

Killing What's Killing You | Worry/Fear

Aaron Brockett | Judges 6:11-17

Alright, good morning. How's everybody doing today? Good to see you today. We have survived snowpocalypse 2019. It's good to have you guys.

We are one church gathering in multiple spaces and places around our city. So I just want to say hello to each and every one of our campuses, whether you are joining us from North, Downtown, West or maybe some of you tuning in online and those of you here at Northwest. We're really, really glad to have you and especially if this is your first time to be with us, maybe you're a guest.

We are in week two of a four-part series of messages that we're simply calling *Killing What's Killing You*. This whole idea really stems from something that a guy by the name of John Owen, he's a dead theologian, said a long, long time ago. He wrote, "Be killing sin or sin be killing you."

And I think that John Owen must have been studying Romans, chapter 8 because this guy named Paul writes the book of Romans and he says something very similar in verse 13. He said, "But if through the power of the Spirit you **put to death** the deeds of your sinful nature, **you will live.**"

So what we want to do as we begin a brand new year is we want to identify some of the things that have been killing us. And what I mean by that is what are some of the things that are holding us back? What held you back in 2018? What are some of the things that kept getting in the way? And we want to go after that and remove it.

I said this last week—I'm not a New Year's resolution hater. I think that you should make a bunch of resolutions and I hope that you accomplish all of them; I think you should set goals and go after them.

But as I reflect back on some of the things that have actually hindered me from accomplishing some of the resolutions or goals in my life, it's not that I wasn't well intentioned, it's not that I couldn't actually achieve them or that they were too far away to achieve them, it was that something got in the way.

Something actually short-circuited my ability to follow through on them and achieve them. There was something that was holding me back. And that's what we want to do as we start off a brand new year. We want to identify some of those things.

Last week I used this analogy or metaphor to try to help us visually with this; it's of a spider web. I just said that if we walk into a spider web chances are our reaction is to flail our arms

and run around and to get rid of it and then to identify all of the other webs that we see and get rid of those. They'll go away for a while until something spins a new web that we walk into. So if we want to get rid of some of these webs we've got to identify the thing that spun the web to begin with.

So last week we talked about the web of envy that all of us can walk into and if envy is the web that we walk into chances are that the thing that spun that web is this thing called comparison. And the difference between comparison and actually being inspired or motivated by somebody else is that what we end up doing is we compare ourselves and our blessings and our opportunities with someone else to try to determine our own sense of worth. We talked about that last week. If you missed that message you can go and catch up on it.

Today here is where we are. I want to talk about the web of worry. Any worriers in the room? Any of you worried that I was going to ask that question just a second ago? Man, I have a tendency to let worry into my life and I don't mean to mix too many metaphors but you know, worry to me almost... Worry is always there. There's always something to be worried about.

It kind of feels like these rabid dogs that are kind of chained up in my mind and I can always hear them barking and they are just about ready to break free and come crashing in. And if worry is the thing that we are wrestling with, chances are fear is behind it. So what are some of the things that maybe you're afraid of? There are a whole bunch of things that I can think of.

About 13 years ago, my grandparents offered to take our whole extended family on a vacation. They wanted to take some of their savings and just bless our family with that. We were really grateful for the opportunity to do that with them.

They took us to this all-inclusive resort in the Dominican Republic. And if you've ever been to an all-inclusive you know there's really no reason to leave. Everything that you could want is right there on the hotel grounds. But you can meet with the concierge. And there were several trips, some excursions that we could book with the concierge. One of them was the zoo.

So my wife wanted to take—we only had two kids at the time and they were both very, very young—she wanted to take our kids to the zoo and my sister agreed that she would take her little boy to the zoo. So they booked the ticket. The guys in the family, we all booked a deep sea fishing trip during that time.

And about 30 minutes before I had to get Lindsay and the kids up to the lobby where the tour bus would pick them up and take them to the zoo, I ended up locking the keys to our hotel room inside. Thank you very much, right? One of my gifts and timing is everything.

So we're waiting for the hotel staff to get to our room to unlock it for us so we can get the key and Lindsay really needed to get into the room—she needed her purse and some other things. By the time they came to let us into the room, she missed the tour bus. We were late.

So we rushed up to the front. I talked to the concierge. Asked if there was anything he could do. And what happened next happened so fast that I didn't really have time to process it. Immediately the concierge called a taxi cab to the front.

