

## God's Cure for Worry

Text: Matthew 6: 24-34

A definition of worry is to give way to anxiety or unease; allow one's mind to dwell on difficulty or troubles. Worry is natural; worry is normal. It is normal and natural for us to be bothered, sometimes extremely bothered by situations that have caused distress and discomfort. The tendency to worry increases when that discomfort seems out of our hands.

The Sermon on the Mount is Jesus' longest continuous discourse found in the New Testament. It encompasses three chapters in Matthew's Gospel, chapters 5, 6 and 7. In chapter 6, our Lord teaches us how to pray by giving us the Model Prayer, sometimes called The Lord's Prayer. Then as chapter 6 progresses, Christ rebukes materialism and emphasizes the Lordship of Christ as the antidote to the poison of avarice. Then from Matthew 6:25 to the end of the chapter, our Lord addresses the futility of worry and how to overcome it. The genius of our Savior's mind is on display here. It's as though our Lord is saying, pray and make me Lord and you can live a worry free life. And then for those of us that did not get the earlier message found in the first two parts of chapter 6, He takes the remaining verses to explain it to those of us who are sometimes spiritually slow learners.

Corrie Ten Boom said, "Worry is like a rocking chair - it keeps you moving but doesn't get you anywhere." Elisabeth Elliot said, "Worry is the antithesis of trust. You simply cannot do both. They are mutually exclusive." Arthur Somers Roche said, "Worry is a thin stream of fear trickling through the mind. If encouraged, it cuts a channel into which all other thoughts are drained."

Let's invite the Lord Jesus, the Master Teacher to give us His cure for worry:

### 1. CONSIDER THE BIRDS.

Matthew 6:25, 26.

May the Lord help us to humble ourselves and learn from things we often take for granted and pass by without any thought. Our basic instinct is to model up rather than model down. However, when God wants to impart wisdom, He will often tell us to look around and see His wisdom in the little things. So Jesus is telling the worried heart to check out the birds. God said in Job 12:7 and 8, "But ask now the beasts, and they shall teach thee; and the fowls of the air, and they shall tell thee: Or speak to the earth, and it shall teach thee: and the fishes of the sea shall declare unto thee." In the most ancient book of the Bible, the Lord is telling us to learn from the birds!

When as a teen, after deciding to live for Jesus for the rest of my life, my parents became my greatest disciplers. I have often said, "Dad taught me theology; Mom taught me 'kneeology'." When I was in my first year of college, I was still living at home with my parents. Mom fed the birds every day. There were a few special birds that she would recognize as daily visitors. Spring break came and we went up to Arkansas to spend a week with my grandmother. When

we returned, Mom went to the backyard and threw some scraps of bread to her birds. When she came back inside, she called me to the large picture window overlooking our backyard. Mom pointed out some of her familiar birds. Then she smiled and looked at me and said, "Johnny, who fed those birds while we were gone?" And with this she happily pointed that God had indeed watched over the birds and fed them in our absence. Job 38:41: "Who provideth for the raven his food? when his young ones cry unto God, they wander for lack of meat."

Jesus said in Luke 12:6, "Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings, and not one of them is forgotten before God?" The Lord even said that He attended every funeral for the little birds, Matthew 10:29: "Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father." Then the Lord goes on to make His point in Matthew 10:30, 31: "But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows." The number of hairs that someone has on their head can vary by individual. However, the average person has about 100,000 hairs on their head at one time. Considering the population in the earth to be 7.9 billion people, that is quite a lot of hairs on quite a lot of heads! But going back to the birds, Christ is simply saying, if He cares for the birds, He cares so much more for us. Luke 12:24: "Consider the ravens: for they neither sow nor reap; which neither have storehouse nor barn; and God feedeth them: how much more are ye better than the fowls?"

## 2. CONSIDER YOUR LIFE ALLOCATION.

Matthew 6:27.

Jesus is asking the question, who, by worry can add one cubit to his stature. "Stature" in our English dictionary is defined as a person's natural height or importance or reputation gained by ability or achievement. When I looked up the Greek word that we translate stature, I found in the Mounce Greek dictionary, that word *helikia* refers to a particular period of life, especially the functioning part of life or the prime of life within the whole of life.

I believe the longest career of any major league pitcher is Nolan Ryan, who pitched until he was 46. In 1983, Ryan passed Walter Johnson's record strikeouts of 3,508. Nolan went on to retire 10 years later with a record 5,714 strikeouts! But after 1993, there were no more strikeouts. He cannot add one more cubit to his amazing stature.

My great preacher friend, Dr. Robert G. Lee died at 91. And he only stopped preaching shortly before that time. The last time I heard him preach he was 88 years of age. David Brainerd passed from this life at the age of 29. Yet in those few years, he initiated America into mission work through his ministry to the American Indians in America's colonial period. Whether one has decades of ministry like Dr. Lee or a brief period of ministry like David Brainerd, neither one could add one cubit to his effectiveness after God's allotted time given to them.

God's word to Jacob's son, Asher is as relevant for us today: Deuteronomy 33:25b, "...and as thy days, so shall thy strength be."

## 3. CONSIDER THE TENDER PLANTS OF THE EARTH.

Matthew 6:28-30.

The lovely lily has its roots in the soil and as it grows toward the sun, its flower, like a trumpet, calls us into worship with beauty and greater glory than mighty King Solomon. One of the sad verses in the Bible tells us how that Solomon, with all his glory, left the simple trust in the Lord, complicating his life so that God recorded in 1 Kings 11:4: "For it came to pass, when Solomon was old, that his wives turned away his heart after other gods: and his heart was not perfect with the LORD his God, as was the heart of David his father." II Corinthians 11:3: "But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ." In Matthew 6:30 God informs us that He who knows the short life of the common grass of the field and yet has a purpose for even that humble foliage, how much more will He not care for us in the brevity of our life?

#### 4. CONSIDER OUR HEAVENLY FATHER'S ALL KNOWING AND ALL POWER.

Matthew 6:31, 32.

Jesus said in Matthew 7:11: "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?" In light of God's omniscience and omnipotence, we should be relieved from worry. God knows who we are and what we need. God has all power to meet every need (Philippians 4:19).

#### 5. CONSIDER THE BENEFIT OF PROPER PRIORITY.

Matthew 6:33.

When we seek Christ and His kingdom as our number one priority, He promises to overwhelm us with everything that we could possibly need to find happiness in this world.

#### 6. CONSIDER TAKING LIFE IN DAILY DOSES.

Matthew 6:34.

Corrie Ten Boom said, "Worrying is carrying tomorrow's load with today's strength - carrying two days at once. It is moving into tomorrow ahead of time. Worrying doesn't empty tomorrow of its sorrow; it empties today of its strength." John Newton said, "We can easily manage if we will only take each day, the burden appointed to it. But the load will be too heavy for us if we carry yesterday's burden over again today, and then add the burden of the morrow before we are required to bear it."

Conclusion: Compare the way "sufficient" is used in Matthew 6:34 to the way "sufficiency" is used in II Corinthians 3:5 and II Corinthians 9:8.

-Pastor Pope-