

“Let’s Be Real”

Lamenting that there are only so many hours in the day to devote to his various stresses, local sales manager and father of two Dale Humphrey told reporters Friday that he continues to have difficulty striking a proper work-anxiety–life-anxiety balance.

“It seems like I’m always so busy dwelling on the countless dilemmas that come up in the office that I barely have any time to stress over the problems facing me at home,” said Humphrey, 38, noting that the demands of worrying about work leave him precious little time to worry about his family, health, and finances. “I mean, most weekdays I’ll stay late agonizing over whether I’ll be able to meet my quarterly sales target, so when I get home I barely have enough energy to obsess over whether we’re saving enough to put Ryan and Jessica through college.”

“I just wish I had the time to freak out about both my job and my personal life without feeling like I’m neglecting the other,” Humphrey added.¹

That’s a little satire from America’s Finest News Source, *The Onion*. But it caught my attention because it’s clever. It caught my attention because it’s funny. And yes, it caught my attention because it’s also kind of real. We all worry. I know I do.

To be honest with you, I dreaded, not only preparing this sermon, but preaching it. You want to know why? Because I’m a pastor with five children ages 23 down to 4. One is married, working and living in Phoenix. One is in college in California. One is in high school, one’s in middle school, and one’s in pre-school. **I worry.** My wife worries. We worry about money, our children’s well-being, our well-being, our parents, cars spread out all over the place, our house, society, the future. And I worry about many of you who are facing so many uncertainties and pains.

But then I started to really think about the role worry actually plays in my life. Does it get me anywhere? No, it doesn’t. It only forces me to live in this twisted maze of future

¹<http://www.mbird.com/2013/10/from-the-onion-man-still-trying-to-find-right-work-anxiety-life-anxiety-balance/>

scenarios, 95% of which never come true. I mean, I can't tell you how many times I have actually worried myself sick, trying to answer those "what if" questions, which in the end, never needed to be answered, because the thing I was worried about never happened. And then I started to think about how worry shades my awareness of the present and my ability to actually enjoy the gifts that God surrounds my life with each and every day. But, reluctantly, and I'll admit, even ashamedly, I still do it. **And so do you.** So, as this sermon series on worry and trust comes to an end, let's just be real. Worry is something all of us experience. And I'm not here to give you some good advice on how to deal with it. You don't need to come to church for that kind of stuff; you can get that anywhere.

But I am here to give you a Word from God. And this means everything, because you are in Christ. Let me say that again. You are in Christ. So no matter what you are worried about or experiencing, know that whatever it is, none of it is ever beyond the reach of God's grace. So again, let's just be real beginning with a brief passage from Psalm 55 (printed on the front of your bulletin).

"Cast your burden on the Lord, and he will sustain you" (Psalm 55:22a). Cast your burden on who? The LORD! Remember him? He's the one who stepped in and fixed everything that we messed up. He stepped into the suffering world and suffered in the person of Jesus Christ. He is the only one who provides any comfort, any assurance in a world of worry, because He bore our griefs and carried our sorrows all the way to death on the cross. I'm that guy! Cast your burden on me, he says. Throw it all on me. "I will sustain you."

We are to give him our worries and leave the result with him. Period. We are to pray prayers like, "Heavenly Father, you are my Lord who created me and redeemed me through your Son. You have placed me where I am in life and things aren't going that great. I am worried. So I give everything to you. Help me." You see prayer is nothing less than proof that God's people are alive. It puts us in a place of dependency. It reminds us who is actually in control.

This isn't to say that whatever worrisome situation we are in will turn out the way we want it if we pray enough. But as our epistle reading from Romans promises, "He works all things together for our good." We struggle to trust this, I know. But because of his great love for us, he will work out our situation. To quote Tim Keller, founding Pastor of Redeemer Presbyterian Church in New York, *"God's answers to our prayers are exactly*

what we would have asked for if we knew everything that he knew." And so we trust in him.

And we heed the words of Jesus: *"When you pray, don't heap up empty phrases...for your Father knows what you need before you ask him"* (Matt. 6:7-8), he tells us. Prayer is not an attempt to manipulate God. We pray remembering that this privilege is a life and attitude of continual dependence and trust in our creator, redeemer, and sustainer.

Even still, when it comes to worry, we put prayer off more than any of us want to admit. And when we do, what are we really saying about our relationship with God? That we are able to bear it ourselves? That we have sufficient power and wisdom to actually be in control? That he is our last resort after we've tried everything else? My friends, as God Word in Philippians reminds us, you and I are to *"Rejoice in the Lord always. We are to be anxious about nothing, but in everything by prayer, we are to let our requests known to God trusting that His peace, which surpasses all understanding, will guard our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus"* (Phil. 4:4-7).

Isn't inward peace what all of us really desire apart from the inward turmoil we bring upon ourselves by worrying? Isn't the peace of God in Christ Jesus so much better than the twisted maze of future scenarios we make up in our minds that rarely come true? Isn't the fact that God is at hand granting us his forgiveness through our faith in Christ and giving us his eternal peace so much more comforting than our constant questions of "what if?"

So let's be real. What are you worried about? I shared with you a few things that worry me, but everyone's situation is different. Is it a pain of the past? Is it a fear of the future? Is it your health, your family, your finances, your business, or your job? What is it that's robbing you of the hope Christ gives you, and even the happiness that the security of his love can bring? What is it that you have tried over and over to handle on your own with no success? Put some thought into this. Identify what worries you the most, and then cast your burden on the one who loves you so much that he gave his life on the cross for you. Give your worries to the one who defeated death and rose again for you, trusting that if he can do that, he can surely take your worry and empower you to make it through no matter what. Give it up, and when you don't have the right words, trust that the *Holy Spirit helps you in your weakness and he intercedes for you* (Rom. 8:26). But you have to give it up.

And you have to keep at it because this topic of worry and trust is not something we can just talk about for 4 weeks and have it all figured out. We will still be tempted every single day to deliberately keep God at arm's length. We will still be tempted to be our own person. We will still be tempted to rebel and keep our worry to ourselves.

So we have a choice. We can fill our minds with things we can't change about yesterday or tomorrow like the fictitious Dale Humphrey I mentioned at the beginning who said, *"Even when I do have a wide-open weekend to just kick back and worry about my parents' deteriorating health, most of the time I'll feel guilty that I'm not stressing over our company's budget shortfall."* Or we can fill our minds with the things of the Lord and trust Him who said, **"Cast your burden on me; I will sustain you."**

So let's be real. For those saved by grace through faith in Jesus, the answer should be obvious. To God be the glory. **Amen.**