

How to Surrender Control to God

A STUDY RESOURCE FOR *WORRY-FREE LIVING*

TEMPTED—Identifying Soul-Robbing Traps

The temptation to worry and the stumbling blocks of anxiety and fear have touched my life, too. Here's how I have been trapped:

Here's why giving up control is so hard for me:

I'd like Jesus to help me with ...

TESTED—Learning How to Break Free

What research confirms about worry and fear:

A growing number of Americans are now battling anxiety, worry, and fear on a daily basis. In fact, most of us engage in fearful self-talk on the spur of the moment, and our catastrophic dialogue usually begins with two words: *what if*. Any anxiety we experience in anticipation of confronting a difficult situation is manufactured out of our own what-if statements to ourselves:¹ “What if I fail?” “What if I can't handle the task?” “What if I lose my job, my family ... my life?” Just noticing when we fall into catastrophic thinking is the first step toward (1) surrendering it to God, and (2) overcoming this soul-robbing choice.

A Proven Path:

- (1) *Give up control*
- (2) *Engage God-centered self-talk*

Hiding God's Word in our hearts coupled with prayer are the keys. And, as Michael demonstrated in this chapter, we can counter fear and catastrophic thinking by reminding our brains of God's truth.

What Christ-Followers Are Telling Us:

The minute I find myself overcome by worry and fear, and giving in to anxiety and negative self-talk, I stop and pray. And then, with God's help, I diffuse the anxiety: "Live in truth. Trust Jesus. He is in control, not me. He will get me through this." I even recite verses like Galatians 2:20.

TRUE—Charting a Path Toward Change

1. **RECEIVE** God's Word—Read or listen to Romans 8:28-39
2. **REFLECT** on verses 38-39—Pull them apart sentence by sentence, looking for God's personal message to you. Invite the Holy Spirit to speak to you.

For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Engage in a conversation with God. After a moment of silence before the Lord, write out a dialogue between you and Him. *Begin with general thoughts and impressions ...*

- "Heavenly Father, here's how I feel about these verses ..."

- "Here's what's hard for me, God—what I don't understand ..."

Now relate these verses to your specific struggles ...

- "Here's what Romans 8:28-39 is telling me about defeating stumbling blocks like anxiety, worry, and fear ..."

- "With your help, Lord, here's how I'll try to let go and surrender my life to You ..."

3. **MEMORIZE** Romans 8:31-32—Repeat it to yourself as often as needed. Write it on an index card and post it within sight.

If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?

4. **LISTEN** to a friend—C.S. Lewis tells us this about giving up control and surrendering our will to God's will: "The almost impossible thing is to hand over your whole self—all your wishes and

precautions—to Christ. But it is far easier than what you are trying to do instead. For what we are trying to do is remain what we call ‘ourselves,’ to keep personal happiness as our great aim in life, and yet at the same time be ‘good.’ We are all trying to let our mind and heart go their own way—centered on money or pleasure or ambition—and hoping, in spite of this, to behave honestly and chastely and humbly. And that is exactly what Christ warned us you could not do.”²

5. *RESPOND to God’s nudges*—Try this courage-building exercise:

- Stand in front of a full-length mirror and evaluate the person you see. As you study the man or woman in the mirror, ask yourself some questions: *Who am I? Is this the best me? Is there room for improvement? What can I change? What must I accept about myself? What must I let go of? What does God think of me?*
- Now consider all the other times you’ve spent in that very spot, sucking in your tummy, combing your hair, checking your physique—expending so much effort on your appearance so that maybe, *just maybe*, you’ll gain the acceptance of others. Now think about this:

Jesus knows everything about you, and yet He’s crazy in love with you. He died for you so you can spend eternity with Him; He wants you to love others—not fear them—the way He loves each one of us! (See 1 John 4:7-16.)

Jesus tells you to stop worrying about life. Let Him take care of the things that trouble you. (See Matthew 6:25-34.)

Jesus tells you to let go. He can be trusted; He will catch us and take care of us each time we fall. And, yes, we will fall. (See 1 John 5:1-13.)

- Next, ask yourself this question: What is one step I can take to begin worrying a little less tomorrow? Then tell yourself . . .

I can because Jesus set me free to live in wholeness, in fullness—because I’ve been given fullness in Him.

I can because God gives me permission to fail, and He gives me the ability to succeed.

I can because God is transforming me from “spiritual loser” to “spiritual winner.”

6. *PRAY*—Tonight, and anytime in the future, consider expressing this prayer by Dietrich Bonhoeffer:

“O Lord my God, I thank you that you have brought this day to a close;
I thank you that you have given me peace in body and soul.
Your hand has been over me and has protected and preserved me.
Forgive my puny faith, the ill that I this day have done,
and help me to forgive all who have wronged me.
Grant me a quiet night’s sleep beneath your tender care.

And defend me from all the temptations of darkness.
Into your hands I commend my loved ones
And all who dwell in this house;
I commend my body and soul.
O God, your holy name be praised. Amen.”³

Endnotes

1 See Bourne, 44.

2 C.S. Lewis, “Giving All to Christ,” *Devotional Classics* edited by Richard J. Foster and James Bryan Smith (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, © 1990), 9.

3 Dorothy M. Steward, *The Westminster Collection Christian Prayers* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, © 2002), 278.