

Worry list or prayer list

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There's a lot of worry going around. The threat of war in Iraq has been unsettling. Concern about biological and other forms of terrorism grows with the talk of war. Share prices are falling; gold and oil prices are rising. Many people are anxious about the future. And along with global concerns are the everyday fears and worries about personal health, finances, safety.

For some people, worry is just a part of modern life. It comes with the territory. Some even believe that they're "born worriers" – that it's a tendency that they inherit, a genetic trait. My neighbor thinks it's her job to worry. Her husband wants her to stop. She says she can't. Living with a worrier can be hard. My father was a great worrier, and he expected all of us in the family to worry right along with him.

I have to say that anxiety, pessimism, and negativity once seemed pretty normal to me. When I read *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures* by Mary Baker Eddy, however, I found that the book taught me how to pray effectively. And it convinced me that worrying about things is not part of our spiritual identity.

Obviously, worry is a state of mind – a state of thought. It amounts to a chronic state of fear – fear that we or someone or something we care about may not be safe or well. This fearful thinking is limited and restrictive.

But there's good news – we can get rid of fear. Fear is not given by God, is not part of His creation. So it's actually foreign to us. It's not something we're born with. And we don't have to live with it. When I feel anxious, I remind myself that I am the calm, spiritual reflection of God. I don't have to worry, because He is taking care of me. This is "proactive spiritual thinking," or prayer, and it has a powerful healing effect.

Sometime ago one of my family members was very ill. I was scared. Each day I prayed. I asked God what I could say to her to help her. Soon, these words came loud and clear to me: "Why are you worried? God will give her an answer of peace."

Suddenly I realized that I had been trying to resolve my loved one's health problems all by myself. I had been feeling responsible. But a comforting message came to me as I prayed. I knew the ideas coming to me were coming from God – that this was an "angel" message. The message went something like this: "Your dear one is in divine Love's care. God is maintaining her health. Trust God to care for her." So I did. She recovered completely. Later I learned that she, too, had prayed and found comfort and peace. This ended the illness.

I've found that putting our concerns on a "prayer list" instead of a "worry list" is a practical help. The ideas that come from God in prayer counter thoughts of worry, and they give us strength. They can carry us *through* tough times. They also help us find solutions to problems – something that worrying can't do.

My husband, David, and I saw this work a while back. After 20 years as a schoolteacher, he decided to change careers. He applied for many different jobs, but was turned down each time. It seemed that his abilities and expertise were only in teaching. He worried. I worried. Finally we decided we had to stop worrying and instead turn to God in prayer for guidance.

The idea came to make a list of all the qualities and skills that had become part of my husband in his experience as a schoolteacher. When we did that, we saw that those God-given abilities, such as communicating effectively, being thorough and well organized, and using initiative, were applicable to other fields.

Soon after this clearer thinking had replaced our worrying, my husband saw a job advertisement in the newspaper for an administrative position with a city government in the Brisbane area. He felt strongly that he should apply. He was interviewed and took a typing test, which he failed. A couple of weeks later he was called in to do some consultancy work for this same council. But the assignment ended. No job again. So we kept praying instead of just worrying.

Then the council rang and offered David the position of economic development officer. At the interview my husband asked, frankly, "why me? I have no qualifications in economic matters." The human resources manager replied that they weren't looking for specific qualifications. "It's the qualities you have – those you expressed as a teacher. That's what we want," the manager said.

This experience showed me once again that worrying – being fearful about our health, finances, or future – is simply dead-end thinking. It's counter-productive. On the other hand, seeking God's direction and trusting in Him to provide answers bring peace of mind, healing, resolution.

When we're facing danger, we have a choice. We can be afraid, or we can turn to God. We do have the power to stop fear from taking over. My mother learned to do this when both my brother and I were in Vietnam during the war there. She told me that at first she was worried and scared that we might be harmed. But daily prayer helped her defeat that intense fear, she said. Each day she listened to God for comforting ideas and guidance, and this actually helped her remain calm. She told me she stopped being afraid altogether over the months we were there. And we returned home safely.

We are all safe in Gods' care. God, who is infinite Spirit, is everywhere, always. He shields us and protects us. And prayer helps us feel His presence and comfort, no matter what the headlines are saying about the world we live in. We can take the world off our worry list and put it on our prayer list. These prayers will ultimately diminish and destroy fear. And they will help us, and others, find real peace and safety.