

# Wednesday Night BIBLE STUDY

Wednesday, October 23, 2013 – First Baptist Church Buda  
Midweek Prayer Meeting & Bible Study

## **PRAYER THAT WORKS** **Prayer and The Problem of Worry** *Matthew 6:25-34, Psalm 37*

Is worry a problem? Why? \_\_\_\_\_

The slogan of many Christians today is, “why trust when you can worry?” That slogan is not new – Christ, Himself, had to address the problem in the first century. Our minds are frequently weary with worry... our spirits are often weighted down. The resulting worry from yesterday’s guilt adds to our anxiety over tomorrow’s uncertainties. We find ways to hide our worry from others. In fact, we give it other titles... “I’m concerned about...” “I am troubled by that...” “That really disturbs me...” “I’m just interested...” “I’m bothered by that...” etc., etc., etc. In the final analysis, however it’s usually plain old “worry”... anxiety, mental distress, fretting, wringing of hands, a lack of inner peace, and preoccupied agitation. Let’s first set our attention on Christ’s counsel, then look at a string of biblical worriers, and finally note four “P’s” to help us overcome and grow beyond our worrying.

### **I. GENERAL COMMENTS ABOUT WORRY**

Ours has been called, “The Age of Anxiety.” People’s faces show it (taut, constricted, intense, we say they have “worry lines” What is that anyways?) People’s attitudes show it (disquieted, apprehensive, vexed). Relationships show it... there is distrust and alienation. There are the physical signs of worry: we call it hyper-tension (high blood pressure), ulcers, nervous breakdowns, and even heart disease is sometimes associated with anxiety and worry.

**What are people worried about today?** List some of the worries of people today.

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| 1. Daily provision    | 6. Personal relationships (mate)   |
| 2. Employment (Nancy) | 7. Personal relationships (family, friends)  |
| 3. The future         | 8. Pleasing people   |
| 4. Life and death     | 9. Finances  |
| 5. Health             | 10. Witnessing ( <i>Luke 12:11, “Whey you are brought before the synagogues, rulers, and authorities, do not worry about how you will defend yourselves or what you will say.”</i> ) |

**3 Categories of Worry:** Worry tends to fall within one of three categories

1. **Worry about death (personal death or demise of a loved one)**
2. **Worry over guilt (even over something confessed)**
3. **Worry about daily problems (related to people, finances, possessions, education, vocation, etc.)**

The last category gnaws away at most every one of us in some way.

**Worldly Advice Concerning “Worry”:** The world is full of advice when it comes to “worry” and sometimes it may even sound “Christian” or like the right way to handle worry. The following are some of the ways the world says to handle worry... some of the advice we may sometimes give or receive.

1. **Don’t worry... it’s a waste of time; think positive!** – You know what I hate about this one is that sometimes the reality is there is not much to think positive about and this advice can sound very insensitive to what a person is going through.
2. **Don’t worry... don’t believe the situation is real; it’s an illusion -**
3. **Don’t worry... it may never happen** – Yet then again it might and it could! Doesn’t help much really for a worrier!
4. **Don’t worry... get control of yourself; you’re in charge – Really!** We are really not in control or in charge of as much as we think we are. Many things are totally out of our control and that’s the problem.
5. **Don’t worry... buy enough insurance for every eventuality** – What is wrong with this advice? There are some things money can’t buy.
6. **Don’t worry... be happy; laugh your troubles away** – What is wrong with this advice?
7. **Don’t worry... bite the bullet; you’ll feel no pain** –
8. **Don’t worry... if might get better, but it’ll probably get worse** –
9. **Don’t worry... get busy doing active things; it’ll take your mind off of it** –
10. **Don’t worry... have another drink, hit, pill; numb the pain and worry** –
11. **Don’t worry... so see your therapist** –
12. **Don’t worry... it’s all going to be over soon** –
13. **Don’t worry... these circumstances are just the “cross” you have to bear** –
14. **Don’t worry... it a sin; stop it! – I wish I could! Some people are hard-wired worriers.**

Reality is... we do worry! We all worry sometimes. We may not all be “big worriers” or “habitual worriers.” Some worry more than others, but we all have worries, cares and anxious moments. Christians worry? How do I grow despite and through worry?

