



*a personal story by* Jill Briscoe

me **WORRY?**



## I am a Christian and I worry.

I know I am not supposed to worry. Jesus said it Himself in Matthew, Chapter 6, but I have been a lifelong worrier. I worry about the same things that you do...family, relationships, the church, the world, the past, the future, the present.

I understand why people who don't know Jesus might worry. They don't know the Creator of the world who can hush their fears. They have no one to assure them there is something greater beyond this world – a heaven and a Christ who will take them there someday. As a believer in Jesus Christ, I understand all of that. But the truth is that many of us who treasure these truths in our hearts worry just the same.

I think in word pictures – I always have. When I think of worry, I see a picture of Joshua marching around Jericho. I'm sure Joshua was worrying...think of it, forty years and the Israelites haven't won a battle. They didn't have a very good track record. I've no doubt that he was remembering the past and worrying about how they would conquer Jericho.

I realize that some days I go around and around Jericho, and I can't stop, but God has revealed so much to me on my well-worn path. **Let's take a walk together around Jericho and learn God's truths about worry.**



## Worry is **not of God**. It is a distraction from the Evil One

The devil wants us to worry. In fact, he is worried if we aren't worrying! Worry and fear are his favorite ways to keep us distracted from God. When we worry, we essentially tell God that we don't trust Him with our circumstances. If we don't trust Him, we certainly won't depend on Him!

The devil doesn't stop once he gets us to worry. He jumps on the back of it, turns it into terror and then paralyzing fear. The Lord Himself said that He has given us a spirit of power and love and not fear. Why then would we consider accepting this fear, this terror, when it comes directly from the devil? **You see, worry isn't just distracting and draining; worry is truly a spiritual battle.**

Joshua had a lot to worry about as he headed into the battle to overtake Jericho. But, he did not allow himself to become distracted from God. In Joshua 1:9, God commanded him, "...Do not be terrified, do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go." The Lord gave both a command and a promise that He would be there in the midst of battle. Jesus is in the midst of our worry battle too, even if the devil tries to convince you otherwise.

*"For God gave us not a spirit of fearfulness; but of power and love and discipline."*

2 Timothy 1:7



## Worry takes our focus off today and what **God has for us**

The word used in the Bible for anxiety is merimnao. It means an anxiety that obsesses so you can't think of anything else. That is exactly what worry does to me. Many of us spend our energy worrying about things that might happen in the future. Why don't we focus on what God has for us today?

In the story of Jericho, God commanded Joshua to walk around the city once each day. It was a heavily fortified city and was going to be difficult to conquer. Yet, His command was to walk around it just once and trust.

Sometimes, at day's end, I'm still tramping around Jericho, not stopping until I am exhausted. Have you done that...gone around and around your worries until you can't take another step? Of course you're exhausted. God has only given you the strength to go around once!

Several years ago, I began the discipline of going around worries just once. I don't always manage to do it. But, it's what God commands. God wants you to attend to what He has for you today. Maybe it's your family, children, neighbors, or parents. **The point is the Lord has wonderful plans for you, but you can't be part of them if you are busy circling Jericho!**





*"Joshua got up early the next morning and the priests took up the ark of the Lord."*

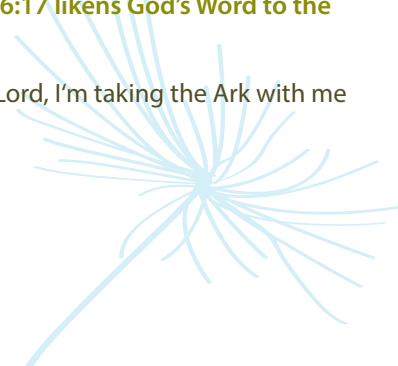
Joshua 6:12

## He gives us all we need to overcome worry

Years ago, while preparing to speak at a conference, I shared my overwhelming worries about my young daughter with a dear woman at the event. I explained to her how I likened my worrying to Joshua going around Jericho. Later, she wrote to remind me that when Joshua went round and round Jericho, he took God's Word in the Ark of the Covenant with him.

At the beginning of the story after God tells him not to worry or be terrified, Joshua returns to camp and tells the officers, "Go through the camp and tell the people, 'Get your supplies ready.'" Of course, Joshua needed supplies and so do we! Joshua needed uniforms and swords and such, but he really needed God's Word. So do we! **Ephesians 6:17 likens God's Word to the "sword of the Spirit."**

Now when I begin to circle Jericho, I say, "Lord, I'm taking the Ark with me and I want to hear what you have to say."





## God is in control. So, be strong and courageous

One reason that we worry is that we want to have control, and we don't. But, God said we should not have a spirit of fear because He is in control of all things. Consider what Jesus did in Mark, Chapter 4. The disciples were out on the sea and a terrible storm came up. Jesus was sleeping. The twelve were worried and panicked for their lives. They woke Jesus and He quieted the storm with just three words, "Quiet. Be still." It occurred to me that the Lord often says the same thing to us as we are thrown about in the storms of our lives. **He whispers to us, "Quiet, be still. Know that I am God."**

Although Joshua was probably worried and confused about the unusual instructions to march around Jericho, he followed God's instructions to the letter. Joshua understood what so many of us do not. Courage is trusting an almighty God because He has proven Himself to be faithful in the past and can be trusted with the future. Courage isn't a feeling that you wait for. Courage is doing when you don't have courage. Courage is doing it scared. Courage is doing it because it's the right thing to do. To quote Dorothy Bernard, "Courage is fear that has said its prayers." And you know what? God delights in coming through!



*"Don't fret or worry. Instead of worrying, pray."*

Philippians 4:6-7

## Fear and faith **cannot live together**

You cannot pray and worry at the same time. It's impossible. I've tried just so I can say that it's impossible! When I am praying, I have to stop to worry.

One of the best things I've ever heard on the subject of worry comes from a paraphrase of Philippians 4 from The Message: "Celebrate God all day, every day. Don't fret or worry. Instead of worrying, pray. Let petitions and praises shape your worries into prayers, letting God know your concerns. Before you know it, a sense of God's wholeness, everything coming together for good, will come and settle you down. It's wonderful what happens when Christ displaces worry at the center of your life."

Instead of worrying, pray. It's not a suggestion or a recommendation, but a command from a Heavenly Father who is all powerful, all knowing, and all loving. He desires for us to seek Him so He can transform our worry into prayers that have power. **So, keep praying—all day, every day.** Celebrate God, revel in Him, and shape your worries into prayers. It doesn't mean that Jericho isn't there. You may still have to walk around it once a day. It just means that the Lord gives you eyes to look at it in a whole different way.

Heavenly Father, thank you for your Word. Thank you for Joshua. Thank you that he went once around Jericho and did what he was told. Help us to take your Word into our hearts and go around our worries just once a day and trust that you are in control. Help us to discipline our hearts and minds and to trust that with every step we take towards Jericho, the forces of Heaven, God and all His angels are with us. In the name of Jesus,

*Amen!*







**Jill Briscoe** is real, her words are penetrating and her message challenging. Born and educated in England, Jill has a Bible teaching ministry that spans the globe. Heard on radio and online through Telling the Truth, she is the author of numerous books, speaks extensively around the world, and is executive editor of *Just Between Us*, a magazine for encouraging and equipping women for a life of faith. For over 20 years, Jill served on the boards of World Relief and Christianity Today, Inc. Both Jill and her husband, Stuart Briscoe, have served as ministers-at-large at Elmbrook Church in suburban Milwaukee, Wisconsin. They have three children and thirteen grandchildren.

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