



“Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof” (Matthew 6:34).

I Am Resolved Not to Worry

Central Truth: Trusting God every day helps us to overcome worry.

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The following tale is from ancient folklore.

Death was walking toward a city and a man asked, “What are you going to do?”

Death said, “I’m going to kill ten thousand people.”

The man said, “That’s horrible!”

Death said, “That’s the way it is; that’s what I do.”

So the day passed, and the man met Death coming back. He said, “You said you were going to kill ten thousand people and there were seventy thousand killed.”

Death said, “Well, I only killed ten thousand. Worry and fear killed the others.”

The first day of the new year is a good time to resolve not to worry. Will you make that resolution and work toward keeping it?

Jesus taught His disciples not to worry. Why? Because worry cripples us mentally, lessens our efficiency for service, and destroys our capacity for joy. It causes us to lose sleep and harms our health. It will not correct yesterday's errors or solve tomorrow's problems; but it will rob us of today's comfort, strength, and time. Worry is faithless, senseless, needless, and useless. It controls, even enslaves, its victims.

Jesus teaches His disciples in every generation not to worry. Matthew 6:25-34 is one of the classic passages recording His teachings on the subject. Read it again and think of it as His speaking personally to you.

I. DEFINITION OF WORRY

Worry is the anxious care that comes from assuming a responsibility which we are incapable of discharging. (Read that sentence again and meditate on it a moment, please.) It comes when we assume God's responsibility and work in our daily affairs. The result is that we are troubled and uneasy, with an anxious state of mind. Worry is misery.

Worry is being at war with oneself. The term comes into English from a compound word in Greek meaning “mind” and “divide.” To worry is to be of a divided mind — at war with oneself. That creates a burden which a human being is unable to bear. *“Heaviness in the heart of man maketh it stoop”* (Proverbs 12:25). Why would anyone bear that burden if relief is available? This study is designed to help you understand the problem of worry and to find relief in Jesus Christ.

II. CAUSES OF WORRY

A. Worry can be caused by a disturbing situation for which one must find a solution. How can a man provide food, shelter, clothing, and other things for his family? That is a subject about which multitudes worry. Jesus deals with that in careful detail in Matthew 6:25-34.

B. Worry can be caused by a disturbing situation over which one has no control. It may be the terminal illness of a loved one, a son serving his country in a war zone, or the problems of inflation or devaluation of one's money. Worry is useless in that situation, but it is common.

C. Worry can be caused by the minor problems of daily life. Many of these warrant little concern, yet they evoke feelings of dread, anxiety, and hopelessness. Those problems could be a traffic congestion on the way to work, a drop in the grades a child makes in school, how many weeds are growing in the lawn, and a thousand other lesser things.

D. Worry is always caused by a lack of trust in God. A businessman had a sign on his desk which read, “Why worry when you can pray?” Why, indeed? When worry comes in the door, faith jumps out the window. It is impossible to worry about our concerns and trust God as our loving Father at the same time. How much better than worry is the prophet's spirit: *“I will trust, and not be afraid: for the LORD JEHOVAH is my strength and my song; he also is become my salvation”* (Isaiah 12:2).

III. EFFECTS OF WORRY

A. Worry has physical effects. A portion of the brain called the hypothalamus is alarmed, and that affects the body. Muscles tense. The sympathetic nervous system causes the heart to beat harder; breathing becomes quicker and more shallow; the blood supply is shut off to the digestive system; muscles in the walls of the gullet, stomach, and intestines go into spasms, causing the “butterflies”; blood pressure increases; sweat glands open, and the salivary glands dry up; sugar is released from the liver to supply extra energy to the muscles; adrenaline is released into the blood stream to keep all those reactions active.

Continued worry will make a person sick. Luke, the physician, recorded more of Jesus' teaching on the subject of worry than any other Gospel writer. Do you wonder why?

B. Worry has mental effects. It disturbs the emotions, causing them to fluctuate from hope to despair. It divides the understanding, causing convictions to be shallow and changeable. It disturbs one's judgment, causing decisions to be unjust or unreasonable. It upsets the will, causing plans and purposes to be dropped or not pursued with resolve. There is no peace of mind to the person who is filled with worry.

C. Worry has spiritual effects. It causes one to think and plan without God. It assumes responsibilities which only God can fulfill. It implies the absence of trust. Remember the saying, “When worry comes in the door, faith jumps out the window.” How much better it is to follow the principle of Psalm 56:3: *“What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee.”*

D. Worry has practical effects. It tends to produce the very thing which is an object of worry. The Bible warns, *“As he thinketh in his heart, so is he”* (Proverbs 23:7). He who worries about losing his health will harm his health by worry. He who spends time seeing himself as a failure is more likely to follow that example in his work. People who worry about having an automobile accident are more prone to have accidents. Energy is used in worry that could be used in solving the problem.

