

THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST

SPREADING THE SOUL-SAVING MESSAGE OF JESUS

MOTIVATIONAL LESSONS

“Worry”

Introduction by narrator accompanied by a cappella singing:

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

Welcome to the Gospel of Christ. In today’s motivational lesson we will be looking the subject of worry. There are many different sins and temptations with which all of us have to deal from time to time. But one issue to which all of us can relate is the issue of worry. We sometimes worry about our health. We worry about our jobs, our relationships, and our financial situations. All of us, at times, worry. Saying, “Do not worry!,” is much easier said than done. In fact, most people know that they should not worry. And no one wants to worry or likes the concept of worrying. But how can we deal with worry?

Christ, as He was presenting the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 6, dealt with worry in verse 25. He 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?” Jesus was talking about things that are necessary in our lives. He told us not to worry about those things. He asked, “Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing?” In verse 26 He used an illustration when He 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?” Jesus reminded us that God takes care of the birds, while birds do not even have souls as we do. Jesus did not come to the Earth to die for us, but He did die for us. If God is going to take care of the birds, then we have to be reassured, and know for a fact, that God will take care of our needs. In verses 27-30 Jesus said,

“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. 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?”

If God takes care of the lilies of the field, the grass, the flowers, and nature—which today are here and tomorrow will be burned—then what will He do for us? Will He not make sure that we are properly clothed? In verse 31 Jesus said, “Therefore do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’” That is very comforting. God knows what we need. He is the One Who created us. He will make sure that our needs are met. But, as verses 33 and 34 state, we must “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.” Jesus was saying that we have to seek first the kingdom of God and all its righteousness. When we do that, God will make certain that we are taken care of.

Now let’s look at three different points in this lesson that will help us conquer worry. The first point is the reality of worry. We must understand the reality of worry, and what worry really is. Oftentimes worry takes us out of reality. When we are worrying about things, it distracts us from the truth. So, what we have to do is take worry and bring it back into re-

ality where it properly belongs. Worry does not change anything at all for the better. We can worry and worry and worry for hours and even days, yet it will not help anything. It will not change anything for the better. That is what Jesus taught in Matthew 6:27 when He asked, "Which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature?" In other words, worry cannot make us taller. It will not make our situation any better. Worry also takes our focus away from the present. We have thoughts going through our minds like, "What if I had done this?," or "What if I had done that?" When we do that, we are distracting ourselves from present concerns. Instead of dealing with what we have right in front of us, we are looking back—with regret. This hurts what we should be doing now. Or, perhaps we are thinking about the "what if's" of the future. "What if this happens?," or "What if this does not happen?" This takes our focus away from where it needs to be—which is in the present. In Matthew 6:34 Jesus said, "Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble." Jesus said, "Do not worry about tomorrow." God did not design us to live more than one day at a time. That is the wonderful thing about the future. It will come at us only one day at a time. When we start to worry about tomorrow or next week, we are only hurting ourselves. In Philippians 3:12-16, Paul talked about how he looked back on his life, but that it did not affect him because he no longer looked back in the same sense. He had not literally forgotten the things that were behind him. He knew those things that he had done. But he did not allow those "what if's" to affect him. Paul could have thought to himself, "What if I had not persecuted this family?," or "What if I had not held the coats of the men who were stoning Stephen?" Do you think that might have affected him? Of course it would have! It could have changed him so much that he no longer was a faithful Christian. It could have made him so "down and depressed" that it might have destroyed him. But instead, Paul had the correct mentality. He took each day one at a time. In Philippians 4:12-13 Paul said, "I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." Paul realized that through Christ he could do "all things," including not worrying. The reality of worry is that it does not do any good for us. Once we understand that, then we can begin overcoming our worry.

In fact, most of the things about which we worry never come to pass. Here's a good exercise. Think about the things about which you are worrying in the short term. Write them down, and then in a few weeks or a month go back and read your list. You will see that most of those things never came to pass. In fact, you probably will look back and say in disgust, "I worried about that?! I feel silly that I worried about something that small." This is a good mental exercise to help us realize that most of the things about which we worry never even came to fruition. And even when it comes to the ones that actually happened, we will look back and say, "Even though it happened, it did not happen the way I thought it would." Worry takes us out of reality, and makes things a whole lot worse than they really are. We need to understand the reality of worry.

