

THE WORRY THAT WEAKENS US

A friend of mine once told me of an object lesson his youth pastor gave at a summer camp. After lunch one day, he asked each student to find a tiny pebble and drop it into one of their shoes. (Being in the days before Merrell, Chaco or any other sport sandal, the only option for closed-toe shoes for camp were trusty tennis shoes.) Those pebbles remained in their shoes all afternoon – through recreation time and while going back and forth between activities. Students would stop to shake their feet, grumble at the annoyance or walk with an unnatural pace to avoid dealing with the discomfort of the pebbles.

At the worship gathering that evening, the youth pastor taught on the topic of anxiety and explained how a little worry could create major disruptions. Relief came when the students were told to remove the pebbles and think on the worries that might be causing spiritual disruptions in their lives.

We often attempt to deal with worry by our own means, but Paul connects our prayers to the elimination of anxiety: *Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus* (Philippians 4:6-7). When we cast our concerns upon God (1 Peter 5:7), we find that he is more than able to handle our problems, and he frees us to live by faith that he is in control.

Are there any “pebbles in your shoes” that you need to lay before God?

Prayer prompt: Read Matthew 6:33-34. Ask God to show you what your major worries and anxieties are at this moment. Pray that God will help you to seek the things related to his kingdom first and trust him with your concerns.

*Anxiety in a man's heart weighs him down,
but a good word makes him glad.*

- Proverbs 12:25

*Casting all your anxieties on him,
because he cares for you.*

• 1 Peter 5:7

If you do catch yourself worrying even after you've done what was wise, remember that God is bigger than our problems, and that he wants us to hand them over to him. Worry then becomes a signal alerting to us that it's time to pray. Any time you hear the alarm start to blare, stop. It's time to stop worrying and start praying.

- Craig Groeschel