This was long before the days of Uber. This minivan that was about 15 or 20 years old comes rolling up, black smoke pouring out the back. The whole thing just looked like a death trap. It was rusted out. The guy opened up the sliding door. I don't recall there being any seatbelts inside, let alone any child safety seats, which our kids needed.

The guy didn't speak any English so the concierge talked to him telling him where to take my wife and kids—to the zoo. At least that's what I think that he was saying to him. For all I knew he was telling him where to kidnap them to.

They got into the van and I should have gotten in with them. Or I should have figured something else out. But it happened so fast. They got in the van, they took off and then it dawned on me, Lindsay doesn't have a cell phone, we're in a foreign country, I don't know where they are going, I don't know the lay of the land.

And as I'm standing there every single Liam Neesen movie that I have ever seen (which is the same movie) goes flashing through my mind—except I don't have a very special set of skills to go after them.

They were gone for the next four or five hours. I had no way of checking in with them. I had no way of seeing if they were okay. I just worried. My mind went to some really dark places as to what might have happened to them.

Can I just ask you today, what keeps you up at night? What are some of the things that you're worried by? And I'm not talking hypothetical, I'm talking real worries that you brought in here with you today.

In fact, maybe for many of you it's difficult for you to even pay attention to what I'm saying. Like you're tracking with me for a few minutes and then all of a sudden the worries start to creep in and you begin to let your thoughts wander off with them. What are you afraid of? What is the worst case scenario that you've got going on in your mind? We can worry about everything both big and small.

You may or may not know that the number one fear that people cite that they have is the fear of public speaking. I can testify. That's a big one. I'm doing it right now. You all are scary. There are all kinds of things that run through my mind—it doesn't matter how many times I do this, I'm always afraid. And some of you may or may not believe me but it's true.

I walk out here on stage and usually it's just a flood of questions. It's like, "Okay, did I study enough? Do I know what I'm talking about? What if I say something wrong? What if you misinterpret something? What if my fly is down? And what's worse, even if it is I couldn't do

anything about it because that would make it worse. There are all kinds of things that flood through my mind.

What are you afraid of? My guess is that if you are anything like me your fears have to do with somebody you love. What if something bad happens to someone I care for? Maybe your fears have to do with your kids. Maybe your fears have to do with: What if we can never have kid?

What if your fears have to do with your aging parents or maybe your fears are wrapped up with a money issue or something's going on at work right now or maybe you're getting ready to move to a new city and you're fearful of what might happen there.

See, most of the time I think our fears have to do with the future. Our fears are really an unhealthy pre-occupation with what might happen. It's not guaranteed to happen, it might happen. So we end up obsessing on that or focusing on that to the point that we actually miss out on some pretty significant things that God wants to say and some things that God wants to do in and through our lives.

Now, not all fear is unhealthy. There is a healthy version of fear. I'm really thankful that my kids were all born into this world hard-wired with some natural fears because that keeps them from hurting themselves. Hopefully it keeps us from making foolish decisions in our adult years—just this healthy fear. But when fear crosses the line into being unhealthy, that's a really dangerous thing that hinders us and holds us back.

Now what's the difference between healthy fear and unhealthy fear? As near as I can tell, unhealthy fear occurs when it gets unhitched from hope. Unhealthy fear takes place when it disconnects from a rightly placed confidence and our mind just runs wild as to all of the worst case scenarios.

The German word for worry literally means to choke or to strangle. And the Greek root word for worry is literally: a divided mind. And maybe some of you know exactly what that's like. It's this inner dialogue that you've got going on all day long.

It's like, "Okay, I've got this." "No, you've got this." "No, God's got this." "No, I've got this. I'll take it back again." And it's just this constant back and forth all day long. It's this divided mind that causes us to be somewhat paralyzed in the way that we think and the way that we live our lives.

That's why I think that the number one command that is given in the Bible has nothing to do with loving others, has nothing to do with obeying God—the number one command in the Bible (many of you know this) is simply two words: fear not.

You know that it is mentioned 365 times? That's one for every single day of the year and I don't think that's by accident. Maybe you knew that. Maybe you've heard that before, that fear not is

the most common command in the Bible, but have you ever stopped to ask yourself why? Why is it in there so much?

