

Biblical Psychology 101

Worry

Lesson Three

INTRODUCTION:

- I. If you were to search through a concordance based on the King James Version or the American Standard Version of the Bible, it might surprise you to discover that the word "worry" is not listed.
 - A. This doesn't mean that the Bible has nothing to say about "worry" – because the Scriptures say a lot on the subject.
 1. It is because the King James and American Standard Version, as well as a few others, use other words to describe "worry."
 - a. They use words like: take thought, care, anxiety or anxious, burden, trouble, dread or fear.
 - B. Actually, Jesus had a lot to say about "worry."
 1. For example, depending on the translation you use, Jesus used the word "worry" and "worrying" in the *Sermon on the Mount* no less than 6 times in 10 verses.
 - a. **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."

- C. So, if we're not supposed to worry – and yet we do – perhaps we don't understand the definition of the word "worry." How does the Bible define "worry" – like the kind of worry Jesus was talking about?

1. Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon defines "worry" as: "to be anxious, to be troubled with cares."
 - a. More specifically, in the context of the *Sermon on the Mount*, the word "worry" describes the fear and anxiety, or the care one has over the future – to fear, or to be troubled by future events.
2. Vine's Expository Dictionary adds one more aspect to the word "worry" and defines it as: "to be anxious about or to have a distracting care" about something in the future.
 - a. In other words, "worry" distracts us – it gets us sidetracked by turning our attention away from the things of God, and shifts them in another direction.
 - b. We suddenly lose sight of the spiritual and turn our attention to the physical or temporal.
3. Worry troubles and distresses us.
 - a. It causes us to experience fear – sometimes paralyzing fear – which then leads to mental and emotional distress that ultimately keeps us from having the right focus.
 - b. We forget about all the times and all the ways God provided for us in the past, and we begin worrying about how we are going to now provide for ourselves.

D. Therefore, as we continue our series of studies I've titled "Biblical Psychology 101" let's take a closer look at what the Bible tells us about worry, fear and anxiety.

1. More specifically I want us to take a closer look at the *Sermon on the Mount* in Matthew chapter 6.
2. It's here where we find Jesus giving us five specific reasons why we should not be troubled by worry.
 - a. This doesn't mean it's wrong to be "concerned" about things, or to find ourselves "burdened" with care, or experience "apprehension" about something in the future.
 - b. Rather, Jesus is going to show us why we should never become seized by worry, or be so filled with fear and anxiety about some future event that we become so preoccupied with our problem that we forget about God.
 - c. Then, at the end of Matthew chapter 6, Jesus is going to give us some rather simple, practical ways we can overcome worry, fear and anxiety.

BODY:

- I. So, what are the five reasons why we should not be overcome by worry?
 - A. First, Jesus said worry distracts us from enjoying the spiritual blessings God provides by keeping us worried about our physical or temporal needs.
 1. **Matthew 6:25** – *"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?"*
 2. Essentially Jesus said worry "distracts" us from things of real value.
 - a. It causes us to become pre-occupied with things that are not really all that important.
 3. This was Martha's problem. Remember Martha, the sister of Mary and Lazarus?
 - a. **Luke 10:38-42** – *Now it happened as they went [Jesus and His disciples] that He entered a certain village; and a certain woman named Martha welcomed Him into her house. 39 And she had a sister called Mary, who also sat at Jesus' feet and heard His word. 40 But Martha was **distracted** with much serving, and she approached Him and said, "Lord, do You not*

care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Therefore tell her to help me." 41 And Jesus answered and said to her, "Martha, Martha, you are worried and troubled about many things. 42 But one thing is needed, and Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her."

- b. Do you see how distracted Martha became in trying to be the perfect hostess, worrying about serving her visitors with food and refreshments?
- c. She had Jesus sitting in her living room! How often does that happen? And yet, Martha was busy in the kitchen.
- d. Martha's worry and trouble about *"many things"* distracted her from the rich spiritual feast Jesus was serving to Mary and the others present.
- e. That's what worry does – it distracts us from the spiritual blessings we receive and causes us to focus on our physical and temporal needs – which are often wants more than needs.

