

Do you know what the #1 addiction in the world is? WORRY! Max Lucado writes: “Would he who gave his Son not meet our needs? But still we worry. We worry about the IRS and the SAT and the FBI. We worry about education, recreation, and constipation. We worry that we don’t have enough money, and when we have money we worry that we won’t manage it well. We worry that the world will end before the parking meter expires. We worry what the dog thinks if he sees us step out of the shower. We worry that someday we’ll learn that fat-free yogurt is fattening.”

In Matthew 6:25ff Jesus tells us that worry is useless. It cannot add a year to our life, an inch to our stature or a hair to our head. He asks that we consider the lilies of the field or the birds of the air, how they neither plant, toil nor reap and yet God provides for them. And we still worry.

Paul has a simple solution to our worry—the prescription is prayer. “*Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving present your requests to God*” (4:6). However, there are a couple of steps along the way. The first is one that Paul has mentioned at least twice before in this short letter to Philippi (2:2 and 3:15, 17)—we need to get along with one another!

Can you image these two women hearing their names mentioned as Paul’s letter is read to the congregation? Our adult Sunday school lesson this morning asked the question about what type of legacy we are leaving. These two women, Euodia and Syntyche are leaving a legacy of not getting along. Their legacy will not only be known to the congregation in Philippi but to the entire church throughout history. And, can you image the horror on the face of the man Paul mentions as the one to bring these two women together (the Greek is difficult here and so there are several options concerning his name). However, Paul knows that if the church is to go forward it must be united in a common vision and differences must be worked out in order for the congregations of Christ to move forward. Thus, the first step is to “get along with one another.”

Paul’s second step is to learn how to be thankful. We need to be thankful for what God has accomplished in our lives. We have just celebrated Thanksgiving and we have all stopped and been thankful for a few moments. As we were having dinner on Thursday, we also celebrated the upcoming 5th birthday of our youngest grandson (he is five today). He blew out his candle and then whispered his wish and we had to pass it around the table. His wish was—he was thankful that we all could spend Thanksgiving together!

Paul spends much of each day in thanks giving. We want to ask, “But Paul, how can you be thankful? You are a prisoner of Rome. You are chained to a Roman soldier 24/7. You have no freedom. You can’t even go the bathroom alone. How can you be thankful?” Paul is thankful for each new day. For each opportunity to witness and proclaim the living Christ. He is thankful for what he has, not for what he wants. God’s very presence in life is a cause for thanks giving. Pray with thanks giving for what God has done and what God promises to do is Paul’s admonition of us.

And then, think on these things. What is.... Let your mind focus on those things that are true, etc. (Look at these today in relationship to God)

Our God is true – God loves you. Sign at the Lutheran church down 56th Street: “If you are looking for a sign that says God Loves You—this is it!” Wish we had thought of that! But that is the truth of the Gospel...God loves us!

Our God is Honorable – we cannot fully imagine the depth of God’s love.

Our God is Just – God is not swayed by outside influences.

Our God is Pure – God’s very nature is love, 100 per cent love.

Our God is Pleasing – Our God is responsible for our joy.

Our God is Commendable – There is none like our God.

Our god is Excellent and Praise worthy – God is the only one worthy of our praise.

In other words, think about what God has done, is doing and has promised to do. Think on God’s faithfulness. Think on these things, the positive things in life. This keeps our minds in a frame of praise and adoration and we don’t have time to dwell on the negatives: to worry.

But we do worry. You know, the “what if...” syndrome. What if this or that happens. Isn’t it true that most of what we worry about never comes? It is also true that worry can paralyze a person from enjoying life, from doing things. It would have been easy to stay inside in the Philippines and not go out. I mean it was, in some cases, a different language and then there was the transportation system. To get from one place to another was a major challenge. There was some bus service but most was by jeepney (a jeep with a long truck bed attached) – and these were not always in the best running order. I have more tread on my head than most of their tires (we learned not to look). And occupancy – yes they had a number on the side, but this was usually double or tripled. And some would tie benches on the roof so passengers could sit on the roof! I was brought home from a church meeting one evening with no lights – well they worked when the driver saw another vehicle approaching, but the alternator was not working and to use the lights would run down the battery. So we traveled a major road in the dark!!!!

Now I am not picking on the Philippines, this is true throughout most of the so-called “third” world. When we were in Thailand we read the story of the American ambassador’s wife who had to go by public transportation one day. She got on the bus and was quickly overwhelmed by the number of people and animals (chickens and pigs) getting on. She writes that they quickly overfilled the inside, hung on the sides and lay on the roof. She was aghast at what was happening...surely this is not legal. Suddenly she saw a police officer running toward the bus frantically waving his hands. “Now she thought, this whole matter will be set straight!” The problem: the bus’s license plate was upside-down!!!

We can have a life full of “what...ifs” and not live at all.

Paul writes to us that we are to think of the good things, those things that are pure, honest and good. Paul is in a position to complain. He is jailed falsely; there are no real charges against him. His life has not been easy since he became a

Christian. Listen again as he writes to the church in Corinth about his endeavors (II Cor. 11:24ff): *“Five times I received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, I spent a night and a day in the open sea. I have been constantly on the move. I have been in danger from rivers, in danger from bandits, in danger from my own countrymen, in danger from Gentiles; in danger in the city, in danger in the country, in danger at sea; and in danger from false brothers. I have labored and toiled and have often gone without sleep; I have known hunger and thirst and have often gone without food; I have been cold and naked.”* (NIV)

Paul is not the companion you want to have on a leisurely cruise. He gets kicked out of towns, left for dead and harassed at every turn. He could dwell on these things but he chooses not to.

Paul would rather think of the good times, the things that happened, the good people who have become a part of his life.

I remember when Lydia came to faith.

I remember when I first met Priscilla and Aquila and we worked together.

I remember when I found Timothy and he joined me in ministry.

I remember when Luke and I journeyed to....

Paul remembers the celebrations of life, the people who touched and assisted him in ministry. He remembers how God has moved with him and been with him in all aspects of his life. Let us remember the good times and how God has been faithful.

It is easy to dwell on what might happen. Most of us worry about things that never happen. We worry when God is control—we must learn to trust the pilot. Charles Swindoll tells about falling in love with Harley Davidson motorcycles – later in life. Both he and his wife sought this new adventure together. He writes, “I know, I know..it doesn’t fit our image. Who really cares? We stopped worrying about our image years ago. We should be ashamed of ourselves. We aren’t. We’re having a mutual mid-life crisis? We hope so. We should be better examples to our youth? They love it! Actually, it’s only a few crotchety adults who don’t..We are having more fun than anybody can imagine..It’s about breaking the bondage of tunnel vision...It’s about refusing to live my life playing one note on one instrument in one room, and finding pleasure in a symphony of sights and sounds and smells...It’s about widening the radius of a restrictive and demanding schedule where breathing fresh air is sometimes difficult and thinking creative thoughts is occasionally next to impossible..It’s about entering into a tension-free, worry-free world..”

Or, it is about thinking about the joys of life, the boundless beauty of creation, the joy of experiencing, new things, new people, new places..it is about being all we are called to be in God’s image and seeking the highest with God at our side. And worry? Let’s just laugh and move on to see what new adventure God has around the next corner of life and ministry!

Lucado, Max, [Experiencing the Heart of Jesus](#), Thomas Nelson, Nashville, 2003 (p.142)

Swindoll, Charles, [Laugh Again](#), OMF, Manila, 1992 (pp191-3)