Now I think the reason why fear is listed so many times in the Bible is because God know that this would be the number one issue in all of our hearts. That every single day there is something to be worried about, there is something to be fearful of because we can't control everything.

I can't control everything that's going on inside of my body. I can't control everything that's going on around the world. There are so many things that I don't have control of and it leads me to feel worried and concerned.

God knew that this would be the number one issue and so he says to us over and over and over again: fear not. And just like last week, I don't want to say if you're afraid, "Stop it." What do we do with it? What do we do with our fears and our worries? I don't think that we can eliminate them. I think we redirect them.

So I want to look at a passage out of the Old Testament book of Judges—Judges, chapter 6. If you have a Bible or a Bible app go ahead and meet me there. I think that somebody we can really relate to when it comes to fear, and what he was wrestling with in his fears, is this guy named Gideon.

Now Gideon is actually mentioned in the New Testament as well. In Hebrews, chapter 11 he is mentioned in the faith Hall-of-Fame. He is one of the heroes of the faith. But when we meet Gideon, Gideon doesn't look anything at all like a hero. Gideon looks pinned down and paralyzed with fear.

Now, just a little bit of back-story—Gideon is a leader in the nation of Israel and in the book of Judges the Israelites are being picked on and pushed around by a group of people known as the Midianites. And this was causing a lot of fear in their lives. So the Israelites had gone on the run. They were hiding out in shelters, hiding out up in the mountains, they're deep in caves and that's when God appears, through an angel, to this guy named Gideon.

Now, notice where he is, verse 11, "Gideon son of Joash was threshing wheat at the **bottom of a winepress** to hide the grain from the Midianites."

So get the mental picture in your mind that Gideon is down in a pit, he's in a winepress, underground. But, he's not pressing grapes. He's threshing wheat. Now that would be very, very unusual. That would be like you and me saying, "Hey, if you need me I'll be doing some gardening in the basement in the dark." That's not where you garden.

You would thresh wheat up above ground out in the open where everybody could see you because the wind needed to come to blow away the chaff. Well, Gideon has been driven underground. He's threshing wheat because they need food but he's doing it in a winepress

that's not designed for that. His fear had driven him underground. He doesn't want to be seen by the Midianites.

And the angel of the Lord speaks some courage into his life but Gideon isn't ready to receive it. Look at verse 12. It says, "The angel of the Lord appeared to him and said, "**Mighty hero**, the Lord is with you!"

The first thing that the angel says is, "Mighty hero." I don't know about you, but to me Gideon doesn't seem very heroic here. And I don't know if the angel is being sincere or sarcastic, but I like to think that the angel is being sincere. The angel is trying to speak some things into Gideon's life that maybe he doesn't yet see. Maybe he's blinded because of his fear.

And Gideon responds with three questions and a statement. They are found in verse 12. He says, "Sir," Gideon replied, "if the Lord is with us, **why has all this happened** to us? And where are all the miracles our ancestors told us about? Didn't they say, "The Lord brought us up out of Egypt?" But now the Lord has **abandoned** us and **handed us over** to the Midianites."

See, behind each one of these questions and behind that statement that he just made is fear. You can just hear it in each of the questions. He says: Why is this happening? And where is God in the midst of this. And the conclusion that I've come to is that God must have abandoned us.

It's easy to go there whenever we are penned down by our fears. I think one of the things that we oftentimes don't naturally connect with is some of these other emotions that come along with fear. There might be a number of you who would actually say, you know...

When you found out that we were talking about worry and fear today you might have said, "Well, I don't know if this is as much of an issue for me as maybe last week. Like, last week—envy and comparison—you nailed me on that one, but I think I've got a pretty good handle on worry and fear." And I'm glad that you do.

But worry and fear actually manifest themselves in ways that we don't often connect with fear. And we see it right here with Gideon: Anger is oftentimes a reflex of fear. Gideon gets angry.

Some of you might say, "Well, I don't really feel like I worry all that much." But do you get angry at times? Does your anger get the best of you? Do you have some anger issues? If you have some anger issues, it's possible that really what you have is fear issues, because your anger is actually a manifestation of the fear that you are experiencing.

Let me illustrate it this way. Those of you in the room who have kids or if you've ever been responsible for a young child, and if you've ever lost him out in a public place there are several moments that go by and you don't know where he is and you're frantically looking around—if that's ever happened...

