

Series: *I BELIEVE IN GOD, BUT...* January 29, 2012

...I STILL WORRY A LOT
2 Timothy 1:7, Philippians 4:4-7, Matthew 6:25-34
Speaker: Ken Davis

1. When it came to choosing a name for our first child, we decided on the name Kelly Elizabeth—for a few reasons. First, we liked it; second, Lori's middle name was **Elizabeth**, third, my Grandmother, Elizabeth Kelly helped us with some of the costs of adoption. What we couldn't have known then was how well the name fit; it means **Warrior Princess**. If you know Kelly...well, let just say it fits who she is!

-My **other** Grandmother, Lillian Davis, was a **WORRIER Princess**. Actually, she was the queen or all worriers. She was a little woman, 4'11", and every inch of her worried. About everything! The classic family story is about the day my Dad brought home a puppy. Grandma stayed up **all night, pacing the floor**—worrying that the dog would grow up and **bite** someone—to the point that they had to give the puppy away the next day to stop her from hyper-ventilating!

-Now, is there anyone here who **never worries at all!** Like your theme song is, **Don't Worry...Be Happy!** Finances, kids, problems, suspicious looking lumps—**none of that bothers you?** I worry. I don't think I got the **full** load of worry genes from my Grandmother—but I got some of them. Sometimes what I believe about God doesn't match my worry factor.

- a. See, I believe that God is God—and that He is Lord of Heaven and Earth. I believe, as the Bible says, **nothing** is impossible for Him. I believe, as Jesus taught, that He loves me more than I could ever possibly love my children—and that He is at work behind the scenes for my good. I believe God either solves the problem—or gives the grace to face it. I believe that His angels protect me—and that prayer is powerful.

-I believe that He is the God of **all** comfort, and that He is in charge of history, not us. I see his hand all through my life—working out problems I thought were unsolvable. I believe that he will care for me when I'm old and gray—which I'm **not** now, but one day will be! I believe that **absolutely nothing** can separate me from God's love and care—and that **He can be trusted!**

-But, at times, I lay awake at night—consumed with worry. I am a lot more like the **worrier** prince—than the **warrior** prince.

- b. Now, there are factors in life that probably make us more prone to worry. My Grandma Davis lost her Mom when she was a toddler—and was raised by an older sister who used fear to motivate her. Before two sons went to school—they were swept into the Great Depression. I get that. But I'm convinced her obsession with worry shortened her life. This is a picture of my brother and I with her as kids.

Know how old she was at this point? 59! She died at 61.

- c. And we **feel** the low-grade anxiety of our culture—especially as parents—that something **bad** is going to happen.

Everywhere you look the message seems to say, “Be worried. Be **very** worried! Worry about your weight, about cancer, about drugs, about bullies, about money...

-Should we be alert? Absolutely! But worry? Well, that’s what I want to talk about today. In a world like ours, how do you **not** worry?

2. A guy by the name of Barry Glastner has written this book, ***Culture of Fear***. He says that we are the most **worried** society that has ever existed. The ironic thing about that is that the average life expectancy has almost doubled in this century. We are able to cure more diseases than we ever have before. No group of human beings has ever been more healthy, **and** no group of human beings has ever been more obsessed with their health.

-Glastner cites a U.S. journalist by the name of Bob Garfield who tracked health articles from the Washington Post, USA Today and the New York Times that keep telling us how sick we are. According to the experts in these publications, 59 million Americans have heart disease, 53 million suffer from migraines, 25 million from osteoporosis, 16 million from obesity, millions more from cancer, 12 million from serious things like brain injuries. When he totaled it up, he found that **543 million** American’s are seriously ill—which is shocking in a country of about 300 million. Garfield then says,

“Either we as a society are doomed, or someone is seriously double dipping.”
(Barry Glastner)

- a. You might be interested in some of the statistics Glastner brings out—even though they’re from the U.S. Between 1990 and 1998, the crime rate in the U.S. dropped by 20%.

In that same time period, the number of murder stories on the news increased by **600%**. One TV executive said: **“If it bleeds, it leads.”** Millions of books get sold annually about future disasters we’re told are imminent—financial collapse, global warming, killer viruses and bacteria.

