

**WINNING
THE
WAR
ON
WORRY**

WINNING THE WAR ON WORRY

*CULTIVATE A PEACEFUL HEART
AND A CONFIDENT MIND*

LOUIE GIGLIO



Winning the War on Worry: Cultivate a Peaceful Heart and a Confident Mind

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INTRODUCTION

WELCOME TO A NEW WAY OF LIFE

By the simple fact that you chose to crack open the first page of this book—*Winning the War on Worry*—I’m assuming you might be worried right now. Sure, it’s possible you could just be checking out this little book “for a friend.” Or maybe you’re one of the few select people on earth who hasn’t experienced any of the warring tensions of worry and anxiety. But I’m thinking that if you’re holding these pages in your hands, it’s more likely you want to worry less. Which is exactly what this resource is intended to help you do.

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Worry is so prevalent in our society and throughout our daily lives that it often feels inescapable. Instead of worry being an occasional event, many of us have learned to embrace worry as a part of the fabric of our lives. Worry has become woven into our regular rhythms, and for many of us, it's become an identity. We say, "I'm a worrier. It's just the way I am." As a result, we live in a perpetual state of being worried about something. In fact, you might already be worried about the promise and prospect of this book.

Will it work for me?

Will it be a waste of my time?

Should I have chosen something different to read?

Will I be able to finish this book and get through each chapter?

Like barnacles on the bottom of a boat, worry has a way of subtly attaching itself to our thoughts. Worry often starts below the waterline, out of sight, out of the forefront of our thoughts. At first it's just a simple *what if* . . .

What if I get to the reception late and miss the moment?
What if I don't know anyone when I get there?
What if my supervisor hates my idea?
*What if it rains next week on the night I've planned the
outdoor party?*

Before you know it worrying becomes a way of life. And just like those barnacles on the bottom of a boat add weight and resistance and therefore slow down the vessel, worry slows down your progress and corrodes your quality of life.

Over time, these little *what ifs* that we allow to creep in and stick to the hull of our hearts begin to morph into substantial and sinking fears. Even before a *what if* ever comes to fruition, the more we allow it to linger and feed it with our attention and activity, the more it begins to weigh us down. As believers, we are meant to live a life characterized by the light and easy yoke of Jesus (Matthew 11:30), and the more room we give *what ifs*, the more heavily burdened we become.

Maybe for you, the list of *what-if* questions above seemed slightly trivial. You might have read through those statements and said, "Louie, I've got bigger concerns on my radar

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than what the weather is going to look like next week.” I hear that. My wife, Shelley, and I are also walking through some difficult circumstances with our family right now. But even in the hardest moments, that element of *what if* remains the same. Maybe your *what if* looks a little more like this:

What if there’s an accident?

What if I’m one of the employees who gets let go at work?

What if I’m not up to the task and I fail?

What if I’m not really saved?

What if my child rebels?

What if my friend bails out on me?

What if my spouse leaves me?

What if I get cancer?

What if this is the end of the world?

Arthur Somers Roche said so well: “Worry is like a thin stream of fear trickling through the mind. If encouraged, it cuts a channel into which all other thoughts are drained.”¹

1. Thomas E. Trask and Wayde I. Goodall, *The Fruit of the Spirit* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2018).

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Before we go too much further, let's pause to clarify something right away. You are not the only person to step onto this battlefield and look across the way toward the enemy of worry and anxiety. The Enemy loves to isolate us and make our struggles seem disproportionate to those around us. But worry isn't an uncommon tactic. In fact, it's one of the Enemy's go-to weapons. There is some level of comfort in knowing that worry strikes people from every walk of life and background.

Worry can weasel into the hearts of business leaders, professional athletes, high-school seniors, first-time moms, creatives and artists and producers and designers and software engineers. It can creep into the minds of chefs and astronauts, truck drivers and teachers. It can even get into the minds of pastors and people who are called to work for the church.

I have to admit—I've spent a lot of my life worrying. I used to blame it on the fact that I come by it naturally, given that my mom and dad were Olympic-caliber worriers.

But here's the stunning truth: worry is a choice.

When I say that, I'm not being simplistic. This isn't my

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attempt to smooth over rough waters with a pithy statement or a few cheap words. It's based on my personal experience and the truth I've seen over and over throughout the Word of God.

