

## The Fear Factory – Isaiah 7

Isaiah 7:4 - ***“TELL HIM TO STOP WORRYING.”***

And I love that Jesus echoes this as if responding to Isaiah’s command in Matthew 6:25:  
***“Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life.”***

Don’t worry is a remix of the most common command in scripture.

***“Don’t be afraid.”***

Fear is often involuntary, it’s the response to a specific perceived threat - valid or not.  
And when it’s valid – ***fear can be life saving.***

But then there is worry.

Gavin DeBecker says in his book the Gift of Fear:

***“To worry oneself is a form of self-harassment ... Worry is the fear we manufacture.”***

**Worry is manufactured fear.**

**Isaiah 7:1-9 (READ)**

News networks need a crisis of the day where we’re forced to take sides.

If they can’t find one, they’ll make one. If there’s a small one, they’ll make it a big one.

Why? Because **fear sells.**

Where the Bible would tell us – ***“Tell him to stop worrying. Tell her she doesn’t need to fear.”***

So much of the news tells us – ***“Fire up the fear factory. This is something you should be worried about.”***

***why does it work??*** **Fear energizes.** And not just metaphorically. The science attests to this. The amygdala is where our impulsive and unconscious responses happen – like fear and bias. As it is with many of the strong emotions that fire up our brain, there’s a chemical release of dopamine and serotonin when we feel fear. So when we fear, we get a dopamine reward in our brain. ***It sounds absurd, but scientifically speaking - fear feels good.*** From roller coaster buffs to horror movie enthusiasts, we can tap into this.

But politicians and advertisers also will tap into this, well aware that fear energizes the masses, and as a result we can become fear junkies hooked on the dopamine it feeds us.

**GARBAGE IN GARBAGE OUT** - Faulty data produces faulty results.

How much of our day to day pessimism and stress and worry is an input problem?

***“staying in the know”*** can produce unstable Christians who ***“stay worried”***

We become fueled by fear instead of love.

When fear takes root it begins manufacturing worry.

We need to heed again and again the words in Isaiah 7:6

***“Tell him to stop worrying. Tell him he doesn’t need to fear”***

## WORRY VS ANXIETY

**1 Peter 5:7** says - *Cast all your cares upon him, for he cares for you.*

Tragically, when anxiety persists this verse can bring shame instead of the revelation that God cares for you.

While worry happens in our thoughts - common reactions to events.

Anxiety quite literally happens in our body and brain, and can be a domineering fixture that interferes with your ability to function. Clinical anxiety, clinical depression, PTSD – these are all matter of the brain, produced by an overactive amygdala. The threat center of the brain is in constant fight, flight or freeze mode.

The message of the church has been if you were OK with God, you'd be OK.

So rather than the message of God cares for you, the Church can pile guilt and shame on top of anxiety or depression.

**So to be clear - know that when I use the word worry tonight and reflect on this command to not worry – I'm speaking about day to day, general worry, the fears we manufacture... what God is speaking to specifically in this passage through the prophet Isaiah.**

## WORRY vs CONCERN

God doesn't say through Isaiah **“tell him not to concern himself.”** He says **“don't worry.”**

*concern* is a good thing when it's

- 1.) Directed at the right things.**
- 2.) Kept from extremes.**
- 3.) And causes us to act.**

## NOISE VS SIGNAL

Noise is a thought that has no bearing on an immediate issue or a solution to it.

Signal is a thought or data that is meaningful to finding a solution.

You can do something about a signal. Signals come with solutions.

Signals **“cause us to act”**

**Proverbs 29:7** says:

*The righteous care about justice for the poor, but the wicked have no such concern.*

This verse states a lack of concern can be plain wicked.

Concern should fuel our compassion and our loving others well.

**Psalms 47:8** says - **“God reigns above the nations, sitting on his holy throne.”**

“God is on the throne” should spark praise in any and every season.

But “God is on the throne” should spark passivity in no season.

## A PROMISED SIGN

### Isaiah 7:10-12

King Ahaz refuses ... and his excuse amounts to false humility.

**Piety** and **faith** are two different things.

The demons in the Gospels address Jesus with piety.

But God wants something more than piety, he wants obedience.

God wanted Ahaz's trusting obedience.

Ahaz refuses under a mask of piety.

