

Biblical Solutions for Life Issues

Topic 44 – Worry

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Presupposition Review

God gives believers the resources necessary to address every life difficulty and struggle with sin in a way that honors Him. The Scriptures are clear that all believers (those who have exercised the gift of true saving faith) are **commanded** and **capable** to use the Scriptures through the power of the Holy Spirit to make disciples – to address their own and others' life issues and sin. The purpose of these studies is to equip each of us so that through the sufficiency of Christ and the Scriptures we can mature, grow in our ability to apply the Scriptures to our own life issues and sin, and also bring Biblical care to one another.

Since we have not been together for some time, talking about addressing our own difficult life issues and sin and caring for others who struggle in these areas, let's review our foundational assumptions.

1. Only Christ can set people free from the penalty and power of sin (Eph 2:1-10; John 3:16; Rom 1:16-17; 2 Cor 5:17; Rom 6:15-23; Phil 1:6).
2. The Bible is the inspired Word of God – His complete moral will for us (2 Tim 3:14-17).
3. Only the Scriptures are authoritative and fully sufficient to meet the spiritual needs of God's children (Isa 55:8-11; Heb 4:12; 1 Thess 2:13).
4. All true believers (someone who has exercised the gift of true saving faith) have all the resources now (through the indwelling Holy Spirit and powerful Word of God) to walk in a manner that glorifies God (Eph 1:3-4; 2 Pet 1:3-4).
5. Every believer is capable and commanded to make disciples (Matt 28:19-20). Spirit-filled believers teach and admonish (encouraging, advising, and warning of the consequences of sin) one another (Col 3:16), are "able to admonish" other believers (Rom 15:13-14), and are called to restore other sinning believers (Gal 6:1-2).

❖ **What do you think about the Bible? How high is your view of Scripture? Have you been set free from the penalty and power of sin? And are you proclaiming that message? Do you avail yourself of the resources God has given you to honor Him?**

Introduction

Life is difficult. The Scriptures tell us and experience demonstrates that diverse people in diverse life situations with diverse life experiences will undergo trouble in their lives (Job 5:7; 14:1). We have all undergone trouble to some degree; and we will in the future also.

Everyone knows that life is difficult, so people are often fearful and worried. Maybe you are fearful and worried. Some people have a disposition/personality toward worrying. Others live with a carefree, "don't worry, be happy" disposition. People may be worried about their own eternal destiny, paying their bills, feeding their family, getting or keeping a job, retirement, the past's impact on the present or future, the future, death, pain, accidents, child's health, child's future, child's spiritual welfare, their health, personal relationships, pleasing people, and more. The list is endless of the things that people can be worried about. A study found that roughly 92% of things people worry about never come to pass or are petty and insignificant.

Fear and worry are so common-place even among believers that it has become acceptable. Jerry Bridges lists anxiety/worry as one of the "respectable sins", sins we tolerate because we are preoccupied with the "big sins". Yet God has a lot to say about fear and worry.

❖ **Is worry a sin that you tolerate?**

Fear

“Phobos” is the Greek word for fear. It refers first to flight, alarm, fright, or terror. This type of fear is connected with fear of the unknown, fear of the future, and fear of authorities. It speaks of the terror which seizes one when danger appears.

²⁶When the disciples saw Him walking on the sea, they were terrified, and said, “It is a ghost!” And they cried out in **fear**. Matt 14:25-26

²⁵“There will be signs in sun and moon and stars, and on the earth dismay among nations, in perplexity at the roaring of the sea and the waves, ²⁶men **fainting from fear and the expectation of the things which are coming upon the world**; for the powers of the heavens will be shaken. ²⁷Then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. Luke 21:25-27

³¹It is a **terrifying thing** to fall into the hands of the living God. Heb 10:31

❖ Is this kind of fear good or bad?

“Phobos” can also carry the meaning of respect of people and their position.

⁷Render to all what is due them: tax to whom tax *is due*; custom to whom custom; **fear to whom fear**; honor to whom honor. Rom 13:7

❖ Whom should you respect?

“Phobos” can also be used to describe someone who fears or pleases people instead of God.

