

SET FREE!

July 2010



LIVING CAREFREE

There was a very popular song that came out a few years ago, by Bobby McFerrin, that went -

“Don’t worry, be happy.” It was a great tune, but unfortunately the song never told us *how* to do it.

The world’s cure for stress and worry is to “get away from *it all* for awhile” hence the term, “summer vacation”. To vacate the situation you are in now and to take a vacation. The only problem with that is that when you get back to *it all*, you start worrying again. The problems are still there.

In Mark 4, Jesus talked about **“The cares of this world.”** According to Him, the cares of this world do more than make you stressful, they also have the ability to keep you from bearing fruit as a believer.

Let’s look at what Jesus said:

Mark 4 (KJV)

¹⁸ *And these are they which are sown among thorns; such as hear the word,*

¹⁹ *And **the cares of this world**, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things entering in, choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful.*

Mark 4 (MSG)

¹⁸ *“The seed cast in the weeds represents the ones who hear the kingdom news¹⁹ but are overwhelmed with worries about all the things they have to do and all the things they want to get. The stress strangles what they heard, and nothing comes of it.*

That little thing called “*the cares of this world*” is a serious matter. The NIV says, “*the worries of this life.*” Young’s literal translation says, “*the anxieties of this age.*”

To be quite simple, what Jesus is talking about here is **fear**. He is speaking of the force of fear operating in the human life. This is possibly the biggest challenge any believer must overcome to ultimately see the Word of God bear fruit in his or her life.

This is Satan's first and primary strategy. His first effort will be to choke the Word out by employing the force of fear. This is why, more than any other single factor, fear dominates most of humanity's decision-making processes.

Fear of failure, fear of rejection, fear of loss, fear of not having enough, fear of this and fear of that.

The problem is, most people don't really call it fear. They're more likely to call it something more benign such as "worry" or "concern."

We say, quite defensively, *"Oh I'm not really worried, I'm just concerned."*

Call it what you want, but if you chronically worry, you're not going to see much of the fruit of God's Word in your life.

"C'mon Ray," you may be thinking, *"A little worry is okay. After all, who, in this world we live in, doesn't sweat a few things?"*

Yes, the world certainly views it that way. It will even tell you a little worry is a healthy thing. *"Keeps you from making a stupid mistake,"* we're told. What deception! The truth is, worry, anxiety and cares are nothing but the product of fear working in the human heart. And it's a deadly force.

A Deadly force!

You cannot receive anything from God when fear is present. Why? Because the cares of this world will choke out the fruit of God's Word. And you can be assured that Satan will labour to generate that fear in your heart. He will work overtime to bring you the kinds of bad reports or negative circumstance that tend to generate anxiety within you. And until you learn to pluck that weed out of your heart, it will be difficult to receive the ultimate manifestation of your faith. God's Word won't be able to produce much fruit.

The Counter-force to Faith

Fear works on the same spiritual principle as faith. It is actually the enemy's perversion of faith. Both work on the principle of heart belief.

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What you believe in your heart is paramount in every area of life. The Bible says nothing is impossible to them that believe. So, if you believe the wrong thing, it works in that direction just as effectively as when you believe the right thing.

For as [a man] thinketh in his heart, so is he. (Proverbs 23:7)

When you're thinking and believing that which is consistent with the Word of God, that's called faith and it will unfailingly produce the promises of God and the fruit of the Word of God.

Conversely, if you believe the wrong thing — if you believe one of the world's false ideas — then the evidence of that will be fear instead of faith, and it will produce what you believe.

That's exactly what Job acknowledged when he said, *"that which I greatly feared has come upon me."* (Job 3:25)

You cannot allow fear to go un-dealt with in your life. (And usually where there is worry, there is also a little murmuring and whining and complaining that should be addressed as well.)

If those things are in evidence, you don't need to look any further for your problem. You have found the reason why the Word doesn't seem to work for you.

You have to get rid of this "weed" called fear.

The Cure for Worry

Put plainly, the spiritual antidote for fear is the love of God.