In my previous books I've been very open about my struggles with anxiety and depression, and I know full well that there's no one-size-fits-all solution to our varied struggles. I also know that catchy slogans don't solve mental illness. Yet, God has lifted me up out of a pretty deep and dark place. He brought me back into the light to proclaim—God is greater. He and He alone can calm stormy waters. He can speak a word that makes the winds and waves subside.

God can conquer worry because He has already been victorious over the ultimate root of worry: fear. We'll dig into this in a later chapter, but 1 John 4:18 says it so well: "There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear."

God is greater than fear and all its cousins—depression, anxiety, panic, and worry. And if God is greater, you and I can experience freedom from the grip of worry that robs us of sleep and peace.

I believe that as we go through these next chapters

together, the truths you encounter will have the potential to set you on a new path and give you the tools you need to replace worry with a greater sense of trust in the Almighty. It's time to take a good, hard look at the root of worry that has grown and spread throughout our hearts. It's time we examine the deep levels of our souls and begin to weed out this way of living as we reclaim a peaceful heart and a confident mind.

Throughout our journey together, we'll look at both the theological and the practical. We'll fix our eyes on the only One who has perfectly conquered worry and anxiety, while also setting our feet into motion as we go to war on worry. If you stick with this, I believe you will find help for the headache and hardship lingering in your life. However, please understand, this is no *self-help* guide.

The essence of winning the war on worry is knowing you can't do it on your own. Like most attacks of the Enemy, when we battle worry, we can't make or muster a strong enough defense by ourselves. It is only by the might of God and the love of Jesus that we can stand firm, take ground, and win this fight.

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My goal is to point you to the One who is greater—to the God who encourages His people:

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)

So join me as we begin this journey of repelling worry from our hearts. It's a big fight, but the great reality is that every big fight can start with a small, simple step. Picking up this book is an example of that first small step. By opening these pages, you are saying, "I need something to change," and that is a powerful place to start.

So before we get into the thick of it, before we even jump in to chapter 1, let's pause here at the very beginning and take a step together. Remember when I said that the Enemy loves to utilize the weapon of *what if*? Instead of fixating on the *what ifs*, let's commit right now to acknowledging

that God has already provided us with the truth of *what is*. God doesn't deal in confusion. He doesn't leave things to chance, and He is never unsure of the final outcome. He doesn't do *if*. He *is*—and that is a truth on which we can build our foundation.

So wherever you are reading this, no matter what you are walking through, I encourage you to speak out this reality:

God, I believe You are greater. Specifically, You are greater than whatever I am worrying about right now.

I believe this confession will immediately catalyze the process of resizing worry and replacing it with trust.

And if you're not quite able to declare those words with full conviction, then maybe this is your confession: *God, help me have greater faith in You.* This is a prayer God loves to hear and loves to come through for.

If you're ready to live free, to cultivate a peaceful heart and confident mind, He's ready to help you bury worry and live with a new reality of deep-rooted trust and hope.

ONE

WORRY IS A LIAR

We've already established that the root of worry is fear. And fear doesn't come from God. Thus, at the heart of worry is the devil. And Scripture is clear—the devil is a liar.

Jesus said about him: “When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies” (John 8:44).

To put it simply, worry isn't just a bad habit. Worry is an Enemy tactic—a strategy built on lies that are designed to rob you of peace and tear your mind to pieces.

That's why it's crucial that you are able to spot the lies worry tells.

Not long ago while on safari in South Africa, Shelley

and I were really wanting to see a leopard in the wild. Early and late on our game drives our eyes were set on every tree limb, bush, grassy hill, and river path in hopes of finding one of several leopards that were known to frequent this particular area. But here's the thing: leopards aren't bright orange with tall, sparkly antennae on their backs. They are designed to blend into the surroundings, like the bark of a baobab tree where they might be lounging on one of its mighty branches.

In the same way, the devil isn't going to jump up and down in front of you shouting, "Hey, I'm a liar, and everything I'm telling you right now is going to drain your life of joy!" No, he's going to arrive more acceptably—in the form of worry. Because everyone worries, right?