It's hypothetically happened to me two or three times. I lost my son one time in an airport. He was just a toddler and I looked up and he was gone. And man, those few moments felt like hours.

And you're frantic—almost to the point of tears where you're like searching for him and then when you find him... When I found my son, I ran to him and my tears of fear turned into tears of joy and I wrapped my arms around him and I kissed him and I hugged him and I loved on him and then I got angry. I was like, "Don't you ever leave my side. I told you to stay put." What is that? Well it's a response to fear.

Let's talk road rage. I know that that's not an issue for our church but if you've ever had a little bit of road rage... I mean the nicest people in the world can have road rage. Ever been with somebody and all of a sudden—he's just so kind and polite—and then all of a sudden, "You moron!" And if you notice, everybody's name is moron when they cut you off.

And when they cut you off in traffic, where does that anger come from? Well, it's fear. Maybe you were afraid that they were going to take your life because they made some illegal move, or maybe you were late to a meeting that's really, really important. And what it is is a flare up that is connected to our fear.

We see that with Gideon. And I love how the angel responds. He doesn't try to squelch it. He doesn't try to shame him or slay him, the angel just lets him vent. And then he just simply says this in verse 14, "Then the Lord turned to him and said, **"Go..."**

It's amazing to me how many times in the Scriptures that God responds with that word. Just go. Just move in some way. Just take a step. What's the next step in front of you?

"Go with the," what's the word? **"strength** you have.." That's interesting. It doesn't really seem that Gideon is in a position of strength. But God says, "Go with the strength you have and rescue Israel from the Midianites." Now, here's the source of his strength. He says, **"I am sending you!"**

And notice that Gideon just is not ready to receive it. He says. "'But Lord,' Gideon replied, 'how can I rescue Israel? My clan is the **weakest** in the whole tribe of Manasseh, and I am the **least** in my entire family!'"

In other words, Gideon does not appear to be in this position of strength and all he can see is his weakness. See, I think that this is where our fears can oftentimes manifest themselves, through insecurity. Insecurity is oftentimes just a reflection of the fear that we have in our lives. It's this inner dialogue that we've all got going on in our minds. And that keeps us pinned down.

Now, I just wonder for the ladies in the room that the way that this can oftentimes work is this inner dialogue that kind of looks like this, "I'm not _____ enough." Ladies, how would you fill

in that blank? In some of your fearful moments when you feel pinned down in fear you just say, “Well, I’m just not _____ enough.”

I’m just not smart enough I’m just not with it enough. I’m just not pretty enough. I’m just not thin enough. I’m just not—whatever it is—successful enough. It’s like, “I look out and I see all of these other ladies who just seem to be killing it, these other working moms who just seem to be juggling so many things and I’m just not sufficient enough. It’s just this inner dialogue that really comes out in insecurity. It’s all connected to fear.

For guys in the room, it’s very similar. It just looks a little bit different. We just simply say, “Do I really have what it takes? Do I really have what it takes to step into that? To be the husband that she really wants me to be. I don’t know that I do.” So you step back.

“Do I really have what it takes to step up and be the man of God that my kids need me to be, my friends need me to be? Do I have what it takes?” And I think that for many of us we just conclude, “I don’t.” And so we shrink back. We step back from it.

And of all of the ways that the angel could have responded to Gideon, notice how he does. Verse 16, “The Lord said to him, **‘I will be with you.’**” Man, there is power in those words. Hey, “I will be with you. And you will destroy the Midianites as if you were fighting against one man.”

In other words he just says: Hey, Gideon. I’m not going to try to give you this pep talk and tell you that you’re really great and wonderful. I’m just going to tell you that I will be with you. There is just something really powerful about that.

Anytime that I’ve ever had to go into a scenario that I was nervous about like maybe it’s a conversation that I know is going to be difficult to have or maybe there’s a responsibility that I need to step into or maybe I’m a new person in a new place for the first time—there’s so much power when somebody close to me says, “Hey, I’ll go with you. You’re not alone.”

And if there’s power when another human being says that to you, it gets magnified times one million when the God of the universe says to you, “I will be with you.” Jesus said to us: The One who is in you is greater than having me with you. He said that to the disciples, meaning his Holy Spirit. And he’s promised us his Holy Spirit, he is with us.