Isaiah 7:14 it says: ***A virgin will conceive a child, and she will give birth to a son and name him Immanuel, which means "God with us."***

This was a two-fold sign with a single meaning but double significance.

Because Jesus took on flesh. Born of a virgin. Immanuel, God with us.

***God with us*** is one of the most profound truths in all of scripture.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer's sermon "Overcoming Fear" preached on January 15<sup>th</sup>, 1933, between world wars:

*"Let's say there is a ship on the high sea, having a fierce struggle with the waves. The storm wind is blowing harder by the minute. The boat is small, tossed about like a toy; the sky is dark; the sailors' strength is failing. Then one of them is gripped by . . . whom? what? . . . he cannot tell himself. But someone is there in the boat who wasn't there before. . . . Suddenly he can no longer see or hear anything, can no longer row, a wave overwhelms him, and in final desperation he shrieks: Stranger in this boat, who are you? And the other answers, "I am Fear." All hope is lost, Fear is in the boat... **Fear is in the boat, in Germany, in our own lives and in the nave of this church—naked fear of an hour from now, of tomorrow and the day after.**"*

And we too need the reminder in our culture fueled by fear of who is with us in the proverbial boat - Jesus. The one whose words calm storms.

*"Now they were **more afraid than ever** and said to each other, "Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him!"* - Fear of the winds and waves was eclipsed by a proper fear

## A PROPER FEAR

King Ahaz's rejection of Isaiah's message is almost immediate.

He chooses to place his trust in Assyria instead of God.

The fears of his flesh and the worries he had eclipsed his appropriate fear of God.

**Isaiah 8:11-14** reads:

*The Lord has given me a strong warning not to think like everyone else does.  
He said, "Don't call everything a conspiracy, like they do,  
and don't live in dread of what frightens them.  
Make the Lord of Heaven's Armies holy in your life.  
He is the one you should fear.  
He is the one who should make you tremble.  
He will keep you safe."*

There is a proper fear of God that puts everything else in its proper place.  
Including worry.

His son and successor Hezekiah didn't make the same mistake.  
Isaiah 7 mentions ***"the aqueduct of the upper pool on the road to the washerman's field"***  
As the place where Isaiah had stood outside the walls of Judah to prophesy to Ahaz.

In **Isaiah 36:2**, 34 years later, the commander of the Assyrian army comes to collect on the terrible agreement King Ahaz had made with Assyria. He orders Judah to surrender.  
Where does he stand as he does this?  
At the same aqueduct Isaiah had met with Hezekiah's father, saying:  
***"Tell him to stop worrying. Tell him there's nothing to fear."***

Unlike King Ahaz, his son King Hezekiah doesn't succumb to fear and worry.

In the past when people have been in a gauntlet and asked how I survive our day to day,  
I've pointed to this passage as instructive...

**FIRST - They don't say a word back.**

Because, as it says in verse 21 – the king had commanded ***"don't answer him."***  
Circumstances will invite us to worry, but here's the thing - we don't always have to RSVP.

So much of my life is out of my control.

The poet Ivan Nuru wrote: ***"If it's out of your hands it deserves freedom from your mind too."***  
It's noise.

BUT - even when it's a signal, what's your first impulse? Who do you send your RSVP to?  
Our fear factory or God's presense?

**SECOND – Hezekiah prays** – Hezekiah's first impulse wasn't to shout back over the wall at the enemy, it was to tear his robes in grief and immediately go into the temple to pray, ordering others to do the same.

And **THIRDLY**, we see Hezekiah has other people in his life who can speak God's truth to him in hard times. Not just advisors, but Isaiah the prophet who reminded Hezekiah of God's truth.  
We need friends who are discerning enough to know when to sit with us and lament, and when to heed Isaiah's command to ***"tell them not to worry"***

**“and it came to pass.”**

**Romans 8:18—*“what we suffer now is nothing compared to the glory he will reveal to us later”***

**2 Corinthians 4:18 – *“so we don’t look at the troubles we can see now, rather we fix our gaze on things that cannot be seen.”***

**Psalm 118:5-6**

**“In my [distress / stress / worry / anxiety] I prayed to the LORD,**

**And the LORD answered me and set me free.**

**The LORD is for me, so I will have no fear.”**

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