

Why Do Christians Worry?

a sermon in the series
Sermon on the Mount

A sermon delivered Sunday Morning, July 10, 2011
at Oak Grove Baptist Church, Paducah, Ky.
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Matthew 6:25-34

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 So why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; 29 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.

The command to not worry is not pretending there are no problems. We are not to act like problems roll off of us as the proverbial water off the proverbial duck's back. No, we do have problems, and each of those problems will tempt you to worry. In verse 34 our Lord Jesus acknowledges that life in a fallen world has enough problems to fill each of our days. He says, "Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble."

Last week we heard Jesus give us nine reasons why not to worry. Each reason was an extremely logical argument why worry makes no sense and is unnecessary. Yet in spite of the nine rational reasons we still irrationally worry. Christians who have the one true omnipotent God caring for them have no sound reason to worry, and yet many of them do. Many of us do, or should I say, we all do.

What I want to discover today, is why do we? Why do Christians worry? It would be excusable if we were alone in life. It would be sensible if God were not on our side. But He is and He has promised to withhold no good thing from His. He has guaranteed to meet our needs knowing what our needs are before we do. Is this not what He says in verses 32 and 33? "For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first the kingdom of God and His

righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.”

If there is no logical reason to worry and God has made us these certain assurances, then why do you, my Christian brother and sister, worry? I wish to lead you into your own heart today and show you why you experience anxiety.

I. What is Worry?

One thing I purposefully didn't do last week was define worry. No doubt some of you left last week wondering if you worried. *I know I have concerns but is concern the same thing as worry? What about when God puts burdens on your heart, does that cross the line into worry also? I do feel grief and sorrow at times, and I feel a sense of urgency, is all of that worry and therefore I'm not to have any cares or concerns at all?*

Well, today I want to define worry and here is my definition of worry: *the sense of hopelessness, a spirit of dread concerning misfortune or potential misfortune.* It's a spirit of hopelessness. A sense of pressure without hope. It's fretting over potential and not actual adversity. You can worry about something that may or may not ever occur, but at the least potential of it occurring, you begin to worry. It's always the sense of dread without hope.

Difference Between Worry and Concern

Is there a difference between worry and concern? Yes. However, often we use the word *concern* when we really mean worry. We say, *I'm not worried about this, I'm just greatly concerned.* That may be true, but that may also be a way of saying *I'm worried, but I don't want you to know.* There is a genuine difference between being concerned about something and worry.

Concern is: an interest or care about someone or something. The difference between concern and worry is that concern is not hopeless. There is not a sense of dread. Therefore, you can have a genuine concern for something or someone and it not be worry. It doesn't cross the line into hopelessness, or despair, or a sense of frustration. There is no feeling of unrelenting fear, therefore it's a legitimate concern and you haven't disobeyed the command of Christ not to worry.

Difference Between Worry and Burden

Is there a difference between a burden and a worry? We use the word *burden* all the time in church, *the Lord burdened me about this*, what do you mean the Lord burdened you?

A burden is: a deeper level of concern, or even grief that God has given you about His will. It's a desire that is intense over something or someone; it may even be accompanied with sorrow and grief over them.

Let me give you two examples of the different kind of burdens you may experience. Let's suppose

Missy here said to us today, “God has given us a burden for young married couples.” What she is saying, in essence, is that God has given her a concern that we minister to our young married at Oak Grove. But let’s suppose that Kent, on the other hand, said, “God has given me a burden for so and so and their salvation that I can’t help but weep over them when I go to pray for them, I’m so burdened I grieve over their lost state and potential damage.” Here the burden is more than just a deep concern, but a sorrow that grieves his soul. As it is with concern, the burden God gives always carries with it hope that God is the answer to the need. That’s why you pray concerning your burdens. You’re burdened but there is no dread or sense of hopelessness, you grieve, you may even be afraid for someone or something, but it is never without hope in God, even the fear that may accompany that burden will relent.

II. Why Would a Christian Have a Sense of Hopelessness?

Having stated the definition of worry I ask this question again—why would a Christian experience hopelessness? Why would you as a believer in Christ ever have anxiety and with that, hopelessness, dread, fretting, and pressure that looks pessimistic?

Where Does Worry Come From?

In order to answer that we must ask another question—where does worry come from? Someone may very well answer that question and say something like this, “You know, I don’t know where it comes from because there are some times I work myself up into a fit of worry. I begin to think brutally about the situation and the next thing I know I’m feeling pressure in my chest, no joy, and a sense of despair comes over me. On other occasions I don’t have to work myself up, if someone mentions a bad potential I automatically feel that way, I don’t make myself do it. I don’t know how it happens.”

What the person is saying is this, sometimes worry is voluntary, he chooses to worry over something, but sometimes worry is involuntary, he doesn’t choose to worry but it still happens. If don’t know the nature of something, where it comes from, why it happens, or what it is, it’s often best to then analyze the very opposite.

