

THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST

SPREADING THE SOUL-SAVING MESSAGE OF JESUS

MOTIVATIONAL LESSONS **“The Problem of Worry”**

Introduction by narrator accompanied by a cappella singing:

THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST. Spreading the soul-saving message of Jesus. And now, Ben Bailey.

“Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God” (Phil. 4:6). Welcome to our study on how to overcome the problem of worry. There are a lot of people in this world who are on pins and needles about everything, and whose lives are in shambles because they cannot seem to gain control of the problem and issues of life. As a result, they are in a constant state of chaos. Worry is one of the problems with which the Bible helps us deal—if we focus on the right things. In fact, many of the things about which we worry are things that are illegitimate concerns anyway. For example, Thomas Kepler wrote about a woman who realized that fears were ruining her life. So, she began to keep track about all the things about which she was worried. Forty percent of the things about which she worried were things that would never happen. Thirty percent were things that had already happened, and thus they were “water under the bridge.” Twelve percent of the things were related to others’ criticisms or opinions, most of which were unjustified. Ten percent of the things were health concerns—and worrying only made them worse. When it came down to it, only eight percent of the things about which she worried were actually legitimate things about which she needed to be thinking. Eight percent! That means that ninety-two percent were illegitimate concerns were a waste of time that caused needless heartache. So how does a person overcome the problem of worry?

If you have a Bible handy, I would like to encourage you to turn to Matthew 6 because I want us to look at what Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount regarding the problem of worry. In Matthew 6:19-24, Jesus offered some prerequisites as things that we need to understand ahead of time if we are going to overcome worry. What are those things? In Matthew 6:19-22, Jesus said that in order to overcome worry we must learn what the real treasures of life actually are. What is really important in life? Where is your treasure located? What are you trying to gain in this life?

“Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. The lamp of the body is the eye. If therefore your eye is good, your whole body will be full of light.”

One prerequisite for overcoming worry is to learn what the real treasures of life are. Jesus told us not to lay up treasures on Earth where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves can break in and steal. To overcome worry, we must stop putting our focus on the treasures of this life. Things like money, houses, cars, and all the “fine things” are not where our focus should be. Worldliness has always been at enmity with godliness. James 4:4 says, “Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.” We become God’s enemy when we allow worldliness into our lives, and when

it becomes our focus. In 1 Timothy 6:10 we are told that “the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.” There is much worried involved in love for money, trying to keep that money, and trying to make sure that no one else takes it. That will not lead to a happy life. John said, “All that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever” (1 Jn. 2:16-17).

We see in Scripture some examples of people who had a problem with materialism, and who allowed it to consume their lives. In Luke 12:15-21 we read about the rich fool. He had a great crop, so he says to himself, “Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink, and be merry.” But what did God think about that mindset? God said, “Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided? So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.” That man allowed his worldly possessions to consume him—and he lost his soul as a result.

Think, too, about the rich young ruler in Mark 10:17-22, who certainly did not have the right focus in life. He came to Jesus and asked, “‘Good Teacher, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?’” Jesus said to him, “Keep the commandments.” The man said, “Teacher, all these things I have kept from my youth.” Jesus then said, “Go your way, sell whatever you have and give to the poor...and follow Me.” We learn that the man went away sorrowful because “he had great possessions.” To overcome the problem of worry, we must realize what is important. What are the real treasures in this life? The real treasures are in the immortal things like the Word of God. In Matthew 24:35 Jesus said, “Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away.” It is the Word of God that is going to judge us (Jn. 12:48). It is the Word of God that sanctifies us and that is absolute truth (Jn. 17:17). It is the Word of God that sets us free (Jn. 8:32). It is God’s Word by which we are born again (1 Pet. 1:25). Instead of focusing on material goods that people can steal, that can rust, or that moths can eat, why not put your focus on things of this life that are really important—like the Word of God, your immortal soul, or making sure that you get to Heaven?

