

I am an avid worrier. I worry about everything and everyone. I have all my adult life. I worry when I'm awake and when I'm sleeping. I worry about the welfare of my 7 siblings, my daughter, my nieces and nephews. I worry about my friends and their families. I worry about the planet, the abuse and neglect inflicted upon it by the powers that be making decisions for selfish reasons. I worry about today, about tomorrow and yes, even about yesterday. Case in point, because I have been prone to nose-bleeds all my life, I carried tissues hidden beneath my bouquet on my wedding day because I worried that as I walked down the aisle my nose would begin to bleed, dripping red streaks down my white gown.

In society today, worrying can cause pre-occupation with so many things while at the same time create resentment and depression and a feeling of helplessness. It fragments our lives with endless lists of things to do, think about and plan for, people to remember to connect with, causes to attach or defend, deadlines to meet, clients to see, and activities to get to. These things displace us from our center. The spiritual description of this crisis has been coined as: "Most of us have an address but usually cannot be found there". "We are all over the place, but seldom home."

I began worrying about my turn to share a reflection in December when I signed on for the month of April. I've thought about what to share in my reflection for the months between then and now, but kept coming up empty. I realized I was apparently in a state of non-reflection. My thoughts were shallow. That worried me. I even brought it to my bible study group, Soul Sisters. Someone there actually suggested I do a reflection on my non-reflection. I continued to worry.

Last fall, I was hiking with a friend in Devil's Den, a nature preserve in Weston, CT. We were discussing the kind of things friends might discuss while hiking in nature on a beautiful autumn day at the Gateway to New England, where the environment has a way of easing the heart and opening the soul. After I shared my thoughts, Lorraine, in a very to-the-point and conclusive tone commented, "Deb, you borrow worry". I found her observation hilarious, because she was absolutely correct. When I stopped laughing, that comment stayed with me for the next 8 months, through fall, winter and into spring.

My bible study group begins each meeting by reading a passage from a book entitled "Jesus Calling: A Devotional Journal". The entry on January 30 read as follows: "Worship Me only. Whatever occupies your mind the most becomes your god. Worries, if indulged, develop into idols. Anxiety gains a life of its own, parasitically infesting your mind. Break free from the bondage by affirming your trust in Me and refreshing yourself in My Presence. What goes on in your mind is invisible, undetectable to other people. But I read your thoughts continually, searching for evidence of trust in Me. I rejoice when your mind turns toward Me. Guard your thoughts diligently; good thought-choices will keep you close to Me." Hmm...

For me that devotional brought to mind again my friend's comment that I borrow worry. But still, my worrying persisted unabated.

Then the season of lent arrived, and a spiritual door opened inside me; I saw an opportunity to "give up" something meaningful for lent. I would give up worrying, or stated another way -- I would take an opportunity to grow in faith. So, in "giving up" something I was really "gaining" something.

Matthew Kelly, in his Lenten meditations states, "God created the "best version" of me". Well, I cannot be that best version of me unless I step closer to God and put all my faith and trust in Him by letting go of and handing my

worries over to Him. In changing my habitual, worry-filled style of processing thoughts, I aim to increase my trust and faith in God, as God expects this of me.

So, I have begun keeping a “Best Lent Ever” journal, which is helping me acknowledge, examine and release my worries to God. In doing so I feel my faith growing. And I feel this pleases Him.

I have been able to let go of some worries; the first was worrying about having a reflection to share with you. I gave that to God and He gave me a solution. I've let go a lot of worries but my efforts will surely extend passed the season of Lent and beyond Easter. But with every effort I make, the load lightens, I feel I am obeying the Lord, and my faith grows stronger. And it becomes easier to not worry. I have experienced so many of my prayers being answered, because I let God handle them. And I know that's what He wants us all to do. *“Let go and Let God”*.

I know it is unrealistic to believe it is possible to be worry-free, but as the plaque in my sister's guest room reads: *“BEFORE YOU GO TO SLEEP AT NIGHT, GIVE YOUR WORRIES TO GOD. HE'LL BE UP ALL NIGHT ANYWAY.*