

The Truth about Worry

part 4 of *Dismissing the Myths that Make Us Miserable*

Message for Sunday, November 4, 2018
by Bruce Fraser

Children's Message: Mark 12:29-31 (love your neighbour)

Suggest to the children that, while adults may worry mostly about money, one of the biggest concerns for children is “Do other people like me?” Check with them to see if they would agree that is a common concern among young people (the ones I’ve asked heartily agree!).

Demonstrate with role play the truth of what Jesus said, about loving your neighbour. Imagine that I am a new student at your school, and I’m worried about whether or not the other kids will like me. So I stay off by myself, watching the others, and try to guess what they’re thinking (mostly about me, and mostly bad). The more I worry about it, the more miserable I become.

Questions:

- ◆ Have I done anything to get to know others?
- ◆ Have I shown any interest in other people?
- ◆ Who am I concerned about, more than anyone else?
- ◆ Have I done *anything at all* to help other people like me?

Right! Worry is basically being a self-centred person. But love is thinking about others.

Now role play the same situation; but this time I try loving people. How do I love people? By caring about them, showing interest in them. Go up to other children and get to know them (what’s your name?; that’s a nice jacket — is blue your favourite colour?; that’s a new game – can you teach me how to play it?).

There is no guarantee that doing this will make other people like you. But you can be sure it’s better than worrying.

Message “The Truth about Worry” in the series *Dismissing the Myths that Make Us Miserable* based on a message by Rick Warren

I heard a story of a man who is terribly worried about flying, yet who simply had to go on an airplane trip. After he checked his luggage, got through security, and was waiting for his plane, he noticed one of those machines that sells flight insurance. So he bought a million dollars worth of insurance, and it cost him only a few dollars. Somehow, the thought that an insurance company was willing to bet all that money that he wasn’t going to crash gave him some peace from his worries.

He got on the plane, found his seat, tried out the window blind, the air conditioning, the reclining seat, the light. He was really enjoying himself. When the flight attendant gave the emergency instructions, he paid close attention, and felt that he was in good hands. The takeoff was a bit scary, but the spectacular view out the window more than made up for it. He was actually enjoying his trip!

When dinner came around, they served Chinese food, one of his favourite meals. At the end of the meal, he cracked open his fortune cookie and read, “A recent investment will pay great dividends.” So much for enjoying the flight!

What is the most difficult command in all the Bible to obey? Would you say, “Don’t steal”? Or “Don’t commit adultery”? Or “Don’t lie”? My vote would go for the commandment that’s found in Philippians 4:6:

Philippians 4:6, New Living Translation:

“Don’t worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done.”

Would you agree that’s difficult? But it’s not impossible! God never commands us to do something that we can’t do. He always makes a way for us to do it.

I’m leading us through a series of messages called “The Myths that Make Us Miserable.” Each time we look at a common myth, and then we compare that with the truth we read in the Bible.

Myth: I can control things by worrying about them

Here’s how this myth works. You’ve just finished painting the fence around your yard. It was a lot of work, getting in and around all the corners, but it’s

done and it looks good. You feel a gentle breeze, but it quickly turns into a strong wind. You look up at the sky and—oh dear!—there are ominous dark clouds drawing near. The weather forecast said it would be sunny with cloudy periods, but this is looking bad. You think, “If I just worry hard enough, the rain will miss us.”

Well, actually you don’t think that. Nobody seriously believes you can control the weather with your mind. *But you act like you can.* Your mind is focussed on the rain, wishing for it to stay away.

The Truth: Worry is useless

But the truth is that worry does nothing for you; it only makes you miserable. In Matthew chapter 6, Jesus he tells us the truth about worry. This is important because the truth sets us free from worry.

1) Worry is unreasonable

Matthew 6:25, New Living Translation:

“So I tell you, don’t worry about everyday life — whether you have enough food, drink, and clothes. Doesn’t life consist of more than food and clothing?”

Have you ever been to a party where someone spills something on their dress or on their shirt, and they’re having a fit, because they’re worried about what everybody’s going to think? Friends, that’s silly. We get upset and worried over the stupidest of things.

And how often do we worry about something we can’t change? Isn’t that totally useless? To worry about something we *can* change is stupid. If you can change it, then change it. If you can’t, then don’t worry about it. Either way, we shouldn’t worry about it.

Worry doesn’t make sense. It’s unreasonable.

2) Worry is unnatural

Matthew 6:26, New Living Translation:

“Look at the birds. They don’t need to plant or harvest or put food in barns because your heavenly Father feeds them. And you are far more valuable to him than they are.”

Birds don’t do a lot except build a nest once a year, flutter around, leave a deposit every once in awhile.

They sing songs and they’re pretty but, they really don’t do a whole lot. Yet God says, “I take care of the birds; but you are a lot more valuable than those birds.”

Then Jesus says, “Look at the flowers.”

Matthew 6:28-29, New Living Translation:

“And why worry about your clothes? Look at the lilies 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.”