- b. Truth is, most of us inherited fear from our families. How many of you had a Mom who said, as you went out the door, “Take it easy! Don’t worry! Take risks, Honey. Embrace danger—you only go around once. Look just one way when you cross the street.” No, it’s more like, “Be careful! There are bad people out there who can get you. Did you change your underwear—cause if you were to get run over and taken to the emergency room—what would people think?” Parents teach impressionable children prayers like, **“Now I lay me down to sleep; I pray the Lord my soul to keep. If I should die before I wake...!”**

-We aren’t usually told about normal kids who get average grades, play hockey for **fun** and are somewhere at the middle of the social food-chain. We’re either told about the super-stars at the top—or the seriously maladjusted kids who are plotting massacres.

-Now, **what can you do about most of this stuff? NOTHING!** There's an interesting equation. Fear increases as our sense of vulnerability goes up—and our sense of power goes down. Fear **decreases** as our sense of vulnerability goes down and our sense of power goes up.

3. Most worry is pretty vague, isn't it? So, let's narrow worry down to our families and people we love—and try to identify what these fears really are. What do you think are some of the bad things people worry might happen?

a. Well, most parents—at some point—fear that their children will make a bad decision that will have lifelong consequences. That they'll get arrested, get pregnant, fry their brains on drugs, make friends that will lead them into evil, addictive, life-threatening stuff. It's very simple: No one wants to see someone they love sabotage themselves—bring sadness and regret that they'll never recover from. Can anyone identify with that fear? I can.

-And this fear is not totally unfounded. Our world offers temptations that weren't even around 30 years ago. I heard this quote,

“A schoolboy today faces more temptation on his way to school in the morning than Grandpa did on Saturday night when he went out looking for it!” Unknown

b. A second fear, again, for parents, is that their children will not **“turn out right.”**

This is the fear that our children will not successfully make the transition to adulthood. When you ask parents what this means—specifically—sometimes it's pretty superficial—like succeeding in their careers or having a certain lifestyle. But sometimes there actually is more substance—parents who want their children to do something worthwhile with their lives.

-Know what worry causes—especially in parents? The desire to **control!** To **make it happen.** From birth on it's push, push, **push**—this race to the top of the hill where there are only winners and losers. You've heard it, “Go to the right school, get in the right activities, go to the right university!” And it's **nuts!** -Let me give you a freebee—**you can't control!** You can encourage and help—but if you play helicopter parent—hovering around to protect, push and save your child—you'll probably do more damage than good!

c. A third fear is that **we are failing as a family.** “What will the neighbors think?” If you've ever looked through the family/parenting section of **Chapter's** you've probably noticed that it is **thoroughly** intimidating! Quick poll: How many of you here feel like you're **amazing** parents--like your kids ought to be grateful they have **you?**

-Does anyone here sometimes feel like a failure? I do! Sometimes my kids have been angry about my decisions as a parent. Sometimes I listen and say, “You're right!” On others I say, “Tell your therapist someday.” **Then** I worry that their therapists will say, “Your dad did WHAT for a living!?”

-I take great comfort in the fact that God is a perfect parent, and provided a perfect context for his first two—Adam and Eve--and they **both** screwed up. Is **He** a bad parent?

- d. The next fear is the one we have when they're late coming home—or aren't where they're supposed to be when we pick them up. We worry that someone we love will get seriously injured or killed or maimed by an accident, illness or catastrophe. Or kidnapped.

-Lori and I had our first big fight over this. We even broke our engagement for, I believe, 1 or 2 days. She wanted to play on the "Powder-Puff Football Team" in college. I said, "Have you see the size of the girls you're going to be playing against?" She said, "You're trying to control my life." I said, "I'm trying to **save** your life." She said, "Try to save someone **else's** life—I'm outta here!"

-Now, I've had a little fun with this—but this fear sucker punches us—and fills our hearts with paralyzing terror. Your son's out with the car. He's two hours overdue. There's a pattern. At first your distracted—then pacing—furious. "If he **isn't** dead, then **I'm** going to kill him!" Then you're calling 911—but it's a little hard because you're hyperventilating—and you've got a paper bag over your head.

-And the **hard** truth is—heart-breaking things **do** happen. Remember the insurance ad with Karl Mulden with his hat, trenchcoat and bulbous nose saying, "What would you do? **What WOULD YOU DO?**" Something inside says, "I couldn't handle that. I couldn't go on. I couldn't survive."