The second point is the results of worry. Is worry healthy for us? Will it make us better Christians? Will it help us as we try to study with individuals to bring them to Christ? No. Proverbs 23:7 says, "As he thinks in his heart, so is he." If we wake up every day and continue to worry, then we will become constant worriers because that is what we have in our hearts. When the Bible speaks of the heart, it is not talking about the physical heart, but is instead referring to the mind. If we constantly think about worry, then we will become worriers. The result of worry is always bad. Nothing good has ever come from worrying because it only distorts the truth. In Proverbs 12:25 the Bible says, "Anxiety in the heart of man causes depression, but a good word makes it glad." Anxiety and worry only cause further problems. Even though the things about which we worry usually do not happen, wor-

rying can actually cause problems that never would have existed if we had not worried in the first place. We can get to a point where we worry so much that anxiety usually causes depression. Then more issues stem from that. There are no good results that come from worrying.

The third point (on which I want us to spend the majority of our time) has to do with the resolution of worry. Most of probably understand the first two points. We know the reality of worry, and that it doesn't help. We know that the result of worrying is not what we want. But how do we fix worry? What does the Bible say to help us take care of worry? How do we get rid of worry?

In Philippians 4 Paul gave Christians the resolution for worry. Beginning in verse 6 the Bible says,

“Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. 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 on these things. The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you.”

In Philippians 4:6-9 we see Paul providing the remedy (or resolution) to worry. First, we need to go to God in prayer and supplication. Philippians 4:6-7 tells us to “be anxious for nothing, “Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God.” Instead of worrying, we should pray. Someone once told me that it is hard to worry when we are praying to God. That is so true. It is hard to worry when we are praying because we are taking the issues to God in prayer. We are to “with thanksgiving, let our requests be made known to God.” If we do that, then “the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard our hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” As I look back in my life, there were times when I went through certain trials and tribulations. I wonder how I made it through those times. I made it through those events because God guarded my heart. He gave me great comfort. If we take our stress and anxiety to God in prayer, He is listening to us if we are faithful Christians. God wants to help us, and will guard our hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

In 1 Thessalonians 5:17 the Bible says that we are to “pray without ceasing.” We are to have a constant mindset of prayer. This does not mean that we pray 24/7 to God. But our minds must always be geared toward being able to pray toward Him. If something happens, then our minds should think, “I need to pray about this.” Oftentimes we pray only when something bad comes our way. But we also need to pray when God has given us comfort through our trials. And when good things come our way after our trials are over, we still need to pray and thank God. We should not say, “Well, the trials are over, so I do not have to pray any more.” We need to continue to “pray without ceasing” in everything we do. In James 1:5 the Bible says, “If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him.” But verse 6 goes on to say, “But let him ask in faith with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind.” This tells us to pray, but not with doubt as if we are saying, “I know what the Bible says, and I'm going to pray to God, but I don't really know if He's going to answer me, give me any comfort, or help me.” If we do that, then we will not have our prayers answered the way we would like because we are like “a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways” (Jas. 1:8). In Ephesians 6:18 the Bible says, “praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all

perseverance and supplication for all the saints.” The word “supplication” carries the idea of making a specific request. This means that we are being specific when we talk to God about our needs. There are times when we are not sure how to pray, and when we simply ask God to please help us because we don’t know what we need. But at other times we should be specific with God so we can make supplications to God in prayer. In Psalm 55:22 we read, “Cast your burden on the Lord, and He shall sustain you; He shall never permit the righteous to be moved.” I would encourage you to mark that passage in your Bible because it is so very encouraging. We are to cast our burdens upon the Lord. The idea is that they will be removed from us so they no longer will burden us. Rather, we will give them to God. When we do that, “He will sustain us.” We will not sustain ourselves. Nor will someone else sustain us. God will sustain us. God will “never permit the righteous to be moved” if we cast our burdens on Him, and if we are doing what He has told us to do. We need to be praying for ourselves as well as for one another (Eph. 6:18) so that we will not be moved. In 1 Peter 5:6-7 the Bible says, “Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time, casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you.” The Lord cares for us and loves us. People say, “I don’t have anyone who cares for me. No one loves me.” That is not true. The Lord loves you and cares about you. He wants to help you through your trials and worries. But you must be willing to “humble yourself under the mighty hand of God” and cast all your cares and burdens upon Him so that He can take care of you.