Have you ever looked at a flower up close? Did you notice the intricacy? God made flowers with such exquisite detail, and they last only a few weeks. You are far more precious than flowers.

Here’s the point: animals don’t worry. Plants don’t worry. The only thing in all creation that worries, that doesn’t trust God, is people.

Worry is unnatural. It’s not a normal part of God’s creation. You weren’t born to worry.

Now some people use that old cliché, “I’m a born worrier.” That’s not true. There’s no such thing as a born worrier. Worry is a learned response. You learned it from your parents, or from people around you. The Good News is that, since you learned it, you can unlearn it as well. That’s because worry is unnatural.

3) Worry is unhelpful

Matthew 6:27, New Living Translation:

“Can all your worries add a single moment to your life? Of course not.”

Worrying can’t make a person taller or shorter; it can’t change the situation you’re facing; it can’t make you live longer. If anything, worry will make your life *shorter*, by making you sick. It is the most useless waste of time and energy anyone can think of. It can’t change the past; it can’t control the future; it just messes up today.

4) Worry is unnecessary

Matthew 6:30, New Living Translation:

“If God cares so wonderfully for flowers that are here today and gone tomorrow, won’t he more surely care for you? You have so little faith!”

Jesus says there is no need to worry, because God has promised to take care of your needs.

Some people quote the verse “God helps those who help themselves.” Quick now, can anyone tell me what book of the Bible that verse is in? You can’t, because it’s not in the Bible — Benjamin Franklin is the one who said that! The Bible says “God helps those who trust him and ask him for help.”

5) Worry is unChristian

Matthew 6:31-32, New Century Version:

“Don’t worry and say, ‘What will we eat?’ or ‘What will we drink?’ or ‘What will we wear?’ The people who don’t know God keep trying to get these things, and your Father in heaven knows you need them.”

Now we come to the core of the whole issue. Worry is a symptom of a deeper spiritual problem. It’s a sign that we don’t really know God.

Christians don’t need to worry. People who don’t have a relationship with God as their heavenly Father *should* worry! I know I would if I woke up every morning and heard the latest news about crime and corruption and drugs and child abuse and so on, and I had to face the world all on my own, under my own strength, with no divine help.

If you have stepped across the line and said, “Jesus, I believe in you, and I want to commit my life to you and be part of your family,” then you don’t have anything to worry about. From that moment on, God has taken responsibility for supplying your needs.

Now, before we go on any further, I want you to stop right here, and write down on your outline your greatest worry. No peeking! If the person next to you is your greatest worry, just draw an arrow. God will understand what you mean. Write it down, and then scribble it out. No one else will see it, but you have identified it. This is important, because your biggest worry is about to become a blessing in your life. Are you ready?

Okay, now I’m going to give you what Jesus says, how to get rid of worry. Jesus not only gives the truth about worry, but he also gives the things you need to do to overcome worry.

The Antidote to Worry

1) Put God first in every area of my life

Matthew 6:32-33, Living Bible:

“Your heavenly Father already knows perfectly well what you need, and he will give them to you **IF you give him first place in your life** and live as he wants you to.”

Worry is always a warning light of mixed up values. *Any area where God is not Number One in your life is going to become a source of worry for you.* It may be in your job, it may be the person that you’re seeing, it may be your finances, it may be anything—that area will become a source of worry for you. Count on it.

As long as we love anything in the world more than God, then that thing or that person will become a source of worry, because you’re afraid that you’ll lose it.

The starting point, if you’ve never done this, is to commit your life to Jesus Christ. Say, “Jesus, I commit my whole life to you: the good, the bad; the past, the present, the future; my relationships, my career, my values, my money, my time—the whole works. God, it all belongs to you. And I want you to be Number One in each area of my life.”

Jesus says that if you do that, if you put God first in your life, he will take care of all the other things you need. Stop living for things; start living for God.

Every person needs to answer the question: “Whom or what am I going to live for?” You tell me the answer to that question, and I’ll tell you whether or not you’ll be plagued with worry for the rest of your life.

2) Live just one day at a time

Matthew 6:34, New Living Translation:

“So don’t worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring its own worries. Today’s trouble is enough for today.”

Don’t worry about tomorrow; focus on today. There are two days you should never worry about: yesterday and tomorrow. You can’t change yesterday, and you can’t control tomorrow.

It's OK to *plan* for tomorrow; but don't *worry* about tomorrow.

Jesus taught us to pray, "Give us today our daily bread." [Matthew 6:11]. We've got to learn to trust God moment by moment.

Next Steps:

- Your greatest worry: give it to God to look after.

I asked you earlier to make a note of your greatest worry. Some of you have actually made yourselves ill because of your worries. Would you like to be free of that feeling? You can be. You can give it to God, and let him handle it for you. You can ask God to come into your life, and take the Number One place where he belongs, instead of your worry.

Just imagine — your greatest worry can be the very place where God comes into your life in a way that you've never experienced.