

Don't Worry – It Will be Okay

By Bobby Schuller

Well today I want to tell you something you already know and believe and that is this: life is better relaxed. Oh man, isn't that the truth? Life is better relaxed. And if you're here today, I have good news for you. Whatever it is you're going through, you and God are going to get through this.

So today, you can drop your shoulders, you can take a deep breath, you can think about good things, and you can enjoy every single moment in this church. I want you to know life with all of its challenges, and there are many, you can let those things go to God because he is strong enough, faithful enough to deliver us and deliver you, and he will and that's a promise. So you and God are getting through this so you can let go today. Look life is an anxious thing, isn't it? And we need to constantly train ourselves in a world that makes us feel worried, we need to train ourselves to let go, to recognize that there's so many things we can't control, and we need to learn to abandon those outcomes to God so that we can live every day with joy, vision and passion. Can I get an amen?

The thing that made me most anxious was becoming a dad. Being a parent is an anxiety ridden experience. I remember I was walking with Evelyn Freed and I said 'Evelyn, I can't wait till my kids are teenagers then I don't have to worry about them anymore.' You know? You're

looking at me like he's just such a young green-eared kid. She said 'Bobby, parenting is a life sentence.'

Parenting worries us, news worries us. Most news is bad news, right? And many of the terrible news stories that come through, there are some things we can do, we can do things like vote and we can do things like pray, and especially praying is a good thing to do, voting is good, too. But in the end, how much can you really control?

I remember when I started to have contempt, especially for TV news, when one day I was like watching and they're like, "tonight at eleven, five things that will kill your kids, but first look at the squirrel waterskiing." I was like come on. So the news trains us to be worry warts. And you know what the news can kind of do, in fact this guy Shawn Achor called it medical school syndrome when medical students enroll in medical school because all they're doing is studying sicknesses and diseases, all of them come up with real diseases and many of them like think they're sick. And he was saying 'and this is what's happening to our world.' Very often we watch the news so much, there's so much bad news that we think the relationship between bad news and good news in life is proportional to what we see on TV or what we read in the newspaper or on Twitter. And the truth is that bad news is good news for the news companies.

You know what, let go of the bad news. I have good news for you. Good things are going to happen in your life. God's going to open up

heaven and pour out so much blessing on your life there's not enough room to contain it. Your best days are ahead of you. Your best days are ahead of you and God just can't wait to lead you from one victory to another. So you don't have to worry, you don't have to stress, you don't have to have anxiety, you can just let it go because God is very strong and very faithful. Can I get an amen? Can I get a relaxed amen like an amen. That's good. That's good, guys. That's very good.

Very often, when we're feeling stressed, we fantasize about being somewhere else, not here where we're actually relaxed. I always go to the same place. I have no idea why I'm this way. But I always picture myself in swimming trunks laying on a gnarly wooden dock in the Caribbean, where I've never been. I've never been to the Caribbean, by the way; emerald water, palm trees and a little fishing boat that's there just in case I want to go out fishing or hunting for treasure. And I just lay there not a care in the world. And I noticed this like a few weeks ago, and I'm like why do I always picture myself there? And I asked Hannah, I was like do you have these fantasies? She's like yes but mine's a bit more refined. She didn't say that. I picture myself in an English cottage like Elizabeth Bennett from *Pride and Prejudice* on a warm English day walking along the Dover cliffs pondering poetry and life. She didn't say that, either, but that's basically it.

At its heart, very often when we feel stressed or maybe you went to college you remember finals where you had to write a thesis or you got a

project due for work; you just got something that's worrying you or stressing you out, very often you kick back and you fanaticize just being somewhere else. And what I want to point out about those fantasies is that very often we think about a place, what's really happening is we're fantasizing about a state of mind. We're fantasizing what it would be like to be care free, to be worry free, to be relaxed because intuitively we all know that life is better relaxed. And in fact when Bill Gaultierre asked Dallas Willard, a spiritual titan, who was one of the greatest pastors, theologians, philosophers, what's the one word that you think best describes Jesus. He said relaxed! Why? Cause Jesus knew. It wasn't naiveté, and it wasn't stupidity. Jesus was the smartest human being who's ever lived and he knew the faithfulness and the character of the Father. And he knew he was doing God's calling. And yes, he still got crucified, but God raised him from the dead to change the world.

So trials come and difficulties come, but look you can relax and you can trust that when we walk by faith, God's going to get you through this. He always does, he always will. So you can live today worry free and that is very, very good news. And by the way, you're not a worrier. You know that. You're not a worrisome person, you're not an anxious person, you're a lot stronger than you think. And I think the Lord wants me to remind you today that you are strong, you're stable, you are a joyful person who has always walked by faith, and you're not going to start

worrying today. Yes, we run into scary things, we run into challenges, but it's going to be all right. He's going to get you through.