So, we need to ask a second question.

What is the Opposite of Worry?

Most people would say faith or trust, but the answer is no. Worry is the sense of no peace and no joy, so the opposite must be joy and peace. The opposite of faith is not worry, but doubt and unbelief. That’s its opposite. Joy and peace are the products of faith. There are several Scriptures that say this but none better than Romans 15:13, “Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.”

There are two links here; the first link in this verse is faith with joy in peace. Paul says, “fill you with all joy and peace in believing.” In other words, the act of believing God creates joy and peace.

When I am truly trusting God I will always have the fruit of joy and peace, but if I do not have joy or if I'm not experiencing peace then I am not trusting and the result is worry.

The second link I want you to see is "joy and peace in believing" with "abounding in hope." As I've already said, the opposite of trusting in Jesus is not trusting in Jesus. And if trusting Jesus produces joy and peace, then the opposite must also be true; to not trust Jesus must a sense of peacelessness, and joylessness. That is exactly what anxiety is, it is the absence of hope, a sense of peacelessness and joylessness. We know that peace and joy are derivatives of faith, and since worry is the opposite of joy then worry must be the derivative of unbelief. Now my question is why does a Christian experience hopelessness and lapse into anxiety? The obvious answer is—he does not trust God.

Why Does A Believer Not Believe?

This leads to a third question, why would a believer (a noun which describes someone performing the act of faith) not trust God? How illogical and insensible is unbelief in a believer?

Our answer is in verse 27 of our text, "Which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature?" There are two reasons our Lord gives as to why we as Christians could be anxious. The first is faith in self. How can you by worrying add one cubit, 18-inches either to your height or the length of life because stature can also mean life? How many of you by worrying can add one step to the appointed hour of your death and live a little bit longer?

The person He's implying is you and me, the one worrying. The one who is worrying is trying, by himself, to add to his own life, which means he's trusting in himself to do it. So the first thing you need to see in this text is faith in self. If you're not trusting in God, then you are trusting in someone else—you. You say, *I could be trusting in my mom and dad, or my employer.* Yes, but even your confidence in other people is an act of confidence in yourself. You're choosing to trust them so as long as they cooperate with you. The moment they don't you withdrawal your trust. You're still in control. There are only two people you will ever ultimately trust in your entire life, you or Christ.

The opposite of faith in God is faith in you. It is this very thing, faith in oneself that will quickly produce anxiety. That's what Jesus is showing us here. As faith in God produces joy and peace, faith in self will always produce anxiousness and fear because you're putting your trust in someone who is not capable to solve the problems. You worry about how you'll solve your dilemmas rather than resting in your Father's loving care.

Faith in self is really a control issue. To trust someone else requires one thing only—the relinquishing of control to that person. If you're going to trust Christ explicitly, it means you have to turn lose of the control. If I trust you with something I own I have no control over it. You may neglect it, break it or even destroy it. Or you may take better care of it than I. The point is, I can't determine that, it's not under my control. That's what faith does, it surrenders control to another.

Trust in Christ is giving Christ the control of your life. That's why some of you are not saved. You don't trust Him with your life; you don't want Him to have control. There is no faith without relinquishing the control of your life.

If you were to cease to trust in yourself and start trusting in Christ it might mean you won't receive what you believe you deserve, or maybe you will get what you know you deserve and you don't want that either. We fear this and we refuse surrender the control. We trust in ourselves but when life gives us problems we cannot solve, anxiety comes immediately.

The answer to why Christians worry has now been reduced to something very simple—we worry because we want to control our lives and we do not want anyone else to do it, not even God. Jesus told us that we only worry about the uncontrollable issues; you don't worry if you can fix it. You don't worry if you can solve the problem, you just do it. But when you cannot solve it, and it's now out of your hands, worry begins. Although it may be uncontrollable you're still trying to control it. That's why anxiety saddles you, blankets you, wraps itself around you, and smothers you.

We all have problems we're facing; Jesus already told us that everyday we have a new set of problems. But you don't have to worry about those problems if you relinquish the control and trust that whatever He has determined is best for you. Ah, this is the problem. We don't prefer God's will most of the time. We don't see it as being best. If you worry 50-percent of the time, then 50-percent of the time you don't believe God's will is the best. If you worry 70-percent of the time, then 70-percent of the time you don't believe God's will is the best. If you will humble yourself and know that God loves you then you will put your trust in Him.

There are three steps for how a Christian come overcome worry:

1. Trust in Christ. Jesus said, "Let not your heart be troubled," don't be agitated, don't worry, "You believe in God, believe also in Me." *Have faith in Me and your heart will not be troubled, it will be assured, peaceful.* Trust in Christ.

