Do Not Worry

If I were asked to write the biography of the day and age in which we live, I could do it in three words: **hurry, worry, and bury**. A lot of people are in a hurry and carry a lot of worry, so they find themselves in the cemetery way too early!

We live in an “age of worry” – this is one of the great problems of our modern world and it is getting worse every day! Statistics show that **27%** of all Americans will experience significant stress today - 13 million will worry intensely for at least 90 minutes (**American Demographics and MD Magazine**).

We all feel anxious at times. We worry about our health, marriages, children, jobs, money, mortgages, grades, friends, accidents, things that may never happen, things that cannot be changed, the weather, growing old, the death of loved ones, etc.

According to Thomas Borkovec, a professor of Psychology at Penn State University, the single most common source of worry is other people’s opinions of our lives. “**If this happens, what will they think? What will people say? Will I be laughed at?**”

How about you? Do you find yourself worrying about every little thing in your life? Are you a **worry-wart**?

I. What is “anxiety?”

**Philippians 4:6** – “Be anxious for nothing…” NKJV

**Philippians 4:6** – “Don’t worry about anything…” NLT

The Greek word for “**worry**” or “**anxious**” means a **divided mind** - “to be distracted, or pulled apart from the more important things in life, to be drawn in different directions.”

When Paul said “**Be anxious for nothing,**” he was saying “**stop continually worrying about even one little thing.**”

A mind that “**worries**” is a mind that wants to go in two directions at the same time - “**this way and that.**”

**James 1:8** - “…he is a double minded man, unstable in all his ways.” NKJV  That includes his emotions, decisions, thought processes, etc. He makes up his mind and then gets scared and changes his mind again. He nearly wears out his mind changing it back and forth. He just can’t make a judgment and stick with it. The double-minded man is a good picture of what **worry** is.

II. Anxiety is unhealthy

“**Anxiety**” can affect your health and cause physical illness, because the body and mind are closely connected.

Many physical problems are “**psychosomatic**” - that is, they originate in the mind and are brought on by worrying. People can literally “**worry themselves sick.**” Worrying can become crippling if it is not properly controlled.

Medical experts tell us that prolonged worrying or anxiety can lead to severe and long term physical problems such as unexplainable fatigue, sleeplessness, restlessness, irritability, difficulty concentrating, high blood pressure, heart disease, heart attacks, migraine headaches, backaches, ulcers, panic attacks, blindness, deafness, thyroid malfunction, some forms of asthma, temporary paralysis, etc.

One website listed over 100 symptoms of anxiety (**www.anxietycentre.com**).
“Our anxiety does not empty tomorrow of its sorrow, but only empties today of its strength.”

“Worrying does not take away tomorrow’s troubles - it takes away today’s peace!”

“If you can’t sleep, then get up and do something instead of lying there worrying. It’s the worry that gets you, not the lack of sleep.” Dale Carnegie

Heart trouble, the number one killer in America, is brought on by worry and anxiety. Dr. Alexis Carroll said “If businessmen do not learn how to keep from worrying, they will die young.”

During WW II we lost over 300,000 men, but during that same period of time we lost over a million people to heart disease.

Worry is an “inside job.” Proverbs 12:25 – “Anxiety in the heart of man causes depression…” NKJV (weighs a person down).

You can purchase sleep at the drug store, but you cannot purchase rest. Medicine can remove the symptoms, but it cannot remove the cause.

“Worry is disastrous to health, robs life of its energy, and cripples the soul – it robs us of joy, happiness, peace and contentment without providing any benefits!”

“A day of worry is more exhausting than a day of work.” John Lubbock

Worry will even show up on your face! A little girl asked her mother, “Aren’t you happy?” The worried mother sharply replied, “Yes.” The little girl said, “Well, you haven’t told your face yet.” Proverbs 17:22 – “A cheerful heart is good medicine, but a broken spirit saps a person’s strength.” NLT

Worrying also affects the way we treat others. When we worry a lot, we tend to be harsh towards our family, friends, and co-workers. We get so wrapped up in our worries that we lash out to those we love the most. That’s why no one likes to be around a chronic worrier!

III. What can be done?

What can be done about the tendency to worry? We need to realize that most of our worries are unnecessary. Dr. Thomas S. Kepler reported the following from a study he did:

- 40% of our worries will never happen.
- 30% of our worries concern old decisions which we cannot change.
- 12% of our worries are about others’ criticisms of us (mostly untrue).
- 10% of our worries are about our health, which gets worse as we worry.
- 8% of our worries are “legitimate,” since life has some real problems to meet.

Over 90% of the bad things we worry about never happen or can’t be changed! Therefore, the first step toward solving the problem of anxiety is simply to remember these two rules:

1) Instead of worrying about something that can be changed, we should change it! If the problem is solvable, solve it!

