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Antidote for Worry

Philippians 4:6,7

Does anybody here struggle with worry? Most people if we are totally honest must admit there are times when the knots of anxiety twist up our stomach into full blown worry. We worry about our health, and health of those we love. We worry about finances. We worry about losing our job. We worry that the money we're making just won't be enough to provide for our family. We worry about our kids and all the dangerous things that could happen to them driving on the road, in the halls at school, harmful influences. Holidays are prime time for worry as it seems to increase the anxiety factor. We have many memories implanted in our brains associated with holidays, some good and others painful. They can remind us of our loss and failures.

Thanksgiving is a time when relatives get together. Now that in itself can increase your stress and offer plenty for us to worry about. We worry about our time with the in-laws. How can I handle all those negative insults that are going to be casually tossed my direction? How will I handle the one who wants to control and dominate things, the one who wants to bustle about seeking to pacify everybody and make things feel like they are far better than they really are. How will my actions be perceived by the family? If you are cooking, will the food turn out? Will I not be too overwhelmed by all the people? Thanksgiving can give us plenty to worry about. Between marriage and kids and work and hospitals....life offers plenty for us to be worried about.

My question this morning. Is it possible to transform our worry into something productive? How can we replace our painfully agitated hearts with a calm rested peace? It's not something that comes naturally for most of us.

Football hall of famer who played wide receiver many years for the Seattle Seahawks and is now a United States congressman, watched as his wife Terry gave birth to his fourth child. He was excited to see another son come into their family then the doctor said, 'Hold on we've

got problems here. His son was born with a condition where the spinal cord is exposed, spina bifida. As Steve was weeping his wife Terry comforted him by saying "God planned our little Kramer and having him will be one of the greatest things ever to happen to us." Today, Steve and Terry Largent have found cause to be thankful in the face of a situation that would cause great worry and leave many parents angry and bitter. Steve can say, "For myself and for my wife we would n't change a thing. For our son we wish things would be different, that he didn't have to live like this. But having this child with a disability has added more to our lives than we could possibly imagined. It's given us sympathy and more compassion for other couples who are facing difficult challenges."

What is it that helps one person become thankful and the other walk down the road of worry to anger and bitterness? Certainly God deserves our thankfulness, but obligation and duty are pretty poor motivators. Thankfulness is like a fuel that empowers the Christian to grow spiritually when the trail is narrow and steep. Unless we can cultivate a thankful heart, no matter the circumstances we are going to continue slogging through the foggy slough of worry, fear getting more and more stuck in anger and bitterness. Thankfulness is the only way out. We know its pretty biblical as often the scripture reminds us 'Give thanks to the Lord for he is good.' Give thanks always for all things. I Thessalonians 5:17 is pretty direct "Give thanks in all circumstances."

Hold on you may say. What about the reality of a terrible situation. Isn't that "Thankfulness in all things tune" a bit naïve and trite? Well let me ask you this question. Has your worry ever healed a child that is disabled? Has your worry ever replenished your bank account? Has your attitude of bitterness ever done anything to restore a shattered friendship? Has it ever fixed the car and healed sickness? No. and being thankful doesn't fix broken transmissions either, but it certainly does transform our spirit as we face them. It changes our whole perspective because we are focused on something other than ourselves and our loss and our demands and our shattered expectations. Thankfulness is given to us by God as a kind of "spiritual air freshener" to drive out the stale odor of worry, bitter and negative resentment. Thankfulness give the soul some clean, fresh smelling air to breathe.

Turn in your Bibles to Philippians chapter 4. The apostle Paul wrote this book while in jail. It is a prison epistle, or letter, written to the church in city of Philippi. As a prisoner on death-row, Paul had every reason to worry. He had every reason to be resentful and angry and bitter. As an Apostle of the early church he had plenty of opportunity to worry. He was open to criticism, misunderstanding of his motives (what will they think of me?), hostile audiences, even physical abuse (what's going to happen to me?). Yet, Paul was able to replace the strong temptation to worry with something far more powerful. He was able to replace a mind of painful suspense into a bold, confident, rested peace. Wouldn't you like to have some of that confident peace going into the holiday season? This morning we will first examine the anatomy of worry..then we will find the antidote for worry.

Reading in Philipians 4:6. "Be anxious for nothing..." Be anxious for NO thing...nothing." This is a command from God through the pen of Paul to us. An imperative in the present active tense is commanding us to Stop worrying about any thing. Many of us would feel quite good if we could conquer our worrying about the small stuff. The broken nails, flat tires and stubbed toes. Then we could save our best worrying for the real big stuff. Here the Bible commands us Be anxious for NO thing. It does not discriminate between the small and the large. Stop worrying about the small stuff....stop worrying about the big stuff. Now if your like me when someone comes along and says, "Stop worrying" it doesn't seem very helpful. If worry were a switch that I could just choose to turn off and on them maybe it would, but I need some help to be able to obey that command.

Paul also warned us in the first chapter of Romans about people who knew God but who failed to give Him thanks. The results were horrific. They knew God but neither glorified Him as God nor gave thanks to him. Their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. When we're not thankful we are ripping off God. We are robbing him of His glory. We lose sight of His beauty. We lose that healthy eternal perspective. And its just as dangerous for Christians to not give thanks as it is to bungy jump without attaching the cord. We jump out on our own without anything to catch us by questioning whether God is loving and able.

