

THE FOLLY OF WORRY

MATTHEW 6:25-34

Death was walking toward a modern city. A man who met Death asked him what he was going to do. "I'm going to kill 10 people," Death replied. "That's terrible," said the man. "I know," said Death, "But that's what I do."

The next day the same man met Death coming away from the city, and he protested, "You said you were going to kill 10 people, but 100 died." "I only killed 10," said Death. "Worry and fear killed the rest."

We laugh at this story, but the truth of it hits close to home. According to Harper's Index, the average American is in a bad mood 110 days out of the year. About 30% of the time we are in a bad mood because of worry, stress, anger, or depression.

We know we shouldn't worry; we know that it's wrong; we know that it doesn't do any good; yet we do it anyway.

We try to cross our bridges before we get to them, then worry the bridge is going to break while we're crossing. We worry over tomorrow's problems that will never happen.

Jesus understands us. But He also knows that Christians must learn to trust Him.

Last week, in vv. 19-24 Jesus emphasized the danger of living for our stuff—putting our trust in stuff instead of Him. When we live for our things we worry about it. Jesus says, "Stop it. You can eliminate worry from your life." First...

1. Decide not to worry (read vv. 25, 31, 34)

V. 25, Therefore I tell you, do not worry. V. 31, So, do not worry. V. 34, Therefore do not worry. Who's telling us this? Jesus!

Three times Jesus explicitly states, "Do not worry." Do you think Jesus would have said this if it were not possible for you to stop?

Yes it is easier said than done. But Jesus knows a secret—we are Christians! We live in His strength, not our own. The secret is to turn our worries over to Him.

2. Most of our worries are trivial (v. 25)

A Navy chaplain drew up a “Worry Table” based on the problems brought to him by the men and women he served. Their worries fit into five categories:

Worries about things that never happened, 40%. Worries about decisions already made and not changeable, 30%. Worries about sickness that never came, 12%. Worries about children and friends, forgetting that they were able to help themselves, 10%. Worries about real problems, 8%. His conclusion was that 92% of our worries are needless.

Wow! Only 8% of the things we worry about legitimately deserve our concern and thought.

We spend so much time worrying about our things and tomorrows, that we tend to ignore that which is truly important—what has eternal significance.

3. Worry is a waste of time (v. 27)

V. 27. Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life? Worry burdens us and wears us down. We don't have what it takes to worry about all the things we fret about.

Worry causes high blood pressure, heart problems, and drains our energy. Yet we continue to worry. We use the excuse, “I can't help it. This is who I am.”

Worry causes much of our stress, anger, and depression. Worry is that uneasiness we feel over some real or imaginary problem. We assume the worst, so we worry.

Can you, by worrying, add a single hour to your life? Of course not! That's just the point. It is outside our competence. In fact, far from lengthening your life, worry very well may shorten it.

So it is a waste of time. Leave it in God's hands.

4. Worry is beneath your dignity (v. 26).

“Are you not much more valuable than birds?”

You are God's creation, made in His image. You are more valuable than the birds. It is beneath

your dignity, you are made in His image, to spend your life worrying. Jesus said He came to give us abundant life, not a life eaten up with worry.

Consider the birds. God provides, but He doesn't line their nest with seed. They must work for it. They don't worry about food—they just stay busy gathering what God provides for them and their babies.

If God so carefully takes care of such relatively insignificant creatures as birds, how much more will He take care of those who are created in His own image and who have become His children through faith?

5. Worry is a sin (v. 30).

V.30b. O you of little faith. Worry is a lack of faith. Anything that is not of faith, the Bible says, is a sin (Rom. 14:23). By worrying we are saying in effect, "This is a situation over which God has no control. God is helpless and I'm on my own."

Understood this way helps us to realize how utterly sinful worry is. Worry can destroy your fellowship with God. Worry can come between you and God.

Worry is not just a little sin—it strikes a blow both at God's love and His integrity. Worry means we've decided that God's Word is untrustworthy.

