

Handing over what is not mine

By [Beth Merrill Neel](#)

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I was up worrying the other night. It happens. Worry is a spiritual gift I received from my mother, and I have worked hard to perfect that which was passed on to me. I also work not to pass it on to my daughter, but I worry that I am failing in that.

Anyway, I was worrying the other night when what I really wanted to be doing was falling asleep. It was the end of a long day, the house was quiet, all other living creatures under our roof were asleep, and there I was, worrying. Someone once defined worry as “misuse of the imagination.” Yes, it is. Finally my desire to sleep won over my need to worry, and I decided to hand it all over to Jesus.

Now I really don't consider myself that kind of Jesus person. I usually don't hand it over to the Lord, nor do I think that he walks with me or talks with me in the “In the Garden” sort of way. My prayers tend to be to God, not to Jesus. I mean, I'm good with him, but I do like to keep my distance. But that night I decided I really needed to hand it all over to him. So I pictured what I was handing over, and it was a spherical-shaped thing, a tangle of worries that might best be represented by barbed wire, lima beans, the insoles of my daughter's summer Keens, and all those random electronic cables you stick in a drawer because you have no idea what they're for. Roll all that up into a ball, and those were the worries I wanted to hand over to Jesus. Lucky him.

So I did. In my mind's eye I pictured handing him this messy, sharp bundle, and I pictured him taking it. And then a funny thing happened. As soon as he took it, it turned into a beach ball- one of those big plastic, colors-in-pennant-shapes beach balls. It was like he was taking all my worries so very lightly, like he was saying, “Hey, I know there's stuff that's getting you down but I think we should go play on the beach.”

What the hell, Jesus?

Okay, not really.

But somehow, it worked. He took my ball of lima beans and barbed wire and turned it into a beach ball and I fell asleep. Not only that, but that night I dreamed I was about to marry George Clooney. (I did confess that to my husband the next day and assured him that George Clooney was no match for him.)

The next day I had coffee with a friend who is a 12-stepper. I am remarkably proud of her, and often inspired by the rigorous and truthful way she looks at her own living. We talked about whichever step it is where you let go and let God, and she talked about the deep meaning the serenity prayer has for her. While I listened, I was having my own internal conversation about letting go and the whole Jesus-turned-my-worry-into-a-beach-ball thing. Here's where I ended up.

Sometimes, in order to sleep, in order to get the rest our bodies, minds, and souls need, we have to let it go. (Apologies for cueing that particular song.) It's not always ours to keep, the things we worry about. But sometimes, after that rest, we take some of it back. Some of it is mine to carry, or to deal with, or to wrestle with. But maybe when I take it back, there are fewer lima beans and more grains of sand.

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