B. Second, Jesus taught that worry makes us forget our worth.

- 1. **Matthew 6:26** – *"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?"*

2. Science tells us there are well over 8,000 species of birds, and the Scriptures tell us God feeds them all.
 - a. And yet, despite all their beauty and diversity, Jesus did not die for a single bird!
 - b. He died for us!
3. We should never question or doubt our value in God's eyes.
 - a. And yet, when we begin to worry, the first things we forget is the immensity of the Savior's love.
 - b. Instead, our minds become flooded with, "Why me? Why this? What does God have against me?"
4. When you begin to forget the worth God sees in you, just remember:
 - a. No bird was ever the object of God's sacrificial love in the giving of His Son (i.e. Jesus never died for a bird).
 - b. No bird was ever created in the image of God.
 - c. No bird was ever made an heir of eternal salvation.
5. If God did all that for you – if He provided you with all those wonderful spiritual blessings – don't you think He'll also take care of your physical needs?
 - a. He feeds the birds. Don't you think He would do the same for you?

C. Third, Jesus taught worry keeps us focused on things we can't change!

1. **Matthew 6:27** – *"Which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature?"*

2. More literally translated, Jesus was asking, "Who of you by worrying can add any length to your lifespan?"

a. Worry certainly won't increase our life span – if it does anything, it will probably shorten it!

3. Have you ever noticed that if you lie awake and fret all night long, when morning comes those problems are still there?

a. So, worry never solves problems.

b. The only way to solve a problem is to get up and do something about the situation – that is, if it's in your power to solve the problem.

c. And, if it's not in your power to change the situation, then worrying about it won't help.

d. Instead, you need to turn the problem over to the Lord, lay it at the feet of Jesus and leave it there.

e. We'll say more about this in a moment.

D. Fourth, Jesus taught that worry causes us to forget God's promises to care for our needs – not our wants.

1. **Matthew 6:30-31** – *"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?'"*
2. When difficult times come, it's easy to forget how much God has actually blessed us.
 - a. When we're all knotted up with worry, we forget about all the times in the past when God saw us safely through similar situations.
 - b. Instead, we become obsessed with questions like: "What shall we eat?" or "What shall we drink?" or "What shall we wear?"
 - c. Or, "Where will we live?" or "What job am I going to get now?"
"How am I going to support my family?"
3. There is a great promise God made to every one of us – it's a promise we talked about briefly at the conclusion of our last lesson:
 - a. **Hebrews 13:5** – *Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you."*
 - b. This doesn't mean that God promises a care-free life – God doesn't say we will never experience hardships or setbacks.

- c. However, what God does promise us is that during those hardships and setbacks He will take care of us and take care of our needs or the needs of our family.
- E. Fifth, Jesus taught that worry is characteristic of the unbeliever, not the Christian.
 - 1. **Matthew 6:32** – *"For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things."*
 - 2. One old-time preacher I knew use to say, "Worry is the sign of unbelief in the Christian."
 - a. How true! Worrying about tomorrow is something the unbelievers and unbelieving Christians do.
 - b. When the unbeliever or the unbelieving Christian turns away from God they will spend every day of their lives serving that tyrannical master called "worry."
 - 3. You and I as faithful, believing and trusting Christian have a solution to our problems.
 - a. We don't worry about a matter – we don't need to become pre-occupied or paralyzed with worry.
 - b. Instead, we turn the matter over to the Lord and leave it there – we lay the matter at the feet of Jesus.

- c. And after we've done that, we believe the Lord will handle that situation in a way that will always be in our best interest spiritually.
- d. The solution provided by the Lord may not be the one we would have chosen, but if we fully trust in the Lord to do what's best for us spiritually, we'll be thankful and move on in the direction the Lord is leading us.

