

11th December 2024

Worries

“Worry is interest paid on trouble before it falls due.”

Advertising Slogan, *The Grape Belt* (1906)

Yesterday I instanced *The Problem of Pain* by C S Lewis, which has offered me guidance on the issues of pain, suffering and death over many years. Today I have beside me a very different book, which provides further insights into these issues. It's *The Huge Bag of Worries* by Virginia Ironside.

Published by “Hodder Children’s Books” in 1996, and beautifully illustrated by Frank Rogers, this book encourages children to talk about their worries, before they become too heavy to drag around. It's not just about death – though, for all of us, children included, that can be a worry indeed. It's about *a//*the stuff that's a struggle to deal with.

“Wherever Jenny goes,” we're told, “her worries follow her – in a big, blue bag. They are there when she goes swimming, when she is watching TV, and even when she is in the lavatory. Jenny worries she's getting too fat, that her dog has fleas, her best friend is going away, she's getting bad marks at school, kids are whispering about her, her mum and dad are arguing. *And* she worries about wars and bombs ... Her huge bag of worries has to be dragged round everywhere, and it gets heavier and heavier. Jenny decides they will have to go. But who can she get to help her?” I won't spoil the story. Suffice to say, Jenny finds someone who's prepared to listen, and she's able to deal with her worries in a healthy way.

A children's book? Of course, and who doesn't see the sense of encouraging children to talk about whatever worries they might have before they become an unmanageable burden. Children need encouragement to explore their anxieties, and to find trusted adults with whom they can share. But what about the adults themselves? Don't we need encouragement too, and trusted folk with whom we can share *our* huge bag of worries before it becomes impossible to deal with? Death, suffering and pain? Yes, if those are burdens. But there might be *lots* of worries in that huge bag – from a dog with fleas, to wars and bombs.

Let's talk it out, as Jenny learned to do. Let's find an openness, a trusted companion to share with. And if *you're* the one to be trusted, then you might be helping someone unload their huge bag of worries too.

A prayer for today

Thank you, God, for all the people who understand, and who listen to our worries. Amen

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