- e. For me, one of the major fears I face is that those I love, particularly my children, won't share my love for and faith in Jesus. That there will be this weird, awkward silence when it comes to what the whole point of life is. I wonder, "Will the love and companionship we share—continue on through this life and into the next...or not?"

-Now, there are a **lot** of fears about the unknown part of life—but this is enough, right? Here's my point: Worry, fear, anxiety can not just steal our health and our joy and our time—that can cause us to do irrational and destructive things **if we don't get a handle on them!** They can paralyze us!

4. Here's the deal, friends. We **all** have fears, okay? The key question is--what kind of fuel are you running on? What's **motivating** you: fear—or hope? One guy made the comment, "**My fear is turning me into someone I hate—the person I least want to be. It's destroying my relationship with my wife and with my children, and it's like I can't stop.**" See, the thing you worry about most may never even come close to happening—but **worry, fear, and suspicion** my wreck things anyway. Wouldn't **that** be tragic?

-Let me just summarize some things the Bible says about this. Anyone remember Jesus' famous comments on this? They could be summarized as, **If I were you—I**

wouldn't worry about life—it accomplishes NOTHING! And you have a Heavenly Father who's crazy about you—watching over you! So don't worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring its own worries. Today's trouble is enough for today. (Matthew 6:33-34 NLT)

-Writing to Timothy, his understudy, Paul writes:

For God has not given us a spirit of fear and timidity, but of power, love, and self-discipline. (2 Timothy 1:7 NLT)

-The point here is not to just be a more spiritually cool person, okay? There are some **very** good reasons to deal with fear—and move toward hope and faith, believe me.

a. First of all, fear and fear has a way of paralyzing us. We freeze up.

We become too cautious, too afraid to make decisions. We begin to think thoughts like, "I can't handle this. This is too much for me. It's too late—all these desperate thoughts.

b. Something else worry does; it drains our confidence in God. God says, "Don't be afraid—I'm **with** you!" Worry causes us to either act like He isn't telling the truth—or that He doesn't love us or care about us.

c. And fear causes us to be controlling people. This is maybe the most damaging part of worry and anxiety. Fear, as you know, causes an action drug called adrenaline to get pumped into our system. Adrenaline is a performance drug that our glands dump into our bloodstream—intended to help us run fast—or fight fiercely.

-What do you do if there's really nothing to fight—and nowhere to run? One of two things, usually. Either want to hide from the future—or we want to **control** it. See, we **think** controlling behavior is about protecting our spouse or our kids—when it's actually about **us!** Sometimes it creates a level of anger that is always under the surface.

-How many of you like to be around a controlling, suspicious person who won't give you any space? Know why it backfires? Because we weren't MEANT to control. Even God doesn't do that. And trying to control situations so we don't have to worry frustrates us when the people around us won't follow our rules and react to our fears. Worry, anxiety and fear is **bad** stuff to run your life on. Jesus says, GIVE IT UP! LET IT GO!

-See, that's the deal. We **can** let it go! We don't **have** to pump adrenaline through our system and poison ourselves. We don't **have** to hover, control, manipulate, get sick, live with a sense of impending doom—and drive everyone nuts around us. Because **fear, worry—is NOT** from God! God gives peace. God comforts—and brings joy.

5. Anyone know what the biggest obstacle is in us dealing with our fear? It's usually admitting it. Owning it. In a culture that celebrates the extreme sports, bug-eating,

bungee jumping kind of person—it's not cool to say, "***I'm worried! I'm afraid!***" Sometimes "I'm afraid." We tell ourselves lies all the time. Like, "Real men aren't afraid," or "Really good Christians aren't afraid," or "Fear is for weak people."

-We hear verses like the one I read:

For God has not given us a spirit of fear and timidity, but of power, love, and self-discipline. (2 Timothy 1:7 NLT)

- and instead of seeing it as a ***reminder*** of where fear comes from—and where power comes from—we see it as a statement about our spirituality.

- a. Being afraid for someone you love more than your own life is not sub-human or sub-Christian—it's normal.

Concern that comes from love is a really good thing. But you **have to get on the solution side of it—so** first you have to admit it.

