

Loving What Is

1. Warm-up Question: On Sunday, Pastor David began his sermon by having us sing “Everyday People.” What’s a favorite old song that you love to sing along to?
2. Read Psalm 37:1-9, as printed on p. 3. Three times our scripture passage tells us to “fret not.” “Fret not” comes from a Hebrew word that means “to burn, to fume, to take offense, to be anxious.” David shared a story about a time a woman was fretting over a confrontation with a friend. But the longer she pondered the situation, the more she realized she had whipped it up into something much more than it actually was, distorting the reality of what happened. We’ve all been there. Tell us about a time when you found yourself facing something that caused you to fret – maybe someone who angers you, or a situation you worried yourself sick over, or something you were afraid of – only to later realize you were distorting the situation.
3. David’s friend Bea experienced a traumatic divorce and financial disaster. She found herself facing the future with no job experience. Her ex-husband hung up a poster in her home that said, “I can’t make it on my own.” (The message was directed at Bea, not himself. It was meant to get in her head and taunt her.) Bea found herself fretting bigtime, feeling worthlessness and rage, until she read Byron Katie’s book “Loving What Is: Four Questions That Can Change Your Life.” The book emphasizes the importance of discerning what really IS. In other words, sorting out what’s true and what’s not. The process outlined in the book goes like this: Write down a thought causing you stress, then ask yourself four questions about the thought.
 - ✓ Is it true?
 - ✓ Can you absolutely know that it’s true?
 - ✓ How do you react when you think that thought?
 - ✓ Who would you be without that thought?

To get a flavor for the process, have someone in the group identify a situation that they’re fretting about. Have them give a brief answer to each of the four questions.

4. Katie says, “A thought is harmless unless we believe it. It is not our thoughts, but the attachment to our thoughts, that can lead to undue suffering (fretting, anxiety, anger, etc.). Attaching to a thought means believing it’s true without inquiring. A belief is a thought that we’ve been attaching to, and it can happen for years.” Put what you think Katie is saying in your own words, then tell us what you think of what she’s saying.
5. Katie says there are three kinds of business – Mine, Yours, and God’s. Much of our stress, she says, comes from mentally living out of our own business. When I think “you should get a job” or “you should take better care of yourself,” I’m in your business. When I’m worried about floods or war or when I’ll die, I’m in God’s business. Being mentally in your business or God’s business keeps me from being

- present in my own. What's something you're fretting about right now that's not your business and out of your control? How can we do a better job of not fretting over what we can't control? Any suggestions?
6. David reminded us of several Bible stories where people found themselves fretting. Let's take a quick look at some of them. Read Luke 10:38-42, as printed on p. 3.
 - a. What was Martha fretting about? Describe what you imagine she was thinking and feeling.
 - b. How were her thoughts affecting her?
 - c. Was what she was thinking true?
 - d. How would Martha have been different if liberated from these thoughts?
 7. David also recounted the story of Naaman (II Kings 5), a powerful commander who developed leprosy. In ancient times, people with leprosy were shunned. People were afraid to come near them. When Naaman went to Elisha to seek healing, Elisha refused to come out to see him. He simply sent word that Naaman should wash himself in the muddy Jordan River. Naaman was furious. But his servant girl urged him to do what the prophet said. He did so and was healed.
 - a. What was Naaman fretting about? Describe what you imagine he was thinking and feeling.
 - b. How were his thoughts affecting him?
 - c. Was what he was thinking true?
 - d. How was Naaman's life different when he was liberated from these thoughts?
 8. When we ask questions like the foregoing about our own thoughts, we're doing what Katie calls "The Work." In other words, we're doing the intentional work necessary to keep ourselves focused on what's real and what we can and cannot control. David said, "Any stressful feeling is like a compassionate alarm clock that says, 'Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for God; fret not yourself. . . . Time to do The Work!'" When David's friend Bea saw the poster her husband hung up declaring "I can't make it on my own," she changed it to read "I can make it on my own," and made that her mantra. She went on to become very successful in business, in her spiritual life, and with her family. She even found the grace to care for her ex-husband decades after their divorce when he was dying. She's a powerful example of the importance of examining our thoughts and being intentional about the stories we tell ourselves. Having heard all we've discussed, what's a thought that has been causing you stress that you want to prayerfully examine using Katie's four questions. You don't have to tell us the answer to the questions. Just tell us the thought you feel the need to prayerfully re-examine.

Note: Katie's Worksheet appears on p. 4 as a resource you can use as you examine your thoughts.

Psalm 37

- ¹ Do not fret because of the wicked;
do not be envious of wrongdoers,
- ² for they will soon fade like the grass,
and wither like the green herb.
- ³ Trust in the LORD, and do good;
so you will live in the land, and enjoy security.
- ⁴ Take delight in the LORD,
and he will give you the desires of your heart.
- ⁵ Commit your way to the LORD;
trust in him, and he will act.
- ⁶ He will make your vindication shine like the light,
and the justice of your cause like the noonday.
- ⁷ Be still before the LORD, and wait patiently for him;
do not fret over those who prosper in their way,
over those who carry out evil devices.
- ⁸ Refrain from anger, and forsake wrath.
Do not fret—it leads only to evil.
- ⁹ For the wicked shall be cut off,
but those who wait for the LORD shall inherit the land.

Luke 10:38-42

³⁸ Now as they went on their way, Jesus entered a certain village, where a woman named Martha welcomed him into her home. ³⁹ She had a sister named Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet and listened to what he was saying. ⁴⁰ But Martha was distracted by her many tasks; so she came to him and asked, "Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to do all the work by myself? Tell her then to help me." ⁴¹ But the Lord answered her, "Martha, Martha, you are worried and distracted by many things; ⁴² there is need of only one thing. Mary has chosen the better part, which will not be taken away from her."

Loving What Is: Four Questions That Can Change Your Life

By Byron Katie

THE WORK:

Troubling Thought:

With Each Thought do the work.

Inquiry: The Four Questions and the Turnaround

1. Is it true? (Yes or no. If your answer is no, move to question 3.)
2. Can you absolutely know that it's true? (Yes or no.)
3. How do you react, what happens, when you believe that thought?
4. Who would you be without the thought?

And then turn the thought around.

You can use the worksheet below to gather thoughts about a situation and run thoughts through THE WORK above.

First relax, get very still, close your eyes, and wait for a stressful situation to come to mind. Fill in the Judge-Your-Neighbor Worksheet (below) as you identify the thoughts and feelings that you were experiencing in the situation you have chosen to write about. Use short, simple sentences. Remember to point the finger of blame or judgment outward. You may write from your point of view as a five-year-old or at any age in your life. Please do not write about yourself yet.

1. In this situation, who angers, confuses, saddens, or disappoints you, and why? (Remember: Be harsh, childish, and petty.) I don't like (I am angry at, or saddened, frightened, confused, etc., by) (name) because _____.
2. In this situation, how do you want them to change? What do you want them to do? I want (name) to _____.
3. In this situation, what advice would you offer them? (Name) should (shouldn't) _____.
4. In order for you to be happy in this situation, what do you need them to think, say, feel, or do? (Pretend it's your birthday and you can have anything you want. Go for it!) I need (name) to _____.
5. What do you think of them in this situation? Make a list. (Don't be rational or kind.) (Name) is _____.
6. What is it about this situation that you don't ever want to experience again? I don't ever want _____.