

Freedom from Worry

Mark 4:35-40 (KJV)

35 And the same day, when the even was come, he saith unto them, Let us pass over unto the other side. **36** And when they had sent away the multitude, they took him even as he was in the ship. And there were also with him other little ships. **37** And there arose a great storm of wind, and the waves beat into the ship, so that it was now full. **38** And he was in the hinder part of the ship, asleep on a pillow: and they awake him, and say unto him, Master, carest thou not that we perish? **39** And he arose, and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm. **40** And he said unto them, Why are ye so fearful? how is it that ye have no faith?

When I was thinking about this message, I had to ask myself, “What is worry?”

Per Dictionary.com, Worry – to torment oneself with or suffer from disturbing thoughts; to harass by repeated biting or snapping.

I thought it was interesting that the word worry means to harass by repeated biting or snapping. That’s the same way I would describe an animal attacking another animal. While I hadn’t thought of the word in that fashion, it is an apt description.

When wolves hunt in a pack, they rarely attack an animal all at once. Instead, they surround it and attack in waves. For example, one wolf would bite the leg, and as the prey turns its head towards it, the next wolf would bite its other leg, and so on and so forth. A huge elk can literally die from worry; the constant biting of the wolf pack can take it down.

We can become like that elk if we aren’t careful. Thoughts can surround us and nip at our heels. Once we turn to address one thought, the next one comes and attacks us from behind.

Our thoughts can surround and torment us; keeping us so occupied that we can’t run away. These thoughts keep us occupied until we are eventually so exhausted that we are defeated.

As part of my job, we must think about all the ways that a computer system can be attacked or rendered useless. We call it “contingency planning.” We think about all the things that make a system work, and then we try to think of ways that it can be undone. We look at each part in the system and ask ourselves, “What happens if this part breaks?” and “How can we make this part break?”

We call each way of attacking a system an “attack vector.” The collection of all attack vectors is called an “attack surface.” We evaluate a system by the number of its attack vectors.

A few years ago, this church had several of its monitors stolen. A group of us got together and tried to figure out how they got in the building to steal the monitors.

We are going to play a game of “find the attack vectors”. If you were outside, what are all the ways that you can come up with to get into the church building?

Unlock the door with a key. Break a window. Push an air conditioner out of a window. Cut into the roof. Dig a tunnel. Hide in the building when it is open.

Once you have recognized the attack vectors, you need to mitigate against the risk that they will happen. One of the things that we need to be cautious about in business is getting into the never-ending mindset of worry. I have seen companies that would never act on any business plan, because they were constantly looking for false precision in their analysis. They were always looking for the next nugget of information. They were looking for ways that things could go wrong. We call it, “Analysis Paralysis.” When a company gets into analysis paralysis, it spends so much time analyzing a business opportunity that the opportunity passes.

The best course of action is to analyze the situation, mitigate the risks, and then move on.

We have another phrase in the business world that says, “Don’t try to boil the ocean.” Don’t try to solve all your problems at once. Another way of saying that is the ask the old joke, “How do you eat an elephant?” “One bite at a time.”

When you are looking at the attack vectors in a computer system, you don’t try to solve all the problems at once; you solve them one at a time.

When you are analyzing the attack vectors in your life, don't try to solve all your problems at once. Attack the problems one at a time.

One of the things that they teach you in martial arts is that you don't attack a group of people all at once. Instead you put yourself in a position where they must come at you one at a time. By taking out your enemies one at a time, you divide them up and make them easier to conquer.

When Joshua attacked the city of Ai, he didn't attack the city all at once; instead he lured them out into the field where he could attack them individually.

Joshua 8:15-17 (KJV)

15 And Joshua and all Israel made as if they were beaten before them, and fled by the way of the wilderness. **16** And all the people that were in Ai were called together to pursue after them: and they pursued after Joshua, and were drawn away from the city. **17** And there was not a man left in Ai or Bethel, that went not out after Israel: and they left the city open, and pursued after Israel.

The men of Ai ran after the men of Israel, but they didn't go out in an ordered army; then went out as individuals. As individuals, you have some people who can run fast while others who are slower. Thus, they didn't run across the field in tight formation after Israel, they were all spread out across the battlefield. While they were outside the gates, Joshua sent attackers into the city and set fire to it. Some of the men of Ai saw the fire and started to turn around and run back to their home.

Joshua lured the men of Ai into a valley where they were trapped on 2 sides. Then Joshua turned around and attacked from one end of the valley while the other part of his army attacked from the other end of the valley.

Joshua didn't try to attack the men of Ai all at once; he got them spread out and attacked them one at a time.

Worry is not Fear

Having fear of something can be good. Fear can keep you out of danger. Fear can make you stay away from something that can-do harm to you. But when fear

causes you to stop doing the things that can help you then it becomes a problem. Worry is when you are so consumed and tormented by fear that you are unable to do something productive.

Fear can lead to respect. I respect electricity, because I fear being electrocuted. I know what electricity can do so I treat it with respect. Many children, however, don't realize what the electricity can do. They don't know that they should fear it.

As a result, electrical outlets can be a danger to children. We must put plastic covers on the outlets to keep the kids from sticking bobby pins into the outlet. They haven't learned yet that electricity is something that should be respected. A few years ago, my kids and I were riding in a boat. As part of the fun on the boat I would take the boat and let off the throttle to let the boat sink down into the water, then I would turn the wheel and gun the engine. That combination would make the boat dig down into a sharp turn. After a while we decided to take turns driving this little boat. I let my son Joel take the controls. He gunned the engine and got it up to a good speed. Suddenly without warning he did what I thought I had done and whipped the wheel to one side. Unfortunately, he had not slowed down first, but instead turned the boat at full speed. Cara and I went flying off the boat and began to skid along the water.