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We find this truth in this verse, where the Word tells us:

1 John 4 (MSG)

¹⁸ *There is no room in love for fear. Well-formed love banishes fear. Since fear is crippling, a fearful life--fear of death, fear of judgment--is one not yet fully formed in love.*

When you think about it, this truth is a logical one. We know that faith and fear operate on the same spiritual principle of heart belief. Fear is nothing but Satan's perversion of faith and it is present when you choose to put more confidence in the enemy's power to bring evil things into your life than in God's power to bring blessing.

We also know that *"faith worketh by love."* (Galatians 5:6) Therefore, if faith only works by love, then love would tend to make fear inoperative.

John also reminds us that *"fear is crippling."* That's true isn't it? There is no kind of mental anguish that compares with fear.

The KJV translation of that verse reads: *There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love.*

Notice how it said, *"He that feareth is not made perfect in love."*

The Greek word translated *perfect* doesn't mean "flawless." It simply means "mature." Or as the MSG said, *"not yet fully formed."* We're being told that when you come to a place of maturity in the love of God, there will be no more fear in your life.

Love is the spiritual antidote to fear.

Walking in Love

The key to keeping the fruit of God's Word from being choked out of your life is to become mature in the love of God.

Many people see the word "love" and automatically think in terms of human feeling or emotion. That's not the kind of love I'm talking about. It has nothing to do with feeling.

The Greek word translated "love" in First John 4:18 is *agape*. It's the God kind of love. It is the kind of love that gives. It is the same word used in John 3:16 which said: "*God so loved [agape] the world that He gave.*"

This kind of love is identified by its selfless giving, regardless of whether somebody deserves it or not.

It's a willingness to give of your life selflessly to someone else's need. It is becoming mature in this type of love that casts out all fear. *Let me say that again:* It is becoming mature in this type of love that casts out all fear.

This is the definition of the kind of love that we have to be perfected in or matured in if fear is not going to have a foothold in our life.

The question then becomes, what does it require to become perfected or matured in this kind of love?

It requires a paradigm shift — a change in the way you view life.

If you've ever met someone that has died, perhaps during surgery, and they came back to life - you'll find that they have a change in their view of life. They see and think about life differently.

That's what we need to do too. We were crucified with Christ, and now we are resurrected to a new life "in Him". This new life gives us a new view on how we live our lives.

Most people are the centre of their own universes. Left to our own natural tendencies, you and I will be the centre of our concern. We fall into the "my needs," mentality, physically, emotionally, relationally and financially, which consume our attention.

But when you have a **paradigm shift** that brings you to this place of walking in love, you suddenly find that you're not living for yourself anymore. You live your life as a resource to God, who can use you to meet someone else's need.

He may use your time, your prayer life, your spiritual gifting or your money. He may use your natural gifts and abilities. In a thousand different ways, God wants to use your life as a resource to meet human need.

**And when you see that as your primary reason for existence,
you'll find that you have been made perfect in love.**

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Of course, this isn't a place people come to easily or naturally. It is diametrically opposed to the nature of your flesh. We live in bodies of unregenerate flesh that constantly remind us of what our wants and cravings are. But if fear isn't going to have a place in your life, you have to come to a place where your view of life is "I'm not in this for me. I'm a resource to God. Everything I am and everything I have is available to address the needs of others."

If we're going to be made perfect in love... if we are going to be conformed to the image and example of Jesus... we are going to have to cultivate a willingness to give all that we have to meet human need. That means, above all, making our resources available to get the Gospel preached and dispersed. In simple terms, telling others about Jesus.

That could involve a number of things. It could involve just getting plugged into the church or volunteering in children's ministry or it may mean going out on the streets to share your faith.

However it manifests, it means getting your life oriented toward the idea of serving others' highest need — their need for the life and love of God.

Three Keys to a New View

I think there are three principal contributors to having this kind of paradigm shift.

The first primary contributor is a constant fellowship with God.