In Matthew 6 Jesus also said that a second prerequisite to overcoming the problem of worry is that we must have the proper vision in this life. Where is your vision? Where is your direction? What are you pointing toward in this life? Jesus said, “The lamp of the body is the eye. If therefore your eye is good, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in you is darkness, how great is that darkness!” (vss. 22-23). If our eyes are dark, then we cannot see, and we will not have the proper vision, direction, or focus in life. So Jesus teaches us that in order to overcome worry, we must have the proper direction in life. Where are we going in life? Jesus asked two pointed questions in Mark 8:36-37: (1) “What will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul?”; and (2) “What will a man give in exchange for his soul?” Is your vision in life, more than anything, to get to Heaven—instead of amassing wealth or being popular? Is your direction pointing toward Heaven? That was Paul’s direction. Paul said, “For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain” (Phil. 1:21). Are we seeking first the kingdom of God and His righteousness (Mt. 6:33)? We must ask ourselves: (1) What are the real treasures in life?; (2) Are we going in the proper direction?; and (3) Who are we going to serve in this life? To overcome worry, we must make up our minds regarding to whom we are going to be servants. We are going to be servants to someone. We will be a servant to our pleasures, to lusts, or to others. Or, we can be a servant to God. In Matthew 6:24 Jesus said, “No one can serve two masters; for

either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.” Who will we follow in this life? In Matthew 4 the devil tempted Jesus. He took Him up on a high mountain and said, “All these things I will give You if You will fall down and worship me.” Jesus replied, “You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only you shall serve” (vs. 10). In Revelation 19:10 we are told that we are not to worship angels, but that we are to worship God. In Luke 9:23 we are told to deny ourselves so that we can take up our crosses daily and follow Christ. We are to be a living sacrifice for God (Rom. 12:1). We are to consider our lives as crucified so that we can live for Jesus (Gal. 2:20). All of these things are motivated by God’s love. “The love of Christ compels us because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died; and He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again” (2 Cor. 5:14-15). Who are we going to follow in this life? What direction are we going to go? And what are the real treasures in this life? Are we focused on those things on which God wants us to focus?

In Matthew 6:25-32 Jesus gets to the heart of the matter, and tells us some steps we can take to overcome the problem of worry. In verse 25 Jesus tells us that we must first understand the real purpose of life if we want to overcome worry. So many people are wandering aimlessly through life without any meaning or purpose. They do not know why they are here or where they are going. And that is why they worry so much. They do not have any real purpose in this life. What is the purpose of life? Jesus said, “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?” To a lot of people, that is what life is about. They live from meal to meal and from clothes to clothes. They live day by day without any real focus on the purpose of life. Life is not about food or clothing. What is life about? Life is about serving God. What’s the real purpose of life? God Himself said in Isaiah 43:7, “Everyone who is called by My name, Whom I have created for My glory; I have formed him, yes, I have made him.” We were created—we are here—to glorify God in this life. Solomon sought meaning in his life. Do you remember the conclusion he reached regarding the meaning of life? In Ecclesiastes 12:13-14 he said, “Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is man’s all. For God will bring every work into judgment, including every secret thing, whether good or evil.” What did Solomon say that life is all about? We are here to fear God, obey Him, and live a life that is acceptable to Him. Paul said in 1 Corinthians 10:31, “Whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.” Paul had that mindset. He said, “For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain” (Phil. 1:21). It is not just the purpose of life that we must understand. We also must understand the purpose of our bodies. “Do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God’s” (1 Cor. 6:19-20). To overcome the problem of worry, initially we must understand the purpose of life and the purpose of the body. We are not here just for food or clothing. We are here to glorify God, be a shining light, and to get to Heaven.

Another step in overcoming worry is understanding our own value and worth so that we can overcome anxiety. In Matthew 6:26 Jesus said, “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?” This strikes at the very heart of God’s nature for us to think that we are the climax of His creation and that He created us so that one day we can live with Him—and then to believe that God said to us, “Fend for yourself, because I’m not going to help you.” God has promised that, because of our value and worth, He will take care of us. He does that physically. When we seek first the kingdom (Mt. 6:33), all else will

