

MASTERING WORRY

Week #2 of a 2-Week "Mastering the Mind" Series

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Rev. Richard Rogers

Rev. Richard Rogers: Okay, so I've been doing this series on mind mastery. And the whole idea that I said last week is this idea that our mind has a tendency to get out ahead of us. Right? That we tend to be kind of so focused on what we're thinking that sometimes it doesn't always allow us to really hear the Spirit of God within us.

Have you ever been so upset or so worried or so angry that you couldn't feel the presence of God within you? And the idea of our mind is: It's not supposed to be in charge. Our spirit is supposed to be in charge! And our mind is there to be a servant for the activity of God: to support the Spirit.

But for some of us: We live a mentally dominant life, where what we're thinking -- and sometimes even what we're feeling -- become the most important thing. Like, we think the world should stop because we have an opinion or we have an idea or we have a feeling. And we really haven't learned to move that in its proper place.

And the reality is: You get to think whatever you want to think! Right? You get to feel whatever you want to feel. But when your feelings are more important than your spirit -- when your thoughts are more important than your spirit -- you're kind of ... you're upside down.

And what I love about Unity is: Unity, I think, is psychologically valid. Right? It's just ... It's good sense. It doesn't ask that you park your belief somewhere else and take on this whole set of beliefs that are just weird. And it invites it to be practical and helpful to your everyday life. But the psychological part of religion doesn't take away the deeper spiritual element. And the deeper spiritual element is that you were created in the image and likeness of God. That your first-and-foremost responsibility is to express the Spirit within: to really know the Spirit within. To express it, to live it, to channel it.

So last week we talked about mastering the inner critic. Because sometimes the inner critic actually gets in the way of you hearing what God thinks of you. Like, sometimes your self-esteem can be so crushed -- right? -- that you can't see yourself the way God sees you. You can't see yourself as whole and complete and lacking in nothing. You can't see your perfection, because your ego -- your personality, your inner critic -- has kind of distorted that.

And tonight we're going to focus on worry. Because *[laughs]* if we're spending too much time in worry, it's a sign that our mind needs more adult supervision. *[Congregation laughs]* Right? So the role of the mind is to be a servant to God, not to worry that God's not there or things aren't going to work out. Right? So when we're spending too much time and energy in worry, we're really missing the faith that allows us to believe that, with God, all things are possible.

So do you ever need to worry? Does worry ever help you move your life forward? So that's a strange concept, right? Because some of us really believe that our worrying is somehow moving the ball forward in our life. Like, we have this belief that says: If I'm not worried, it's a sign that I don't care. Like, if I'm not worried about my kids or my grandkids, or if I'm not worried about what's going on in the world, that's a sign that I just don't care.

And I want you to just see how distorted that is! It's this idea that your worry is somehow synonymous with love. Like, love=worries. Like, I don't think that's spiritually grounded! I don't think that's a spiritual principle anywhere, right? I want you to actually see that you can actually live your whole life without worry.

Now, what would it take to live your whole life without worry? I think it would take a higher degree of faith for most of us. Most of us would have to have a higher level of faith not to worry about our friends or our family, about the future, about who's in politics or who's not in politics, or the way these people are doing this, or the way these people are doing that. It takes a higher degree of faith not to worry.

But I want you to see is that we can actually get there! We can actually train our mind to be still in the presence of stuff. Like, you don't really always have to have an opinion about everything. We can actually our mind to become still and pretty much: *"Isn't that interesting."* Right?

If you were here on Sunday, I gave the affirmation: *"Isn't that cute?"* That no matter what you're doing -- no matter what's going on: *"Isn't that cute?"* Well tonight the affirmation's a little bit different. I want you to just be able to say, without judgement: *"Isn't that interesting?"* Right? And just notice life around you without a judgement.

I've been blessed in my life with two sets of in-laws. Now, many people think one set of in-laws is enough, but I've been blessed with two sets of in-laws. My first set of in-laws have passed, but my first mother-in-law was adorable. A-dor-able! She was so adorable, but she was a fretter. You know what a fretter is? Somebody who frets about this and worries about this. And she was adorable, but the sign that she loved you was how much she worried about you. That they were an equal relationship. So if she loved you a lot, she spent an equal amount of time worrying about you that much.

So her husband one night said to her -- because her youngest was ... He went through this interesting phase in his life, and she spent many a night up late worried about him and his choices, and what he was doing and who he was doing it with, and was it legal or was it close to legal. And so she worried about that, right?

So I remember her husband saying to her one night [laughs], *"Why don't you go on up to bed, and I'll just sit here and worry for you."* [Congregation laughs] And he said she got the sweetest look on her face. Like, *"You love me so much that you'll sit here and worry for me so I can go to bed."* And he said, *"I do! I love you so much that I will sit here and worry for you, so that you can go to bed."*

And then she said, *"No, you won't!"* [Congregation laughs] *"You're just telling me that! You're not going to worry, 'cause you don't worry! You know I worry, but you -- you don't worry! So if I leave you to it, you won't worry. You'll just fall asleep in the chair."* He goes [laughs], *"Well, but at least I'll worry a little bit!"* She said, *"No, you won't; you won't even worry a little bit!"* Right?

