

038: Don't Be a Worrywart

(based on Sermon #33 in the Life of Christ Series)

Take a brief spiritual survey

- Ask yourself the following questions.
- You can simply answer “yes” or “no.”
- Are you afraid of making decisions because you fear making the *wrong* decision?
- Do you regularly dwell on the past, regretting certain things you have done, wondering, “*What if* I hadn’t done those things?”
- Do you constantly run through your to-do list, all throughout the day, thinking, “If I don’t get more done today, I won’t be successful?”
- When you sit down to rest, do you feel inadequate or worthless unless you get up and start doing something productive?
- In other words, does relaxing make you anxious because you feel like you are wasting time?

Do you go through certain rituals during your day, every day, so that if you miss one on a particular day, it throws you off until you do it?

- Do you constantly think of things that could mess up your day? — “Did I lock the door? Did I leave the lights on? Did I brush my teeth? Did I? Did I? Did I?” — to the point that you are crippled in your thinking by all the mental questioning?
- Do you have a difficult time trusting people?
- Do you frequently wonder in your mind if people are talking about you?
- Do you overthink what people say to you, asking yourself, “I wonder if he meant this or if she meant that?”

- When things seem to be going well, do you expect something to go wrong?
- Do you question whether you will have enough resources for tomorrow? — or for the more distant future?
- Are you like “Chicken Little,” thinking the sky is falling?
- If you answered yes to one or more of these questions, it is quite possible you struggle with *worry*.
- But that is not God’s will for your life
- In the next section of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus warns against the sin of worry, for at the root of worry is unbelief.

Matt 6:25-34

- 25 Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing?
- 26 Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?
- 27 Which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature?
- 28-29 So why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; and yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.
- 30 Now if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will He not much more clothe you, O you of little faith?
- 31 Therefore do not worry, saying, “What shall we eat?” or “What shall we drink?” or “What shall we wear?”
- 32 For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things.

- 33 But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.
- 34 Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.

Jesus deals with this sin of *worry* in the context of the Sermon on the Mount.

- The theme of the Sermon is simply this.
- If you want to inherit the kingdom of the heavens, the heavenly Jerusalem, the ruling realm of the Messianic kingdom, then your righteousness must exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees (Matt. 5:20).
- In part, that means you cannot be a worrywart.
- You must get victory over worry, for it is unbelief, as we shall see later in the study.
- You must come to the point in life where you learn to completely trust the Lord and have no worries.
- An old legend claims warts are caused by worry and stress.

In fact, someone anonymously wrote a poem along these lines:

Don't worry a wart,
Or a thing of that sort,
You're taking a terrible chance sir;
For often they grow,
As doctors all know,
Into a formidable cancer.

- Of course, this poem is not *medically* correct, but how many Christians grow *spiritual* warts through worrying,

that become *spiritually* cancerous, metastasizing through their Christian life?

Notice that the text begins in v. 25 with the word *therefore*.

- So we must look in the context and see what it is *there for*.
- What is the context?
- We find it in vs. 19-20, which we examined in the previous study.
- Simply put, the context is: *Don't have an earthly focus; have a heavenly focus* — for no man can serve two masters (v. 24).
- You cannot serve God and Mammon.
- Your loyalty must not be divided between God and something or someone else.
- In light of this (“therefore,” v. 25), “Do not worry about your life.”

Here's the idea: If your focus is heavenly, not earthly — which means that your master is God alone — then there is no need to worry about the things of here and now.

- Indeed, you *won't* worry or be anxious about your life if He is your focus.
- The word *worry* comes from a Greek word that conveys the idea of having a divided or distracted mind.
- That connects with the previous text, because vs. 19-24 are about being single-minded toward God and not being double-minded.
- For a double-minded man is unstable in all his ways (James 1:8).
- So don't take thought — that is, don't worry, don't have a divided or distracted mind.
- Phil. 4:6 admonishes, “Be anxious for nothing” — literally, don't worry about anything.