“If there is something you can do about it, do it. If there is nothing you can do about it, forget it!”

“Worrying is like a rocking chair; it will give you something to do, but it won’t get you anywhere.”
The Serenity Prayer: “God, give us grace to accept with serenity the things that cannot be changed, courage to change the things that should be changed, and the wisdom to distinguish the one from the other.”

2) If something cannot be changed, then why worry about it! From a common sense standpoint, it is useless to worry. It is too early to worry about things that haven’t happened yet. It is too late to worry about things that have already happened.

“I am an old man and I have had many troubles in life - most of which never happened.” Oliver Wendell Holmes

“I have worried over a great many things in life, the most of which never happened.” Mark Twain

“Do not anticipate trouble or worry about what may never happen. Keep in the sunlight.” Benjamin Franklin

Jesus teaches us in Matthew 6 that we should not be anxious about things we cannot change or about problems that we cannot solve. We need to concentrate our energies on the present, on living one day at a time, and trust in God completely for everything! “Don’t worry about tomorrow, God is already there!” Of course, that is much easier said than done!

IV. God’s antidote to worry and anxiety

Philippians 4:6 – “Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God.” NKJV

Philippians 4:6 – “Don’t worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank Him for all He has done.” NLT

Instead of worrying, do what? Pray! Paul is talking about the serious business of placing our lives in God’s hands. “God’s antidote to worry is prayer.”

“Anxiety” is the attempt to carry the burden yourself. “Prayer” is yielding the burden to God and leaving it in His hands. “The cure for anxiety and worry is not another drug prescription – it is prayer! When we put our cares in God’s hands, He puts His peace in our hearts.”

Philippians 4:6 is filled with absolutes: “Worry about nothing, pray for everything, give thanks for anything.”

That’s why we need to learn to bring everything to God in prayer – “big” or “small.” The danger is not that we fail to pray about the “big things;” the danger is that we fail to pray for the “little things.”

“Worrying is wasting energy on the things you can’t control. Leave everything in God’s hand. Think less, pray more!”

“Every evening I turn my worries over to God. He’s going to be up all night anyway.” Mary C. Crowley

“Regret and worry are a waste of time. Regret doesn’t change the past, and worrying won’t change the future. Let go and pray.”

“Anxiety is the problem - prayer and trust in God is the cure! Anything worth ‘worrying about’ is worth ‘praying about.’”

“If you worry, you didn’t pray. If you pray, then don’t worry! Don’t worry, my friends - pray!”
V. Reasons not to worry

Many people are worried and troubled about many things. One worrier said to another, “I have so many troubles that if anything happened to me today it would be two weeks before I could get around to worrying about it.”

Life probably cannot be lived free from all sense of anxiety and concern. However, when we let our “concerns” become “cares,” and our “fore-thoughts” become “fear-thoughts” – we become guilty of the sin of “anxiety/worry!”

In the last part of Matthew 6, Jesus addressed the problem of worry, and gives us several reasons to not worry!

a) Worry is sin

Matthew 6:25-26: “That is why I tell you not to worry about everyday life - whether you have enough food and drink, or enough clothes to wear. Isn’t life more than food, and your body more than clothing? Look at the birds. They don’t plant or harvest or store food in barns, for your heavenly Father feeds them. And aren’t you far more valuable to Him than they are?” NLT

Matthew 6:31-32: “So don’t worry about these things, saying ‘What will we eat? What will we drink? What will we wear?’ These things dominate the thoughts of unbelievers, but your heavenly Father already knows all your needs.” NLT

Food, drink, and clothing are basic needs around the world, and are natural concerns. But Jesus says that faithful children of God do not have to worry about these things! We have a loving Father who sees and will satisfy our needs. Worry implies that we think we have no heavenly Father – worry is insulting to God!

Most Gentiles (unbelievers) did not believe in the true God. They had no knowledge of a loving heavenly Father and no relationship with Him, so they spent their time and energy seeking food, drink, and clothing. They worried and fretted and lost sleep over such matters; they exhausted themselves in their pursuit of earthly things.

During times of economic hardship, people tend to worry about things like food, clothes, shelter, jobs, etc., “What will happen if the bottom falls completely out of the economy and I lose my job?”

Friends, we cannot allow ourselves to get wrapped up in worrying about material things - our first priority must be our spiritual lives! Becoming too preoccupied with our physical lives will only push us further away from God!

These verses are not just good advice that we can take or leave. They are not suggestions – to “not worry” is a command – which means it is a sin to worry - it shows distrust in God.

Jesus used the birds as an example of God’s ability to provide food. Was Jesus teaching that we do not need to work to make a living? No! God has provided in nature what birds need in order to live, but that does not mean they do not work for their needs. Birds work hard – they do not perch on a branch, beaks open, waiting for God to drop in worms or insects or seeds.