-So, let's just see how common some of the fears I mentioned are. I need you to be honest, okay? How many of can't relate to any of these fears for people you love?

-So, we're going to do a mass confession. Look at the person next to you and say, **Sometimes I worry about people I love!**

-Anyone know what the point is in an alcoholic's life when they can be helped? It's when their addiction has created ***enough*** pain to admit, "I've got a **problem!**" Admitting something is powerful. Saying, "I'm in love" is powerful. Saying, "I believe" to Jesus is powerful. Saying, "I'm sorry" is powerful. Saying, "I need help!" is powerful. Saying "I'm afraid" may be one of the most powerful things you can do.

- b. But, honestly, it has to go beyond that. First, you have to admit what it is that you're afraid of. Specifically. Name it. What are you worrying about? Is it that someone you love is going to destroy their life? Is it that something bad is going to happen to one of your children? Is it that you're going to lose your job, lose the love of your spouse, be seen as dumb or inferior, lose your insurance? ***What is it—specifically?*** SAY it!

-But it has to go further. You have to be willing to admit, "My fear and worry is **CONTROLLING** me." It's running my life—and it's causing me to try to run and control other's lives. It's not just **running** more than I would like it to—it's **ruining** a whole lot more than I'd like."

-Let me give you a kind of picture of this: Years ago when we lived in Pennsylvania, our family room had a huge stone fireplace—right across from where we ate. One night, in the middle of a meal, there was this scratching and clawing sound coming from the inside of this thing. So—thinking it was bats, I lit the fire place. ***Lots of scratching and clawing!*** While the family went and hid in their bedrooms, I—the brave one—opened the flue—and saw these

claws—clinging to the vent. I put on some leather gloves and grabbed it—and it was this beautiful little brown owl!

-Then Lori came out and said, “Awww! Isn’t it cute. It’s like a little stuffed bird. Don’t hurt it!” Naming and capturing the unseen thing that was scratching and clawing and scaring us took away its power. But I **had** to reach up into the dark—and **grab it!**

- c. But dealing with worry has to go beyond that. It’s discerning what we **can** do—and acting wisely—and discerning what we **can’t** do—and putting our faith in God.

-There are some things we **can** do—and we need God’s wisdom to act under those circumstances. Let me give you an example. Let’s say you’re out of work—and it’s creating a **lot** of anxiety. Someone asks, “So, what are you doing.” Your response, “Living by faith!” Are you checking out jobs, sending out resumes, searching job sites, following leads, trying to network?” No, no, no, no...and, uh, **no!**

-Well, that’s not faith—that’s just being dumb! Act **wisely**—do what you **can** do—**get on the solution side** of your problem, and then let God do what **He** does best: Work behind the scenes—and give you **peace!**

-Let me just say this in relationship to parenting and family issues. Know what you **can’t** do. I’ll tell what you **can’t** do as a parent. You ultimately can’t **make** your children do what you want them to do. You can help them **know** the right thing to do, you can give them plenty of **opportunities** to do it. You can **reward** them for doing the right thing and **discipline** them for doing the wrong thing—but that’s it. **They** are responsible for their choices, and **you** are responsible for yours.

- d. There’s something else that is really important. For you to keep your head and take action—you need to believe in yourself **in the sense** that God has equipped you to do what you’re doing—and that He is willing to take the little bag lunch you offer—and multiply it in ways you would never imagine.

-Satan’s **best** weapon against us is despair. Hopelessness. See, when we lose hope, when we think, “Things will **never** change”—when we give up, “**I can’t handle this—I can’t handle the truth—I’m a loser**”—you’re cooked! If there is failure on your part, own it, ask God’s forgiveness where you need to ask forgiveness—and **MOVE ON!**

-Remember, God knew what He was in entrusting his treasure—people--into the hands of other imperfect people. One guy said that the most helpful and hopeful thing anyone ever said to him was, “Your kids are all right! **Give them time!**” That’s absolutely true. Know what we do with our kids—and with our lives? We’re in the middle of a single slice of life; worry takes that snippet—and tries to write the final chapter!