be provided. But look also at what God has done to provide salvation for us. In John 3:16 we are told that “God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.” Romans 5:8 tells us that “while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” In 2 Corinthians 5:21 we are told that God “made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us.” Hebrews 10:12 says, “This Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God.” Think of what Matthew 27 tells us that Jesus went through. He was beaten, spit upon, laughed at, and mocked. Stripes were laid on His back. He “bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness” (1 Pet. 2:24). Think about all that God went through. Is God then just going to throw us out and say, “You worry about yourselves”? No, God has promised that, because of our value and worth (seen in what He allowed His Son to do for us), He will take care of us. This is why Jesus asked regarding the birds, “Are you not of more value than they?” Birds do not have to work for their food. God abundantly provides for them. Yet we are of more value than any bird that has ever lived. How do we gauge our value? Is it based on inherent worth? No. How do you get a pair of blue jeans to cost \$100? It is not their inherent worth? How do you get a pair of tennis shoes to cost \$150? It is not their inherent worth. Rather, the price is based on the value we place on an object. Our worth is based on the value that God has placed on us. Jesus said in Luke 17:10, “When you have done all those things which you are commanded, say, ‘We are unprofitable servants. We have done what was our duty to do.’” All of us have sinned, but God has chosen us as the pinnacle of His creation. He has given us an immortal spirit. One day we will live somewhere eternally—either in Heaven or in Hell. So we must realize our value and worth. God did not go through all He did just to abandon us to our own devices. God will take care of His own!

Then Jesus said in Matthew 6:27-29 that we must understand that worry is the thief of total dependence upon God. Worry steals that which God has promised to abundantly give to us. Jesus asked, “Which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature? So why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; and yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.” What good thing can come from worrying? Does worrying make us bigger than our problems? Isn’t that what Jesus was asking? “Which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature?” In fact, it is the exact opposite. Worry does not make us bigger than our problems. Rather, it makes our problems bigger than we are. Worry causes the problem—not us—to look like the giant. We must realize that worry will not help us deal with the trouble. That is why Paul wrote by inspiration, “Be anxious about nothing” (Phil. 4:6). It will not do any good to worry. If we obey God (Mt. 7:21), put our trust in Him (Prov. 3:5), and have true faith to follow through with His commandments, then God has promised to take care of us. Worry is the thief of total dependence upon God.

Another key Jesus gives us is found in Matthew 6:30-32. We must understand that God already knows about, and cares deeply about, our needs.

“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? Therefore do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things.”

We are not to ask, “What are we going to eat?,” or “What are we going to wear?,” or “How will we make it through life?” God knows and God cares! In Matthew 6:7-8 we are told to pray to God in Heaven, and He will help us. In John 2:25 we learn that Jesus knows what is within every person. Proverbs 15:3 tells us that “the eyes of the Lord are in every place, keeping watch on the evil and the good.” God knows all things. All things are “open and

naked before the eyes of Him to whom we must give an account” (Heb. 4:13). God knew how to help the people in the wilderness when He provided them with manna from Heaven. God knew how to take care of Elijah during one of the most challenging moments in his life—the victory on Mt. Carmel (1 Kgs. 17). God knows what we need, and is more than able to provide. But we must realize that God is on top of things. He knows, and He does not need our help to figure things out. All we need to do is our part by following His will and seeking first the kingdom of God.

Matthew 6:33 is a key verse in this matter. In this verse, Jesus provides us with two special keys with which to overcome the problem of worry. Let’s say that we have worries and anxieties in our lives, and we are dealing with numerous troubles. What is one thing we can do to help us eliminate such problems? We must seek first the kingdom of God—above all else. In the context, there is a discussion about food, shelter, clothing, and anxieties. What does Jesus say? “Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.” We must put the kingdom first, knowing that God will take care of His own. If we understand that we, in this life, must give ourselves fully to God. We must worship God at every available opportunity (Heb. 10:25). We must give of ourselves and our means (2 Cor. 9:6-7). We must realize that we are workers in the kingdom of God, and that we must stay busy (1 Cor. 15:58). If we really love Jesus, we will keep His commandments. Do Christ and His kingdom have preeminence over everything else in our lives—ball games, jobs, or families (families will fall into line if we put God first)? God must come before all else in this life. First and foremost, we must make up our minds to put the kingdom of God first, and let the chips fall where they may. I guarantee you that they will fall in the order they should to help you take care of your life—if you are truly following God.

Then Jesus said, “Seek first the righteousness of God.” This means that in this life, we must try to attain, to the best of our ability, the righteousness of God. In Matthew 5:6 we are told, “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled.” Psalm 119:172 tells us that “all of God’s commandments are righteousness.” Thus, in essence we must seek the will of God through the Scriptures, and then follow that will according to the pattern shown in the Bible. We must first seek God’s kingdom, and we must seek to be righteous like God. If we will do those two things, everything else will fall into place.