THE FOUR LIES OF WORRY

To keep your adversary from blending into the scenery of your mind, you have to become adept at spotting the lies worry tells you. So let's take a look at four of worry's lies.

Lie 1: Something really bad is going to happen.

We've all been tormented by this lie. Throughout the day, as we are confronted by different situations, we too easily tilt to the negative extreme and assume something bad is going to happen. But really, only a fraction of the things we worry about come to pass. A 2019 study from Penn State showed that roughly 91 percent of the things we worry about never even happen.¹ But worry wants to convince you of what feels like the inevitability of every possible negative outcome. It tries to guarantee that your situation will end in the worst-case scenario.

There's a quote often attributed to French philosopher Michel de Montaigne, who framed this lie well when he wrote: "My life has been full of terrible misfortunes, most of which never happened."

To be clear, I'm not suggesting that bad things don't happen in life. Obviously, your story and mine affirm that they do.

1. Seth J. Gillihan, "How Often Do Your Worries Actually Come True?", *Psychology Today* (Sussex Publishers, July 19, 2019), <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/think-act-be/201907/how-often-do-your-worries-actually-come-true>.

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I've lost both my parents to long-term, debilitating diseases. Pain and suffering and loss are a part of our journey on a broken planet. Jesus underscored this when He said, "In this world you will have trouble . . ." The power to deflate worry, though, is found in how Jesus finished that sentence: "but . . . I have overcome the world" (John 16:33).

So here's the new reality that allows you to combat the lie that something bad is going to happen: most of what you're spending your time worrying about won't happen. If you know and believe this ahead of time, you can cut worry off from the onset because you're now armed with the reality that "the worst" outcome statistically will not occur. The more you choose not to go down the path of worry, the better equipped you'll become.

Now, again, that's not to say that bad things won't come our way, because unfortunately we live in a broken world filled with heartache, misfortune, and loss. But what it does mean is that we don't have to overcommit our valuable time and attention toward *what-if* circumstances. If the *what if* happens, when something bad actually lands in your world, Jesus will give you what you need to overcome it.

Lie 2: The more you worry about it, the better your odds of avoiding it.

This is a tricky lie. Yes, we often have cause for concern and preparation. But the Enemy wants you to believe that if you worry or fret over a certain outcome long enough, you can keep something bad from happening.

The reality is worrying has *never* once prevented something negative from happening. Planning might. Prayer has. But worry never will.

The Enemy tells you that by worrying about a situation (or every situation) you can make your tomorrow better. Really, worry just robs you of today. Jesus implored us:

I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes? Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? . . . Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. (Matthew 6:25–26, 34)

Your best bet for being prepared for tomorrow is to lean in and trust God with what He has put in your hands today. And when the day turns over, repeat.

One of the greatest tools to help counter the temptation to worry is recalling the faithfulness of God. In every situation, worry wants you to think, *This is the one where everything is going to go off the rails*. But the faithfulness of God tells you otherwise. It says, “Today, I will do for you what I did yesterday, and the day before, and the days before that.” Faithfulness is the fuel of peace for today, while worry pushes you past today and into tomorrow.

Lie 3: I have no choice—I’m a born worrier.

As I mentioned in the introduction, I had some pretty amazing worriers in my house growing up. My dad was a champion at creating dreadful scenarios and spending his days drowning in the *what ifs* of every bad outcome. I would watch him and think, *Man, what’s wrong with him?*

Abandoned by his parents as a young boy, my dad had good cause to think that around every bend in the road, another frightful, lonely night awaited him. But as a kid, I

had no clue about what was going on in his mind and heart. When I was a teen, I remember him having one particularly traumatic day. Being sixteen, I was clueless about most of the weight my parents were carrying. But that night, as I went to leave our apartment and walk to a friend's house, he said, "I've just had the worst day of my life. I need everyone to just stay in the house tonight."

I turned around and went back to my room.

Not sure what's up with Dad, I thought. But whatever that was, I'm going to just say okay and stay in tonight.

What was going on at that moment? My dad was trying to let me know he was worried every time I left the house. And this night he couldn't bear the burden of worrying on top of what he'd been through that day.

I only fully understood this when I was older and I started having the same feelings. I realized that I, too, could easily tip toward fearing a dreadful outcome. I would naturally obsess over the question, "What's the worst thing that could happen?"

