

Becky Combee Ministries, Inc.

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Worry or Pray

Long ago, I learned a song entitled, "Why worry when you can pray?"¹ Today, it still captures my heart because there is such great truth in these simple words. No doubt, these lyrics were composed from the writings of the apostle Paul to the church at Philippi. He said, "Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God."² The *New Living Translation* interprets this verse, "Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done." Here, the word "don't" has great impact. It carries the weight of "stop." It continually cries, "Quit," and loudly decrees, "Avoid." It is defined as "customs, rules, or regulations that forbid something."³

In my life, worry seldom comes with a loud, clashing bang, but quietly, subtly tiptoes until I am completely absorbed in some dilemma. And often, it is only a potential trauma. Looking across the horizon of my mind, I identify something that might happen or that could happen. I stare and focus on the possible calamity until there is no room for any other thought. God's glorious words of victory steadily retreat while concepts of disaster march forward.

The origin of the word "worry" is very interesting. It is derived from an Old English word, "wyrgan," meaning "to strangle."⁴ This word describes the action of an animal that seizes another by the throat, repeatedly shaking and biting. I understand this graphic description because it describes a worried mind. When we are anxious, our mind shakes and our body trembles. We are harassed and tormented like a captured animal. Certainly, it can't be a mystery that God said, "Don't worry."

It is God's will that every troubled moment

becomes a season of glorious triumph. Our great and mighty God wants to walk with us through every trauma. He desires victory of such magnitude that we "overcome the world."⁵ But how is this possible?

First, the Word of God instructs us to turn all our worries over to God. The apostle Peter writes, "Casting all your care upon him."⁶ When we cast our fishing line into a river, we eventually reel in the line. But if we give our cares, our worries, and our anxieties to the Lord, we do not retrieve them. We do not, we must not, meditate on them again. We replace every

A Life Full of Holes

By SUZANNE WILLIAMS

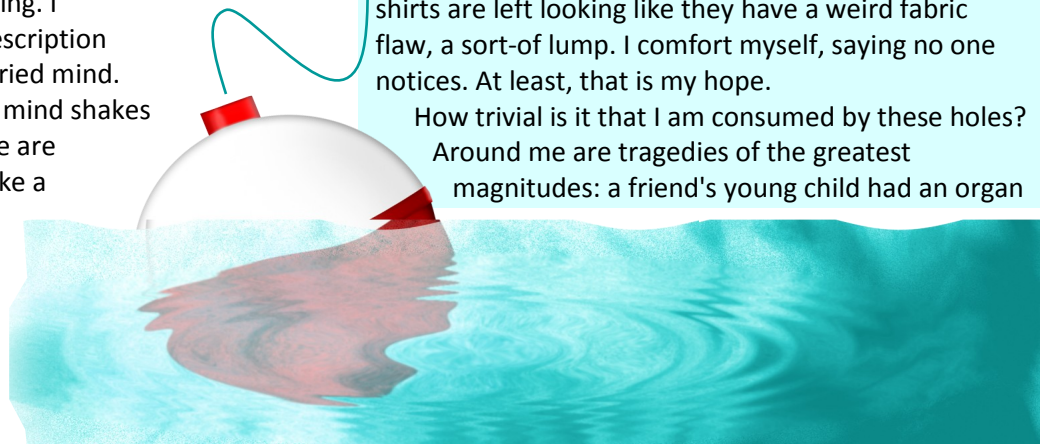
My shirts get these little holes in them, always in the same location. For three years now I have searched for the source. Is it the washing machine? My laundry basket? What? The questions remain unanswered, and it frustrates me.

It's amazing how much time I have spent chasing down the cause of these holes. They steal my concentration. When I'm supposed to be doing a dozen different tasks, half of my brain power remains on these spots of empty space.

And they leave me with a quandary. Do I wear the shirts anyway? Should I repair them first or throw the shirts away? If I threw them all away, I think I'd have nothing left to wear. It's that bad. I have repaired some of them, not well, mind you. Afterward, the shirts are left looking like they have a weird fabric flaw, a sort-of lump. I comfort myself, saying no one notices. At least, that is my hope.

How trivial is it that I am consumed by these holes?