⁴²Nevertheless many even of the rulers believed in Him, but because of the Pharisees they were not confessing *Him*, for **fear** that they would be put out of the synagogue; ⁴³**for they loved the approval of men rather than the approval of God**. John 12:42-43

⁴⁴I say to you, My friends, do not **be afraid** of those who kill the body and after that have no more that they can do. ⁵But I will warn you whom to **fear: fear** the One who, after He has killed, has authority to cast into hell; yes, I tell you, **fear Him!** Luke 12:4-5

¹⁰For am I now seeking the favor of men, or of God? Or am I striving to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a bond-servant of Christ. Gal 1:10

❖ Are you a people-pleaser or God-pleaser?

“Phobos” can also refer to reverence, respect, honor, and reverential awe. It describes the attitude we should have toward our holy God.

⁴²They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. ⁴³Everyone kept feeling a sense of **awe**; and many wonders and signs were taking place through the apostles. Acts 2:42-43

³¹So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria enjoyed peace, being built up; and going on in the **fear of the Lord** and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it continued to increase. Acts 9:31

¹Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the **fear of God**. 2 Cor 7:1

¹²So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, **work out your salvation with fear and trembling**; ¹³for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for *His* good pleasure. Phil 2:12-13

❖ In what ways do you demonstrate the fear of God?

So there is godly fear and ungodly fear. Godliness is living with pervasive thoughts of God, His will, His glory, and dependence on Him. Ungodliness is living with little or no thought of God, His will, His glory, or dependence on Him. Godly fear is a fear (reverential awe) of God and a reasonable fear of danger or difficulty. Ungodly fears are unreasonable and irrational in light of our relationship with Christ and are not rooted in an abiding trust in God.

Worry

There are both Greek and Hebrew words that are translated worry or anxious or care. “Merimnaō” (v) or “merimna” (n) are Greek which can mean care in the sense of anxious fear, worried, or troubled with cares. They can also mean caring for, providing for, or taking responsibility for someone or something. The context determines meaning.

Positively, the words are used by Paul referring to the concern for others.

³²But I want you to be free from **concern**. One who is unmarried is **concerned** about the things of the Lord, how he may please the Lord; ³³but one who is married is **concerned** about the things of the world, how he may please his wife, 1 Cor 7:32-33

²⁵so that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same **care** for one another. 1 Cor 12:25

²⁸Apart from such external things, there is the daily pressure on me of **concern** for all the churches. 2 Cor 11:28

²⁰For I have no one else of kindred spirit who will genuinely be **concerned** for your welfare. Phil 2:20

❖ Do you exhibit godly concern for the spiritual welfare of others?

Negatively, the words are used to refer to anxious fear or worry about life’s provision of food, drink, and clothing (Luke 12:22); what tomorrow may bring (Matt 6:34); our defense of the gospel (Matt 10:19; Luke 12:11); the worry of the world that chokes the truth (Matt 13:22); the worries of life that weigh down the heart (Luke 21:34); and the anxiety that we hold on to (1 Pet 5:7).

²²And He said to His disciples, "For this reason I say to you, do not **worry** about your life, as to what you will eat; nor for your body, as to what you will put on. Luke 12:22

³²"So do not **worry** about tomorrow; for tomorrow will **care** for itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own. Matt 6:34

¹¹"When they bring you before the synagogues and the rulers and the authorities, do not **worry** about how or what you are to speak in your defense, or what you are to say; Luke 12:11

¹⁹but the **worries of the world**, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things enter in and choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful. Mark 4:19

⁷casting all your **anxiety** on Him, because He cares for you. 1 Pet 5:7

❖ Is this kind of fear good or bad?

“Sar`aph” is Hebrew meaning “disquieting thoughts”.

¹⁹When my **anxious thoughts** multiply within me, Your consolations delight my soul. Psa 94:19

²³Search me, O God, and know my heart; Try me and know my **anxious thoughts**; Psa 139:23

Worry has been called misplaced, ungodly concern about provision, performance, or reputation (see for example Matt 6:25-34; 10:19; Luke 10:41; 12:11; 12:22-32). Worry dwells on and is preoccupied with some fear. Worry weighs down the heart and chokes out the Word of God.

²⁵**Anxiety in a man's heart weighs it down, But a good word makes it glad.** Prov 12:25

³⁴**Be on guard, so that your hearts will not be weighted down with dissipation and drunkenness and the worries of life, and that day will not come on you suddenly like a trap;** Luke 21:34

²²**And the one on whom seed was sown among the thorns, this is the man who hears the word, and the worry of the world and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful.** Matt 13:22 (see also Mark 4:19 and Luke 8:14)

❖ **In what ways have you experienced worry choking out fruitfulness?**

Worrying is a form of practical atheism because it leaves God out of the situation or thinks He is not strong enough or loving enough to deal with it.