Look over that list of the effects of worry. Ask yourself the question, “Why do I contribute to my own hurt by giving thought to worry when I could trust God instead?” Jesus said, *“Take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with . . . cares of this life”* (Luke 21:34).

Why worry when you can pray?

IV. EVALUATION OF WORRY

A. Most things about which we worry do not happen. By keeping a record, we will be amazed to discover that our worries are often of a “what if

...” nature, and the difficulty that we fear does not occur. It is useless to worry over such questions as these: “What if I lose my job?” “What if my health fails?” “What if my marriage partner dies?” In most instances, the feared thing does not happen. We have wasted the joys of today by borrowing troubles from tomorrow.

B. Anticipation is worse than the experience. If the bad thing happens, God gives special grace to bear it (I Corinthians 10:13). Think of the worst possible thing that could happen in that area of your worry, then plan what you would do in that case. Whatever happens will be less than that, and you know you can handle it in the Lord.

C. Keep your focus on Christ, not on your problems. As Peter walked on the water in the midst of the storm (Matthew 14:27-31), so you can walk through your storms as long as you keep your eyes on Jesus. Take your attention off Him and, like Simon Peter, you will begin to sink. The storm is nothing when He is caring for you.

V. REMEDY FOR WORRY

The solution to all our worries is God himself. It all focuses on the fact that He is our Father and is committed to care for His children.

A. Accept the Father's values. Jesus warned that we cannot serve God and earthly treasures at the same time. Which of the two is more important? God is so much more important that one would be the loser if he gained the whole world and lost his soul (Matthew 16:26). Jesus said, “*The life is more than meat, and the body is more than raiment*” (Luke 12:23). If you would be free from worry, put your value where God puts His.

B. Receive the Father's provisions. “*Look at the fowls of the air,*” Jesus said. “*They do not sow, or reap, or gather into storehouses.*” Yet they have plenty to eat! Why? Jesus explained, “*Your heavenly Father feedeth them*” (Matthew 6:26). You are more important to God than many birds. God fed Israel in the wilderness (Deuteronomy 2:7). He fed Elijah in a time of famine (I Kings 17:6, 16) and in the wilderness (I Kings 19:6). He supplied the army of three kings (II Kings 3:10). He fed the prophet's widow (II Kings 4:6). He has made a promise to “*supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus*” (Philippians 4:19). What more could you ask?

C. Ponder the Father's power. He has no problem providing for the millions of birds. He has the power to provide for you. So we say, “*Blessed be the Lord, who daily loadeth us with benefits, even the God of our salvation*” (Psalm 68:19). Think on that when you tend to worry about your

supply.

D. Regard the Father's family. *“Your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things”* (Matthew 6:32). He counts the hairs of your head and considers you of great value (Luke 12:6, 7). He gives good things to those who ask Him (Matthew 7:11). He is committed to caring for you as a loving father cares for his dear children.

E. Remember the Father's promises. *“Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you”* (Matthew 6:33). Your concern is not to be with your provisions but with your obedience. *“Trust in the LORD, and do good; . . . and verily thou shalt be fed”* (psalm 37:3). God promises, *“When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I the LORD will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them”* (Isaiah 41:17). The promises of God are as certain as if they were already fulfilled. Accept them with the delight of a little child. God will take care of you.

F. Obey the Father's command. *“Take therefore no thought for the morrow”* means, “Do not be filled with anxiety and fretting concerning tomorrow.” Take the trials of each day as they come. One day's trouble is sufficient for that day; there is no need to borrow possible troubles of tomorrow. Psalm 37 has a list of commands which apply here: *“Fret not. . . . Trust. . . . Commit. . . . Rest.”* Good advice!

Jesus said, *“Let not your heart be troubled”* (John 14:1). Paul wrote, *“Be careful for nothing”* (Philippians 4:6). Peter advised, *“Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you”* (I Peter 5:7).

Conquering worry is an act of the will. Worry is not a virtue, a mistake, a weakness, or a failure. It is a sin! Confess it and ask for forgiveness.

Stop your worry. Do not say, “I hope I will not worry; I will try not to worry.” Surrender the right to fret as a spiritual sacrifice to God.

Questions

1. What is worry?
2. How is worry distinguished from concern?
3. Why did Jesus teach His disciples not to worry?
4. What causes a person to worry?
5. What are some of the effects of worry?
6. Why is worrying a waste of time and energy?
7. How does Matthew 6:26 teach you not to worry?
8. What does Psalm 68:19 say on this subject?
9. How can Matthew 6:33 keep you from worry?

10. How can I Peter 5:7 help you to overcome worry this year?