Worry shows that we are mastered by our circumstances rather than by God—in other words, we are worldly. So stop worrying.

6. Trust God to take care of you (vv. 31-32)

V. 32b. For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them.

The pagans (non-Christians) don't know any better. This world is the best they can hope for. The things of this world are their gods. But the things of this life are not worthy of our adulation.

We have "trusted" God for our eternal salvation. So it doesn't make sense not to trust Him with the everyday cares of life. The first thing to do is:

7. Trust God for the things that are beyond your control (v. 34)

As long as we are in control of a situation we feel safe. But when there are things beyond our control, we begin to worry.

We want to control everything about our lives, but we can't. There will always be things beyond our control. God has given us responsibility to work and support ourselves—not to worry about them, just do them.

So take care of those things you can control, then leave the rest in God's hands.

8. Give your worries to God in prayer:

When you start to feel anxious or worried, avoid panic by giving your burden to God in prayer. One of the best things you can do is to give your concerns to God in prayer. You are saying, "I trust you, Lord."

There are over 7,000 promises found in the Bible. See the faithfulness of God. Start trusting Him more and more, and your worries will become less and less. You do not need to worry when you trust God for the things that are beyond your control.

9. Give Jesus Christ first place (v. 33)

A young boy was driving a big hayrack down the road and it turned over right in front of a farmer's house. The farmer came out and saw the young boy crying and said, "Son, don't worry about this, we can fix it. Right now dinner's ready. Why don't you come in and eat with us and then I'll help you put the hay back on the rack."

The boy said, "No, I can't. I'm worried that my father is going to be very angry with me." The farmer said, "Now don't argue, just come in and have some lunch and you'll feel better." The boy said, "I'm just afraid my father is going to be very angry with me." The farmer and the young boy went inside and had dinner. Afterward, as they walked outside to the hayrack, the farmer said, "Well, don't you feel better now?" The boy said, "Yes but I'm still worried that my father will be very angry with me." The farmer said, "Nonsense. Where is your father anyway?" The boy said, "He's under that pile of hay."

The key to eliminating worry is taking God from under the pile of our worries where we sometimes try to keep Him, and putting Him back in first place in our lives.

Giving Jesus Christ first place means, first of all, that you accept Him as your Lord and Savior. If you have never done this today is a good time to make that decision. You will never have a peaceful mind free from worry until you surrender your life to Jesus Christ.

Secondly, surrender to Christ complete Lordship of your life. Even if you have been a Christian for many, many years, you still need on a daily basis to give Him complete Lordship of your life.

The reasons many Christians struggle with worry, fear, and anxiety is because they have let their relationship with God become a secondary priority in their lives. Jesus demands that He be your first priority.

10. Live one day at a time (v. 34)

“Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.”

11. Don't ask, “what if?”

Jesus understands the fear we have that something may happen in the future to make life difficult. This is why we ask the “what if?” questions.

What if my health fails? Or what if I'm no longer able to work? How will our needs be met? We have plenty for today, but what about tomorrow?

He is telling us that worrying about it doesn't do any good at all. We should take life one day at a time and stop asking “what if?” All that does is keep us from having the boldness to step out and do the things that God wants us to do today. (College, no job).

There is nothing wrong with planning for the future, planning for retirement—that's all part of godly stewardship. But it is a sin to worry about the future. God knows our needs and He is both able and willing to provide.

12. Give full attention to each day

Give your full attention to each day as it comes. Oh, you can worry about tomorrow, but all that does is upset your today. Wouldn't it be better to devote your energy to living today in a way that we brings glory to God.

Application:

Worry quenches the work of God's grace within you. You belong to God—trust Him. We know the future is in His hands. However, it is generally much less difficult for us to commit our future to the Lord than it is to commit our present. We know we are helpless regarding the future, but we feel as if the present must be carried on our own shoulders. Learn to trust Him with both your present and future.

Worship and worry cannot live in the same heart: they are mutually exclusive. -- Ruth Bell Graham

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