

Roots in Ripon

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Chuck Roots

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Don't Worry, Be Happy

The year was 1988 when a song written by Bobby McFerrin hit the airwaves, entitled, "Don't Worry, Be Happy." This light-hearted, toe-tapping tune was an instant hit. T-shirts were worn with the song's title and slogan emblazoned for all to see. Though the song was catchy, I never paid attention to the lyrics before.

Worrying seems to be a part of the universal human condition. I have known far too many people, some in my own family, who firmly believe that the act of worry is their right. That they were born to worry. A wayward child, a lost job, needing a new car, a failing marriage, and so on creates an environment in the soul that is ripe for worry.

The first verse in the song, "Don't Worry, Be Happy," is profound in its understanding of our human dilemma. *"In every life we have some trouble. When you worry you make it double."* That line sums up the problem of worry: when you worry about someone or something, you are unable to help that person, that problem, or yourself. All the fussing and hand-wringing in the world does not alter the problem one iota. Truth be told – worry makes things worse. As the song says, worry causes your trouble to double!

As a pastor, I often found myself addressing this stumbling block in the lives of many people who profess to know and love Jesus. The compulsion to worry is a faith killer. What do I mean by that? Worry stabs at the heart of trust. Too often we chuckle at the person who always worries about something. There are even those who would create something to worry about, if necessary!

This is not intended to have some sort of Pollyannaish approach to life. Instead, I have learned to turn every care, concern, trouble, and worry over to the One who can thoroughly handle that which plagues me.

Let's take a look at why worry is a faith killer. God created us to be in relationship with him. Any relationship we have demands a certain degree of trust. I trust that the clerk at the store is charging me the right prices when I buy my groceries. I trust that the gasoline I put in my car has been processed properly. I trust the elevator company in the high-rise will run as designed, safely transporting me to my desired floor. I trust the pilot to fly the plane safely to my desired destination. I even have to trust other drivers to obey the traffic laws.

So, let me use an apologetic approach to this argument. Since I believe that God loves me, and that he sent his Son, Jesus, to die for my sins, then I am fully

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accepting that my life is completely in his hands. It then stands to reason that I should be able to fully trust God with my life and everything that takes place throughout my life. God has made it very clear in his word, the Bible, that I am to trust him implicitly in all things, and any act of worry on my part is a red flag announcing that I don't really trust God to handle my problem.

Lest you think this is overly simplistic, I would then challenge you to prove the Bible says it's okay for you to worry. Since that is not possible, let me tell you what the Bible says about not worrying.

In the Sermon on the Mount, Matthew 6, Jesus says, *"Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes? 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?"*

The Apostle Paul wrote to the believers in Philippi (Greece), these words about their many anxieties and worries. *"Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."*

Worry is an all-out attack on your heart and mind, make no mistake about it. When you find yourself falling into the worry-trap, turn it all over to Jesus. Worry is a burden you were never designed to carry. Jesus can handle any and all problems you have.

And have a wonderful Easter week! Jesus is Risen! After all, he defeated sin and death. My troubles are puny by comparison. No more worries!