- The same Greek word, translated *anxious*, is translated *worry* in Matt. 6.
- Interestingly, the English word *worry* comes from an old Anglo-Saxon word meaning “to choke or strangle,” for that is what worry does in one’s life, emotionally and spiritually.
- God wants us to take this admonition seriously, for in Matt. 6 He warns against worry five times — vs. 25, 27, 28, 31, 34!
- As we work our way through this text, we will discover four characteristics of worry.

1. Worry doesn’t change anything.

- v. 27 Which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature?
- Worry will never add an inch to your height.
- Notice that Jesus doesn’t say “one pound to your weight.”
- That’s probably because some people, when they worry, tend to eat more and gain weight.
- Worry will never add a year to your age (or take away a year).
- Worry never solves problems; it only brings bigger problems.
- In fact, worry tends to compound over time, breeding more and more worry.

This is illustrated in one of our cultural icons, at least in my generation — the Peanuts Cartoon series by Charles M. Schulz.

- Linus says: “You look kind of depressed, Charlie Brown.” He replies: “I worry about school a lot ... I also worry about my worrying so much about school ... My anxieties have anxieties.”

- In another cartoon Charlie Brown is shown in bed with eyes wide open.
- His blanket as the word *worry* written all over it, numerous times.
- The obvious point is that Charlie Brown is blanketed with worry.

Medical experts claim that continued worry leads to numerous health issues.

- A secular website called WebMD says, “Worrying too much can lead to physical problems, and can affect appetite, lifestyle habits, relationships, sleep and job performance.”
- The article goes on to point out that excessive worry can trigger the nervous system to release stress hormones that can cause adverse health effects, such as:
 - Difficulty swallowing
 - Dizziness
 - Dry mouth
 - Fast heartbeat
 - Fatigue
 - Headaches
 - Inability to concentrate
 - Irritability
 - Muscle aches
 - Muscle tension
 - Nausea
 - Nervous energy
 - Rapid breathing
 - Shortness of breath
 - Sweating
 - Trembling and twitching
 - Suppression of the immune system

- Digestive disorders
 - Short-term memory loss
 - Premature coronary artery disease
 - Heart attack
- Scientific studies are now conclusive that chronic worriers don't live as long, because worry breaks down resistance to disease and actually diseases the nervous system, particularly that of the digestive organs and the heart.
 - Why worry, when worry never changes anything?
 - An exasperated husband asked his wife, "Why are you always worrying when it doesn't do any good?"
 - She quickly replied, "Oh yes it does! Ninety percent of the things I worry about never happen."
 - The only thing that changes when you worry is your health; the problems don't go away.

2. Worry doubts God's provision.

- v. 25 Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing?
- If God gave you life and a body, then surely He will provide food to sustain your life and clothes to cover your body.
- Isn't your life more important than food and clothes?
- v. 26 Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?
- God provides for the birds on a day-to-day basis, making sure they always have access to food.
- Granted, He doesn't drop food in their nests.
- They must go out and work to get it.

In like manner, you cannot sit around idly and expect God to drop food in your lap; you must work to get it.

- But He will provide if you are industrious.
- God's care for the birds illustrates the truth of His provision.
- Aren't you much more important than birds?
- If He provides for birds, won't He provide for you all the more?
- Furthermore, birds don't stockpile (i.e., "gather into barns").
- That is, they work, but they don't hoard, and they certainly don't worry about future meals.
- So with you! Don't hoard; don't stockpile.
- Work and expect God to provide your daily food.
- vs. 28-29 So why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; and yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.
- 30 Now if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will He not much more clothe you, O you of little faith?

Think about the beautiful lilies of the field (or the wildflowers along the interstate).

- They have incredible natural beauty — far greater than all of Solomon's splendor, and Solomon was the richest king of Israel, fabulously wealthy.
- Though the flowers are not productive or enduring, God clothes them spectacularly.
- Will He not do the same for you?

