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Breaking Free from Worry

By Matthew Black

How do we break free from sinful worry and start living a life of peace and joy in the presence of God?

First, we must recognize the fear/anxiety exists.

My people perish for lack of knowledge.

—Hosea 4:6

Recognize that those fearful thoughts are not your thoughts. You are being harassed by the devil.

For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.

—Ephesians 6:12

Ask God “where is this fear/concern coming from?”

But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth.

—John 16:13

Ask yourself, “what am I wanting?” We have to go below the surface level fear and get to the desires of the heart (Jas 4:1-10). I do what I do and feel what I feel because I want what I want. Why am I afraid? What am I afraid to lose? Is it earthly comfort, reputation, or something else? Give that to the Lord. Idols cause fear. Trusting God brings peace.

Counter the fear/worry/anxiety with the truth of God's word.

For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing of soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.

—Hebrews 4:12

Preach that truth to yourself every time you are tempted to go back into worry, fear, or anxiety.

So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.

—Romans 10:17

Trust God to handle your situation and thank Him ahead of time for His answers. Walk in his peace.

Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need and thank him for all he has done. —Philippians 4:6

Resist the devil and refuse to be distracted by his harassment. Walk in self-control and perseverance.

Giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, 6 to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, 7 to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love. 8 For if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9 For he who lacks these things is shortsighted, even to blindness, and has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins.—1 Peter 1:5-9

So humble yourselves before God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

—James 4:7

Commit to be controlled by the word and not your feelings. Do the daily work of mind renewal by walking in the word. It's not enough to just learn the Bible or read it. You have to walk in it and practice it. One way to do this is the heart of change journal. Here is an exercise to do when you feel any of the toxic emotions.

Put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, 23 and be renewed in the spirit of your minds 24 and... put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness. — Ephesians 4:22-24

Learn to walk in the word and not in your feelings.

Real transformation begins with mind renewal. We put away fear by putting on trust in God. We put away anger by putting on a submitted spirit before God. We put away depression and despair by recounting the promises of God and reigniting hope. We put away worldly pleasure by finding delight in the Lord, his word, and his people. Look at the exercise below to see how to defeat sinful emotions.

Heart of Change Journal

Identify the idol indicator: anger, fear, despair, worldly pleasure, or escape.

What am I wanting so much that it is making me worry, etc.?

What does the word of God say about my situation, my response, and my source of joy in light of the gospel?

What should I want?

How ought you to repent? Instead of _____ I need to put on _____.

See God as larger than your problems. He is in control and working them for your good and his glory.

Greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world. —1 John 4:4

And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. 29 For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son. —Romans 8:28-29

Verses to memorize for worry

For God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control.

—2 Timothy 1:7

Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. 7 And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. —Philippians 4:6-7

