

“Tim writes like he preaches—from Scripture. Surely, if we’re going to find release from worry, we must find the One who is greater than us. Tim points us to him in this well-written, easily-studied book.”

**BOB INGLIS**, former Member of Congress

“This is the best book I have ever read on the frequently debilitating subject of worry. I started this book worrying about whether it would help me. But throughout the book, I found myself worshipping the Lord for who he is and what he does for his people... and, while worshipping, I found myself less anxious.”

**DR SAMUEL LOGAN**, Director, The World Reformed Fellowship

“In *Living Without Worry*, Tim Lane provides a unique combination of understanding and compassion for the many worries of life along with a God-focused, Christ-centered, eternal orientation. Tim offers every reader a robust diagnosis of worry and a heart-centered, biblical, and relevant prescription for replacing anxiety with peace.”

**DR BOB KELLEMAN**, VP of Institutional Development, Crossroads Bible College; author of *Anxiety: Anatomy and Cure*

“I worry. All my attempts to stop worrying have failed pitifully in the past, leaving me even more vexed, but finally there’s a book that can help break that cycle. Tim Lane gets to the heart of what worry is and why we all do it, and gently shows us a better, more biblical, way to live, saturated in the grace of the gospel. An accessible must-read for anyone who wants to begin the journey of worrying less.”

**HELEN THORNE**, Director of Training and Resources, Biblical Counselling UK; author of *Hope in an Anxious World*

“Timothy Lane speaks biblically and personally to our struggles with worry. I recommend this readable yet profound book to all who grapple with life in the midst of an uncertain world.”

**TREMPER LONGMAN III**, Professor of Biblical Studies, Westmont College, Santa Barbara, California

“Tim writes simply but not simplistically; with sympathy and yet without letting us off the hook. Whether you’re beset with worries or are seeking to help others who are, this is a great read. It probably won’t stop you worrying, but it will give you a framework for understanding it and some strategies for dealing with it.”

**RICHARD UNDERWOOD**, Pastoral Ministries Director, The Fellowship of Independent Evangelical Churches

“Tim Lane’s latest book is a classic! *Living Without Worry* is theologically robust, laced with wisdom, filled with the love and grace of God, and intensely practical. After reading it, I went through it again, making notes to share with friends and remember myself. We all struggle with worry; Tim has provided a strategy to help us grow spiritually through the experience.”

**BOB D. DUKES**, President and Executive Director of the Worldwide Discipleship Association; author of *Maturity Matters: The Priority and Process for Disciple Building in the Church*

“With great pastoral concern and a sharp biblical understanding of the problem, Tim Lane shows us how the Scriptures speak to the worries of our hearts. I will be using this book myself and recommending it to many.”

**SALLY ORWIN LEE**, Executive Committee, Biblical Counseling UK

“*Living Without Worry* tremendously helped me understand the roots, causes and effects of worry. It clearly addresses what the Bible says about overcoming worry and replacing it with peace and trust in God. I don’t know of anyone not affected by worry; may God help you conquer those worries as you read this book.”

**CLYDE CHRISTENSEN**, Quarterback Coach, Indianapolis Colts, 2002 – present

“Unlike some Christian books that can actually exacerbate the problem, this brief, grace-saturated book will help give struggling Christians guidance on how to address their tendency to worry. Relying mostly on Scripture, but open to the insights of contemporary science, this is well-informed, Christ-centered pastoral wisdom at its best.”

**DR ERIC L. JOHNSON**, Professor of Pastoral Care, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary; Director of the Society for Christian Psychology

“Worry is one of the greatest thieves in history. It robs people of their joy, peace, relationships and health. We all know we shouldn’t worry, but we still do. Timothy Lane addresses this head on with a helpful, biblical, and practical approach. Whether you worry a little or a lot, this book has the remedy!”

**DR RICHARD BLACKABY**, president of Blackaby Ministries International; author of *Experiencing God Day by Day*

TIMOTHY LANE

LIVING

WITHOUT



WORRY

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*For Barbara*

Living Without Worry: *How to Replace Anxiety with Peace*

© Timothy Lane 2015. Reprinted 2015, 2018.

Revised edition printed 2021.

