

Worry, worry, worry!

Intro: Who among us does not at times experience that uneasy feeling of uncertainty, agitation, dread, or fear that we commonly call worry?

We worry because we often do not know what the future holds for us.

We worry because we do not know what is happening to someone we care about.

We worry because we are unsure about whether we'll have things we need in the future.

We worry because we are afraid that our performance is up to the expectations of others.

We worry because we feel guilty about something we've done or neglected to do.

We worry about how others may think of us.

And in all this worry, we share a state of mind that even godly people have faced from time to time. Even the Scriptures we can see many examples of worry:

Jacob was anxious about how Esau would respond to him (Gen. 32)

Saul's father was anxious about his lost donkeys, and then about Saul's failure to return from looking for them (1 Sam. 9:5; 10:2).

Martha was worried about making Jesus comfortable (Luke 10:40, 41).

Paul was worried about the whereabouts of Titus when he couldn't find him in Troas (2 Cor. 2:12-13)

Among his sufferings, he mentions the great anxiety he felt for the welfare of all the congregations (2 Cor. 11:28).

The problem is that genuine concern can quickly degenerate into a worry that becomes debilitating and distracting.

Someone once said, "Worry is a small trickle of fear that meanders through the mind until it cuts a channel into which all other thoughts are drained."—
Anonymous

And it can ultimately get in the way of responding properly to the word.

Jesus warned in the parable of the sower, "And the one on whom seed was sown among the thorns, this is the man who hears the word, and the worry of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful." (Matthew 13:22)

Anxiety in the heart of a man weighs it down, but a good word makes it glad. (Proverbs 12:25)

Let's look for the good word that will enable us to get a handle on worry and live in gladness. The Scriptures give us guiding principles to help us cope with those circumstances that cause worry. Let's think about some of them:

Recognize that worry is unproductive energy.

Is there anything that is more unproductive than worry?

*And which of you by being anxious can add a single cubit to his life's span?
(Mt. 6:27)*

I once remember a counselor telling me about a person who had come to him and he was constantly confronted with worry. The counselor wisely said, "Ok. If you must worry, here's what I want you to do. Find you a place and every day go there and start worry about things for as long as want." One day, the person while sitting in his worry chair said, "This is crazy! I spent all this time every day worrying; and nothing has changed!" Exactly!

Quit trying to control the uncontrollable!

Sometimes the reason we worry so much is because we are control freaks. We think our only protection is to control everyone and everything around us. That is impossible; and it will drive you crazy trying to do it! We have neither the power nor the position to do that; but God does!

Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time, casting all your anxiety upon Him, because He cares for you." (1 Pet. 5:6-7)

God's people through the ages were confronted with wicked people they could not change. Here's God's response:

Do not fret because of evildoers, Be not envious toward wrongdoers. For they will wither quickly like the grass, And fade like the green herb. Trust in the LORD, and do good; Dwell in the land and cultivate faithfulness. Delight yourself in the LORD; And He will give you the desires of your heart. Commit your way to the LORD, Trust also in Him, and He will do it. And He will bring forth your righteousness as the light, And your judgment as the noonday." (Psalm 37:1-6)

What God says to us is, "There are some things in life you can't fix; but I can. Trust judgment to me; you just keep doing right!"

"Commit your works to the LORD, And your plans will be established." (Proverbs 16:3)

Appreciate God's fatherly concern for His whole creation.

When Jesus addressed the problem of anxiety he found the solution in the power and goodness of the heavenly father. He kept saying things like these:

Look at the birds of the air, that they do not sow, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not worth much more than they? (Mt. 6:26)

And why are you anxious about clothing? Observe how the lilies of the field grow; they do not toil nor do they spin, yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory did not clothe himself like one of these. "But if God so arrays the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the furnace, will He not much more do so for you, O men of little faith? (Mt. 6:28-30)

Imagine coming into the living room and finding one of your little children sitting in the floor with a concerned look on his face. What's wrong? you ask.

He replies, "I don't know where I'm going to get food and clothes!" What would we say to them? "I'm here; I'll always take care of you!" That's what God says to us! We expect our children to believe us; why don't we believe Him?!

Let your character be free from the love of money, being content with what you have; for He Himself has said, "I WILL NEVER DESERT YOU, NOR WILL I EVER FORSAKE YOU," so that we confidently say, "THE LORD IS MY HELPER, I WILL NOT BE AFRAID. WHAT SHALL MAN DO TO ME?" (Heb. 13:5-6)

Worry is putting question marks where God has put periods.—John R. Rice

Trust Him to take care of you.

In Scripture, anxiety manifests a subtle insinuation that God is either unable or disinclined to see to our welfare. It is portrayed as being inconsistent with trust in God.

In fact someone once said, "Worry is a form of atheism, for it betrays a lack of faith and trust in God."—Attributed to Bishop Fulton J. Sheen

But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added to you. (Mt. 6:33)

Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thought. (Ps. 139:23).

The steadfast of mind Thou wilt keep in perfect peace, because he trusts in Thee." (Is. 26:3)

Keep a big picture view of life (an eternal perspective)

If we become narrow in our perspective we fret about the little stuff.

Jesus cautioned his disciples about that with a single question:

"For this reason I say to you, do not be anxious for your life, as to what you shall eat, or what you shall drink; nor for your body, as to what you shall put on. Is not life more than food, and the body than clothing?" (Mt. 6:25)

God challenges us to think in a bigger picture--to see life in an eternal perspective in which the earthly gives way to the heavenly.

Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has chosen gladly to give you the kingdom. Sell your possessions and give to charity; make yourselves purses which do not wear out, an unfailing treasure in heaven, where no thief comes near, nor moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. (Lk. 12:32-34)

Note how these verses with help us.

We are the sheep of God's fold; and the good shepherd takes care of His sheep!

God has already given us the greatest thing of all--citizenship in His kingdom. Is there anything else he will not give us that we need?

If we invest in the eternal, we invest in what neither be lost nor taken away from us

Use the energy of worry to pray for God's help.

“Cast your burden upon the LORD, and He will sustain you; He will never allow the righteous to be shaken.” (Psalm 55:22)

Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God (Phil. 4:6).

Victor Hugo said, “Have courage for the great sorrows of life and patience for the small ones. And when you have finished your daily task, go to sleep in peace. God is awake!”

Live one day at a time

What would you think if someone approached you in a store and said, "I would like to ask you to go ahead and pay tax before you start shopping?" You'd say, "That's ridiculous! I'll pay the tax when I make a purchase." But that's exactly what we do when we worry about things. Worry is the interest we pay on tomorrow's troubles.—E. Stanley Jones Why pay a premium on what may never happen?

Therefore do not be anxious for tomorrow; for tomorrow will care for itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.” (Mt. 6:34)

And in the meantime, we can live with the confidence that as we build our trust, we'll be ready when the day of testing comes for us.

Conclusion: We can get a handle on worry and live in peace. By applying these principles we can say with the psalmist: *“When my anxious thoughts multiply within me, Thy consolations delight my soul.” (Psalm 94:19)*

How could anyone enjoy real peace knowing that they have not made peace with God? If I had not obeyed the gospel, I would be worried about that! How about you?