Jesus would say this in John, chapter 16. He said: I’m saying all of this so that you will have peace in me. In this world you’re going to have trouble. Translation: In this world, tons of things to be worried and fearful of but I want you to have courage because I’ve overcome the world and I’m with you in and through this.

Am I speaking to anybody today or is it just me? I wrote this sermon just for me. Just for me. It’s what I need to hear.

Notice this. Let me wrap it up. In verse 17, "Gideon replied, 'If you are truly going to help me, **show me a sign to prove** that it is really the Lord speaking to me.'"

My home state is Missouri, which is the "Show Me" state meaning I ain't going to believe it 'til I see it. That's essentially what Gideon does. The angel just said some tremendous things to him and he's just like: All right. Prove it. Prove that this really is the Lord speaking to me and I'm not just having a hallucination or a dream.

The one last thing that I would just kind of point out is that oftentimes our control issues—I don't know if we've got any control freaks in the room. I'm guessing we do. I'm one. And if you've got some control issues, they really are connected to fear as well, "I don't trust this other person. I don't know that I trust God enough to just handle this, so let me handle it." So our control issues are often connected to our fear.

By chapter 7, Gideon, to his credit, was able to trust God and he did let go of his fears and he ended up taking 300 men into battle and they defeated the Midianites just as the angel said that they would.

Now, here's the principle. There are so many things that we can learn from that great passage. Here's the one principle I just want you to take home with you. It's just simply this: The invitation to walk by faith is an invitation to step into your fears.

See, that's what faith is. And maybe you've had people say, "Well, you just need to have faith." Or, "You just need to walk by faith." Or, "You just need to have more faith."

And I don't know if you really know what to do with that. At times it almost seems like kind of a throw-away statement or just something that somebody should say. Like, "I really wonder what that means."

For a long time I just thought that living by faith or having faith or walking by faith meant that I just really need to try hard to believe something that seems impossible believe. That's not faith. Or, I really just need to try harder to believe something that is difficult to believe. That's not faith.

Here's what faith is. When fear surrounds you—and it's everywhere—you step into it. Not in your strength but the strength that God provides. And you see what happens.

It's been said that the Spirit of God is a preservationist, meaning that he provides power only as it's needed. And I don't know about you, but oftentimes I wait and say, "God, give me power then I'll step." And he goes: No, step and I'll give you power. It's a standoff with God and I lose every time.

And God says: You want to walk by faith? Then take your pick of all of your fears, all the barking, rabid dogs that are chained up in your mind just waiting to get loose—pick one and step into it, this time with the strength that only I can provide.

Now, what does that look like? As we begin to step into our fears I've noticed that every opportunity, every way in which God uses my life in a significant way to impact others and to advance his purpose and his kingdom on this earth—it almost always comes by me stepping into what I'm afraid of. It's almost never like, "Well, this seems safe. Let me go over here." Right? "Wow, this is amazing." No actually, I need to step into something that terrifies me and watch God work a miracle.

Here are a few questions for us to ask as we step into our fears. The first question is simply this: What am I standing on? Is the ground underneath my feet solid? And I think for many of us it's really, really shaky.

Now, some of you may have been wondering what this was. And I'm going to do what some of you are afraid that I might do. So, if you weren't afraid you will be. Some of you are going to enjoy this too much. The only goal here is to not end up on YouTube.

This is a stability ball. There we go (Aaron stands up on the ball). Thanks so much for that. I've got this. I've got this. Whoops. Many of you have seen these in a gym. Maybe this is in your basement. You bought it and you never used it. But a stability ball, what it is is that when you stand on it... My body is way more tense than what it was just a minute ago. I've got a brand new fear, by the way—speaking in public while standing on a stability ball.

I'm making all of these tiny adjustments and what it does is it tightens up my core. You use muscles you never used before. That's the whole thing. I'm way more focused on staying upright. Now, many of us live our lives like this. The ground is shaking beneath our feet. We're trying to do this in our own power.

Now here's what God's word says about God. He says that he is a rock, that he never changes, that he is the same yesterday, today, and forever.

You want to know what does change? The stock market. Whoa! Any of you check your IRAs or your 401Ks lately? Don't, alright?

You want to know what does change? The behavior of your kids. Whoa! I thought we'd cover that now I've got to re-cover it with you.