3. Worry is unbelief, which is characteristic of pagans.

- Is worry a sin?

- Yes, because to worry is to be anxious about something, and God specifically commands us not to do that.
- Furthermore, worry is lack of faith in the promises of God.
- In fact, in v. 30 Jesus refers to those who worry as those “of little faith.”
- The adjective *little* does not imply that faith is small in size.
- Rather, it is short in duration; it does not continue to trust God, and that is sin.
- For “whatever is not from faith is sin” (Rom. 14:23).
- When we don’t claim the promises of God, we live in sin, we live in unbelief, not trusting God to provide.
- Thus, worry is an affront to the providence of God and is characteristic of pagans, not believers.

Notice vs. 31-32:

- v. 31 Therefore do not worry, saying, “What shall we eat?” or “What shall we drink?” or ‘What shall we wear?’”
- 32 For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things.
- Why do you worry about food, drink, clothing?
- Anxious concern about basic necessities of life is what characterizes those who do not know God.
- They hoard, they stockpile, they fret about tomorrow because they have no God in whom to place their trust.
- But, as children of God, we have a heavenly Father who cares for all of our needs.
- When you worry, you act as if you have no Father to meet your needs.

4. Worry overloads us today with tomorrow’s burdens.

- v. 34 Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.
- The text began with *therefore* in v. 25, and it ends with *therefore* in v. 34.
- Again, we must ask, what is it *there for*?
- Based on what Jesus has just said — that our providential God meets all our needs ... don’t worry about tomorrow!
- Today has enough *trouble* (KJV, *evil*) without worrying about tomorrow.
- Commentator George Lyons said, “Worry is the interest paid by those who borrow trouble.”

How foolish to worry about what has not yet happened!

- God gives grace to handle today’s problems (2 Cor. 12:9), and He promises to give grace to handle tomorrow’s troubles (James 4:6) when tomorrow comes.
- Early in my pastoral ministry an elderly widow woman in my church congregation said to me: “I don’t know what I’m going to do; I don’t have any more work at my age, and I only have \$10,000 in the bank.
- I only receive a small Social Security check each month.
- What will I do when that is gone?”
- She was quite distraught and worried and thought about this continually.
- I tried to show her that she was overloading herself with tomorrow’s burdens, which never came in her case.
- She did eventually get more work that she was quite capable of doing, and she ended up dying many years later with the \$10,000 still in the bank!

A high percentage of what people worry about never comes to pass.

- They waste much time focusing on the bad, disobeying God, and destroying their health, when they could be focusing on the good, obeying God, knowing that all things work together for good to those who love Him (Rom. 8:28).
- Linus says to Charlie Brown, “Worrying won’t stop the bad stuff from happening, it just stops you from enjoying the good.”
- How true!
- What should believers be doing instead of worrying?

3. Seeking *first* God’s kingdom

- v. 33 But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.
- Some have mistakenly interpreted “the kingdom of God” to be a reference to Heaven, and they assume this verse promises that those who are saved (regenerated) and “on their way to Heaven,” can count on all their needs being provided by God.
- In other words, they don’t view this promise as conditional, to be fulfilled in the lives of those who are on the pathway of kingdom inheritance.
- They view it as an unconditional guarantee of provision for all children of God.
- But it is important to consider the context.

God is not speaking about matters of initial salvation.

- The Sermon on the Mount is preached to believers who are serious about discipleship and desire to inherit a place of rulership in Christ’s Messianic kingdom.
- To qualify, they must seek first — or prioritize — God’s kingdom, which is the kingdom of the heavens.
- They must make it their number one priority in life.

- They must become obsessed with “press(ing) toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. (Phil. 3:14).
- Make inheriting the kingdom your first priority in life, and any thoughts of worry will fade away.
- As mentioned earlier, worry is unbelief, and it has no place in the life of someone who is diligently seeking to inherit the kingdom. Kingdom seekers are faith-filled.
- You cannot serve God and worry.
- You can only have one Master.
- So seek to qualify for inheriting the kingdom, and all vestiges of worry will be driven out.
- Furthermore, God promises your needs will be met.
- What should believers be doing instead of worrying?