Pastor, that's the whole issue, you just told me I don't do that and now you say "trust in the Lord." I need more than that. Yes you do.

2. Experience the love of God. You need to experience the love of God. This is most crucial. If you want to have faith in God, or your faith to increase, you need to experience more of His love. Why is that? Because trust in Christ is always built upon the love of God. We are not faith factories, we cannot manufacture or increase our faith when we want to, otherwise we would. Faith is in direct proportion to experiencing the love of God. Some of you folks have come with puny and weak faith, you do not need more faith you need more of the experience of God's love and your faith will automatically increase. Quit seeking faith, seek Christ and experience His love for you.

To trust someone with your life you have to believe they've got your best interest at heart. The Father loves us and Jesus says in verse 26 that He values you more than birds. "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?" Verse 30 says He values you more than the grass of the field that He clothes with the beautiful flowers. "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?"

You really don't believe God loves you like that, therefore what your faith needs is to experience it firsthand. You don't need a preacher to tell you secondhand of how great the love of God is, you need to experience it for your own self. It's not enough to rest in your conversion, it's not enough to rest in the last time He answered your prayer and you experienced renewal in your soul, you need a fresh touch today! You need God to pour out His love on you today. He's not only willing, He stands here ready to pour into hearts who will say come, *pour it into this vessel*.

How many fathers here would give their sons a rock if he asked for a piece of bread? What father would give his son a scorpion in place of an egg, or instead of fish a poisonous snake? There is not a one of you who would do that and yet you accuse your heavenly Father of doing much worse. When you worry, you say He won't answer your prayer, He won't give you what's best, or that He will not provide for you. You may be able to pray beautiful prayers and say all the right things in them, but if you do not believe He is working His best on your behalf, your heart is praying and saying something entirely different.

The most important thing you can do several times throughout the day is what Jude told you to do in Jude 21, "Keep yourself in the love of God." That means taking God's Word and believing it even when your emotions and circumstances say otherwise.

I want to share with you something I found many years ago, I've shared this before but it's so apropos to this point. It's from George Muller. He said these words about the love of God, which he calls being happy in the Lord:

"I saw more clearly than ever that the first great and primary business to what I ought to attend to everyday was to have my soul happy in the Lord.

The first thing to be concerned about was not how much I might serve the Lord, how I might glorify the Lord; but how I might get my soul into a happy state, and how my inner man might be nourished.

Before this time my practice had been, at least for ten years previously, as an habitual thing to give myself to prayer, after having dressed myself in the morning. Now, I saw that the most important thing I had to do was to give myself to the reading of the word of God, and to meditation on it, that thus my heart might be comforted, encouraged, warned, reprov'd, instructed; and that thus, by means of the word of God, whilst meditating on it, my heart might be brought into experi-

mental communion with the Lord.”

All that Müller is saying is you must experience God. You need a reality to your prayers where you know you touched heaven and heaven has touched you. That’s your number one priority every day, and if you will not fulfill that responsibility you will trust in yourself and not God and therefore will be plagued by anxiety.

3. You must set your mind on things above. We spend too much time on worldly things, therefore we exercise control over these worldly things and do not trust God. This is what Jesus is showing us in verse 25. What I want you to see is how He weaves his theme from verses 19 and following; He weaves serving mammon, storing treasures on this earth, and anxiety, they’re all related. If you serve money or live for money and store treasures on this earth and treasure your treasures here, you will be a worry wart for sure. If your goals are earthly you will be a person given to anxiety. Verse 19, “Therefore,” there is the connection to the previous verses, “I say to you, do not worry.”

You have no reason to worry but sadly we do. The good news today is that you don’t have to. We’ve exposed worry as a feeble and doomed attempt to control our lives, even the parts we cannot control. Worry is the same spirit of prayerlessness, faithlessness, and joylessness we so often are plagued with. Peace is stolen because you try to control things that are simply out of your hands. When things are going well, what do you do? You’re worried that the next shoe is about to drop at any time.

How has your worrying improved your life? It hasn’t. Do you really want to experience God? Do you want to have intimacy with Christ? I don’t know any believer who wouldn’t. If that’s what you want, then you’ve need to do this one thing—relinquish your life to His will. You’ve got to say *Father, Your will at times is painful, difficult, and even mysterious, but I relinquish my life to You.* The result will be the presence of God flooding your life. You will have a consciousness, an awareness of God as you do that. You’ve got to turn lose of the controls and humble yourself, you can’t have two masters—you and Jesus.

God is not interested in you being a co-pilot; in fact, He doesn’t even want you in the cockpit. He wants you to trust Him like Abraham. You need to be Abraham-like. “By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance. And he went out not knowing where he was going” (Hebrews 11:8). That, my friend, is a worry-free life. God help you to trust even when you don’t know where He’s taking you. Amen.