Everything I'm preaching is from the bible. These are Jesus' exact words in the Sermon on the Mount. Before he says this, Jesus tells us that the "eye is the lamp of the body." And he says "if your eyes are good, your whole body will be filled with light." When I memorized the Sermon on the Mount years ago, I wanted it to really get in my blood. And as I was reading it, that one was confusing to me. I didn't quite understand it. And I know now. I know what he was saying. "The eye is the lamp of the body." It's like windows to your soul. In the sense that whatever you look at, that's what's going to fill your body.

So if you're looking at positive things, good things, as Paul says "whatever is pure, whatever is noble, whatever," etc. As you look at the good things of life, your whole body gets filled with light. But when we focus on the negative, on the bad stuff that's happening and all the nasty circumstances of life, our whole body gets full of anger, bitterness, fear, darkness. And to look at the light doesn't mean you don't see the darkness, it means you focus on the light. All of you, right now, as you're looking at this building, are focusing on the light but the darkness gives us shape, right? If you look at this wall, for example, there are lots of darkness and lots of light. Some things are lit up and some things are in the shadows. But what you're looking at is what is illuminated. And so in

life, we see the darkness and we see the light, but we focus on what's light so that our whole body will be filled with light.

So in life, there is so much light and so much good that is happening. Focus on what is good, focus on the dream God put on your heart, focus on his character, focus on the word, connect with your friends and your family deeply, and let go of all that dark stuff. Don't let those things entangle you. The enemy's desire is to get your focus off of what is light onto what is dark, onto regrets, onto beating yourself up. Just let it go! Let it go. God's strong enough to carry. It's going to be all right. Don't worry.

And after he says that, Jesus then tells us that exact thing – don't worry. He says, "Therefore I tell you do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink or about your body, what you will wear. Is life not more important than food and the body more important than clothes? Look at the birds of the air. They don't sow or reap or store anything away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds all of them. Are you not much more valuable than they?" You are, by the way. You're so valuable to God.

And then he says, "Can anyone of you by worrying you add a single hour to your life. And why do you worry about your clothes? See how the flowers of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. If that's how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is

thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you, oh you of little faith. So do not worry saying what shall we eat or what shall we drink or what shall we wear. For the Pagans run after these things and your heavenly Father knows you need them. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness and all of these other things will be added to you.”

Okay. So Jesus gives us this formula. I remember I was running recently out in the parks. If you're watching from somewhere else, California is not a very green place, Southern California in particular. And we've got a lot of rain lately. We're finally out of the drought, which is good. So that's great. And I was with somebody and he was like 'man it's like Ireland in Southern California. So green.'

And I was walking around and I saw these birds, sparrows that were eating bugs out of the sky, which was already very satisfying because I hate bugs, I hate flies and gnats, just watching birds just swoop them out of the sky, watching it was like watching children at play. And then they would go up and they would sit on a branch or on a wire and they were all super close to each other, like talking like this, and they're all like chattering like they're in a sewing circle or something. And it was so just fun, in a way, watching birds at play.

And that's exactly what they were doing, they were playing. They're not worried about where their next fly is going to come from. They're not worried about their next tree branch. So this is what Jesus says. Look at those birds. It's easy in life sometimes to not look at a bird and feel a

little jealous. They can fly. They don't have to eat anything. I mean they eat but it's always there for them. And Jesus says just look at them.

And very often it reminds us of when we were children. Most of us, when we were children, didn't worry about much, and even when we did, we didn't worry about it very long. We just trusted. We trusted our parents, maybe, or trusted God. And he says look at how the lilies of the field grow, and I remember that same day, just looking at all just a hill full of mustard. I mean just a bright yellow hill and looking down at lilies and seeing all those flowers grow and just going God takes so much pleasure in this, in all of this. And so often people will never even see it and its like God doesn't even care. It's like it's for him. He just loves it so much.

And Jesus' asks are you not much more valuable than they. And the obvious answer is yes. You are so much more valuable than you think, more valuable than any animal or flower. God's going to take care of you and you need to know that. Let it strengthen you, let it galvanize your bones, let it give you exactly what you need to move forward and not be encumbered by the worries and the fears of this world. You and God are getting through this. You are going to get your victory and just stop worrying about and enjoy today because today is only coming once. Today's a special day. Tomorrow today will be gone. So enjoy it.

Seek first his kingdom; seek first his righteousness and all this other stuff will be added to you. If you need it, he'll give it to you. Don't

worry. That's what Jesus tells us and I believe it. Do you? So you are relaxed, you're a relaxed person, you're a strong person. You're not an anxious person. It doesn't matter if you've messed up from time to time. You're on a good trajectory. God is getting you to your destiny. You're going to get there. Nobody's perfect. Some people are just better at hiding their flaws than others. You're going to do great, and so stay relaxed. It's going to be okay. Can I get an amen?