2. Seeking *first* God’s righteousness

- Jesus instructed disciples to seek His kingdom *and* His righteousness.
- The idea is that by living righteously, we become kingdom inheritors.
- Robert Govett said, “The ‘kingdom of God’ is the end to be sought. The ‘righteousness of God’ is the way to obtain it.”
- Again, this has nothing to do with initial salvation.
- It is about *sanctification* — being set apart by obedience, righteous living, becoming perfect as our Father in heaven is perfect (Matt. 5:48).

God expects all men to live righteously, especially His own children.

- Acts 10:35 In every nation whoever fears Him and works righteousness is accepted by Him.
- 1 Tim. 6:11 But you, O man of God, flee these things and pursue righteousness ...

- 2 Tim. 2:22 Flee also youthful lusts; but pursue righteousness ...
- When seeking God's righteousness becomes your priority, you will not worry about the mundane things of this life, for you will have a greater goal, a higher calling. Your needs will be met now, and you will be on the pathway of receiving an inheritance in His coming kingdom.
- What should believers be doing instead of worrying?

3. Trusting God with needs

- 1 Peter 5:6-7 Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time, casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you.
- The same Greek word translated *care* in Peter's epistle is translated *worry* in Matt. 6.
- It is anxiousness.
- Peter is essentially saying, cast your *worries* upon the Lord.
- To that end, Jesus extends to you an invitation:
- Matt. 11:28-30 Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.

What a glorious offer with promise attached!

- But how does a child of God do this in a practical, everyday-living sense?
- The answer is found in Paul's letter to the Philippians:
- Phil 4:6-7 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.

- Verse 6 can be easily summarized in one sentence: *Don't worry about anything; pray about everything.*
- When you do, the peace of God will keep (guard or protect) your *heart* — the seat of the emotions — and *mind* — the seat of the thoughts.
- Ironically, when we are overcome with worry, our thoughts and emotions are the very aspects of our being that rage out of control.
- But God promises to protect our thoughts and emotions when we are praying rather than worrying.
- The end result will be the pervading presence of God's peace, which is beyond explanation.
- That is how to find rest for the soul.

An old gospel chorus asks:

Why worry, when you can pray?
Trust Jesus, He'll be your stay.
Don't be a doubting Thomas,
Rest fully on His promise,
Why worry, worry, worry, worry, when you can pray?

- What should believers be doing instead of worrying?

4. Showing concern for others rather than worrying about self

- Interestingly, the Greek word translated *worry*, used five times in Matt. 6, has an obvious negative connotation.
- However, the same Greek word is translated *care* elsewhere in the NT with a positive connotation.
- For instance, in 1 Cor. 12:25, when speaking about spiritual gifts, Paul emphasizes "that there should be no

schism (split or division) in the body, but that the members should have the same *care* for one another.”

- That is a positive use of the same Greek word translated *worry* in Matt. 6.
- In Phil. 2:20 Paul tells the church at Philippi that he will send Timothy to be a blessing to them, “For I have no one likeminded, who will sincerely *care* for your state.” Again, this is positive usage of the word.
- In closing, I would like to give you a simple chart that I ran across in a good book on worry, for I think it will be a blessing and a help to some.

Characteristics of CARE	Characteristics of WORRY
Focused on others	Focused on self
Encourages serving	Discourages serving
Constructive	Destructive
Welcomed by others	Unwelcome to others
Driven by love	Driven by fear
Goal is to help	Has no goal
Builds relationships	Weakens relationships
Motivated by faith	Motivated by doubt

If you want to inherit the kingdom of the heavens, then *don't* be a worrywart.

- Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness.
- Trust the Lord in everything.
- Show concern for others rather than worrying about yourself.
- I challenge you to: THINK ON THESE THINGS!