

Biblical Living (3) – Worry - 1

Worry is mental energy expended on things you can't change or can't change right now. *Trust* is the opposite of worry. Trust is a calm certainty that God is overseeing what you can't change or can't change right now.

The root of the common NT word for worry (*merizo*) meant *to divide*. Therefore, to worry is to *have a divided mind*.

Solomon's description of worry: Ecc 2:23. Literal translation: ... *at night his mind does not lie down*.

Forms of worry:

- endless mental reviews of past conversations or events
- imagining present or future disasters
- irrational fear or panic attacks

The source of worry:

- wanting a good thing too much (a good future for your children)
- wanting a bad thing too much (hoping a sin will not be discovered)

Observation:

Similar to anger and conflict, *worry* results when your heart is *ruled by a desire*. 2

Five results of worry:

1. Sin.

Matt 6:25. *For this reason I say to you, do not be worried about your life ...* Phil 4:6. *Be anxious for nothing ...* Col 3:15. *Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts ...*

2. Bad, fear-driven decisions.

Worry produces *fear-driven* decisions rather than *wisdom-* or *principle-driven* decisions.

Example: Abraham in Genesis 12 and 20.

3. Negative effects on physical health.

Prov 14:30. *A tranquil heart is life to the body, but passion is rottenness to the bones*. Examples: High blood pressure, heart disease, ulcers, and frequent sicknesses. Note: stress exacerbates all other negative physical conditions.

4. Neglecting life responsibilities.

Prov 12:25. *Anxiety in a man's heart weighs it down ...* Fitzpatrick and Hendrickson:

When we spend our days in needless worry and anxiety, we're taking all the grace He's given us for each day's activities and wasting it on trials that aren't even here yet or never will be. (Will Medicine Stop the Pain?, 126)

Point: The time and mental energy spent on worrying often causes an anxious person to neglect his or her daily responsibilities, usually leading to further worry.

5. Spiritual asphyxiation.

Luke 8:14. ... as they go on their way they are choked with worries and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to maturity.

Luke 21:34. Be on guard, so that your hearts will not be weighted down with ... the worries of life ...

Twelve things people often worry about or brood over:

1. Money, success, or work.

The root of our worry and fear is often ... the love of earthly treasure. (Fitzpatrick and Hendrickson, Will Medicine Stop the Pain?, 127)

Ecc 2:22-23. For what does a man get in all his labor and in his striving with which he labors under the sun? Because all his days his task is painful and grievous; even at night his mind does not rest. This too is vanity.

Matt 6:24-25. No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth. For this reason I say to you, do not be worried about your life ...

1 Peter 5:6-7. Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time, casting all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you.

2. Their children's futures.

Prov 17:25. A foolish son is a grief to his father and bitterness to her who bore him.

Prov 28:7. He who keeps the law is a discerning son, but he who is a companion of gluttons humiliates his father.

3. People talking against them.

Ps 119:23. Even though princes sit and talk against me, Your servant meditates on Your statutes.

4. Injustice or crime.

Ps 37:1-2. 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.

5. Questions that God won't answer.

Job 3:11. Why did I not die at birth, come forth from the womb and expire?

Job 3:20. Why is light given to him who suffers?

6. A lack of information.

1 Sam 10:2. *The donkeys which you went to look for have been found. Now behold, your father has ceased to be concerned about the donkeys and is anxious for you, saying, "What shall I do about my son?"*

1 Thess 3:5. *For this reason, when I could endure it no longer, I also sent to find out about your faith, for fear that the tempter might have tempted you, and our labor would be in vain.*

Prov 25:25. *Like cold water to a weary soul, so is good news from a distant land.*

7. Decision making.

Matt 25:25. *I was afraid, and went away and hid your talent in the ground.*

8. The future.

Illustrated by its opposite:

Ps 3:5-6. *I lay down and slept; I awoke, for the LORD sustains me. I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people who have set themselves against me round about.*

Ecc 7:14. *In the day of prosperity be happy, but in the day of adversity consider—God has made the one as well as the other ... 5*

9. Imagining the worst about other people's motives.

1 Sam 18:8. *Then Saul became very angry, for this saying displeased him; and he said, "They have ascribed to David ten thousands, but to me they have ascribed thousands. Now what more can he have but the kingdom?"*

10. That a hidden sin will be exposed.

Prov 28:1. *The wicked flee when no one is pursuing ...*

Ps 38:18. *I confess my iniquity; I am full of anxiety because of my sin.*

11. The consequences of past sins.

Gen 50:15. *When Joseph's brothers saw that their father was dead, they said, "What if Joseph bears a grudge against us and pays us back in full for all the wrong which we did to him!"*

Gen 32:6-7. *The messengers returned to Jacob, saying, "We came to your brother Esau, and furthermore he is coming to meet you, and four hundred men are with him." Then Jacob was greatly afraid and distressed.*

12. Petty details.

Luke 10:40-41. *But Martha was distracted with all her preparations But the Lord answered and said to her, "Martha, Martha, you are worried and bothered about so many things.*

This is fretting over your inability to meet self-created, perfectionistic standards: I want things to be just right when we have guests over for supper tonight. Often it is due to worshipping the

idol of reputation. It might also reveal a grace-deficient, works-righteousness view of being right with God: *If I don't perform perfectly, God won't love me.*

Two revealing questions to ask those who worry (*Will Medicine Stop the Pain?*, 128):

- What do you most commonly worry about losing?
- What makes you the most happy when you think you have gained it?

Point:

We do what we do, including worry, because we want something (James 1:14).

Ineffective solutions to worry:

❖ Medication:

Drugs do not take care of the cause of emotional pain; they only decrease the awareness of it.
(Fitzpatrick and Hendrickson, *Will Medicine Stop the Pain?*, 38)

❖ Alcohol or other "recreational" drugs:

While getting tipsy or "happy" might help a person temporarily forget his worries, his problems won't go away while he is drunk (often they get worse), and he'll have to face his worries again once he is sober.

❖ Demanding or untrusting prayers:

Sometimes Christians misuse prayer as *sanctified worry*, praying in such a way that it is clear that they don't trust God.

Question 2: What does God say about your problem?

Jesus' teaching in Matthew 6:25-34

1. Worry is disobedience. Matt 6:25
2. Worry is unnecessary. Matt 6:25, 30-31

Most people in Western societies worry about luxuries and abundance, not about basic needs.

Proof that God will provide basic needs—two arguments from the greater to the lesser:

1. Matt 6:25. God gives life; He will provide what you need for life.
2. Matt 6:26, 28-30. God cares for His creatures' needs (birds and flowers); therefore, God will care for you.
3. Worry is useless. Matt 6:27

Possible meanings: Worry cannot add an hour to your *life* or a centimetre to your *height*.

4. Worry is unbelief. Matt 6:30 7

Worry is unbelief because it is, in essence, doubting God's perfect knowledge, His absolute control, and His loving concern.

5. Worry is ungodly. Matt 6:31-32

In this context, the word *Gentile* referred to a pagan. How does worry encourage pagan thinking about God?

1. God is distracted, capricious, or untrustworthy.
2. God is an elderly grandfather, befuddled by the complexity and fast-moving nature of my problems.
3. God is a Clockmaker who winds up life and then leaves me to manage things by myself.

6. Worry is distracting. Matt 6:34

Worry keeps you from dealing rightly with your immediate responsibilities.