You want to know what does change? The conditions at work or the mood of your boss.

You want to know what does change? Your physical appearance.

It's all of these tiny adjustments that we're making. Many of us are living our lives like this. We come to church on the weekend and we give it up to God and we get right back on the stability ball as soon as we leave. We're like, "Okay, I can handle it. I can do it." And we're constantly making all of these adjustments. We're afraid. We're living our lives defensively and we're exhausted. And we wonder where the power is.

You know what the invitation to walk by faith is? Jesus just says: Would you just simply trust. Just simply step off of the ball onto solid ground. I don't know if you are clapping because you liked the point or because I didn't break my neck. Anyway, I'll take either, alright?

Here's the second question: What am I doing?

What am I doing on a daily basis to help redirect my fears? Now, here's what I mean. There is a connection between your peace and your practice. So if I overeat and I never exercise, I can expect health issues because my practice has facilitated that. If I overspend and I don't save enough and I don't trust God with what he says about my finances, then I can expect some financial stress and worry. There's a connection there.

I think for many of us, especially society as a whole... God has told us in the Scriptures to fear him—that's not like a terrifying fear. That's just a rightly placed fear. For many of us we, as a society, as we sort of stop fearing God, we fear everything else. But if you fear God then you can fear nothing else.

So there is a connection between our peace and our practice. Let me just give you this principle right here. On a daily basis develop a routine that helps you focus on the promises of God rather than the problems of your day. Those are the only things you can do. You can either focus on the promises or you can focus on the problems.

This is where daily Bible reading comes into play. This isn't just about learning something you don't know or trying to understand the Bible better—I hope those things happen. But here's what happens. When you spend daily time in God's word you get reminded of his promises and they supersede the problems.

Daily Bible reading—get subscribed to it. We'll send you a daily Bible reading every day. But even on your own, it's not in and of itself everything you need to do. I would encourage you to do this. Start with a book of the Bible and read two chapters. It will take you about 10 minutes every day.

And here's all you need to do. Find one verse that gives you hope and reminds you of what is true. That's all you've got to do—one verse that gives you hope and reminds you of what is true and you take that verse with you all through the day. You do that all month long, you've got 30 verses stored up in your mind and heart. And it just begins to equip you.

Here's the third thing that I will just leave you with—a question: Where am I looking?

Where am I looking? You know Peter was walking out to Jesus on the water, which is absolutely amazing, and he began to sink. If you remember this story—when? When he took his eyes off of Jesus and he started looking at the storm, he started looking at the waves and the wind. In fact, Peter took his eyes off of who he was walking to and started focusing on what he was walking through. That's when he began to sink.

So I just want to do something with you at all of our campuses. Everybody close one eye, the eye you usually wink with. If you can't wink I'm sorry but just try it. Close one eye and take your index finger and put it as close to your other eyeball as you can without actually touching your eyeball, because that would be gross. Just get it as close as you can to the point that you're actually blocking me out.

Now, hold it there just for a minute. For many of us this is the way that we live our lives. We're holding up the problems of our lives so closely to the retina of our minds that they block out the enormous promises and potential that God has for our lives.

Some of us, not all of us, some of us are pleading for the peace of God to flood into our mind over our worries and fears and God wants to but he doesn't have any place to put it because our minds are so full.

It's this idea that I don't get to control what I'm walking through but I do get to control who I focus on. So I just want to leave you with something real, real practical. I heard this—I can't even remember where I heard this but I like it. It's just an acrostic: S P O T.

When fear begins to creep into your life here's the first thing: Stand your ground.

Stand your ground. When you feel the fear begin to creep into your mind, you stand your ground. Exodus 14, verses 13 and 14 says, "But Moses told the people, 'Don't be afraid. Just **stand still** and watch the Lord rescue you today. The Egyptians you see today will never be seen again. The Lord himself will fight for you. Just stay calm.'"

Many of us, we get this flurry of activity and God says: Just stand still. Just stand your ground.

P—Pray for peace. Philippians 4:6 says, "Don't worry about anything; **instead**, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done."

Do you know that there are more references to joy in the book of Philippians than in any other book of the Bible? Which is ironic because Paul wrote it in a prison cell in Rome where he had been sentenced to death. I don't think that I would have mentioned joy, ever. Paul brings it up all of the time. This is where he talks about worry and he says: You want a vibrant prayer life? Take all of those things that you are worried about and turn them inside out and just re-direct them to God.