For a season, I just blamed this proclivity on my dad. *I'm a born worrier, I thought.*

But that's not my new spiritual reality. In Christ, I am born again, and "if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!" (2 Corinthians 5:17).

Here's the new reality for you and me. We may have a genetic tendency toward worry. And, more powerfully, we may have been weaned in a worrying culture. Worry is what we saw others do. Worry is what we learned. Worry is what we are prone to repeat.

But dear friends, if you are in Christ, all those old patterns were disrupted the instant you were born again. You have a new Father in heaven. He has never worried for one second in His eternal existence. He wasn't worried yesterday. Nor is He today. He will not be worried tomorrow.

There's no doubting the fact that He is concerned for you. He manages time and the affairs of men. He loves you. You are born into a new family as a daughter or son of God through Jesus Christ. And your new family is not a worrying family. Your new family is a family of sovereign peace, knowing that God is in control. And He is enough for you in every situation.

Lie 4: I can control the outcome by worrying.

Worry wants to convince you that if you think about the situation long enough, you can control the outcome. Nothing could be further from the truth. In the end, the reality is that you, by God's grace, can control your choices and how you react to everything else. Period.

You are not God. While worry wants you to think you're in the driver's seat, worry really locks you in the trunk of the car (or "in the boot" for my English-speaking friends outside the US).

Jesus asked, "Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to your life?" Think about that for a moment. None of us can add even a second to our day. He continued, "Since you cannot do this very little thing, why do you worry about the rest?" (Luke 12:25–26).

Worry keeps you up at night. It convinces you that if you work at it, you can solve every problem. But in the end, peace comes by admitting that you are not God. I am not God. Therefore, I am not in charge. I am not in control. I don't run the show. I am simply a part of God's plan. Yet, I know He loves me. So I will trust and obey.

When we adopt this mindset, our prayers shift from trying to get God to give us our desired outcomes to instead saying, “God, I repent of trying to be You. Have Your will and Your way in my life.”

Some could see this prayer as a cop-out. I see it as a beautiful surrender. Worry tells you that you are in charge. But who wants that job, anyway? Faith tells you the God who loves you is in charge. Your Maker is in control. You can trust Him. All His ways are good.

SPOT THE LIES AND START THE FIGHT

Those are four of the lies that worry loves to tell. They aren't the only ones, but they are some of the lies you'll encounter most. Fighting back against worry is like any other training regimen or discipline. At first, each effort feels a bit clunky and forced. If you've been sitting in worry for some time, it's likely going to be an adjustment to begin to identify the lies. They may have become more camouflaged as you've become more acquainted with their presence over time.

But it's never too late to start. And remember, through Jesus you have all the power you need to win this war on worry. Romans 8:11 says, "If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies because of his Spirit, who lives in you."

That first step might feel exhausting or awkward. It's like the first workout when you're trying to get back in shape. But stick with it and keep showing up. Keep calling out the lies that worry is speaking and keep surrendering those lies to God, replacing them with the truths of His Word. I believe that if you commit and start down this path, the Spirit will continue to empower you to fight the good fight.

Worry ultimately spends a lot of time and effort trying to get you to avoid any and all hardships that *might* come against you. The closer you stay to God and the more you call out the lies of worry, the more you'll come to realize that *avoidance* isn't the desired outcome of the Christian life. No, the goal of the life of the believer is *assurance*. Assurance is what turns a *what if* into an *even if* through the truth of *what is*. God is good. Loving. Kind. Mighty in

power. Holy. Healer. He *is*, and because of that truth, you can have assurance no matter what comes against you.

PRAYER

Father, thank You that You are true and what You say is the truth. I am grateful for the firm foundation You provide, and I desire to anchor my life in You. I know the Enemy is working against me, but by Your power and with Your grace, help me to fight well and stand firm.

DISCUSSION AND REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. Are there any negative thoughts that you consistently find yourself coming back to? If so, write those down below.

WORRY IS A LIAR

2. Which of the four lies does worry speak to you most often?

3. What are some practical tools you can use to spot the lies of worry in your day-to-day life?

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4. How can you invite your community to help you spot the lies of worry in your life?