Worry can control a person, other responsibilities may be neglected, and it is possible to lose hope and stop functioning.

The difference between concern and worry is that godly concern is focused on God's responsibilities for today, eternal goals, and other people. God, His will, His glory, and dependence on Him is the central focus. Worry is ungodly concern which leaves God out. The focus is on what might happen, on difficulties, temporal matters, and self over others. God is not being trusted, thoughts are focused on changing the future and self and are unproductive.

Worry is a sin

God does not mince words. He commands us: "do not worry..." (Matt 6:34) and "be anxious for nothing" (Phil 4:6). If we choose to not obey His commands, that is sin.

Not only is worry a sin, but it can, in itself, be a symptom of other unrepented sin in one's life.

¹⁸For I confess my iniquity; **I am full of anxiety because of my sin.** Psa 38:18

❖ **Do you view worry as a sin?**

Worry is sin because it bows us to another master

The classic passage on worrying is in Matthew 6. This specific application is to physical provision (food and covering, 1 Tim 6:8). We normally begin the section in verse 25 with the command, "**For this reason I say to you, do not be worried** about your life..." But this verse begins with, "For this reason" or "Therefore" (ESV) so we must look to what comes previously that prompted the command to not worry. What comes previously is that believers cannot serve two masters; for either we will hate the one and love the other, or we will be devoted to one and despise the other. Believers cannot bow before other masters. When we bow before the Lord, there is no worry. When we worry, we are bowing to another master.

²⁴**No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth.** ²⁵**For this reason I say to you, do not be worried** about your life, ... ²⁷And who of you by being worried can add a *single* hour to his life? ²⁸And **why are you worried** about ... You of little faith! ³¹**Do not worry then**, saying, 'What will we eat?' or 'What will we drink?' or 'What will we wear for clothing?' ³²For the Gentiles eagerly seek all these things; for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. ³³But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. ³⁴**So do not worry about tomorrow; for tomorrow will care for itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.** Matt 6:24-34

❖ **Have you bowed to another master?**

Worry is sin because it does not trust God and calls Him a liar

God is faithful, fulfilling every promise. He is steadfast, unchanging, perfectly reliable, and utterly dependable.

God is sovereign. All things are under His rule and control; nothing happens without His direction or permission. Nothing takes Him by surprise. The purpose of God's plan is His glory (Psa 19:1; Eph 1:4-6, 11-12; Rom 9:23; Rev 4:11). In working all things for His own glory, God causes all things to work together for the good of His children.

²⁸And we know that **God causes all things to work together for good** to those who love God, to those who are called according to *His* purpose. Rom 8:28

In light of these truths, we should never worry. When we worry, we are not taking God at His word, we are not trusting Him. In essence, we are calling Him a liar.

❖ **Do you live in light of the truths that God is faithful and sovereign?**

Panic Attacks

Panic attacks are sudden, overwhelming, fearful reactions. The DSM-V describes panic attacks as “An abrupt surge of intense fear or intense discomfort that reaches a peak within minutes, and during which time four (or more) of the following symptoms occur (Note: The abrupt surge can occur from a calm state or an anxious state.): palpitations, pounding heart, or accelerated heart rate; sweating; trembling or shaking; sensations of shortness of breath or smothering; feelings of choking; chest pain or discomfort; nausea or abdominal distress; feeling dizzy, unsteady, light-headed, or faint; chills or heat sensations; numbness or tingling sensations; feelings of unreality or being detached from oneself; fear of losing control or “going crazy”; or fear of dying.

The episode may have an obvious trigger, but generally the person does not know what prompted it.

The word “attack” is misleading. While it describes the way someone feels during the episode, “attack” implies that the episode is something being done to them over which you have no control.

We have already discussed that thinking and emotions can have an impact on the body (see class topic 38). Scripture tells us that the body and mind are connected.