The Christian journey is one of letting go because letting go is how you trust. First thing you let go of is your pride and your sin. That's how you get saved. But after that, you find that you have to let go of a lot of other stuff, too. Sometimes you have to let go of friends. Sometimes you got to let go of certain things in your life and ultimately we always realize that every time God tells us to let go of something, we let it go to him, it's not to lose something, it's so that we have empty hands to gain something better. You can't hold all of that stuff at the same time. Even when we die, and we all will, we let go of our life so we can gain new life. What a joy. What a joy. Every time God asks us to let go of something is because he wants to give us something better. So give it to him by faith. You always have something better coming when you're doing life with Jesus. I believe it with all my heart.

All earthly power is temporary. We're not owners, we're managers. God gives it to us for a time for a specific purpose and when that purpose

is over, we yield it back to him so that he can give us something better. So let it go. Let it go. It's going to be okay.

I feel like the world says let it go a lot, society says let it go, but if I weren't a Christian, I would find that bad advice because if I didn't know God or God's character, or hadn't experienced God, who am I going to let it go to? And a lot of times the response is the universe. But let me tell you, the universe is what got me in this mess. You know that thing that makes hurricanes and asteroids? I'm not trusting it to that, no way. I've seen sharks. That's part of the universe. God is loving. I need to trust it to God; someone who thinks, someone who's rational, loving and good. And he is loving and he is rational and he's the most joyful person in the universe, and he made the universe, and he loves you, and he cares about the biggest things and he cares about the very smallest things. And he cares very much for you, so you can trust it to him. Can I get an amen? Every time you've trusted him in the past, it's been good and he's going to keep being good.

One of my favorite authors is Henri Nouwen, and I love the character of Henri Nouwen because he's like an old man. He died in 1996, but even as an old man he was kind of like a little boy. He was a priest. He preached, actually, at the Crystal Cathedral towards the end of his life, but he'd always get caught on these little adventures. And one of my favorite is when he accidentally started touring with a circus troupe. He went to a circus with some friends of his, and he loved it so much he

went the next day, and then he was like a fan boy so he like went up afterwards and talked to them, and they're like you should come to our practices. So he started going to their practices. Then they were giving him free tickets all the time because he became their biggest fan, and then they were like you should just come on tour with us and he's like all right, I'll tour with you. And so he did! And he would watch every single day as the flyer, that's the one who goes through the air fifteen feet, would do flips and all sorts of stuff, and then get caught by this other person and be brought to safety.

He became friends with one of these guys and the flyer, the star of the show, his name was Rodleigh, and this is his account. He says, "One day I was sitting with Rodleigh, the leader of the troupe, in his caravan talking about flying." He said, "As a flyer, I must have complete trust in my catcher. The public might think that I'm a great star of the trapeze, but the real star is Joe, my catcher." By the way, I love how the flyer's name is Rodleigh, and the Catcher's name is Joe. "He has to be there for me with split second precision and grab me out of the air as I come to him in the long jump."

"How does it work," I asked.

"The secret," Rodleigh said, "is that the flyer does nothing and the catcher does everything. When I fly to Joe, I have simply to stretch out my arms and hands and wait for him to catch me and pull me safely over the apron behind the catch bar."

“You do nothing?” I said surprised.

“Nothing,” Rodleigh repeated. “The worst thing a flyer can do is try to catch the catcher. I’m not supposed to catch Joe, its Joe’s task to catch me. If I grab Joe’s wrist, I might break them or he might break mine and that would be the end for both of us. A flyer must fly and a catcher must catch and the flyer must trust with outstretched arms that his catcher will be there for him.”

Your catcher will be there for you. You’re a flyer, you’re meant to fly, not catch. And as you go through life, so much of life as a believer is when one journey has ended you just raise those hands up into the air as you fly through the sky and just know your catcher will be there with outstretched arms. Amen? He is faithful. So you can relax. You can enjoy today as you’re soaring and flipping through the air. Don’t freak out, that’s the worst thing you can do.

Life is better relaxed. It doesn’t mean you give up. You can work hard relaxed. Did you know that? I go to Rancho Capistrano every Friday and for years I’ve seen the same old timer cowboy out there working his butt off so hard, and yet he looks so relaxed. He looks like the most peaceful zen-like chilled out guy ever. And I think I’ve only talked to him twice, and one time I talked to him and he just said his wife had died years ago, and he talked about how he was going to see her again, and he said I just keep my eyes on heaven, that’s all that matters. Just keep my eyes on heaven. I never forgot that.

You can work hard and be relaxed if you keep your eyes on God and on heaven. It doesn't mean this world doesn't matter. This world is incredibly important to God. But it means taking a relaxed view of your work in general, and a positive view of your outlook.