Paul is going to give an antidote to help us in curbing our worry, but first lets dissect worry a bit. Lets look at the anatomy of anxiety and see it for what it really is. **First, Worry demonstrates our natural desire to fix life's problems by ourselves.** Worry asks "How am I going to fix my spouse?" What do I have to do to get my kids back on track?" "What can **I** do to stop my relatives from slamming me at Thanksgiving." Worry asks "how can I pull off this program at work when it's totally out of my control?" Worry asks "How can **I** possibly provide the needs for my family. Some of those are valid questions to ask in seeking answers, but worry looks only at oneself to solve the problem. The problem is in the attitude. Worry says, "I'm the only resource that can make things better...and I don't see how I can possibly do any more"

Secondly, Worry eats away at our trust in God. Worry clearly demonstrates a lack of faith in God's ability to provide. Webster defines Worry as a painful uneasiness of mind in respects to an anticipated ill. A painful suspense toward the future, the unknown the uncontrollable. It's a state of restlessness, a mind filled with agitation. We have decided that it's up to us to solve the problem, so we churn our stomachs trying to come up with a workable solution...We only go to God when we have expended all our own possible ideas. Going to God is a last resort. God is the ejection seat pull when we realize our plane is going down. We are quite content to nurture worry for days and days before we are willing to take it to the Lord. Those days we spend in worry eat away at our trust in God's ability. Those hours we spend in worry eat away at our trust in God's ability. Even minutes we spend in worry eat away at our trust in God's ability. Anxiety demonstrates to all our lack of faith and prideful desire for independence. As Christians we need God's love in a desperate way, but we spend so much time accusing Him or trying to cover for him, or running around Him that we never receive the confidence and strength that we need.

So what do we need in order to cultivate this heart of thankfulness? Begin by thanking God for the easy things. Take a few baby steps here. I don't have to look very far where I live to thank God for the beauty of nature. This unmatched beauty has been crafted just for me to enjoy by my Creator God and Father. I can Thank God for sending His Son to die on the cross for me and being my Savior. I can thank God

for the family that he has given. For the food on my table and a dry roof over my head. When life goes flat and there is not one bone in my body that feels thankful. I can still go back to scripture and thank Him for His abilities that I so quickly forget. Psalm 7:17 “ I will give thanks to the Lord because of His righteousness”. I may be having a terrible day but does that mean that God has somehow stopped being righteous? No I may not have the strength at that point to thank God for the difficult day itself but I can always thank Him for His righteousness, His holiness, His grace, His lovingkindness, His mercy, His patience, His goodness, His love and that will help keep my soul on track and away from the paths of worry and bitterness and resentment. When I thank God for God it helps me to break away from my relatively small world and set my mind on the things above. I am led to the rock that is higher than I. For in Thankfulness I find a surprising refuge in Him. Practice giving thanks by staring with giving thanks to God for the easy things.

Next step is to begin to thank God for the ways He has used the things in the past that have been difficult to build us up in the faith and make us stronger. Worry proves our own forgetfulness. We so quickly forget to remember the ways that God has come through in the past and how there has been some really, really tough things in the past and yet looking back we can see how God has used them as a forging tool of character and strength in our lives. I think back at the painful experiences in my life and I would want to go through them again, but I can see how God has used them to forge character in me that I wouldn't dare be without today. And so I can thank him for the struggles. He may have not provided in the way we expected...but we look back and realized that father knows best. He will provide if were seeking to go his way. Don't blame God for the mess ups you created by trying to make it work on your own. God's way is best...but it requires that we travel down the road that God has paved for us. We don't care how things worked out in the past...we are worried about this week! We forget the many things he has brought us through because they are no longer the crisis that the new things are now. We forget.

Perhaps its too hard right now to thank God for the struggles you are going through right now, but you can look back and say, “God you really did help me through that difficult time in high school. You really

matured me through that business failure. You really did open my eyes to some things I needed to know about you and myself when that relationship failed. God I can see that you provided for me in the midst of that great loss. You were there and so I can say thank you for how you have helped in the past. I'm going to trust you with my present.

I think the antidote for anxiety is found in cultivating a thankful heart. A thankful heart must recognize the danger of not being giving thanks. We certainly don't want to rob God of Glory and short circuit spiritual growth. I can start by giving thanks to God for the easy things. Thanking God for who He is; His righteousness, His patience with me. I can take the next step by thanking God for how he has used difficult things in the past to shape me and build me up stronger in the faith. Its then I can take the next steps of beginning to thank God for what He is doing through the hard things in my life today, right now. Remember there is a difference between thanking God for the difficult things and thanking God in the difficult things. What's the difference? When we combine the verse "giving thanks in all things" and Romans 8:28-29 "And we know that God causes all things to work for the good of those who love him , who have been called according to His purpose. For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his son." Don't miss this. This is key here. It is God's will that we be conformed to the image of his son. Any circumstance. Whether it's a pleasant one or a painful one can be used by God to shape into me the character of Christ. That is what God uses circumstances for to shape me to look a whole lot more like Jesus Christ. That shaping process that God is doing in each believer is what we can be thankful for.