II. So, how can we get a grip on the problem of fear, anxiety and worry? I find that the Scriptures provide us with four simple solutions.

A. First, always remember you are not alone – the Lord promises to be with you.

- 1. When Joshua faced the enormous challenge of leading the children of Israel into their conquest of the Promised Land, God reassured His servant with these words:

- a. **Joshua 1:9** – *"Have I not commanded you? Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go."*

- 2. Centuries later, God knew things would soon look pretty bleak for the rebellious Israelites, because the day was coming when they would be sitting by the rivers of Babylon, weeping over being

captives in a foreign land thousands of miles from home. So God told Isaiah to assure them with this promise:

a. **Isaiah 41:10** – *"Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, yes, I will help you, I will uphold you with My righteous right hand."*

3. So, never forget the Lord's promise to be with us during every trial, and through every tragedy – His promise stands: *"I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God."*

B. The second solution to overcoming worry is to trust in His promises.

1. God not only promises to be "with us" during our trials and tragedies, He also promises to eventually bring us peace and consolation in the end.

a. **Isaiah 26:3** – *"You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on You, because he trusts in You."*

b. **Proverbs 3:5-6** – *"Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; 6 In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths."*

(1). A more literal translation of the Hebrew means *"God will make smooth and straight your path."*

(2). The ESV reads: *"And He will make straight your paths."*

- c. **Psalm 4:6-8** – *"There are many who say, 'Who will show us some good? Lift up the light of your face upon us, O Lord!' 7 You have put more joy in my heart than they have when their grain and wine abound. 8 In peace I will both lie down and sleep; for you alone, O Lord, make me dwell in safety."*
- 2. So no matter how dark the skies may seem, no matter how may violent the storm may be, in the end God will bring us joy, peace and safety.
- 3. So... trust in His promises. Nothing brings us more peace.
- C. The third solution to worry is to pray.
 - 1. Prayer is the most power weapon in the Christian's arsenal.
 - a. **Philippians 4:6-7** – *Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; 7 and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.*
 - b. **Psalm 55:22** – *Cast your burden on the Lord, and He shall sustain you; He shall never permit the righteous to be moved.*
 - c. **1 Peter 5:6-7** – *Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time, 7 casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you.*

- d. In Psalm 55:22 and 1 Peter 5:7 the word "cast" literally means
"throw your burdens on the Lord with all your might."
- 2. There is a sense of determined purpose and intensity in prayers
that "cast" our cares and burdens on the Lord.
 - a. When we throw something with that kind of intensity we don't
expect to find it or retrieve it again. It's gone forever.
- 3. So a simple solution to worry is to bring our burdens and cares to
God through prayers and supplications, and to do so with the same
determination and intensity as if we were a major league baseball
pitcher throwing a strike to home plate.
 - a. When we pray with that kind of intensity and determination,
God will bring a peace that not only guards our hearts and
minds He will bring a peace that no words can describe.
- D. The fourth solution to worry, fear and anxiety is to exercise patience –
to *"wait on the Lord"* and let Him handle our problem in His way, and in
His own time.
 - 1. The Lord can do wonderful things for those who *"wait on the Lord!"*
 - a. **Isaiah 40:28-31** – *Have you not known? Have you not heard?
The everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the
earth, neither faints nor is weary. His understanding is
unsearchable. 29 He gives power to the weak, and to those*

who have no might He increases strength. 30 Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall, 31 but those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint.

2. Look what we gain by "waiting on the Lord":
 - a. We get new strength: *"...the Lord shall renew their strength..."*
 - b. We get a whole new perspective: *"...they shall mount up with wings like eagles..."*
 - c. We develop endurance for future contests: *"...they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint!"*
3. In time, the Lord will always bring about what is best for us – even though it may not be what we want, or the way we want, or when we want it.
4. The apostle Paul put it this way:
 - b. **Romans 8:28** – *And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.*
5. So, to conquer worry "wait on the Lord" – let Him answer all your prayers in His way and in His time.