I remember one pastor said this to me – he said my whole life changed when I realized this: Life is not happening to you, it is happening for you. We always think that life is like something we need to stay away from, something that's harming us, something that's against us, something that is random and chaotic and horrible. But what if the giver of life and the God of this world is behind a lot of the stuff you're afraid of that is in truth in the end happening for your benefit. I don't think God made you sick, he didn't. I don't think God punishes you. Jesus never went around making people sick to teach them something. But what if through your experiences in life God is going to always bring you from victory to victory. That is the truth! That's the truth. The worst it is now, the better it's going to be tomorrow. That is resurrection Christian theology. That what the devil meant for bad, God's going to turn it around for good. Life is not happening to you, life is happening for you. Become a positive person, a possibility thinker that falls in love with all the many possibilities; all the things that could happen in your life. And as you do that, your vision will get clearer, your heart will be bolder, you'll be stronger, and you are strong and you are bold, and you are relaxed and I'm proud of you. Life is better relaxed, did you know that?

And you will be more successful in life if you are relaxed in your approach to life. This is because when we relax our eyes, our eyes become clearer and we're able to see a brighter future. When we try and manage and control.. what can you control, by the way? When we try and control and manage outcomes and make things happen manufacturing, we want to see things, when we do that, we get stressed out, we get blurred and we get short sighted. We become myopic.

And I think that walking by faith and seeing God's call for your life is a bit like seeing a stereogram. You remember those? I brought one. A stereogram. It's those 90's computer generated 3-D images. I love stereogram's because they're such a great analogy for walking by faith. It's a two dimensional bizarre abstract image, obviously made by a computer. But what most people know, but not everyone can see is that there's a hidden image within it. It's a three dimensional image. And here is the irony – the only way to see the three dimensional image is to relax your eyes. Most people try harder, they focus, they zero in. That's the worst thing you can do. I was actually reading a report from a doctor that said the more effort you give a 3-D image, the worse. You actually have to look through the image. You have to relax your eyes so that your brain can go from the reptilian part of your brain where we fight in flight and get all stressed out, and move to the neo-cortex where all creativity and language and art comes from. So you have to just relax.

All right, get rid of that image or nobody's going to hear anything I'm about to say. There is an image there. It was Jonah, Jonah and the Whale. I'm sorry if you didn't see it. I could have. I didn't turn around and look but..

So a stereogram, seeing God's call on your life is a bit like looking at a stereogram. When we get stressed out, when we try and control everything, life becomes a bit two dimensional. We miss out on the depth and the goodness of life. When we relax, we walk by faith we see the depth of life. We see clearer, we see farther, we see something no one else can see. We become hopeful visionaries with a way forward.

And that's what God has for you. God is giving you relaxed vision that can see deeper, can see behind the curtain, can see more that is going on. You don't get encumbered by all those other things. And as you become more relaxed and a trusting person, as you let your shoulders drop, you move from being a controlling person to an empowering person. You're not a controlling leader, you're an empowering leader. You're not a controlling spouse, you're an empowering spouse. Can I get an amen from.. no amen's, nobody wants to get in trouble. You go from being a controlling parent to an empowering parent; a controlling friend to an empowering friend. Recognize you'll be there for your friends, but you don't need to judge, you don't need to control, you don't need to manufacture and you don't need to manipulate. You just be there for people. Give them advice when they ask for it. Imagine that.

And so for all of us, I remember when I was reading Lord of the Rings, cause it's a book, my friends. And in Fellowship of the Ring there's this moment where this group of people has just gone through hell. I mean they have been beat up. They were like these happy chubby little hobbits, eating their food, enjoying life, and they were thrust into this adventure by Gandalf, thanks a lot. And they've gone through hell. And they arrive at this elf city and there's something about this place that invites them back into sort of a state of mind. They know they're going to have to leave, they're going to have to do other things. You'd think they'd be worried because they're going to have to carry this ring into Mordor and all this stuff, and instead they're just living each day with joy and rest. And this was the line that Tolkien wrote: "The future, good or ill, was not forgotten but ceased to have any power over the present. Health and hope grew strong in them and they were content with each day as it came, taking pleasure in every meal and every word in song."

So, that's what God has for you. God has in store for you a life in which, though you have challenges, big challenges because you've got big dreams, you have big obstacles, he's going to give you everything you need to endure so today you can just smile and you can relax and you can live every moment with hope and joy and know that only the best is going to happen. Life is working for you, not against you. God is working on your behalf, not against you. He's not prohibiting you, he's not hurting you. The best is yet to come in your life, so today we can relax,

give it to God and know that he's just going to carry us from victory to victory. If you believe it, say amen.

God, thank you that you love us, that you're powerful, that you're strong, that you're faithful, that you're involved, and we give it to you. We give our lives, our stresses, everything, we give it to you and we trust it to you. You are good, and it's in your name we pray, amen.