And it's this idea that we think worry means something about how much we love someone. Right? [Laughs] And I want you to see it just doesn't. Right?

Leo Buscaglia -- remember Leo Buscaglia? -- said this: *"Worry never robs tomorrow of its sorrow. It only saps today of its joy."*

Joseph Cossman said this: *"I want to test your memory. Try to recall what you were worried about one year ago from today."* Like, most of us can't! Most of us can't even remember [laughs] what we were worried about yesterday or the day before yesterday. Right? That we spend so much mental energy.

Winston Churchill said this: *"When I look back over these worries, I remember the story of an old man who said on his deathbed that he had a very troubled life, most of which, he said, never happened."* Right? [Rev. Rogers and congregation laugh]

So what I want you to look at tonight is: I want to make a case that we have to get our arms around our thoughts. And especially those thoughts that are the most destructive. And I believe that worry is a very destructive use of your mental faculty.

In Scripture it says 365 times ... I think that's interesting: 365 times in Scripture it says, *"Fear not."* Like, that's like once a day for a whole year! I want you to hear Scripture saying to your soul, *"Fear not."*

Seventy-one times in Scripture it says, "Be not afraid." Right? And Jesus was so committed to you not worrying that he spoke about worry. Like, this is 2000 ago, right? Two thousand years ago, imagine that people were still fretting! They were worrying! And he spoke to the issue. Because it's a misuse of spiritual energy.

How many of you know that your imagination has power? Right? That, when you visualize something, you actually have the power to add to its creation. So can you see that, when you worry about something, you're actually using the spiritual power of imagination totally destructively? Because you're actually envisioning what you don't want! When you see a loved one or a family member or the country or your future in a negative way, you are using the power of your imagination to actually add energy to what you don't want.

Like, I've never heard a spiritual teacher that said, "Spend 20 minutes a day visualizing what you don't want, and see if your life gets better." Has anybody ever heard a spiritual teacher teach that you spend at least 20 minutes a day visualizing what you don't want? Right? We don't do that! Nobody teaches that! The worst spiritual teacher on the planet doesn't teach that! Why? Because it's a misuse of spiritual power!

So this is what Jesus said. Matthew, beginning with Matthew 6:25:

"Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life."

Was that clear enough for everybody?

"Do not anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, or about your body, or what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? And look at the birds of the air: they neither toil nor reap nor gather in barns, yet your heavenly Father feeds them all. Are you not more valuable to him than these? And which of you by being anxious can add one single hour to the span of your life? And why are you anxious about clothing?"

[Rev. Rogers mimics someone else talking]: "Because I like the outfit to fit." [Congregation laughs] Right? [Continues reading Scripture]:

"Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, and yet Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today are alive and tomorrow are thrown into the oven, why would he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? Therefore, I tell you, do not be anxious, what shall you eat, or what shall you drink, or what shall you wear. For even the Gentiles seek these things. And your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and everything else will be added to you."

Arthur Roach said this: "Worry is a thin stream of fear trickling from your mind. If encouraged, it cuts a channel into which all other thoughts are drained."

And so, I really want us to take a little bit of an inventory about how much time and energy are you spending worried about yourself, worrying about your family, worrying about your future, worrying about the country. How much time and energy are you spending visualizing what you don't want?

And can you imagine there may be a higher mental function that you could participate in? That you could actually quiet your mind and trust that God is going to respond to every one of your needs, without making any one of these needs a big deal? See, the grace of God is the infinite goodness of God that is greater than we can imagine. And tonight, would you be more open to being blessed than being fearful?

So I've got five points that I want to make tonight. Let's shoot the PowerPoint up there, okay?

So how to manage a mind in fear. First one is ... Number one: **FOCUS ON SOMETHING GREATER.** Now, when you're in fear -- when you're in worry, when you're scared -- oftentimes the thing that you're afraid of takes on a bigger sense. A larger form. It looks scarier and scarier. It's like when you were a kid and you looked in the closet, and you knew that there was a bogeyman in the closet, right? And until you got up and turned on the light, you were convinced there was a bogeyman in the closet.

What I want you to see tonight is: The first thing I want you to do is focus on something greater. Now, what's greater than your fears? Well, what's greater than your fears is always God. Right? So what I want you to really practice is noticing when you go into your worry mind state, I want you to say something to the effect of, "*Whatever the situation is, I trust God in this.*" Right?

And I want you to feel the difference between being in your fearful worry mindset, and actually trusting God in this. Right? I trust God in this! And it can apply to any situation! Because your mind can't focus on two things at the same time. It literally can't focus on two thoughts simultaneously. So you're either going to put the focus on your fear, or on God.

