

Don't Worry So Much Allen Webster

The most wealthy, healthy, intelligent, highly-advanced, enlightened generation ever to occupy this orbiting sphere is literally worrying to death. It is remarkable and unfortunate that Christians are not immune to this disorder. They have been known to be just as insecure as those whose feet have never stood on the Rock of Ages, whose eyes have not looked to the hills from whence cometh their help, and whose minds are not set on things above. Most saints know they ought not worry, so they worry about worrying.

What does the Owner's Manual say to do about this malfunction? Jesus discussed the subject of anxiety in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 6:25-34). He says, "Take no thought" (merimnao) for life (6:25), food (6:31), and tomorrow (6:34). This does not mean it is wrong to plan tomorrow's menu, buy winter clothes in the summer, or purchase home or health insurance (cf. 2 Thessalonians 3:16-17; 1 Timothy 5:8; Proverbs 30:25). It means that we are not to "be anxious" for these things.

The birds teach us not to worry (6:26). Whoever said that "worrying is for the birds" was off the mark. Birds don't worry! Whoever heard of a bird taking ulcer medication, committing suicide, or dying with a heart attack? Birds are not concerned with the future, yet they form no lines at welfare offices. God cares for them. Surely, God could not be charged with watching out for sparrows and neglecting His own children! We are made in the image of God and infused with a soul from the Father (Genesis 1:26-27; 2:7; Hebrews 12:9). Birds are not. Thus, if God cares for them, He cares more for us (Matthew 10:29-31; cf. Romans 8:32).

The yardstick teaches us not to worry (6:27). Whoever heard of a short man worrying himself into a larger size? Was it ever reported that worrying lengthened someone's life? No! Worry is useless. Stature (helikia) in verse 27 indicates a stage of growth whether measured by age or height.¹ Jesus says worry will not make you older (though it may put wrinkles on your face) or taller. "Worry never climbed a hill; worry never paid a bill; worry never dried a tear; worry never calmed a fear; worry never darned a heel; worry never cooked a meal; worry never composed a song to sing; actually, worry never did a worthwhile thing." "Worry is like a rocking chair, it keeps you busy, but gets you nowhere."

No one can lengthen his life by worrying, but there is evidence that worry can shorten it. When it comes to long life, what we are eating is important, but what is eating us is more important. Studies indicate that 70 percent of all illnesses are psychosomatic ("relating to bodily symptoms caused by emotional disturbance"). The old English root from which we get "worry" means "to strangle." Many people are strangling their lives with anxiety. Worry is a leading cause of heart trouble, high blood pressure, stomach disorders, and respiratory ailments. Dr. Charles Mayo said, "I have never known a man to die from hard work, but many who have died from doubt." If for no other reason, we should not worry because it destroys the Spirit's temple (1 Corinthians 6:19-20).

Worry falls into three classes.

(1) Things that have already happened. Reader's Digest observed, "Most worries are reruns." Why worry about the past? The score can't be changed, eggs can't be unscrambled, and toothpaste can't be put back in the tube. Paul learned to put the past behind him (Philippians 3:13-14). If sin is involved, we should cleanse it in Christ's blood (Acts 22:16; Acts 8:22; 1 John 1:7), and then go on.

(2) Things which must happen. All the worry in the world cannot change some things, for they will happen anyway. We are going to die (Hebrews 9:27), so why worry about it? Prepare and let it come (Philippians 1:21).

(3) Things which will never happen. One lady said, "I always feel bad, even when I feel good, because I know that it will not be long before I feel bad again." Sad! "It is not the tornadoes that get us, but the termites." It is said that 85 percent of what we worry over never happens. Why waste the time (Ephesians 5:16)? Time should be invested in working instead of worrying. The ant wastes no time worrying about the future. Instead, it constantly works to prepare for tomorrow (Proverbs 6:6-8).

We must learn to concentrate on today instead of yesterday and tomorrow. Philippians 3:13 teaches us to forget the things of the past. Matthew 6:34 teaches us not to worry about tomorrow. That only leaves one day to concern us: today. Yesterday is a canceled check; tomorrow is a promissory note; only today is cash. Spend it wisely! God wants us to walk in the light He gives us and not worry about the darkness ahead. When we get there, His light will make it clear. When we drive at night, the headlights do not shine all the way to our destination. They shine just a few feet in front of the car, but as we move forward, they keep ahead of us. God's light works the same way. He says, "Live one day at a time."

A child teaches us not to worry (6:32). Children can lead adults in many ways (Isaiah 11:6). One way we should imitate them is to trust our Father as they trust their parents. Worry is sinful because it says, "I do not trust my Father to care for me." Worry is praying to the wrong god; it insults Jehovah (cf. Psalm 37:1; Proverbs 3:5-6; Philippians 4:6-7). Our coins say, "In God We Trust," and so should our hearts (Proverbs 3:5; Psalm 9:10).

Problems become smaller when they are seen in God's shadow. Martha was troubled about many things while Mary was sitting at Jesus' feet (Luke 10:38-42). Guess which one was content! "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee" (Isaiah 26:3).

God is unlimited in what He can do (Romans 8:28; Ephesians 3:20; Philippians 4:19), so my big problems are not large to Him. It is much like a child who becomes frustrated with a knotted shoestring. To him, it is a major problem and an unsolvable dilemma. He may even cry about it. Dad smiles to himself and quickly unties it. The difference is a matter of perspective. Our major difficulties are only "knotted shoestrings" to Almighty God. Why get so upset?

A minute of prayer is better than an hour of worrying (Philippians 4:6). We read that Jesus spent an entire night in prayer but never that He spent one minute in worry. His example is worthy of imitation (1 Peter 2:21-22). Worried? Let God handle it.

Endnote: 1 Abbott-Smith