-Know why I can say this? Because God has not given us a spirit of timidity. However, He **has** given us a spirit of **power, love, and self-discipline**. If you know Jesus Christ, and the Spirit of God lives in you—you have more power than you can use in a lifetime. You have power to say no; to **hold the line**; to **make it through the toughest challenges life offers!**

6. There's one more verse I haven't read until now. It's one of the most powerful reminders in the Bible when it comes to worry and anxiety:

Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done. Then you will experience God's peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 4:6-7 NLT)

-Notice what this is saying. Don't worry about **anything**; pray about **everything**. And it tells us how; **tell God what you need—and thank Him for all he has done**. We get the **tell God what you need** part—why the **thank him for all he has done** part?

-I'll tell you why—from personal experience. Sometimes I worry through prayer. I whine, I complain, I cry. This is saying, "Yeah, do that—but make sure you bring it around, in an act of faith—and say **thanks for hearing what I've said—and doing something!** See, when you thank Him—it takes the problem out of your hands and puts it in His—and **then** He can bring peace—a peace that is alien to our world.

- a. Remember the story about my Grandma Davis—**worrier** princess? When she came to faith in Jesus—her worry turned her into **pray-er**. And she would need that. My Dad, when he entered the Navy, couldn't stand his Mom because of how she tried to control the family—out of worry. So he didn't write a single letter.

-One night Lillian Davis woke with a terrifying vision—of my Dad's ship on fire—and him in the water swimming for his life. She **knew** it was real—got on her knees and prayed, "God, now he'll **never** be saved!" And right over that terrifying picture were the words, **BUT GOD...!**

-Day's later, this picture was in the Pittsburgh paper confirming the vision she'd had. And it was right before the kamikaze plane hit his ship that he prayed and said, "God, I don't think I'm going to survive this day—would you please save me?" And he said that the very peace this passage talks about came over him—and over the Worrier Princess—my grandmother.

-See, she would need that peace. Just a few years later—her husband, my Grandfather died at 47. She said, "When I went into the room, it was **filled** with angels!" She would have to get training—and go back to work. She would have to live with and deal with an alcoholic son. She would need **supernatural** peace.

- b. I have sometimes found that, in the middle of trying to be a good Dad, a good leader, a good pastor and a good husband, I've had thoughts like, "God, where

are You?” I asked for this. I studied for this. I **begged** for this. I **dreamed** of this. Now I’m not sure if I’ll survive it!” Any else here who’s every felt totally alone and overwhelmed? If you have--hold your hand up and look around. I’d say the feeling is pretty universal.

-It’s okay to wonder where God is. It’s okay to cry. It’s okay to struggle. It’s okay to not be the perfect parent. It’s okay to screw up. You just need to know that God’s single most common promise is, “Don’t be afraid, for....**I** am with you!” Say it with me, “Don’t be afraid, for...I **am** with you!” Repeated 366 times in the Bible—God even thought of leap year! Say it again. “Don’t be afraid, for I am **with** you. And you. And you. And you.

*Parents of an infant—exhausted, sleep deprived? I’m with you when you cry into your pillow at night. I stroke your hair.

*Student—struggling with exams, not really knowing where you’re going or what you’re doing—with you.

*Husband/wife—and your marriage is just not clicking these days; it feels cold in your home; you sleep next to someone every night—and feel **so** alone—I’m with you.

*Parents of teens? Worn out by arguing? By testosterone/estrogen charged living? By rebellion, hot words, slammed doors..... Boy, do **you** need me! Teens with parents you just don’t get—who feel repressive and nosy and so uncool. I’m **so** with you.

*Single—sometimes overwhelmed with desire, with worry that things will never change, worried about trying to parent all on your own—exhausted, over-worked, longing for companionship in a world that feels **very** scary—and too silent. Don’t be afraid—I’m with *you!*

7. Just remember, Ultimately--God is in control, not the news, not Satan, not friends—not fate. God is. Because that’s, by definition, who God is. Don’t underestimate him. And **remind** yourself who rules.

-Remember all that God has promised to you. Spouses break promises. Best friends break promises. Parents do, too. But God? **Never!**

-And now you’re going to see, in living color and act of faith as parent’s dedicate children. It’s not some spiritual magic wand over them that brings good luck; it’s about desperate parents coming to God and saying, “God, I’m way over my head! **I need help!** And God shows up!