

From the Editor



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KNOW *Prayer* KNOW *Peace*

I was listening to a podcast recently, and the preacher quoted Erma Bombeck. She was a little before my time, but I remember hearing about her. This caught my attention because it was focused on worry.

"I worry about scientists discovering that lettuce has been fattening all along," Bombeck wrote.

Pretty funny! I sure hope that doesn't happen. But this next one made me think.

"Worry is like a rocking chair: it gives you something to do but never gets you anywhere," she wrote.

I remember when I was a little boy, my mom told me that the doctor said, after doing whatever childhood tests they do, that I would grow taller than 6 feet. I thought that was cool and started looking forward to that day. Little by little, I grew, but at a certain point, I stopped—short of the predicted height. I kept waiting and wondering and, yes, even worried about it. I thought a growth spurt was bound to come. But it never did.



You know, Jesus mentioned this in the sermon on the mount when, in Matthew 6:27, he said, “Can any of you add a single cubit to his height by worrying?” I can personally testify that the answer to that is definitely NO!

Another version reads, “Can all your worries add a single moment to your life?” The master teacher, of course, nails the point.

But how can we fight against the all too easy and prevalent sin of worry? If Jesus tells us not to worry as He does a few verses later in Matthew 6:34—“Therefore, do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own”—there must be something we can employ to stop it.

And there is. The answer is actually found in Paul’s letter to the Philippians, which centers around two things: prayer and thanksgiving.

“Don’t worry about anything, but in everything, through prayer and petition with thanksgiving, present your request to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:6-8).

Did you know a recent National Institutes of Health study (November 2022) entitled, ‘Unpacking the Relationship between Prayer and Anxiety,’ found that just the very **act of prayer** has been found to lead directly to lower heart rate, reduced muscle tension, and slower breathing rate? Isn’t God so good to give us a blessing in the very act

of prayer on top of the answers that come from Him? Not only is it spiritually healthy, but it’s also physically healthy and restoring.

But it doesn’t stop there. When we combine praying with thanksgiving, the true peace—peace that passes understanding—comes along and sets up a guard outside our hearts and minds.

Charles Billingsley, the teaching pastor at **Thomas Road Baptist Church** in Lynchburg, recently preached about this topic. He shared three points that bring this home:

- Anxiety cannot exist where there is gratitude.
- Worry and worship cannot inhabit the same space.
- The more grateful you are—the less anxious you are.

This is the very reason why the SBC of Virginia is focusing on prayer. We know that prayer is not just important; it is essential. And when we pray with thanksgiving, we see God move in our communities, our churches, and in our hearts. Throughout the first two months of 2024, we have held pastor prayer gatherings in every region of Virginia. Hundreds of people have attended these prayer gatherings. We pray hundreds more will come to future prayer meetings.

And we know, by faith, that by making prayer a priority, we will see God move in ways we’ve never seen before. Now, that’s more exciting than even growing to 6-feet tall! ■