

Do Not Worry

Have you ever heard people say, "I'm worried sick over that." or "I'm worried to death about it." Can worry actually make you sick or even kill you?

Did you know that the word "worry" comes from an old Anglo-Saxon word meaning "to choke"? Clinical studies show that worry, anxiety, and stress are prominent factors in high blood pressure, strokes, heart disease, ulcers, arthritis, and other medical problems.

Worry is destructive physically and according to the Bible worry is also destructive spiritually. In the original biblical language the word translated worry means distracted. Jesus does not want our worries to distract us from the more important things in life.

We're all familiar with worry and anxiety. They're part of everyday life, and we're always on the lookout for ways to reduce them. The Bible has powerful solutions for worry and anxiety. Let's explore them in this lesson. You can win the war over worry! It is easier said than done but "do not worry" is a biblical command.

Matthew 6:25-34

²⁵ Therefore I say to you, **do not worry (be anxious)** 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 (being anxious)** can add one cubit to his stature (a single moment to your life)?

²⁸ So **why do you worry (are you anxious)** 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 (wild flowers), 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 (be anxious)**, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?'

³² For after all these things the Gentiles (unbelievers) 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 (be anxious)** about tomorrow, for tomorrow will **worry (be anxious)** about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.

Six times in these ten verses, Jesus condemns needless worry and anxiety.

He explains that life consists of more than food and clothing.

He shows that worry is illogical because God will take care of us.

He declares that it is useless because it changes nothing.

He states that it is faithless because we are acting like the unbelievers.

He asserts that it is distracting us from seeking first the kingdom of God.

He contends that it is shortsighted because it takes our focus off dealing with today.

So why do people worry about life, food, drink, clothing, physical appearance, and other life issues? We focus too much on the future and don't trust God to provide. We need to learn to live and deal with one day at a time like the song says and Jesus said in verse 34. Worry and anxiety are natural

human impulses, but Jesus wants us to focus our mental energy on the right things. He says that we are wasting our time worrying about things that God has promised to take care of for us?

Philippians 4:6-8

⁶ Be anxious for nothing (Don't worry about anything), 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 (secure and protect) your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

⁸ Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate (dwell) on these things.

How can prayer overcome worry, anxiety, and stress? Just like the song says, take it to the Lord in prayer and leave it there. Many of us pray, but how many of us leave our requests with God. We often say Amen and continue to worry. Trust in God and you'll find your worry and anxiety replaced by a spiritual peace beyond anything you've experienced just like verse 7 says. How does God replace our worries? He tells us in verse 8 to displace them with positive things. Our life is what our thoughts make it.

Proverb 12:25

Anxiety in the heart of man causes depression, but a good word makes it glad.

Anxiety or heaviness in a man's heart weighs him down, but a good word makes him glad.

Worry weighs a person down; an encouraging word cheers a person up.

1 Peter 5:7

Casting all your care (anxiety, worries) upon Him, for He cares for you. Give all your worries to God.

Luke 10:41

And Jesus answered and said to her, "Martha, Martha, you are worried (anxious) and troubled (upset, bothered, fuss) about many things." Martha was distracted by her preoccupation of her good work of serving that she robbed herself of learning from the Master. She also became a harsh critic of her more focused sister.

Psalms 94:19

In the multitude of my anxieties within me, Your comforts delight my soul.

When my anxious inner thoughts become overwhelming, your comfort encourages me.

When my anxiety is great and my anxious thoughts multiply within me, Your consolations bring joy and delight to my soul.

When I worry about many things, your assuring words sooth my soul.

When the cares of my heart are many, your consolations cheer my soul.

Concern differs from anxiety.

We must be careful not to confuse concern with anxiety. It is normal for a Christian to care. Concern motivates us to intercede and take godly actions towards meeting the needs of others or ourselves.

We are to be concerned about our families, our health, and our performance at work.

Concern involves wanting to do everything the best we can so that God receives glory from our lives.

Some concern is rooted in responsibility. We also express this attitude in relation to the people under our protection. For example, if a child is injured, the parent has a genuine right and responsibility to be concerned about whether the ankle is sprained or broken. Concern will lead to taking action and seeking medical advice.

And what if you were to lose your job? You'd naturally and justifiably be somewhat preoccupied with how to find a new one so you could provide for your family. A concern rooted in caring or obedience is not the same as anxiety. But to fall apart emotionally, become paralyzed with fear, or allow thoughts of a bleak future to overtake your mind - that's anxiety.

Concern is positive. It is forward-looking and constructive. Anxiety is the opposite. It is counterproductive, stuck in the past, and negative. In other words, concern motivates us to take action, but anxiety paralyzes us. Concern may be marked with tears, expressions of sorrow or sympathy, thoughtful reflection, or quiet time for meditation. In the end, concern leads us to make decisions, not linger in fear. Appropriate concern might sound like this. I choose to trust in God. I want to seek His purpose and plan in this. I'll take the action He leads me to take.

Anxiety, on the other hand, tends to be marked by hand-wringing, uncontrollable crying, deeply furrowed brows, slumped shoulders, sleepless nights, nervous twitches, and endless pacing. Worry is a treadmill that tends to keep a person in a state of fear and negativity.

The choice is yours.

We are all human, so occasionally we will be blind-sided by unsettling incidents or discoveries. At such times, it is normal to react emotionally. But God's children should not remain in that condition for long. Instead of falling into a downward spiral of anxiety over difficult circumstances, a healthier response is to do what Jesus and Paul taught.

Positive Anxiety or Concerns

As we have seen not all anxiety and concern is condemned.

The Greek noun *merimna* is found 6 times in the New Testament. Its corresponding verb occurs 19 times. These words can be translated worry, anxious, care, or thought. *Merimna* can be destructive and condemned as we have seen so far in this lesson. However, the same words can be positive and commended as we are going to see in the next four examples.

2 Corinthians 11:28

Besides the other things, what comes upon me daily: my deep concern (anxiety) for all the churches.

Philippians 4:10

But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now at last your care (concern) for me has flourished again; though you surely did care, but you lacked opportunity.

2 Corinthians 8:16

But thanks be to God who puts the same earnest care (concern) for you into the heart of Titus.

1 Corinthians 12:25

The members should have the same care (concern) for one another.

Where is the best place to take all your worry, anxiety, and stress? Take it to Jesus. A woman once took this literally. She left a wad of paper in her pew each week when she attended worship. The minister noticed it and finally asked why she left a wad of paper behind each week. She said when she comes to church that she writes down all her worries and troubles on a piece of paper, wads it up in her fist, and leaves it behind for God. After turning it over to God she said that she leaves worship without those burdens. Why don't you decide today to do what Jesus said in **Matthew 11:28-30**,²⁸ Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. ²⁹ Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰ For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.