

Every Little Thing Is Going To Be Alright

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"Therefore, do not worry about tomorrow for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own." Matthew 6:24

Someone close to me smoked cigarettes for over ten years. She started as a college freshman, smoking socially when she was out with friends. She said she never would have imagined that ten years later she'd be smoking several packs a week. The shame of it affected her relationships and self esteem. She tried everything from gradually cutting down, to patches and gum. She even tried prescription medication. Nothing worked, and the prescription drugs had adverse effects on her mental health. She felt powerless and became anxious. One morning, desperate and overwhelmed, she prayed "Lord, please help me to not smoke today." And He did. The next morning, she prayed the same prayer. And the next morning. And the next. Years later, she still has not smoked. By focusing on just the twenty-four hours before her, she was able to quit smoking for good.



Now, smoking cigarettes is a powerful addiction. The method my friend used might not work for everyone. Some people need nicotine replacement therapy, prescription drugs, or therapy to help kick the harmful habit. That is not an indictment on their faith, their will power, or anything else. Often, our bad habits and anxiety go hand-in-hand.

What inspires me about my friend is that she took her distress to God, and then she focused on her goal, one day at a time. She didn't look ahead or worry about how she would face tomorrow.

In today's culture of busyness, we plan, replan, and overplan. We have lists and agendas, and know what we are going to be doing weeks in advance. There is always something coming - vacations,

mission trips, weddings, college visits, medical procedures, empty nests - things we look forward to and things we dread. Some of us, in an effort to plan for every contingency, create scenarios we think we might encounter. We worry and regret.

Then we go about solving problems that haven't even surfaced. We worry about the interruptions of our well-laid plans. We imagine medical diagnoses, accidents, job losses, or other perceived failures. We can become so preoccupied with the worry of what might be coming that we lose sight of the present. We get so caught up solving all our problems that we lose sight of God's hand in our lives.

Our worries are valid and realistic. They might even come to pass. But Matthew 6 instructs us not to be concerned with tomorrow because each day has its own troubles. We are to seek Him. He knows what we need and He will provide.

Corrie Ten Boom said, "Worry does not empty tomorrow of its sorrows, it empties today of its strength." Scripture agrees. Proverbs 12:25(a) says "Anxiety weighs down the heart." Being chronically burdened and weighed down is exhausting. We can become weak with what ifs, when we are called to be strong in our belief that God has us.

What should we do instead?

1. Pray when we are feeling overwhelmed or anxious, yes. But 1 Thessalonians 5:17 instructs us to never stop praying. It goes on to tell us to rejoice in all circumstances. If prayer becomes our habit, then confidence becomes our posture, and celebration is the inevitable response. Instead of letting fear dictate our emotions, confidence in Christ does.
2. If you've been in church long enough, you have heard the phrase "Take your thoughts captive." I always picture one of those cartoon thought bubbles, capturing my negative thoughts and then, POOF, exploding them. It's not that easy in real life. But 2 Corinthians 10:5 instructs us to actively combat doubts and knowledge that goes against God's teaching. The only way to do this is to seek Him, and know Him by being regular, active consumers of His Word.
3. Submit our destiny to God. I love the verses in Jeremiah 17:7-8 that tell us, "But blessed is the one who trusts the Lord, whose confidence is in him. They will be like a tree planted by the water that sends its roots by the stream. It does not fear when the heat comes; its leaves are always green. It has no worries in a year of drought and never fails to bear fruit." I want to be *that* tree!

Reflect:

- Is there a habit you want to break or a goal you would like to obtain that you can take one day at a time?
- What might happen if you stopped to pray every time you caught yourself feeling temptation or worry? Commit to trying it.

Dig a little deeper:

- Do an internet search to find all the scriptures that address breaking bad habits. Write them down and meditate on them when you feel tempted.
- Do an internet search to find all the scripture that address worry/anxiety. Write them down and meditate on them when you feel overwhelmed.

REFERENCES

New International Version Bible, www.biblegateway.com