

Rebuke Relentless Fear With These 3 Faith-Filled Keys

Of course you worry when there's no money in the bank, no food in the house, no immediate prospect of adequate income and the only phone calls or mail you receive are creditors asking for money. God knew we would worry about material things. And His Word has a lot to say about it.

Maslow's hierarchy of needs begins with the basics: food, water, shelter, clothing and safety. Human beings cannot survive without those needs being met.

And God knows that.

I know what it's like to worry about material things. Some years ago, I moved from one state to another. My new medical license was delayed, and for a period of six months I had no income. None. I remember what a struggle it was to go to sleep at night while worrying about bills and basic necessities—until I learned these principles.

Matthew 6 became very meaningful to me during that time. Since God knows you and I have need of these material things, we don't have to worry about them. Jesus says repeatedly, "Don't worry about it!" (see Matt. 6:32).

Jesus is not advocating denying our need for food and shelter. But giving in to worry about it is neither useful nor godly.

Here are three things to know and three things to do when you wrestle with worry about material things.

Things to Know

1. Worry Doesn't Work.

Your mental gymnastics won't make any difference in the

outcome. Worry will only wear you out. Worry is mentally running in place; you get sweaty and tired but you're still in the same spot.

Jesus said no one, by worry, can add "one cubit to his stature" (Matt. 6:27, NKJV) or "a single hour to your life" (Matt. 6:27, NIV). I learned a long time ago I cannot stretch my vertically challenged height of under five feet by one iota. And my angst didn't add one moment to my husband's life. Worry just doesn't work.

2. Worry Diverts Your Energy.

Worry takes you out of the present. It clouds your mind and your emotions. It makes you unavailable to the people who need you, stifles your creativity and productivity and distracts you from pursuing your purpose.

They say "necessity is the mother of invention." In many ways, that's true. But if all your mental and physical energy is diverted by worry, you won't have what it takes to find, create or connect with the solutions that may be closer than you realize or with the people who can help you get there.

3. Worry Prevents God's Best.

Worry about the cares of this life can choke the seeds of truth God sows in your heart (see Luke 8:14). God doesn't often add His voice to a cacophony of sound in your head. When your mind is filled with fear and anxiety, it's very hard to hear Him speak.

God does not want you or your family to suffer. We are promised that trouble will continue until Jesus returns. Both those statements are true. But worry short-circuits the life Jesus came to give us here and now. The meaningful productive life God does want for you does not come out of worry, but from trust and obedience.

Things to Do

If you don't worry, what do you do instead?

1. Focus on What You Can Do

You have more choices than you realize, regardless of your circumstances. Some things you cannot change, but you can always choose your focus. You can place the majority of your thoughts, energies, time and more into those areas where you can make a difference.

Some things you *can* do might include seeking out regular mental/emotional/spiritual nourishment that will bring encouragement, actively seeking ways to make the resources you do have reach farther, learning to maximize the skills and abilities you have in finding or creating work that is meaningful and regularly seeking God's input on your circumstances.

2. Enlarge Your Prayers

God asks us to bring our material needs to Him. Do that often. And also pray larger prayers. Pray for the right attitude while facing material needs, for wisdom in stewarding what you have and knowing what action steps to take, for an open mind to see any doors God opens for you, for a generous heart to help those you can and for His peace and presence in your soul.

And spend time listening. Spend time quietly in His presence. Let Him show you who He is. Hear Him assure you of His presence. Welcome His peace into your soul. Actively listen for any directions He gives you for taking action. Invite the character transformation He always offers when you face troubles.

3. Put Legs on Your Prayers

God's blessings to you will involve, in part, actions that you

take. If you can speak, walk, listen, write, sew, cook, type, help, build, sell, sing, code, assist, nurse, or whatever your skills are, the answer will include you using your skills in a meaningful way. And that usually involves somehow helping others or bringing value to them.

Frederick Douglas is credited with saying, “I prayed for 20 years but received no answer until I prayed with my legs.” How you are to “pray with your legs” is one of the most important things to pray about and think about. What doors are you to knock on? Whom is God sending you to help? What has He put in your hand to do right now?

God doesn’t promise us that everything will be alright–yet. Learning to trust Him regardless of our circumstances reminds us that there is an end to the story. And then everything *will* be alright.

*Read more in Dr. Carol Peters-Tanksley’s book **Overcoming Fear and Anxiety through Spiritual Warfare**. Dr. Carol is an OB-GYN, author and ordained minister.*