We both had our life jackets on, so we were fine. I did lose my glasses, my cell phone was ruined, and my lungs were full of water, but we were only about 50 feet from shore so we were fine. Just then my daughter got it in her head that the fish were going to bite her feet. She started to panic and tried to climb on top of me. This caused me to be pushed down into the water. Suddenly, I was in a very real danger of drowning. I pushed her off me and yelled at her in the meanest voice I could muster.

Why did I yell at a girl who is scared? Because her fear turned into a problem. Her fear wasn't protecting her from danger, but instead it put me into danger. To break that cycle, I needed her to be more afraid of me than she was of the fish. I broke her out of this cycle of fear and got her to concentrate on swimming back to the boat. She was more afraid of me than she was afraid of the imaginary fish biting her feet.

Psalm 111:10 (KJV) The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom: a good understanding have all they that do his commandments: his praise endureth for ever.

Sometimes we get into a trap of being fearful of all the things around us. Rather than using that fear to avoid problem, the fear itself becomes a problem. Those are the times when the Lord needs to step in and force us to be more afraid of Him than we are of our fear. We get caught up in our fear of dying, fear of being hurt, fear of losing what we have... The fear turns into worry: a constant torment that is nipping and biting at us. The fear takes over and we are suddenly paralyzed by it. The fear is no longer something that can protect us from danger; instead the fear itself becomes a problem.

At that moment, the Lord steps in and says, "Look at me!" There are times when the Lord needs us to be more afraid of Him than we are of our fears.

Matthew 10:28 (KJV) And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.

Sometimes when we are being irrationally controlled by fear, the Lord needs to make us more afraid of Him than we are of our fears. We need to be more afraid of destroying our soul than taking our life.

We are all on the earth for such a short time. We are like a fog, foam, or a vapor. A fog seems like it should have some substance to it, but the moment that the sun comes out it burns the fog away. Likewise, our lives seem like they should be important, but when the light of Jesus shines on our lives every one of our accomplishments fades away in comparison.

When we fear the Lord, we learn what it is that we should be afraid of. If we understand just how short and insignificant our lives are compared to eternity, we realize that it doesn't matter whether we die at 1, 13, 30, or 130; they are all miniscule periods of time compared to eternity. In the end, the Lord is much more concerned about your eternal soul than he is about this temporary body. No matter what we do, this body will eventually wear out.

Don't be overly concerned about the cancer that can destroy your body. Don't worry about the boss who can take away your job. Yes, have a respect for those things and avoid them if you can; but in the end, we need to be more concerned about the things that change our eternity.

Why are you So Fearful?

In my opening scripture, it says,

Mark 4:40 (KJV) And he said unto them, Why are ye so fearful? how is it that ye have no faith?

Keep in mind that these men were fishermen. They lived their lives on boats. They know how to handle a boat in rough water. They had respect for the weather. They knew what to be afraid of and what not to be afraid of.

Jesus doesn't ask them, "Why are you afraid?" Fear can be good. Fear can keep you safe. But Jesus asks the, "Why are you SO afraid?" That word indicates that their fear got a hold of them. Their fear had begun to paralyze them and possibly cause them to make bad decisions. Their fear; their worry had become a problem. That is when Jesus put the Fear of God into them (literally) by speaking to the waves.

Mark 4:41 (KJV) And they feared exceedingly, and said one to another, What manner of man is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?

Jesus did the same thing to these men that I did to my daughter: he made them more afraid of the one who could command the sea than they were of the sea.

The problem wasn't that they were fearful; the problem was that they were SO fearful.

The Lord comes to us and says, "Hey, look at me!" We need to remember that we are not here on this earth to keep our job. We are not here to survive cancer. We are on this earth to save our soul. We are here to save our kid's souls. We are here on this earth to seek and to save that which was lost. Everything else is just fluff; fog, foam, mist.

We need to do the job we were tasked to do and give everything else to Jesus.

Marriage in Cana

In John chapter 2, there is the story of Jesus turning water into wine:

John 2:3-5 (KJV)

3 And when they wanted wine, the mother of Jesus saith unto him, They have no wine. **4** Jesus saith unto her, Woman, what have I to do with thee? mine hour is not yet come. **5** His mother saith unto the servants, Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it.

Mary shows us how we should deal with the worry and the fear in our life. She doesn't ask Jesus what he is going to do. She certainly doesn't tell him how to solve the problem. (Many times we are guilty of going to Jesus in prayer and telling Him how he should solve our problem.) Instead, she puts the burden on him and walks away.

Mary had a job to perform at the wedding, but the lack of wine was keeping her from performing her job. Mary could have run down to the wine store herself and bought some more wine, but that would have distracted her from her other duties as hostess of the wedding celebration. Instead, she took the problem to Jesus, said "Solve this however you want," and then she walked away. By placing this burden at Jesus' feet, she freed herself from the worry of the wine.

Jesus has given each of us a job as well: we are to spread the gospel to the entire world. We can't afford to be distracted by other things. We can't afford to allow a healthy fear to turn into an unhealthy worry that paralyzes us and keeps us from our task. We need to be like Mary and take those worries to Jesus, leave them at his feet, and walk away.