“God gives every bird its food, but He does not throw it into their nests!”

Birds are always very busy, gathering food, preparing nests, caring for their young, but (and here is Jesus’ point), they do not worry! “Birds are God’s creatures - you are God’s child!”

Matthew 10:29-31: “What is the price of two sparrows - one copper coin? But not a single sparrow can fall to the ground without your Father knowing it. And the very hairs on your head are all numbered. So don’t be afraid; you are more valuable to God than a whole flock of sparrows.” NLT
Jesus was not discouraging work. However, when you have done everything you can to prepare for the future, learn to leave it in God’s hands and not worry about it. Trusting God doesn’t mean we are lazy and indifferent, but it does mean we come to the point that we can know and understand that God will provide what we really need.

Matthew 6:28-30: “And why worry about your clothing? Look at the lilies of the field and how they grow. They don’t work or make their clothing, yet Solomon in all his glory was not dressed as beautifully as they are. And if God cares so wonderfully for wildflowers that are here today and thrown into the fire tomorrow, he will certainly care for you. Why do you have so little faith?” NLT

Just like the birds, the lilies of the field also do what God prepared them to do. But they do not sit on the hillside, worrying about what they look like!

His point is – if God is powerful enough to create life, if He can feed the birds and clothe the grass of the field in a way that would even put Solomon himself to shame - then don’t you think He is also able to provide what we need as well?

“Anxiety” or “worry” is the constant state of mind of a person who doesn’t quite trust that God is big enough, powerful enough, or loving enough to take care of what’s happening in their life!

“You can tell the size of your God by looking at the size of your worry list. The longer your list, the smaller your God.”

“If you worry, you do not trust in God; if you trust in God, you do not worry!” Frank J. Dunn

Psalm 34:9-10: “Fear the Lord, you his godly people, for those who fear him will have all they need. Even strong young lions sometimes go hungry, but those who trust in the Lord will lack no good thing.” NLT

Psalm 37:25 – “Once I was young, and now I am old. Yet I have never seen the godly abandoned or their children begging for bread.” NLT

So if Jesus was not denouncing concern and planning ahead, what was He condemning? He was forbidding a “care-worn, worried fear, which takes all the joy out of life.”

In Matthew 6:25 the Amplified Bible has “…stop being perpetually uneasy (anxious and worried).”

Jesus did not say that His listeners had no faith, but that they had little faith. Faith and worry cannot exist in the same heart! “Worry is infidelity – it is prayer to a false god!”

b) Worry is ineffective

Matthew 6:27 - “Can all your worries add a single moment to your life?” NLT

Some say this refers to the height of a person (KJV), some length of life (NLT). It really doesn’t matter – either way, worry will not help. It will not make you taller or live longer.

Worry is not just unproductive; it is counter-productive! It is not only ineffective; it is injurious.” Dr. Charles Mayo, of the Mayo Clinic, said, “Worry affects the circulation, the heart, the glands, the whole nervous system, and profoundly affects the health. I have never known a man who died from overwork, but many who died from doubt.”
c) Worry is improper

The promise of God’s providence has a condition: Matthew 6:33 - “Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and live righteously, and He will give you everything you need.” NLT

The basic meaning of the word “kingdom” is “the rule of God in the hearts of men.”

In the Sermon on the Mount, “righteousness” refers to living right - living as God wants us to live, which means to let God have His way in our hearts and lives.

We are not to seek “garments and groceries, but God and goodness.” If we put God and the things of God first in our lives, we have a wonderful promise. Jesus said that “all these things (the necessities of life) will be given/added to you.”

As an omniscient God, He knows all things, including our needs. As our loving Father, He sympathizes with us. As our caring Father, He supplies our needs. Never forget, God is always on time - He has no shortages - He is never late! So don’t give up, you have a big God! “There is no recession in the economy of heaven!”

Philippians 4:19 – “And this same God who takes care of me will supply all your needs from his glorious riches, which have been given to us in Christ Jesus.” NLT

d) Worry is impractical

Jesus had given more than enough reason why we should not worry, but He knew people. He knew that someone would say, “All right, I won’t worry about today - but what about tomorrow? Who knows what terrible things will happen tomorrow?”

Matthew 6:34 – “So don’t worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring its own worries. Today’s trouble is enough for today.” NLT

Much of what we worry about centers on foolish acts we committed in the past or serious problems we anticipate in the future. Paul provided a positive example regarding worrying about the past: Philippians 3:13-14: “...Forgetting the past and looking forward to what lies ahead, I press on to reach the end of the race and receive the heavenly prize for which God, through Christ Jesus, is calling us.” NLT

In Matthew 6:34, Jesus discouraged worrying about the future. He is saying - “Let tomorrow take care of itself by trusting in God and doing His will today! Let your undivided attention be given to putting God first in your life. If you do, then He has given His word to meet your needs.”