Published by:

The Good Book Company



[thegoodbook.com](http://thegoodbook.com) | [www.thegoodbook.co.uk](http://www.thegoodbook.co.uk)

[thegoodbook.com.au](http://thegoodbook.com.au) | [thegoodbook.co.nz](http://thegoodbook.co.nz) | [thegoodbook.co.in](http://thegoodbook.co.in)

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Cover design by ninefootone creative

ISBN: 9781784987060 | Printed in India

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# INTRODUCTION

Jesus talks about worry. And before we look at what he said, it is important to understand the tone he uses as he speaks to you during your worries. So before we begin, I'd love for you to read Luke 12 v 32 out loud:

*Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom.*

This verse comes towards the end of Jesus' most extended teaching on worry. Now read it again:

*Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom.*

To understand the tone that Jesus uses here, let me take you back to when I was a parent with young children. It was not uncommon for one of our children (we raised four!) to awaken in the middle of the night having had a bad dream. They would come stumbling into our bedroom at 2 or 3 a.m., deeply afraid and sometimes crying. If you are a parent, I guess you can recall moments like these. Now, how do you think my wife and I responded in these moments? We did not say in a stern rebuking way, "Don't be afraid; go back to bed!" That would be a command but with little compassion! No! We would say something like this in a soft and soothing voice: "What's wrong? Are you having a bad dream? Are you afraid? Oh, I'm sorry. Don't be afraid.

Mommy and Daddy are here. It's going to be ok. Don't worry. Come up here and let me hold you." The difference between the first response and the second is not just in content but primarily in tone. And the second response is how Jesus speaks to us when we are afraid or filled with anxiety. It, too, contains commands, but it is laden with tenderness and compassion.

As you read the chapters of this book, keep this in front of you the entire way. Jesus is calling you out of your anxiety because he knows it is not helpful. He encourages you in your struggle to find safety. He creates the very safety you are so desperately seeking, and shows you how to turn to him in child-like trust. That is the goal of this book. Read it with these tender words in mind, even when the truths may be hard to hear. Why not say them one more time?

*Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom.*

# 1. WHY NOT WORRY?

*“I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear.”*

*“So do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’”*

*“Do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.”*

*Matthew 6 v 25, 31, 34*

So you picked up a book on worry, and at the very start of the very first chapter you find yourself hearing Jesus tell you not to worry. Perhaps now you are *really* worried! Do Jesus’ words comfort you or do they just make you more troubled? Was your response: “This is fine if you are Jesus, the Son of God, but not if you are me, a regular person with a myriad of things to worry about”?

It is tempting to dismiss Jesus’ command not to worry as unrealistic in today’s world, and unfair to expect of you. Everyone has worries, and everyone does worry; so how can Jesus expect you and me—in fact how can he *command* you and me—not to worry? Surely he was only talking of a simpler, agricultural age, not the complexities of 21st-century life? Surely he didn’t mean *all* worry?

And yet... this command from Jesus is clear and it is universal: “I tell you, do not worry”. What will we do with it?!

## **STRANGLER**

Jesus’ command may seem impossible to you right now; but wouldn’t it be great if it weren’t? The English word “worry” comes from an Old English word meaning “strangle.” “Anxiety” comes from an Indo-German word referring to suffering from narrowing, tightening feelings in the chest or throat. They’re actually very helpful words to describe the feelings of low-level worry and anxiety. I’ve not met anyone who doesn’t know how that feels, and while it may become a familiar companion in our lives, it never becomes a welcome one.

So wouldn’t it be great if there were a way to worry less, or in fact not to worry at all, in the midst of your struggles? What if Jesus really could enable you to fight anxiety in your life in substantial ways? Jesus’ teaching in Matthew 6, and the whole Bible’s teaching, was not meant to be a burden—to give you something else to worry about, so that you end up thinking: “Now I’m worried that I’m worrying!” No, as we’ll see, he does want to be honest about the world you live in, and give you liberating reasons not to worry. He wants to meet you in the middle of the complications and concerns of life with his goodness, mercy, grace and power.

Jesus wants you to deal with your worry. He wants you not to worry anymore. And he wants to help you with that. It’s worth asking: what is the alternative? It is important to see that not dealing with your worry has a significant impact on life. Here are a few effects of chronic worry on our bodies:

- Difficulty swallowing
- Dizziness

- Dry mouth
- Fast heartbeat
- Fatigue
- Headaches
- Inability to concentrate
- Irritability
- Muscle aches
- Muscle tension
- Nausea
- Nervous energy
- Rapid breathing
- Shortness of breath
- Sweating
- Trembling and twitching

Those are fairly low-level, and I imagine you recognize some of them from your own experience; but worry can also lead to more serious physical consequences:

- Suppression of the immune system
- Digestive disorders
- Muscle tension
- Short-term memory loss
- Premature coronary artery disease
- Heart attack

More importantly than all of this, though, is the truth that whenever you are struggling with any form of obedience, it is ultimately connected to your relationship with God. When you worry, you are not enjoying your relationship with God; you're missing a part of the joy and fullness that he promises to you.