Around me are tragedies of the greatest magnitudes: a friend's young child had an organ



(Worry or Pray continued)

troublesome thought with the promise of God.

The psalmist gives us a similar word picture when he exhorts us to "commit [our] way unto the Lord,"⁷ or "roll [our] way upon the Lord."⁸ We can understand his words when we think about mountain climbing. If we are carrying heavy backpacks, we struggle with their great weight. But if I give my backpack to you, then I am no longer overwhelmed. I am free!

This is God's magnanimous offer to us. He urges us to come to Him when we are burdened, perplexed, afflicted and distressed. We can trade our worries for freedom because He cares for us, and His great care is more than concern. I may be concerned about you, but I am unable to help you. When God is concerned, He can and will solve our dilemma. If we hire a caretaker to oversee our yard, we want more than keen observation and an accurate report. We want the yard mowed, the shrubbery trimmed, and the flowerbeds weeded. Our intention is clear. We want him to work diligently.

God works mightily when we cast every care upon Him. The psalmist reports, "We can 'trust God and He will work for [us].'"⁹ What glorious words! We are not trapped by maybe-so, hope-so, or keep-your-fingers-

crossed logic. The *New Century Version* declares, "Depend on the Lord; trust him, and he will take care of you." What a magnificent Father! We are not frustrated because He carries our burdens. We have perfect peace.

The apostle Paul spoke of God's great peace when he said, "Don't worry, BUT pray." The key word here is perhaps the word "but." This word gives us a choice. We can worry OR we can pray, BUT we cannot worry AND pray. Years ago, I heard someone say, "A scared prayer won't work." We could also say, "A worried prayer won't work." Worry and prayer are simply not compatible. We must surrender our worries to our loving Father before we pray.

But does God answer prayer? Yes! Listen to the words of Jesus, "Ask, and it shall be given you."¹⁰ Hear His counsel in John 16:24, "Ask, and ye shall receive." Truly, God answers prayer. The song is right, "Why worry when you can pray?"



¹ Words: John W. Peterson, Compiled by: Alfred B. Smith ² Php 4:6 ³ "don't," Dictionary.com ⁴ "worry," Dictionary.com ⁵ Jn 16:33; 1Jn 5:4 ⁶ 1Pe 5:7 ⁷ Ps 37:5 ⁸⁻⁹ Ps 37:5, Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Bible, e-sword.net ¹⁰ Mt 7:7

(A Life Full of Holes continued)

transplant, a relative's husband needs corrective surgery, countless people (unknown to me) have lost their homes to a massive tornado. Yet here I sit, distractedly looking for holes.

Sunday morning following the sermon, my pastor announced to the congregation "a time of worship." Our band began playing beautiful music, the words from the stage floated into the air, and I closed my eyes in gratitude to think of the Father. I love to worship. I live to worship. Yet when my eyes opened just a crack, in amazement I watched people filing out. Before he could even offer the blessing he speaks each Sunday, the greater portion had left, and following the blessing, they went like a flood until only twenty or so were left.

No time for worship?

So many things consume our lives. Like me, searching for holes, all those people had allowed circumstances to become a distraction - time for lunch, pick up the children, mow the yard, take a nap. Trivial items sent them out chasing their holes. When

for a few minutes, the Father asked them to stay, to enter into His presence, to sit awhile, to talk with Him.

What all had failed to see was the benefits that come from those precious moments. It's not that my words help God. He doesn't need help. No, my words help me. God is pleased with faith, and time spent in worship reminds me of who He is. It builds my faith.

He is greater. He is higher. He is more than enough. Worship places God onto the throne of my heart and myself in surrender, where I need to be. Him larger. Me smaller. No longer am I out chasing holes. Instead, I dwell with God. I am quiet and can hear His voice. I come away so much stronger than I was when I entered.

I prayed today about those holes. In a moment of forgetfulness, I actually asked God to show me what I was doing to create them. How silly, empty, and vain. I see now it doesn't matter. If ten years from now, my shirts still contain holes, perhaps they serve only to remind me of this lesson.

I think I'll stop writing now and worship. For He is great. He is mighty. He is powerful. He is holy.