Will you say that with me? I trust God in this. Together: *[with congregation] "I trust God in this."*

Two: If you notice that you're spending a lot of time in fear, in worry, what I'd like to suggest to you *[laughs]* today is that: If you tell me you don't have time to meditate, we know that's a lie. *[Congregation laughs]* Right? Does that make sense? Because if you have time to worry, you have time to pray! Right?

If you're spending time in fear, you have time to meditate. You have time to pray. You have time to actually **DEVELOP A DEEPER SPIRITUAL PRACTICE.** Because if we're in fear, what we know is that our spiritual practice isn't deep enough for the things that are going on in our life. Does that make sense to you? That, if you're in fear, I'd like to suggest tonight that there may be a possibility of you actually carving out a deeper spiritual practice. That you could actually spend more time in your spiritual practice and less time in fear.

Because, if you're going to worry, can you imagine ... If you're worrying, can you imagine just saying, "*Okay, instead of just worrying about this, I'm just going to pray about it. I'm going to actually feel the presence of God. I'm going to actually quiet my mind and acknowledge that I'm connected to the Infinite. I'm going to pray about it.*"

Let's go to three. Three says that, every time I'm worried -- right? -- **GIVE THANKS.** Because your mind can't focus on two things. That every time I notice that I'm worried, I'm going to invite you to get out a piece of paper and write a list for every blessing that you're grateful for. Right? I want you to actually turn the conversation in your head from worrying about negative outcomes: to begin to write down everything that you're grateful for. And I want you to make a significant list!

Like: "*I give thanks for my oatmeal. I give thanks for the health of my kids. I give thanks for my job. I give thanks I can pay my bills.*" And I want you to start actually moving your thoughts off of what you're worried about and on to what you're grateful for.

Four. This is where ... This is a really interesting practice. **FOCUS ON THE NOW,** not on the future or the past. Do you know that 99.999% of worry is future-related? You're worried about a future outcome. You're worried that you're not going to pay your bills or this is going to happen or that's going to happen. But it's all future-oriented.

When you actually train your mind to stop worrying, you actually bring your mind into the present moment. You bring it into the now. You bring it into this moment. And what's so amazing to me: In this moment, you have everything that you need. And that thought was a game-changer for me! Because I noticed that, in the future I can worry about whether or not I have this or that, or am I going to need this or that. But right here -- in this moment -- I have everything I that I need.

Now, when I really entertain that idea -- that, in this moment, I have everything I need -- then it's not a leap in logic to think if, in this moment I have everything that I need, can I imagine that, in the next moment, I'm going to have everything I need? And maybe even on Friday I'll have everything that I'm going to need. And Saturday and Sunday and next Wednesday and the Wednesday after that!

And when we move into the present moment -- and move out of the future or out of the past into this moment -- we realize there's nothing to worry about. Only when we become future-oriented is there anything to worry about. But right here, right now, you have everything you need. Do you have enough oxygen in the room for you tonight? Right? You have a chair that's supporting you. Is anybody's chair breaking underneath them as they sit? No! In this moment, you have everything -- all the oxygen, all the blood, all the love. In this moment, you have everything that you need.

Let's go to five. Five says *[laughs]* to **FOCUS ON THE POSSIBILITIES, NOT THE PROBLEM**. See, worry tends to be focusing on the problem. And it denies the infiniteness of God. So every time you're worried, you're focused on one negative possibility. And when we shift the focus off the problem and on to the possibility: Well, what is it that I'd rather create? What is it that I'd rather have? What life would I rather live in? But the moment we do that, everything in our life begins to change.

See, I want you to see that, for most of us, we don't think worry is a big deal. Now, for some of us, worry is a big deal. But we spend just an enormous amount of time worrying. And worry has gotten way out of proportion. But for most of us, it's kind of in the middle ground.

But what I want you to see: That for you to live your best life, you need to master your mind. You need to get ahold of your thoughts. Your thoughts need more adult supervision. Right? Because they're just running all over the place. And it doesn't glorify you; it doesn't glorify God. It doesn't help you move your life forward. And as we learn to master our mind, the consequence is a deeper level of peace. When we learn to get ahold of our thoughts, peace is the natural consequence.

Jesus said, "*Don't be anxious.*" Like, if that's all we ever hear from the man -- if that's the only principle we apply in our life: don't be anxious -- everything in our life gets better.

Will you pray with me?

And I invite you to open your mind, your heart, your soul to the activity of God that is right here, right now. And I want you to hear His words one more time: "Don't be anxious." "Fear not."

Fear not! Today, let your mind become quiet. Let the grace of God bless you in ways that are greater than you can even imagine, and allow the peace of God to fill you to overflowing. That there is so much good in our world. So tonight we come together being of the mind of God: to lift our mind out of the darkness -- out of the fear -- and bring it back to God. In the name and through the power of the Living Christ, we give thanks. And so it is. Amen.

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