

A BIBLICAL STUDY ON FEAR
LESSON SEVENTEEN: BANISH WORRY

by Sandy Harber

"Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." Philippians 4:6-7

As I study what the Bible has to say about fear I'm surprised to find that only 2 of the 37 Hebrew and Greek words translated "fear" mean "anxiety." In my mind "worry" or "anxiety" is a mild form of fear, whereas "dread" or "terror" are more extreme forms of fear. It's all a matter of degree.

Worry is a common ailment that seems to plague all of us. There are several familiar Bible passages that address this subject. One is Philippians 4:6-7. Verse 6 starts out "be careful for nothing." The Greek word "merimnao" is translated "careful" in the King James Version. We don't use the English word "careful" in quite the same way they did in the 1600s and 1700s. Modern versions of the Bible generally substitute "anxious" here in this verse. The Greek "merimnao" means "to have a distracting care." Worry certainly is distracting. When we are worried about something it consumes our whole mind. We find it difficult or impossible to concentrate on anything other than what we are worried about. Worry robs us of our time and productivity to the point that we can't do our job properly. Worry robs us of peace and sleep. It is a foe that we need to defeat.

God commands us to be anxious for nothing. The Greek word translated "nothing" here expresses absolute denial. It is an entirely negative term, just as "no," "never," and "not" are. It is not permissible to have a distracting care about anything or anyone. Scripture is adamant about what we are not supposed to do.

So what are we supposed to do? Verse 6 goes on to tell us how to handle "every thing." The Greek word translated "every" is the positive opposite of the negative "nothing." "Every" is all-inclusive; it is the total; there are no exceptions. There is no loophole to fall through. We may not worry about anything. Instead we must take everything to God.

How is this accomplished? Through prayer, supplication, and thanksgiving. These three used together format a proper communication with our Heavenly Father. Prayer should begin with adoration, an attitude of worship, and acknowledgement of His majesty. Jesus taught His disciples to pray by providing an example or template to emulate. He began "hallowed by thy name" (Matthew 6:9), thus expressing reverence for the holy name of God.

After acknowledging the greatness of our God, we move on to the "supplication" portion of the prayer. This is where we humbly make our specific requests known to God. Does He already know what we want? Of course He does. But putting our requests together in an articulate manner forces us to think about what we are asking and examine our needs and motives. It clarifies the situation in our minds. And, with our request we include thanksgiving. By thanking God for allowing us to bring our requests to Him we are showing our reliance on Him. By thanking Him for the answer to our prayer before we even receive that answer we are demonstrating that we have complete faith in Him. We trust that He will answer our prayer and that whatever the answer is it is the right answer. We trust that God knows what is best for us in every situation.

The result of this process is peace. Imagine that! Instead of worry we have peace! Our hearts and our minds are at rest. That is, our emotions (heart) and intellect (mind) are blissfully quiet. The peace of God is applied to the two areas of our lives that create worry: our hearts and our minds. This is God's formula for banishing worry.

"Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you." I Peter 5:7