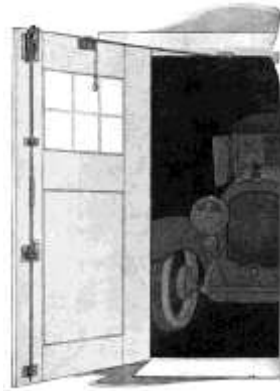


THE GARAGE METHOD

Jim Elliff

A former professor of mine, now a successful author of Christian fiction, used to dismiss his anxieties by repeating this mantra: “Oh well. It doesn’t eternally matter.” For him six words conquered all ills. He slew his worries with a phrase, with a mere wag of his tongue. I’m not sure he was right about things not eternally mattering, but his blood pressure remained low and in many ways, he turned his worries into trust.



It is sort of an embarrassment now, but I must admit that years ago, when I was a teenager, I avidly read the arcane MAD Magazine. At the time it was the rage among those in my school. If it is like most forms of media, MAD is likely less pure now than it was then. At that time it was just—well, silly. Alfred E. Newman, the central figure in every magazine, was best known for this one phrase—“What? Me worry?”

Alfred E. Newman was nobody’s model, but everybody’s alter ego.

Can we have a world without worry?

Here is what some people do with their worries:

1. They bury them. Many people stuff their worries deep inside only to have them resurface later in other forms such as physical problems related to stress or anger.
2. They pass them. Comedian Erma Bombeck once said, “I don’t have stress, but I think I am a carrier.”
3. They eat them (that is, they eat in order to forget them).
4. They drug them. Liquor and drugs are well-known methods for drowning worries.

Years ago I knew a man named Mr. Kidwell. He was a lovable man, a president of a bank, who had suffered a sun stroke and jerked as he walked. His pocket was always full of candy for the kids. On the subject of worry he had some expert advice. He said that he would go into his garage and tell God everything that he was concerned about and then jump through the door as fast as he could slamming it quickly behind him.

I think Mr. Kidwell had the best approach.

Dwight L. Moody, the evangelist of the 19th century preached a sermon on the beloved passage we all know but none of us live—Philippians 4: 6-7. Read the text first:

Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God.; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

His succinct outline went like this. Perhaps you’ll remember it for your next big worry-fest:

1. Worry about nothing.
2. Pray about everything.
3. Thank God for anything.

I’ve not lived this verse very well either, but I do think about it often and meditate on it a great deal. When we refuse to worry, we are saying that God can handle this situation. To do otherwise is an insult to an all-powerful and loving God.

Worry destroys a lot in us. It mitigates against living faith, the only way we have to please God. It is a sin, plain and simple.

But, worry will probably show its head again the next time you are aggravated with an “issue.”

In such times, don’t forget the garage.

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