In addition, worry will impact the way you relate to others. Worrying may appear to be an effective coping skill and it may

even make you “feel” safe, but it will not produce fruit in your life. You will find yourself not taking opportunities that God is laying in front of you, because you are trapped by worrying about what might go wrong. You may find yourself holding back in your relationships with others, failing to love people and serve them, because you are worrying about getting hurt. And as we have already said, you may find that worrying is affecting your ability to sleep or impacting your health.

## **WORRY DOESN'T WORK**

The truth is that worry doesn't work. It seems natural to worry, maybe even loving to worry—but it doesn't change anything. “Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life?” asks Jesus (v 27). Answer: *No!* Corrie Ten Boom, who sheltered Jews in German-occupied Holland in World War II and was then imprisoned in a concentration camp, knew more worrying circumstances than most; and she wrote: “Worry does not empty tomorrow of its sorrow. It empties today of its strength.”

It may not seem possible to stop worrying; but it would be a positive thing to stop worrying, wouldn't it? That isn't easy; facing your worries will require from you the cost of real honesty and some hard work... but not facing your worries will cost you even more.

But to start with, let's remember that the reason Jesus is teaching us to not worry is because he knows that there are a lot of things that it seems very sensible to worry about! He actually acknowledges that “each day has enough trouble of its own” (v 34)! Jesus never says that life has no troubles, or that we should not care about them. He knows there is plenty of trouble that demands our attention and, yes, our worry. Is it possible that the Jesus who tells us not to worry also understands our

plight more than we realize? I hope you will continue to read to find out.

## **THE WORLD IS A WORRYING PLACE**

It was September 3, 2001, around 9 a.m. My wife, Barbara, and I, along with our four children, were visiting some friends in New York City. We had made our way up the elevator to the top floor of the Empire State Building and were comfortably and safely perched there, looking out over one of the most amazing cities in the world. We could see Central Park to our north. To our east was Long Island. To our west was New Jersey. And as we gazed south, there they were: the Twin Towers. It was an iconic view.

Later that day, we returned home to Philadelphia, and went back to our normal routines. Several days passed, until it was September 11, 2001. Comfort and safety were not a feature of that day. And that iconic view was no more. The United States, and the world, would never be the same.

As I have reflected on that infamous day, I am often stunned by how close my family was to this attack. Just eight days separated us from one of the worst attacks in our country's history! I often imagine what it would have been like if we had been on the Empire State Building at the time of the attack. What if the terrorists had chosen a date eight days earlier, and an equally iconic building in Manhattan: the one my family was standing at the top of?

When I consider that day, I become anxious. I worry. Why? Because the world you and I live in is unpredictable, dangerous and unsafe.

Prior to 9/11, I lived with the illusion that the world was a rather safe place. After that day, my thinking radically changed. It took 9/11 to shake me out of my false sense of safety and it

caused me to become more anxious. For you, it may have been another day, and another event. Whatever it is, we all come to a point where we realize that the world we live in has many reasons to cause us worry.

See, once you start to think about it, there are all kinds of reasons to worry and struggle with anxiety. Over my many years of pastoring and counseling, I can say that there are countless people who struggle with worry because something difficult or even traumatic happened to them at some point in their lives. The memories are so clear that often things in the present can trigger those memories and cause them to spiral into a bout of anxiety. Life on this planet is unpredictable; cataclysmic tragedies, natural disasters, evil and accidents are happening all of the time. The surprising thing is not that there are a lot of anxious people in our world, but that there are not more! In one sense, to not worry seems to not be in touch with reality. The question isn't: "Why worry?" It is: "Why not worry?"

## **DAILY LIFE IS FULL OF WORRY, TOO**

Let's bring this even closer to home. Large disasters and traumatic things can happen at any moment; but there are also the daily, mundane details of life that give us reason to struggle with anxiety. Let me share another personal story about my family.

Four months before 9/11, in the spring of 2001, I received a letter with a job offer that would require moving our family of six from South Carolina to Philadelphia—an 800-mile move. I took the job. It was a move we were really excited about; but it was a move that we were really anxious about, too.

- We worried about telling the church that I had been pastoring for ten years. How would they respond? Who would be my replacement?



- We worried about our children. They were ten, seven, three and two. Our ten-year-old daughter was at a stage in her life where she was forming friendships at church and school. She was not enthusiastic about moving. Would she be OK? Were we doing the best thing for her?
- We worried about selling our home. Would it sell for a suitable price? Would it sell at all?! How long would it take? How much time and work would it take to prepare it for sale?
- We worried about buying a new home in Philadelphia. The cost of living was at least 30% higher than in South Carolina. The housing market was booming at the time and home prices were at their highest.
- We worried about finances and our budget. Could we afford it? How?