¹How blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, Whose sin is covered! ²How blessed is the man to whom the LORD does not impute iniquity, And in whose spirit there is no deceit! ³**When I kept silent about my sin, my body wasted away Through my groaning all day long. ⁴For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me; My vitality was drained away as with the fever heat of summer.** Selah. ⁵I acknowledged my sin to You, And my iniquity I did not hide; I said, “I will confess my transgressions to the LORD”; And You forgave the guilt of my sin. Psa 32:1-5

¹O LORD, rebuke me not in Your wrath, And chasten me not in Your burning anger. ²**For Your arrows have sunk deep into me, And Your hand has pressed down on me. ³There is no soundness in my flesh because of Your indignation; There is no health in my bones because of my sin. ⁴For my iniquities are gone over my head; As a heavy burden they weigh too much for me. ⁵My wounds grow foul and fester Because of my folly. ... ¹⁸For I confess my iniquity; I am full of anxiety because of my sin.** Psa 38:1-5, 18

What we find with panic episodes is physical responses to out-of-control, misplaced, ungodly concern – worry.

❖ **Have you experienced out-of-control fear?**

Addressing Worry Biblically

Regardless of the severity of the worry, the steps to address it are the same.

1. Regardless of the circumstances, the believer must make a decision of the will that our highest purpose is to glorify God. For the believer, our desire to glorify God must be our greatest desire, our highest purpose, more important than anything.

To glorify God is to show His character in our motives, thoughts, words, and deeds. We purpose to make choices that honor God in obedience. We glorify God when we live in a way that those around us can see God's character in us (Ex 33:17-23); when we display the life of Christ living through us (Gal 2:20).

³¹Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever **you do, do all to the glory of God.** 1 Cor 10:31

²⁰I have been crucified with Christ; and **it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me;** and the *life* which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me. Gal 2:20

❖ **What is your most important and over-riding purpose?**

2. Regardless of the circumstances, the believer must strive to walk in the Spirit ("above the line").

¹⁶But I say, **walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh.** ... ²²But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, *peace*, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. Gal 5:16, 22-23

Living a consistently God-glorifying life is possible only through Spirit-filling. The Christian life is not lived in the believer's own strength. It is a life lived filled with the Spirit as the life of Christ flows through us.

When a believer is submitted to God (Eph 5:18-6:9) and His Word (Col 3:16-4:1), the indwelling Holy Spirit fills (or controls) them and produces Christ-like character, heart motives, attitudes, words, and reactions. The believer in a right relationship with God will be filled with the Spirit. This is the usual, expected state of a believer. Being filled with the Spirit (Eph 5:18) is also described as "letting the word of Christ richly dwell within you" (Col 3:16); "abiding in Christ" (John 15:1-11); "setting apart Christ as Lord in your heart" (1 Pet 3:15); "living by faith in the Son of God" (Gal 2:20); and "presenting your body a living and holy sacrifice" (Rom 12:1-2).

As we bow before God in complete submission, we will be filled with the Spirit and exhibit the fruits of the Spirit. If we find ourselves sinning and therefore bowed before a master other than the Lord, then we must repent and bow again before the Lord. As we repent and once again bow before the Lord as master, we will be filled with the Spirit and the life of Christ will flow through us. We will have the power to live a God-glorifying life and exhibit the fruits of the Spirit.

God's Word is the tool that God's Spirit uses to produce God-honoring change in God's child. Therefore, we must commit to be obedient to God's Word.

❖ **Are you consistently walking in the Spirit?**

3. Regardless of the circumstances, the believer must be actively involved in a local body.

²³Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful; ²⁴and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, ²⁵not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging *one another*; and all the more as you see the day drawing near. Heb 10:23-25

Believers are united in Christ and connected to one another. The body figure illustrates the diverse unity and interdependence that is present in the church. The body is made up of unique individuals who are united by the indwelling Holy Spirit. God has designed the church in such a way so that care can be brought to each other. The local body is the major way that God brings love, edification, encouragement, admonition, and comfort to believers.

❖ **Are you actively involved in your local body?**

4. Specifics of addressing worry

a. Ask God to reveal your anxious thoughts.

²³Search me, O God, and know my heart; Try me and know my anxious thoughts; ²⁴And see if there be any hurtful way in me, And lead me in the everlasting way. Psa 139:23-24

b. Repent of the sin of worry, renew your mind with God's Word, and put on trust and peace.

