

From Worry to Watching

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Today's Treasure

Don't fret or worry. Instead of worrying, pray. Let petitions and praises shape your worries into prayers, letting God know your concerns. Before you know it, a sense of God's wholeness, everything coming together for good, will come and settle you down. It's wonderful what happens when Christ displaces worry at the center of your life.

Philippians 4:6-7 The Message

The phone call left me breathless. I knew God had just given me a glimpse of Him working behind the scenes in the life of a friend's child, a child for whom I regularly pleaded for the Lord to remember as His covenant child. A child raised by believing parents, a child pushing against the borders, a child rejecting a superficial faith. That one phone call comforted me, as though God was saying, "I've got this. Trust me." If I had not been praying, pleading for God's mercy, I might have missed this treasure, I might not have been watching for His touch, His presence. That moment reminded me of this post I shared a few years ago; a challenge to move from worry to watching.

I love how author Paul Miller captures this truth in his book, [A Praying Life](#): "When you stop trying to control your life and instead allow your anxieties and problems to bring you to God in prayer, you shift from worry to watching. You watch God weave his patterns in the story of your life. Instead of trying to be out front, designing your life, you realize you are inside God's drama. As you wait, you begin to see him work, and your life begins to sparkle with wonder. You are learning to trust again."

Prayer Lesson in Japan

Carol and I were tired but excited as we landed in Japan for a week of speaking as well as counseling military wives, missionaries and Japanese women. Our hostess was an older woman who exuded warmth, encouragement and most of all, Jesus. Before we began the first women's retreat, she gave us a tour of the simple but lovely missionary house, nestled in the side of a mountain. The more time we spent with this woman, the more Carol and I knew we were on holy ground.

When she invited us to hike up the mountain, assuring me I would be fine in spite of the soft cast on my healing broken leg, we eagerly piled into her old car, excited to soak up every minute of this strange land. We walked along a narrow pathway up the mountain, listening carefully as she pointed out altars and explained the meaning of

some of the idols. She described the spiritual darkness of the Japanese people who regularly made this trek for the purpose of praying to their idols. Her words and obvious passion for displaying Jesus in this spiritually dark land struck deep into our souls and framed our view of the military harbor below. She said she often came here to pray over the city, imagining Jesus overlooking Jerusalem and crying out, "Oh Jerusalem, Jerusalem... how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing...." We joined hands and prayed for the upcoming seminars, for each woman who would attend and for the harbor city below, pleading for the Holy Spirit to open hearts and minds to the Savior, to our Redeemer. We felt the presence of Jesus. Our journey back down the mountain was a little more somber as we considered the opportunities and privilege of sharing Jesus with needy women, knowing we would never forget those moments on sacred ground. But our adventure was not over.

Our elderly hostess kept up a stream of conversation, describing some of the women we would soon meet. As she inserted the key in the car ignition, she continued talking, but suddenly Carol and I realized she wasn't talking to us. She seemed a little flustered and was talking to Jesus, asking Him how to get home. She could not remember the way. Carol and I looked at each other, more than a little unsettled. This was before cell phones and GPS apps. We had no idea of where we were or even where we were going and we didn't know the language.

Our hostess started driving, talking nonstop to Jesus, asking Him which way she should turn, interrupting her conversation with Him to ask if we remembered this building or that garden or that sign... Well, no... I admit, when our hostess first started asking Jesus how to get home, I was a little unnerved. Actually, I was a LOT unnerved! What in the world had we gotten ourselves into? I was not in control, I could offer no assistance. I had to sit back and wait for Jesus to lead us through a foreign land to our home, and He didn't disappoint.

LIFE-GIVING ENCOURAGEMENT

As our time in Japan unfolded, Carol and I recognized we were in the presence of a woman who truly saw Jesus as ever-present, ever-interested in every detail of her life and ever-reliable. Our conversations included Him. She acted out what we said we believed - Jesus will never leave us, not ever. We wanted to be just like her when we grew up!

Her life exemplified the call of Paul to the Philippians:

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Phil 4:6 – 7 The Message

I need to watch more. How about you?