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Casting Cares

Friday, January 13, 2012 | Written by Laura Z. Sowers

When I was young, Dad sometimes took me fishing. As I stood beside him on the bank of the stream, he would thoughtfully "read" the water: "There's a nice little pocket over there where the bank's been undercut by the current." After more study, he might say, "Downstream a ways there's a riffle. Old Mr. Trout just loves those sunny shallows."

Then, in hip waders and hat, with his fishing rod held to the side, he stepped through the rushing water and over the rocks until he steadied himself at the desired spot in the stream-bed. He was partial to the swirling eddies that formed behind a boulder or a tree fallen across the water. With the target solidly in sight, he brought the rod behind him and flicked it out before him like a bullwhip. The reel hummed as the line sailed through the air. Once the fly had settled, he pulled the web-like line until it fell in a cascade before him and then began slowly winding it back onto the reel.

As far as I was concerned, catching the fish was not nearly as interesting as the systematic approach to finding them and the dance of casting the line. Dad could fish for hours. His patience and faith seemed inexhaustible. Although he couldn't see what was happening below the water's surface, he trusted that the well-placed fly was doing its job and would eventually yield the reward of a fine rainbow trout.

In 1 Peter 5:7 we are told: "Cast all your anxiety on Him because He cares for you." In reality, casting our cares on Him is usually a much more haphazard than the thoughtful casting of a fisherman's line. Rather than a confident placement of our troubles that comes from a studied faith in the character of God, our efforts are more often a feeble toss of a heavenward prayer - one that seems to plop right back into our own palm.

While believers are quick to profess that Jesus saved them from their sins and secured their eternal future, they are often hesitant to express the same confidence about His ability to make a difference in their immediate circumstances. Our culture tends to regard the cynical worrier as a more intellectual individual than one who possesses a simple faith. So sometimes we worry and feel a little self-righteous about it.

I understand this because I was raised in an atmosphere that validated worry. There were subtle rewards when I looked at a situation in terms of possible problems, obstacles, and negative ramifications. If those worries left me too paralyzed even to try, then it was proof that it was a bad idea to begin with.

But when I became a believer, I had to reevaluate this approach to life. Worry had become a habit that was harder and harder to defend and to break. My worry masked some deep fears and also unmasked my lack of confidence in the God I professed to love.

When I first heard worry referred to as a sin, I - well - I worried. But I was also convicted and intrigued. Could it be that worrying was a symptom of my disobedience? Was I holding on to control? Was it possible I had never really made Jesus the Lord of my life? If worry was a symptom of half-hearted devotion, I wanted to change that and fully experience the peace that passes understanding. It became clear that it was one or the other: Faith can't exist in an atmosphere of worry any more than worry can exist in an atmosphere of faith.

The stakes of worry are deceptively high - it comes at the cost of peace and readiness to effectively serve and minister to others. Satan gives himself a high-five when he successfully turns us away from serving the Lord.

Recently I was asked to speak to a group of women. Public speaking is something I generally avoid out of the totally rational concern that I might spontaneously self-destruct while on stage. My immediate reaction was to say "no" and move on to some activity that was more comfortable - like knitting. But I decided to pray about it, and God made it clear that I should accept the invitation, speak the Word, and do the best I could. I later learned that two women received Christ as their Savior when I shared the gospel that morning.

Hebrews 13:8 says, "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever." What good news. Everyday I have to remind myself of some tough-love truths because I am a recovering worryholic.

Today is all we can handle so don't sweat tomorrow. (Matt. 6:34)

Obey. Jesus commanded us not to worry. (Matt. 6:33)

Dwell on the things of God. (Phil. 4:8)

Adore the One who adores you. (1Pet. 5:7)

Yesterday has passed - move on. (Phil. 3:13)

The intensity of our trial does not diminish His power any more than His love for us is diminished by our puny faith. He is the same God that created all that was created, defeated the unconquerable, provided forgiveness for our sins, healed the sick, raised the dead, and loved the unlovable.

When we cast our cares and fears upon Him, we aim at a mighty target: the cross of Jesus. Our problems and prayers are not too big or too difficult for God. And, while waiting for the answer to our prayer, we can recall the steady faith of the fisherman and know that Jesus is just outside of our field of vision working things together for our good.

No worries.