O—Object to lies. Just object to them. 2 Corinthians 10:5 says, “Take captive **every thought** to make it obedient,” man there are all of these rogue thoughts running through your mind—that inner dialogue—you take it captive. You object to the lies that they have been telling you.

T—Trust God. Psalm 56, “But when I am afraid, **I will put my trust in you**. I praise God for what he has promised. I trust in God, so why should I be afraid? What can mere mortals do to me?”

Listen. To be worried and afraid is just human. We're all there. All of us have things to be worried about. And every single weekend as we gather together, regardless of what campus we're joining us from, I don't want us to just get something out of the worship service.

I hope we get something out of it, but oftentimes it's not what we get out of it and take home with us, it's what we bring here and leave here. And for many of us a really good worship service is when we come with our arms full of worry and fear and we go home empty handed because we left them here. We didn't take them back home with us.

My fears are mostly wrapped up in these two little words right here: What if? What if? What if I let Lindsay down? What if I let you down? What if I let my kids down? What if this horrible tragedy happens, like what if? I can torment myself around that.

One of the primary things I often think about is this weekly thing I do where I stand up here and teach you. And I know that preaching a good sermon doesn't help, it just adds to the pressure because you're only as good as your last sermon—at least that's what I'm afraid of.

So as soon as I get done, you know what I do on my drive home? Usually, I'll pull over and I pull out my cell phone and I start taking notes for next week. Why do I do that? Well it's because I'm afraid I'm not going to have anything to say when I stand up here next week.

Do you know I have a nightmare that reoccurs about once a quarter? It usually goes one of two ways. One version of the nightmare is that I get here and I stand up on the stage and I have written the best sermon I have ever written—clearly not this one—but I've written the best sermon I've ever written in my life and I stand up on stage to preach it and all of the seats are empty. Nobody is here.

The other version of that dream is that I get here and I stand up on stage and the place is packed to the gills, standing room only, and I forgot to write a sermon. And you all start booing me. And I wake up in a cold sweat. I have that dream once a quarter.

You know what that is? That's connected to my insecurity issues and my control issues and my identity issues. I can hold on to those things or I can let them go.

And for you, maybe your set of fears and worries are very, very different than mine but we're similar in the way that we need to let them go.

So what I want to ask you to do right now at all of our campuses—we're just going to lower the lights a little bit, just for privacy. I just want to ask you right now that if you walked in here today with your arms full of worries and fears, would you just be willing and courageous enough to stand to your feet, to not be pinned down by them anymore but to stand up right where you are and just be willing to say, "I'm going to leave them here today. I'm going to let go of them today. I'm going to leave them at the foot of the cross. As I worship, I'm not just singing lyrics, I'm actually letting these things go."

And even if you don't fully believe the lyrics, you're actually singing the lyrics in faith. You're stepping into your doubts. You're stepping into your cynicism. You're stepping into your fears. Man, just look around the room. You are not alone. You are not alone in your fear. You're not alone in your worries.

And what we want to do—I know not everybody is comfortable raising their hands in worship. And you're right. It is not a show and you're not performing for anybody else but God. But there are times in my life when all of these fears, all of these voices start creeping in—the critics, the people who misunderstand me, even my own narrative. And you know what I have to do from time to time? I have to stop and say, "Everybody shut up but Jesus. Everybody be quiet but Jesus because I can't hear his voice."

So when you lift your hands, that a sign of empty-handedness. I'm letting go of my fears and my worries. And as we lift our voices and as we sing, may we do that. May that be the condition of our heart. I'm asking you to step into your fear and see what God might do to build your faith.

Let me pray.

God, we ask you today to meet us in this room just as we are with our worries and our fears and to not be ashamed of those things but to redirect them—to hand them to you.

And every single day our arms get filled up with those things that we are fearful of and so when we gather here, this is an opportunity and an exercise to walk by faith and to let them go. I pray that if some came in here with their hands full that they would leave empty-handed because they handed them to you.

God, I pray that we could redirect our fears and our worries and trust you, to walk in the strength that you provide. We ask this right now in Jesus' name. And the church says: Amen.

Let's lift up our voices, let's sing.