The rub? Its when my purpose for me is different then God's purpose for me. It going to take a whole lot more then a glib "Oh thank you God for whailing on me right now" Go for it. I will grit my teeth and take it. No. It requires some soul searching effort to understand what God is trying to work into us. Pray God what are you trying to forge into me. Please let me know and even if I never understand or if it takes ten years to understand I affirm that you are God and love me and know whats best for me and I want to stay in your development program. Steve Largent admitted he didn't wished his son didn't have spina bifida and suffer so. Yet the character traits of humility and surrender come

alongside as coworkers with a heart of thankfulness and help us keep on track toward learning more of God. I can't thank God for the death of my mother. But I can thank God for relieving her pain. I can thank God that He has given me one more thing in this world that makes me eager for heaven where I will see mom again and I can shake her hand firmly not worried about the ravaging affects of Rheumatoid arthritis.

Lets look at the remedy or worry **the antidote for anxiety**. When worry comes knocking on the gate of your mind..respond in prayerful thanks. Look at verse 6. "but in everything...not just the big things. ALL things" in prayer and supplication in requests. Whether you are just plain worried about life in general or a specific area is causing you worry...take it to God! How are we to take it?...with thanksgiving! Anxiety is a futile spinning of wheels...all it does is wear out your bearings.. Requests made to God with a thankful heart get somewhere...it does something. While worry says.."I've got to do something....I've got to do something. Thanksgiving says "God can do something..God can do something". He has come through in the past I'll trust Him for this week. I'll be looking to see how He will provide. The antidote to worry is to fold more thanksgiving into your life. That will take practice for all of us. Thanksgiving is a discipline and it takes practice Phil 4v.9 Learned of me. I must consciencly choose to dwell on the good things, on the high-qualities of my heavenly father. On the things that are true and right and excellent and praise worthy. It may even help to pray these prayers of thanksgiving out loud so that my own mind can hear the words of thankfulness. It may help to arm yourself with a few verses that challenge us to thankfulness. I've always been amazed at the power of the Word of God to renew my mind and redirect it to the right perspective. Heres your assignment for this week. Memorize Phil 4:6-9. If you feel like you are going to be needing some heavy duty work to tool your mind to thankfulness. Memorize Ephesians 5:18-20 "Do not be drunk with wine but be filled with the spirit speaking to one another in psalms and hiyms and spiritual songs singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." One of my moms favorites Colosians 3:15 "And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts. To which indeed

you were called in one body and be thankful” There are a number Psalms that exhort us to thankfulness. Read them meditate on them.

Paul here recognizes that there are plenty of reasons for us to grow anxious. But He also knows that it is good and right to direct concerned care not toward our own ability...but to God. These feelings of concern ought to be a fuel to kindle prayer in our lives. Worry should develop a heart of prayerful thanksgiving to God. I think that those who are most prone to worry should become the greatest prayer warriors. Transform that temptation to worry into fuel for thankful prayer. Isn't it interesting how God delights in taking our weakness and turning it into a strength? Stomp on the evil one's attacks by using the temptation to worry as a fuel for giving thanks to God. (examples)

While an anxious heart is a forgetful mind, A thankful heart has an excellent memory. Thanksgiving is expressing gratitude for a favor done. You are impressed by the kindness you've received and your ready to acknowledge it. I think of the hundreds of kindnesses you people have shown to me and my family this past year...I can only say thanks. We are very grateful for everything. That's what I like about thanksgiving. It's a chance to remember back. To think about the many things we have to be thankful for this past year. A thankful heart has an excellent memory. This many of you have remembered the many ways, small and big that God has been kind to us, and blessed us. Be thinking of what you may want to offer in thanksgiving. A thankful heart has a good memory and is able to remember that the same God who came through in the past has the ability to come through this week. A thankful heart goes directly to God and places bold confidence in His ability.

Read with me verse 7. "And the peace of God which surpasses all comprehension ..shall guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. A thankful heart sets peace to guard the heart and mind. Who are you going to set in place to guard your mind this next week? Are you going to place worry at the door or thanksgiving standing there to guard. Now worry is going to let some interesting things come into your mind. It will welcome in frustration. It will open the door to criticism and nit-picking. It allows negativism and discouragement, agitation, depression and pride. But if you choose to allow thanksgiving to guard your mind...peace will stand there right next to him. There is nothing like

peace to guard your heart and mind. It will let in confidence and encouragement. It gives a big hug to patience and faith. Joy and love get a wide open door when Thanksgiving and peace are guarding your mind. Are you prone to worry? What are you going to choose? The antidote is right here in God's word. Give thanks for everything. Prayerfully with memories of past blessings...directs your concerns to God. Lay them on His.

A thankful heart is not based on circumstances. There are plenty of things that could give us worry. A thankful heart comes from love for a God who has blessed us beyond belief.

Stand and sing together "Give thanks"

Grab the hand of one standing next to you as we sing "Blessed be the tie that binds"