**Developing a Christian Attitude Toward “Worry”:**

1. **Realize that worry is the opposite of faith** - As defined above, “worry” is contrary to the attitudes and activity that God would have Christians to be involved with. **Dr. John MacArthur says, “Worry, by nature, is the product of a lack of faith and trust in God.”** We need to come to the realization within our own minds that God does not desire for me to worry about a matter, but rather to commit it to Him.
  - (1) **Worry fails to take God into account in the situation**

- (2) **Worry is a self-oriented assumption of responsibility** – That is what Jesus meant when we said, *“Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life?”* (Mt.6:27).
- (3) **Worry is the opposite of faith** - *“Whatever is not from faith is sin”* according to **Romans 14:23.**
2. **Focus on God** - Rather than have a “divided mind” concerning the situation, we are to look to God in the midst of the situation.
  3. **Pray about it** - Looking to God in prayer should be our response to worry. Such prayer should be done in faith. The result will be “peace” in place of bothersome, disquieting “worry”
  4. **Keep a Christian perspective** - Remember that a Christian’s perspectives and responses to situations is to be different.

**Different Christian Perspective in Worry:**

- (1) **Christians do not seek to escape, withdraw or remove all problems.**
- (2) **Christians are not indifferent, apathetic, or unconcerned in situations**
- (3) **Christians know that “God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who called according to his purpose” (Rom. 8:28)**

**2 Perspectives on Worry:**

1. **A Biblical Perspective** – The word “worry,” as it appears in our English language, does not surface in the text of the King James Bible. However the concept does. To convey the thought, such words have been used as “anxiety,” “care,” “trouble,” “concern,” and “fret” or “fretting.” In the New American Standard Bible text of Matthew 6:25-34, the term “being anxious” has been employed to convey the thought of worry, and is used no less than six times. What does it mean to be anxious?
2. **A Practical Perspective** – To be anxious is to be “divided” or “distracted.” Literally the Greek words translated as “worry” (NIV) or “anxious” (NAS) in Matthew 6 is the Greek word “merimnao” and it means “to divide the mind” or “to have a divided mind.” In other words, your mind is distracted, weighted down, concerned, preoccupied with care... it’s divided by something or someone. The thought is that of being so mentally ill-at-ease that the individual is distracted. Such people cannot do what they are supposed to do... or want to do... because they are divided in their thinking. An excellent example of this is Martha in Luke 10:38-42 (READ). What was Martha’s problem? She was “worried” about everything that had to be done. Not the phrase in **verse 40, “But Martha was *distracted* by all the preparations that had to be made...”** Mental distraction – or worry – leads to agitation. Why? Because the person with the problem of worry is caught in the middle.

**II. SPECIFIC ARGUMENTS AGAINST WORRY (Matthew 6:25-34)**

Early in His ministry, Christ delivered a significant address that clarified His message and ministry. It stood as a sharp contrast to the predominant teachings of the religious pros of the day (the Pharisees). His conclusions about worry are as meaningful today as they were to His first-century listeners. Let’s summarize them.