Jesus says that we must open our eyes and hearts to the providential care of God in the world. In Matthew 6:25-34, He said “Look at the birds of the air, observe how the lilies of the field grow!”

Jesus was not proposing a self-help program: “Just think positive thoughts, and you will never worry again.” Instead, He was proposing a “God-help” program. He wants us to learn to rely on God for our help and our hope. “We must learn to trust in the providence of God.”
VI. You

Today, if “you” are worried, you need to understand that you are on God’s mind and heart. He sees you struggling and planning, worrying and sweating, crying and running, at a furious pace. He sees you trying to move that mountain by yourself - again! Think about what your worrying says to God when you refuse to give things over to Him!

Did you know that when we worry we are actually calling God a liar? We are saying to God, “I know you can keep the sun in orbit. I know that you can sustain all life on earth. I know that you can answer prayers all over the world at once. I know that you have always been in control in the past. But I don’t believe you can take care of the problem I’m going through now.”

When you worry about money, you’re telling God that He is unable to provide for His children, that although He has riches beyond belief in Heaven, He is too stingy to share them with you.

When you worry that you will not have enough food, you’re telling Him that although He rained down bread from Heaven in the desert to feed His children, you are the one He’s forgotten.

When you worry that no one understands you, you’re telling Him that although He has been with you since before you were formed in the womb, and has carved you into the palm of His hand, He doesn’t know you.

When you worry that your enemies will have victory over you, you’re telling God that although He has given you spiritual battle gear to defend yourself, that despite His track record of being a giant slayer, Red Sea divider, lion mouth closer and a furnace cooler, He can’t handle your co-worker, your neighbor or a former friend.

When you worry because the doctors told you that healing is impossible, you’re telling Him that this world controls your fate. You’re saying that prayer time with Him is merely something to pass the time. You’re saying that although He can raise the dead, make a virgin conceive, open the womb of a woman well past eighty, heal a 12 year flow of blood, make the blind see and the lame walk, He can’t help you.

When you worry that no one will love you, that you’ll be lonely for the rest of your life, you’re telling Him that His love is insufficient, that He couldn’t possibly love you enough to ward away loneliness. You’re saying that although He has promised to give us a rich and satisfying life, He was lying, that despite the fact that He started off saying that it is not good that we be alone, He’s changed His mind.

When you worry and refuse to give the problem over to God, you’re telling Him that although He could create the world, He can’t handle what’s going on in your world, so you will.

You are saying that He can’t work things out, that obstacles cannot be overcome, that mountains can’t be climbed, that healing cannot occur, that what is lost will not be found, that joy does not come in the morning, that He is not the God of second chances, that the promised land has been swallowed up by the desert, that you have discovered the height, depth and width of His love and found it to fall short of your needs.

Friends, it’s easy to look around at what’s happening today and be worried. Circumstances may seem overwhelming. Maybe your business is struggling, maybe you lost your job, and maybe you’re really concerned about the economy. During times like these, it’s important to remember that God has promised that He will never leave us nor forsake us. We need to develop the faith that says, “This may be a big problem, but my God is bigger!”

Take the biggest problem you have in your life, double it. Is that too big for God? Jeremiah 32:17 – “O Sovereign Lord! You made the heavens and earth by your strong hand and powerful arm. Nothing is too hard for you!” NLT
We all have so much to worry about, our families, our jobs, our health, and countless bothersome things that plague us every day.

But as great as our problems are, God is greater, and He wants to help because He cares. “He has His eye upon the sparrow and I know He watches me.”

“Worry is worthless; it never solved a problem, lifted a burden, or dried a tear. Not only is it worthless, it’s wasteful, it takes away energy. It doesn’t take the sorrow out of tomorrow; it takes the strength out of today. It is pulling tomorrow’s clouds over today’s sunshine, it is wicked and pagan!”

VII. Conclusion

Why should we not worry? Because Christ is always with us (Matthew 28:18–20), and with God on our side, we can successfully overcome anything and anyone that stands against us: Romans 8:31 – “...If God is for us, who can ever be against us?” NLT

Therefore, we can live free from worry!

The ultimate solution to the problem of anxiety is to take our burdens to the Lord in prayer and leave them with Him!

1 Peter 5:7 – “Give all your worries and cares to God, for He cares about you.” NLT

God wants us to have enough faith in him that He will make the best of our problems – to put our problems into His lap.

Then once we turn our worries over to God we must leave them there and allow ourselves to live worry-free!

Psalm 55:22 – “Give your burdens to the Lord, and He will take care of you. He will not permit the godly to slip and fall.” NLT