III. Let's go back to The Sermon on the Mount, and notice two more things Jesus said we can do to overcome worry.

A. Jesus said to conquer worry and keep it from dominating our lives, the first thing we must do is to seek two things: **Matthew 6:33** – *But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.*

1. Jesus said the first thing we must seek is the "kingdom of God"
 - a. This is another way of saying to seek God's authority over every area of our life.
 - b. We do that by placing the Lord Jesus Christ in complete control of our will, and truly making Him the "King."
 - c. Remember Jesus said, *"the kingdom of God is within you!" (Luke 17:21)*. It is within us that Christ must reign as King!
 - d. So, to conquer worry we must release our grip on our desires and place our future in God's hands to do as He sees best – and yet, that's often the last thing we do when problems come.
2. Jesus then said we must also seek "His righteousness."
 - a. This means we must seek to be like Him. We must foster the character of Jesus Christ in our own lives – especially during the midst of trials!

- b. We must be willing to say, "Not my will, but yours be done!" – and mean it.
- B. In addition to seeking two things, Jesus said if we want to get a handle on worry we need to take one day at a time: **Matthew 6:34** – *"Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble."*
 - 1. This is just another way of saying, "Live for today!"
 - a. Don't live in the backwash of all the mistakes of "yesterday."
 - b. No matter how badly we would like to go back and re-live some of those days of our past, we can't – there is simply no way we can erase the mistakes of the past.
 - c. However, we can learn from those mistakes, and avoid making the same ones in the future. We can also help others avoid the mistakes we've made.
 - 2. But hand-in-hand with living for today, Jesus doesn't want us to live in the fear of "tomorrow."
 - a. Obviously, no one can predict tomorrow! We don't even know if there will be a tomorrow. The Lord may come today. Or, for all we know, today may be our last day on earth.

- b. The main reason for not living in constant fear of tomorrow is because most of the things we worry about will probably never happen anyway.
 - c. Montaigne (the great French philosopher) said it best: "My life has been filled with terrible misfortunes, most of which never happened."
3. So, rather than live in fear of tomorrow, "cast all your cares on Him..." and let the Lord handle tomorrow.

CONCLUSION:

- I. Are you a worrier?
 - A. If you have a tendency to worry about a lot of things, just remember what Jesus said:
 - 1. Worry keeps you from enjoying the spiritual blessings you already have. We lose sight of the spiritual blessings we enjoy in Christ and begin focusing on the physical and temporal – such as food, drink and shelter.
 - 2. Worry also keeps you from seeing your worth. If God will feed the birds, don't you think He will feed you and your family too?
 - 3. Worry causes you to constantly focus on things you can't change. God can change anything – but not us.

4. Worry causes you to forget the wonderful promises of God – the promise to never leave us nor forsake us.

II. Are you able to enjoy all the wonderful blessings and promises of God?

A. If you're not, and you're still worrying about things in your life, allow me to suggest a couple of reasons that may apply to you.

1. One reason why you may not be enjoying the blessings of God, and still worry every day about your life could be because you're not in God's family.
 - a. The promise God made in Hebrews 13:5 - "*I will never leave you nor forsake you*" is a promise God made to His children.
 - b. If you're not in the family of God by your obedience to the gospel, and by being baptized into Christ for the remission of your sins, then that's where you need to start.
2. Another reason why you may not be enjoying the blessings of God, and are constantly worried about the future, could be because you've harboring some sin in your life for which you have never truly repented.
 - a. How can you expect God to care for you if you don't care about Him?

- b. If you've drifted away from the Lord, then you need to come back by humbling yourself and by coming to Him with a repentant heart, and by confessing your sins to the Lord.
- c. Once you've done that, you can begin living every day with the peace and assurance of knowing the grace and mercy of God has wiped away every sin through the blood of Jesus Christ.