### **5 Biblical Arguments Against Worry:**

1. **Worry keep us from enjoying what we have (v.25)** – “... *Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes?*” Worry focuses our attention on what we do not have, and undermines the enjoyment of what we already possess. It prompts us to assume responsibility that is not ours to handle.
2. **Worry makes us forget our worth (v.26)** – “... *Are you not much more valuable than they? (the birds who do not labor or spin)*” Worry makes us forget that God is not the heavenly Father of the bird... but the heavenly Father of man. It makes us feel forgotten and unimportant. If He will feed a bird (a lesser creature), He will feed us without fail.
3. **Worry is completely useless (v.27)** – “*Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life?*” Christ was making reference to man’s inability to either add a year to his life, or to add an inch to his height. As a matter of fact, worry results in subtraction, not addition. It leads to a loss, not a gain.
4. **Worry erases the promise of God from your mind (vv.30-32)** – “... So do not, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’... your heavenly Father know that you need them.” What David learned, we tend to forget... he says it like this in Psalm 37:25, “*I was young and now I am old, yet I have never seen the righteous forsaken or their children begging bread.*” God’s love for man motivates Him to care for those who walk with Him. Nothing can separate the believer from that love. As Romans 8:38-39 says, “*For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*”
5. **Worry is characteristic of the heath, not the Christian (v.32)** – “*For the pagans run after all these things (food, drink, clothing).*” When one excludes God’s personal involvement in his life, he has no one substantial on whom to lean. For all practical purposes, the worrier is alone and lives just as the one who lives without God in his or her life.

### **III. A WISE PSALM FOR WORRIERS (Psalm 37)**

This psalm shares the wisdom of an old man, David, who had had much to worry with in his life time, but who had walked with the Lord as reflected in verse 25, “*I was young and now I am old, yet I have never seen the righteous forsaken...*” He had battled evil men and knew frustration of seeking the wicked prosper and the righteous suffer. As he reviewed the past, he gave some wise counsel to worriers... fretters both in his day in the days to come... our included. (READ: Psalm 37:1-7)

Notice the word “fret” that appears in verses 1, 7, 8. The word translated here as “fret” literally means “to heat oneself in vexation” or “to be vexed” (vexation – something or someone that causes anxiety or worry/vex – disturb the peace of mind of, divide the mind). This is the Hebrew word that is the equal of the Greek idea/word translated in Matthew 6 as “worry.” David is telling us he has learned in his old age and much living that there are some helps for worriers or fretters...

### **Wise Counsel for Worriers:**

1. **Trust in the Lord (v.3)** – Listen if you walk by sight and not by faith you will find it easy to fret and worry. There is promise here in verse 3 for God’s protection and safe keeping with we put our trust fully in Him.
2. **Delight yourself in the Lord (v.4)** – Find your joy and pleasure in His will. Make Him your delight, and your desires will be in His will. Living to please the Lord sets you free from fretting and worrying about whatever...
3. **Commit your way to the Lord (v.5)** – What does this do to worry? When you trust Him and delight in Him, how could you do anything other than commit your way to Him? Let God guide your steps, choose your joys, protect your name, bless your work.
4. **Rest in the Lord** – Restlessness is an evidence of unbelief and worry. Faith rests in the Lord and enjoys “the peace of God, which passes all understanding” (Phil 4:7). God sometimes waits in answering prayer so that He might strengthen our patience.

#### IV. A TIMELY PRESCRIPTION FOR THE PROBLEM OF WORRY

Four words help us translate this study into practice. Each one represents a discipline in which we need to engage if we are to grow through and beyond worry.

##### Prescription for the Problem of Worry:

1. **Presence** – Claim the presence of God in your life (Joshua 1:9, Isaiah 41:10, Matthew 28:20) *“Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go” – Joshua 1:9*
2. **Promises** – Get into the Word of God and learn of His assurances (Psalm 37:4-5, Proverbs 3:5-6, Isaiah 26:3-4) *“Delight yourself in the Lord and He will give you the desires of your heart. Commit your way to the Lord; trust in Him and He will do this.” –Psalm 37:4-5*
3. **Prayer** – Maintain communication with God, built around specifics (Psalm 55:22, Philippians 4:6-7, 1 Peter 5:7). Max Lucado says, “No one can pray and worry at the same time.” *“Cast your cares on the Lord and He will sustain you; He will never let the righteous fall.” –Psalm 55:22*
4. **Patience** – Don’t allow Satan to sell you short and steal the victory that could be yours (Psalm 27:14, Isaiah 40:31, Romans 8:25) *“Wait for the Lord; be strong and take heart and wait for the Lord.” –Psalm 27:14*

*“Worry is like a rocking chair. It will give you something to do, but it won’t get you anywhere!” – Vance Havner*

*“If you have any long standing problems, try kneeling.”*