Another encouraging passage is Psalm 37:5 where the Bible says, “Commit your way to the Lord; trust also in Him, and He shall bring it to pass.” I like that last part especially: “He shall bring it to pass.” If we are committing our way to the Lord, and if we are trusting in Him, we might still feel as if what we are experiencing is something we may never be able to endure. We might say, “This is such a tough time in my life, and each day it seems as if it is just getting worse and worse.” But we need to simply calm down and commit our ways to the Lord. We must trust in Him, because He will bring it to pass. There will be an end to those trials and tribulations. In Psalm 34:15-22 the Bible says,

“The eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and His ears are open to their cry. The face of the Lord is against those who do evil, to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth. The righteous cry out, and the Lord hears, and delivers them out of all their troubles. The Lord is near to those who have a broken heart, and saves such as have a contrite spirit. Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivers him out of them all. He guards all his bones; not one of them is broken. Evil shall slay the wicked, and those who hate the righteous shall be condemned. The Lord redeems the soul of His servants, and none of those who trust in Him shall be condemned.”

Here we learn that God will protect the righteous. He will make sure that not even one of their bones will be broken, spiritually speaking, so long as we put our trust in Him. God will take care of us. Instead of losing heart, we need to pray. In Luke 18:1 Jesus said, “Men always ought to pray and not lose heart.” We must pray diligently and trust in God.

Second, we must control our minds. The reason I bring this up is because there are some who teach that we cannot control our minds because we were born a certain way, and there is nothing we can do about it. If you were born a homosexual, you can’t help it or control it. If you were born with great anger, then just let the anger out. If you end up murdering someone, it is because you couldn’t control yourself. People say, “We just can’t control our minds.” If we believe that we can’t control our minds, then we will never even attempt to control our minds.” If someone says, “There is nothing we can do because we cannot control our minds or our thoughts,” then they will not even attempt to do that. But the Bible teaches us that we can and must control our minds. In Philippians 4:8 the Bible says,

“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 on these things.”

We are to control our minds and what we think about. If we are always filling our minds with good, pure, clean righteous thoughts, then our minds will be strengthened. But if we are always thinking about the bad and the negative, then our minds will be weak, and we will not have the control that we need. We do have the power to control our minds. The Bible talks in great detail about self-control (Gal. 5:23). Self-control is a fruit of the Spirit. We must add self-control to the attributes that Christians are supposed to have (2 Pet. 1:6).

However, we are not just to control our mind once—like a light switch that we activate and the light comes on. We have to continually control our minds. In Romans 12:2 the Bible says, “Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.” We are to have our minds transformed. How do we do that? We are to renew our minds. It’s like a subscription to a magazine. You may have that subscription for one year, but what do you have to do after the year is over? You have to renew the subscription. We have to continually renew our minds by thinking on good, positive, and pure thoughts. If we surround ourselves with the bad, that is what we will become if we are not careful. But if we surround ourselves with the good, then we will become good. We can renew our minds by studying the Word of God, praying, and being around other faithful children of God. In 1 Corinthians 9:27 Paul said, “I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified.” We must discipline ourselves, spiritually speaking. In 2 Corinthians 10:5 Paul said, “...casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ.” We must bring every thought into captivity. We have the control, so we must use it to bring our thoughts into captivity “to the obedience of Christ” as we serve Him. In Proverbs 29:11 the Bible says, “A fool vents all his feelings, but a wise man holds them back.” We have to control ourselves, and the things about which we think. We need to be thinking about good and positive things. We need to keep our minds pure.