That was before we even moved! Once we reached Philadelphia, my worry only increased. I began to doubt whether I had made the right decision to uproot my family and leave a good job, nice house, friends and family. My anxiety turned into depression and I struggled with irritation, impatience and anger. I did not see it at the time, but my wife, Barbara, could tell that I was not doing well. It was not a good time.

## **WE ARE ALL WORRIERS**

Why have I started by sharing some of my own personal story with you? Because I want you to know that I am in the trenches with you. I have chosen to share a few of the more common experiences to show you that you don't have to be a victim of a traumatic abuse to struggle with worry. We are all natural worriers; and studies suggest that around 40 million Americans are *chronic* worriers.

I know that the details of my life may not be similar to yours. I understand that the examples that I have shared may not be similar by degree to yours. You may even think that I have lived a rather charmed life based upon what I have shared. But the experience of worry knows no boundaries of wealth, education, career or gender. Remember, minor surgery still feels like major surgery if you are the patient. What might seem minor to you may be major to someone else.

In addition, I want you to see that just because I am writing a book on worry, it does not mean that I have overcome the struggle. I am facing various degrees of anxiety even as I write this book. Ironically, it involves another move, a new job, children who are struggling to adjust and finances that are in flux! This is life in a broken, fallen world. What I hope you will see throughout the pages of this book is a real person who needs help. I struggle with worry. I am in this with you, and I need daily encouragement and help, just like you. Just writing this book was a means by which God worked in my life to help me face up to, and then face down, some of the things I tend to worry about.

It may be that you are reading this book as someone who is not a Christian, but who senses that just maybe there is something in the Christian message and perspective that holds the key to getting help for your worries. In that case, I believe you're right to sense that! And I hope you come to see that you're right as you read what the Bible says about your life, and your worries.

It may be that you are reading this as someone who does call yourself a Christian, but you're unsure what that means (if anything) for the whole area of worry. Or you know that your faith should make a difference to your reaction to circumstances

and that you shouldn't worry as much; yet just knowing that is not much use, as again and again you find that you are struggling with worry.

It may be that you not only struggle with worry like everyone, but that your struggle is as a result of something, or some things, that have happened to you in your past. It could be last month or many years ago. Depending on the severity of that event, your struggle with anxiety will be more intense. We will pick up on this cause of anxiety in chapter 4. But if this is you, then I want to say at the outset that the truths I point to and seek to apply in this book may not take your anxiety away completely; but they can begin to, and can enable you to continue with your life, loving God and serving others without walking under the burden of a constant or recurring crippling anxiety.

Whoever you are, since all of us know what it is to worry, this book is for *you*. Whether it is a relationship, a job, finances, sickness, loss, a season of grief, a traumatic event or anything else that has you worried as you read these words, my ultimate desire is for you to find, in relationship with Jesus, a new and renewed energy and resolve for the tasks and challenges that you are facing.

In the following chapters, you will be introduced to a perspective, truths and promises that have been and continue to be immensely helpful to me, and to many I have pastored and counseled over the years. As I wrote this book, real faces crossed my mind—faces of people who needed help and hope in the midst of deep worry. I was also reminded of how God worked in my life and in theirs to bring gradual but certain change into their lives. Sometimes, their circumstances changed; often, they did not. But one thing remained constant: God was present and worked in gracious and encouraging ways. It has been a privilege to walk with these people and to receive their encouragement as

well. My hope is that you, too, will gain insight into how God is with you and how he can help you grow. Growth is a process, often gradual, and never achieved by “Six easy steps to [fill in your desire here].” By God’s kindness and grace, change and growth are possible, even in something as ingrained and almost instinctive as worry and fear.

There are so many reasons to worry. Jesus knows that. After all, his life was not a walk in the park, but a walk toward execution. He lived in this world and faced the same struggles as us. He knows; he understands. And yet we return at the end of this chapter to where we started. In a world where there are so many things to worry about, Jesus was able to say:

“Do not worry.”

Wouldn’t it be wonderful if that were possible, and if Jesus were able to show us how it is? In the middle of a world of worry, that is what this book is about.

## **QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION**

1. What is happening in your life right now that causes you to struggle with worry? What do you tend to worry about in general?
2. Are there any events in your past that make you more prone to worry? If so, what are they?
3. When you worry, how does that impact the way you live, and how you relate to others?
4. What specific things (both positive and negative) do you do in order to deal with worry in your life?
5. Was there anything in this chapter that stood out for you, and raised questions that you had not had before?