There are two great benefits in this same context to overcoming the problem of worry. In Matthew 6:33-34 Jesus said, “Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.” What benefits can be found in putting the kingdom first and overcoming worry? All the necessities of life, God will take care of. In Psalm 37:25 David said (as he looked back on his own life), “I have been young, and now am old; yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his descendants begging bread.” Righteous people who put the kingdom first will be provided for. God said that in Philippians 4:19—“My God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.” He did not say that God would supply all our “wants,” “luxuries,” “passions,” or “desires.” Rather, He said that God would supply all our needs. We also will not have to worry about tomorrow and its troubles. If we put the kingdom first, then we can focus on living for God in the here and now. James 5:16 tells us that “the effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.” We have the power of prayer at our disposal. We can cast all of our cares on God (1 Pet. 5:7), knowing that He will care for us. We can do like Jesus did in Mark 1:35 by beginning every day with prayer, knowing that “sufficient for the day is the trouble therein.” This will allow us to focus on living faithfully before God in the here and now.

Are you caught up in the problem of worry? Here are some things you can do to overcome worry in your life. Ask yourself: "What are the real treasures on which I'm focusing in this life?" Then, realize that the real treasures are God, His Word, and getting to Heaven. Realize that you cannot make yourself bigger by worrying about problems. Life is about serving God, not about clothing or feeding the body. That is not what life is about. Above all else, the one thing that Jesus said we can all do to overcome worry is to put the kingdom of God first.

Are you putting the kingdom of God first? Have you done that initially? Are you a member of the kingdom? The kingdom is the church (Mt. 16:18-19). The kingdom is present today (Col. 1:13). Are you in the kingdom? How does one become a member of Christ's church? He must hear the Word of God (Rom. 10:17). Then he must believe that Jesus is God's Son (Jn. 8:24). But belief alone will not save a person (Jas. 2:24). A person also must repent (Lk. 13:3). And a person must make the good confession (Acts 8:36-39). And a person must be baptized in water for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38).

But it does not stop there. A person then must rise up out of the waters of baptism to walk "in newness of life" (Rom. 6:4). Then a person must give his life fully to the cause of Christ by living faithfully for Him every day. Then, and only then, can a person "be anxious for nothing, but in everything with prayer and supplication let your requests be known to God." May the God of peace help each of us to put Him first and thereby rid our lives of worry so that we truly can seek first His kingdom, and make sure that we are living in such a way as to know that one day we can hear the great statement, "Enter in, good and faithful servant."

Narrator accompanied by a cappella singing:

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STUDY QUESTIONS FOR “THE PROBLEM OF WORRY”

1. What did God tell us in Philippians 4:6?
2. What important point did Jesus offer in Matthew 6:19 concerning how to avoid worry in this life?
3. What does James 4:4 tell us will happen to us if we succumb to worldliness?
4. What does 1 Timothy 6:10 have to say about “the love of money”?
5. What does 1 John 2:16-17 tell us about worldly passions and desires?
6. About whom do we read in Luke 12:15-21?
7. In Mark 10:17-22, what made the rich young ruler sad?
8. What two pointed questions did Jesus ask in Mark 8:36-37?
9. According to Philippians 1:21, what was the apostle Paul’s attitude in this life (and, by extension, should be our attitude in life as well)?
10. What valuable piece of information is found in Matthew 6:24?
11. In Luke 9:23, what did Jesus tell us to do?
12. What is it, according to Paul’s statement in 2 Corinthians 5:14, that “compels us”?
13. How, according to Romans 12:1, are Christians to live their lives every day?
14. According to Isaiah 43:7, why did God create us?
15. In 1 Corinthians 10:31, what did Paul tell Christians to do?
16. What, according to Ecclesiastes 12:13-14, is “man’s all” (or “whole duty”)?
17. What does 1 Corinthians 6:120 admonish Christians to do?
18. In Matthew 6:26, what example did Christ use to make His point, and what question did He ask about that point?
19. According to 1 Peter 2:24, how are Christians to live each and every day of their lives?
20. What rhetorical question did Christ ask in Matthew 6:27?
21. What does Proverbs 3:5 admonish us all to do?
22. What, according to Philippians 4:19, will God supply for us?
23. In Matthew 6:33, what did Jesus tell Christians to do?