We also need to remember that God is not going to give us more than what we can handle. In 1 Corinthians 10:13 the Bible says,

“No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.”

God will not give us more than we can handle. When trials and tribulations do come our way, there will always be a way out if we are seeking God and doing His will. We must do the will of God. It is important to know that God is going to take care of us during the tough times if we are seeking Him.

Now I want to talk about living a faithful life unto God. There is a stipulation to all of this. We have to put God first. A person must be a child of God—a faithful Christian. In Matthew 6:33 the Bible says, “Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.” It does not say just “seek it,” but “seek first” the kingdom of God. If we want to have God take care of us so we can enjoy all of His wonderful blessings, then we must seek first the kingdom of God. In Philippians 4:9 Paul wrote, “The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you.” What happens if we do not do what God has told us to do? Then the God of peace will not be with us. It is not that God does not want to be with us. He wants to. He begs us to change. But we have to do the right thing in order for Him to protect us. In Proverbs 3:5-8 the Bible says,

“Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths. Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the Lord and depart from evil. It will be health to your flesh, and strength to your bones.”

When we live righteously, we have less to worry about. But if we are always living in sin, then we will constantly be worrying about something. Not only will we worry about what people are doing to us, but we also will have to worry that God is not for us. If you are not a Christian, you need to worry. Worry might be a good thing if you are not a Christian so it can bring you to the Lord. But when we do the right thing and put God first, we have nothing to worry about. One of my favorite passages of Scripture in regard to the way God works is Romans 8:28—“We know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.” This knowledge belongs to a certain group—those who obey the Lord.

Are you worried? Do you worry? There is a resolution for that. First you must acknowledge the reality of worry, and how it takes you away from reality. Worry does not do anyone any good to begin with. You need to see the results of worry, which are not good. Worry only causes further problems—problems that probably wouldn’t even have existed if you had not worried. Then you need to understand the resolution of worry.

But if you want this resolution so that God will guard your heart and give you comfort and strength, then you must be a child of His. The Bible teaches in 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9 that there are two groups of people who will be lost—those who do not obey the Gospel, and those who do not know the Lord. In Mark 16:16 Jesus taught, “He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned.” If you have not obeyed the truth, we pray today that you will obey the Gospel of Christ.

Narrator accompanied by a cappella singing:

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STUDY QUESTIONS FOR “WORRY”

1. What command did Christ give in Matthew 6:25?
2. What illustration did Christ use in Matthew 6:26 concerning the concept of worrying?
3. What question did Christ ask in Matthew 6:27 concerning the concept of worrying?
4. What illustration did Christ use in Matthew 6:28 concerning the concept of worrying?
5. What solution to worrying did Christ present in Matthew 6:33?
6. What statement did the apostle Paul make in Philippians 4:13?
7. What important tool for avoiding worry did Paul present in Philippians 3:14?
8. What observation was made in this lesson regarding most of the things about which we humans are prone to worry?
9. What does Proverbs 23:7 say, and how does it apply to worrying?
10. According to Proverbs 12:25, what does worry (or anxiety) do to us?
11. What does Philippians 4:1 admonish us **not** to do and **to** do?
12. What good “preventive tool” for worry is found in Philippians 4:8?
13. What good “preventive tool” for worry is found in 1 Thessalonians 5:17?
14. What does James 1:5 encourage Christians to do?
15. What does James 1:6 have to say about how Christians are **not** to pray?
16. Ephesians 6:18 tells Christians to pray “always with all prayer and supplication.” What idea does the word “supplication” carry with it?
17. What does Psalm 55:22 admonish us to do?
18. What does 1 Peter 5:6 admonish us to do?
19. According to 1 Peter 5:7, what good will come to us if we properly humble ourselves before God?
20. What does Psalm 37:5 admonish us to do?
21. Upon whom, according to Psalm 34:15, are the eyes of the Lord?
22. What important point does Psalm 34:18 convey?
23. What encouraging point is found in Romans 8:28?