

Sermon notes

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Going to War With Worry: Learning the Art of Casting Your Cares Upon the Caring God

Several highlights/elaboration from the sermon:

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There are a couple of important caveats I left out of the sermon:

1. There is such a thing as “good anxiety.” Or perhaps we should say that legitimate “concerns” should be distinguished from being “over-concerned.” We know this because Paul speaks of his anxieties for the churches in a positive way in 2 Cor. 11:28. One of his hardships as an apostle and church planter/pastor was his concern for the well-being of his churches. This was a godly concern, but there is no doubt that it gave Paul many sleepless nights. What kept his concern/anxiety from being sin is that he kept turning his concerns into prayer requests (reflected in his letters). His anxieties fueled his prayer life, as he translated “worries” into petitions. Another example of this might be Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane. Certainly, Jesus gives every sign of being anxious before his arrest, trial, and crucifixion. But he does the very thing we must do with all such anxieties: he turns them into petitions before his Father.

2. Most anxiety issues are Spiritual issues, but many are ALSO physiological issues, related to such things as brain chemistry. There can be a legitimate place for medication (though in our hyper therapeutic culture, there is no doubt medication is abused). But note: medication can only solve physical problems, not Spiritual ones. In cases where medication is legitimately used, medication should be combined with a regiment of biblical counseling. For excellent discussions of medication and brain chemistry, see Ed Welch’s *Blame It on the Brain* and an article from the *CCEF Journal of Biblical Counseling* by Michael Emlet entitled “Listening to Prozac...and to the Scriptures: A Primer on Psychoactive Medications.”

Speaking of CCEF, in general I highly recommend their resources for any kind of counseling issue.

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The world tends to fight worry with the power of positive thinking. But this is fighting worry with lies. Scripture calls us to be utter realists – we live in a fallen world in which many terrible things do happen, and we need to be prepared for them. So we must fight worry with truth, not with fantasy.

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In light of Mt. 6:26b: Once you know how important you are to God, you know what should be most important to you.

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Pagans seek food, drink, and clothing. Christians seek the kingdom of God. And this is why pagans can never overcome their worry whereas Christians can. Pagans, in the end, cannot rise above living for the here and now, living for their own comfort. Christians can endure suffering without worry precisely because we know that life does not consist in maintaining food and clothing, but in bringing glory to God, whether we live or die. And Christians can live this way because we know God will repay all our sacrifices with glory that is far better than food or drink.

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In Phil. 4:4, Paul says that our gentleness (or reasonableness) will be evident to all. This connected to the exhortations in 4:6. Anxious people cannot be gentle. They are under too much pressure, they try to control things (including other people), and they are easily angered/frustrated because they are so afraid of not getting their way. When we cast our cares upon God in prayer, we can be gentle towards people because we know our own destiny is safe and secure in the hands of God.

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Paul says in Phil. 4:5, "The Lord is near," or "the Lord is at hand." Some read this in a preterist fashion: the Lord's coming in judgment on Jerusalem in 70 AD is near. Of course that was true when Paul wrote the letter. But I wonder if he means something else by "near" – not exactly spatial, but more relational than chronological. I need to study the passage some more but at the moment this makes the most sense to me. We can have joy and peace – we do not need to be anxious – because the Lord is near to us. Because the Lord is near, we know his comfort. He is with us no matter what we go through, so there is no need to ever worry.

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Again and again the Bible gives command like "Do not worry" and "Do not fear." This means that fear and worry are sin. If the major sin most men struggle with day to day is lust, the major sin most women struggle with is anxiety. Obviously, men also struggle with anxiety (though they are much less likely to admit it than women) and women certainly struggle with lust at times. But these are tendencies we should be aware of. The antidote is the same: the grace of God and the promises of his Word. We fight temptation with the sword of the Word.

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Book recommendation: Timothy Lane's *Living Without Worry* is a very basic but very solid and practical study of what Scripture says about worry.