¹⁸For I confess my iniquity; I am full of anxiety because of my sin Psa 38:18

c. Cultivate a deep understanding of God's attributes, like faithfulness, sovereignty, and love (see class topics 2 and 15).

d. Spend time having God talk to you through His Word

¹⁹When my anxious thoughts multiply within me, **Your consolations delight my soul.**
Psa 94:19

e. Spend time talking to God in prayer.

⁶Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. ⁷And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Phil 4:6-7

f. Recognize that God provides enabling grace.

⁷Because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, for this reason, to keep me from exalting myself, there was given me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to torment me—to keep me from exalting myself! ⁸Concerning this I implored the Lord three times that it might leave me. ⁹And **He has said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness."** Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me. ¹⁰Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong. 2 Cor 12:7-10

²Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord; ³seeing that **His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness**, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence. ⁴For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, so that by them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust. 2 Pet 1:2-4

g. Recognize that worry fails to trust God.

³⁰But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is *alive* today and tomorrow is thrown into the furnace, *will He* not much more *clothe* you? **You of little faith!** Matt 6:30

¹"Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. John 14:1

h. Recognize that worry is futile.

²⁷And who of you by being worried can add a *single* hour to his life? Matt 6:27

³⁴“So do not worry about tomorrow; for tomorrow will care for itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own. Matt 6:34

i. Recognize that God cares for you and desires for you to entrust your cares to Him.

⁷casting all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you. 1 Pet 5:7

²²**Cast your burden upon the Lord and He will sustain you;** He will never allow the righteous to be shaken. Psa 55:22

j. Recognize that Jesus is with you now.

¹⁸And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. ¹⁹Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, ²⁰teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; **and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.**”
Matt 28:18-20

Concluding Thoughts

Worry is misplaced, ungodly concern about the things of life. It leaves God out of your life and says that He is not strong enough or loving enough to deal with it. God is not being trusted, thoughts are focused on changing the future and self and are unproductive. Worry is a sin because God commands His children to not worry. When you worry you bow to another master and do not trust God and call Him a liar. Through your relationship with Christ, the indwelling Holy Spirit, and the powerful Word of God, you can live a life exhibiting the fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.

Real Life Scenarios

Yourself #1: The industry in which you work has taken a down-turn during the last quarter and the outlook is not good for the rest of the year. Your company is already lean and you are one of the most junior people in your department. Recently, your thoughts go toward the reality that you may get laid off any day now. You lay awake at night anxious about your family’s future. What truths from today’s study can be an encouragement for you? Where do you begin to address your anxiousness, then what?

Yourself #2: You are a college student. The only way you can afford to be at school is through an academic scholarship which requires you to keep your grades above a certain GPA. Pretty much all the time, this weight of having to perform is over you and you find yourself paralyzed by worry. What truths from today’s study can be an encouragement for you? Where do you begin to address your anxiousness, then what?

Someone Else #1: Your friend at church has confided in you that she is afraid of driving. Specifically, she is afraid to turn left across oncoming traffic. She goes way out of her way to avoid left turns which has resulted in her sometimes being late for appointments and work. In thinking about bringing Biblical care to your hurting friend, what is the first thing you need to know? What is the next thing you might share with her?

Someone Else #2: Your friend has told you that he is worried about his performance at work. He worries to the point that his performance is affected – a self-fulfilling behavior. He is additionally worried that he may lose his job over this. In thinking about bringing Biblical care to your hurting friend, what is the first thing you need to know? What is the next thing you might share with him?

Biblical Solutions for Life Issues

Topic 44 – Worry

Read Philippians 4:4-9 and answer the following questions.

⁴Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice! ⁵Let your gentle *spirit* be known to all men. The Lord is near. ⁶Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. ⁷And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. ⁸Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things. ⁹The things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you. Phil 4:4-9

1. How often are you supposed to rejoice (verse 4)?

Read James 1:2-4 – Do you consider difficulties as joy? What is the purpose of difficulties?

2. Instead of being anxious, what are you commanded to do (verse 6)?
3. What is the result of submitting to God and praying when anxious (verse 7)?
4. What types of things are you commanded to have your mind dwell on (verse 8)?
5. What types of things did the Philippians (and you) learn, receive, hear, and see in Paul (verse 9)?
6. What will be the result of practicing those things (verse 9)?

Additional Scripture to read, meditate on, and pray through: Psalm 23; 37; 46; 112