When you spend significant amounts of time fellowshiping with your Heavenly Father, you begin to gain His heart about these things. You begin to see the world through His eyes instead of your own. Jesus said it this way, *"live in me, making yourself at home in me."* Let's look at where He said that-

John 15 (MSG)

⁴*"Live in me. Make your home in me just as I do in you. In the same way that a branch can't bear grapes by itself but only by being joined to the vine, you can't bear fruit unless you are joined with me.*

⁵*"I am the Vine, you are the branches. **When you're joined with me and I with you, the relation intimate and organic, the harvest is sure to be abundant.** Separated, you can't produce a thing. ⁶*Anyone who separates from me is deadwood, gathered up and thrown on the bonfire. ⁷But if you make yourselves at home with me and my words are at home in you, you can be sure that whatever you ask will be listened to and acted upon.**

When you live with a conscious awareness of **His abiding presence**, along with the awareness that you are **"in Christ"** then His heart will begin to become your heart. There will be an impartation of His life and His Spirit to you that will begin to enable you to see things differently. This isn't just an intellectual change you make. It's something that begins with your connection with God, your being "in Christ."

Without being aware of your “in Christ” condition, you can never become matured in the love of God. You’ll strain and grunt and groan to produce a little love fruit, but you’ll fail every day.

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To discover the **second major** contributor to the kind of shift in your view that enables you to begin a life of serving others, you need to go back to:

1 John 4 (MSG)

¹⁶ *We know it so well, we've embraced it heart and soul, this love that comes from God. God is love. When we take up permanent residence in a life of love, we live in God and God lives in us.* ¹⁷ *This way, love has the run of the house, becomes at home and matures in us, so that we're **free of worry** on Judgment Day--our standing in the world is identical with Christ's.*

Look at that again: ***our standing in the world is identical with Christ's.***

Why is it identical with Christ? Because we are “in Christ.”

It's not enough just to have an intellectual understanding that God loves you.

You must have a supernatural enlightenment of His love for you.

This is important because, as we've seen, your ability to love other people is directly related to the revelation you have of God's love for you. **You can't give somebody else something you don't have.** And to the extent you know and believe the love God has for you, you'll be **set free** to love other people.

This is where I think the biggest part of this shift in how we view life begins. When you are absolutely grounded in how much God loves you, you're not going to be worrying about yourself. You'll be able to focus your attention on other people, because you know He's going to take care of you.

Sometimes we're so aware of our shortcomings and weaknesses it's hard for us to realize just how special we are to God.

He will never leave you. Never forsake you. Never give up on you. And when you realize this, you're **set free** to love other people, because you don't have to worry about yourself anymore.

You don't have to sweat your relationships. You don't have to sweat what's going on in the news. You can forget about you, and begin concentrating on other folks.

The Final Key

The third and final change of perspective that allows you to be perfected in love is the one that gives you endurance.

Endurance.

It involves choosing to love people who hate you. It involves continuing to give to someone who slaps you in the face every time.

How can you love someone who spits in your eye or mocks your faith? It is the highest test of being perfected in love. Jesus warned us and has equipped us where this challenge is concerned.

John 15 (MSG)

¹⁸ "If you find the godless world is hating you, remember it got its start hating me. ¹⁹ If you lived on the world's terms, the world would love you as one of its own. But since I picked you to live on God's terms and no longer on the world's terms, the world is going to hate you. ²⁰ "When that happens, remember this: Servants don't get better treatment than their masters. If they beat on me, they will certainly beat on you. If they did what I told them, they will do what you tell them.

This is the way you keep giving to people you don't even know and who may dislike you and intend you harm.

How do you sustain a lifestyle of giving under this kind of scenario? By walking in the power of God's love as we read in First John:

1 John 3 (MSG)

¹³ So don't be surprised, friends, when the world hates you. This has been going on a long time. ¹⁴ The way we know we've been transferred from death to life is that we love our brothers and sisters. Anyone who doesn't love is as good as dead. ¹⁵ Anyone who hates a brother or sister is a murderer, and you know very well that eternal life and murder don't go together. ¹⁶ This is how we've come to understand and experience love: Christ sacrificed his life for us. This is why we ought to live sacrificially for our fellow believers, and not just be out for ourselves.

Jesus laid down His life for us, thus enabling us to "understand and experience" the love of God. That's why we can love and serve a world that hates Him and us.

Make these three adjustments to the way you view yourself and the world.

- 1. Have constant and consistent fellowship with the Father.**
- 2. Be constantly aware of your "in Christ" position.**
- 3. Walk in the power of God's love.**

Live like this and you'll soon find yourself being matured and perfected in love. Then, and only then, will all fear be cast out of your life.

With the fear gone, you'll be living carefree.