively put faith back into our future so that we don't miss the present. Listen closely:

"Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will direct your paths" (Prov. 3:5-6, MEV).

In other words, TRUST God's person, LEAN on God's wisdom and LIVE OUT God's ways to start getting God's direction toward your future. This is God's tried, true and tested way of resetting and returning your faith to your future. The question is this: Are you trusting, leaning and living out your faith presently?

Jesus put all of this into a practical perspective on two specific levels. First, he said "Do not worry about your life ... Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life?"

In other words, it is emotionally and spiritually unhealthy to take on the future. Get that. Resolve not to do that. Instead, Jesus says, put that energy into knowing and doing life in God and with God today.

“But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be given to you. Therefore, take no thought about tomorrow, for tomorrow will take thought about the things of itself. Sufficient to the day is the trouble thereof” (Matt. 6:33-34, MEV).

Still not convinced? Listen to King Solomon again:

“In the day of prosperity be joyful, but in the day of distress consider: God has made the one as well as the other. For this reason man will not be able to understand anything that comes after him” (Eccl. 7:14, MEV).

Because we are not God, we shouldn't assume His responsibilities. The focus needs to be on being present today and trusting God with tomorrow. We all have problems, and worrying about future ones doesn't help. God isn't telling us to ignore them and stop planning or trying to get ahead. He's just saying let it go. Give it to Him. Trust Him with it. And be present. You have a chance to make a difference in the world when you are dealing in the moment. But chasing the future can steal away our energies, wear on our relationships and erode our ability to be intimate with God and others.

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