

Introduction

I'd like to ask you two questions. First, have you ever told someone **"Don't be a worrywart"**? Second, has anyone ever told you **"Don't be a worrywart"**? Either way, you gave or received sound advice. I know that because it's the same advice Jesus gives in Matthew 6:25-34 and that's what I'm going to preach about today. Don't be a worrywart.

Worry and Its Consequence

Let's start with the words **"worried"** and **"worry"** in verses 25, 27, 28, and 31. Worry has two components, mental and emotional. The mental component is we think that something bad might or will happen to us; that something might or will harm us. As we've learned before, every thought has an accompanying emotion. In this case, that emotion is anxiety. We're afraid of the harm that might or will happen to us.

Jesus identifies four primary worries in chapter 6, but there are countless more: dying, having a stroke, getting a bad grade on an exam, losing a job, breaking up with a boyfriend or girlfriend, being cut from the team, a car breaking down, and not getting a promotion. That is a sampling of the countless worries people have. They think those bad things might or will happen and harm them. That in turn makes them feel anxious or afraid. They're worried, in other words.

But they, and we, shouldn't be because it's destructive when we are. Alex Carrol said, **"People who don't know how to fight worry die young."** Dr. Charles Mayo said, **"Worry affects the circulation, the heart, the glands, the whole nervous system."** Walter B. knight said: **"Worry is a killer! Remember this, 'A day of worry is more exhausting than a day of work.'" But we don't need the experts telling us that do we? We know firsthand that few things, if any, are more destructive to us than worry is.**

Consequently, we need to eliminate it as a factor in our lives and Jesus teaches us how to do just that.

Believe that We Can Eliminate Worry

Notice what He decrees in verses 25, 31 and 34, **“Do not be worried (worry).”** He assumes in doing so that we’re able not to.

Many if not most people would dispute that. **“We’re only human,”** they contend, **“And are going to worry because we are.”** This decree of Jesus, in their view, is just nice talk. He said it but didn’t really mean it because it can’t be done.

That’s a decisive point of view and Dallas Willard explains why, **“Projects of personal transformation rarely if ever succeed by accident, drift, or imposition.”** He’s right. Personal transformation succeeds only by intention and that includes eliminating worry. But if we believe that we can’t eliminate it, we won’t intend to. And if we don’t intend to, we won’t try to. And if we don’t try to, we won’t.

It’s clear that the process of eliminating worry begins with the belief that we’re able to. As many of you know though, we can’t just choose to believe. But we can choose to understand, which can lead to belief. So we choose to understand by studying what the Bible generally and Jesus specifically reveal about eliminating worry. Our understanding leads to belief, which leads to intention, which leads to action. We act to eliminate worry as a factor in our lives, and do.

That’s where our text comes in because Jesus articulates in it what the action that eliminates worry is. It’s three things.

Reason with Our Worry

First, we reason with our worry. We do that by bringing reality to bear on two things.

The first is “worry” itself. Jesus Himself does that by asking a rhetorical question in verse 27. Can we add a single cubit (1’6”) to our height by worrying about it? If the answer was **“Yes”**, I’d be 7’ tall, which is my height, 5’6” plus a cubit. One of my biggest worries growing up was not being tall enough. I thought about it all the time. But look at me. I’m living proof that the answer to Jesus’ question is a

resounding **"No!"** Worrying doesn't make us taller. It doesn't do anything constructive in fact. That's Jesus' point in verse 27.

I think of something that I worried about for six years – that a bowed basement wall in my house would collapse. That wall didn't quit bowing or even bow less because I worried about it all of those years. It only did so when I hired a contractor to fix it. It's clear to us all isn't it? Worry never helps.

We should bring reality to bear on something else – the things we worry about. That's what Jesus does in verse 34. He makes two observations here. One is that tomorrow will care for itself. Inherent in that observation is the fact that many of the things we worry about never happen. Another observation is that each day has enough trouble of its own. Inherent in that observation is the fact that we can do very little or nothing about most of the things we worry about.

A stressed out businessman drew up a chart that he titled "Why Worry?" He wrote down on it all the things that worried him and analyzed them. This is what he found. 30% of the things that worried him concerned circumstances he couldn't change. 12% had to do with criticisms by people he couldn't control. 10% related to his health, which only worsened when he worried. And 40% would never happen.

Those are accurate percentages that are just as true of us as they were of him. They reveal two facts that relate to verse 34. One is that 40% of the things we worry about won't happen. I worried that I would fail the bar exam; that my son would marry the wrong woman; that my premature grandson would have lung problems, and more. None of those things happened. The businessman's percentages reveal a second fact. We can do very little or nothing about 80% of the things that we worry about that happen. A good next door neighbor of a friend of mine died. My friend worried for several months that he'd get bad neighbors in his place. He couldn't do anything about it though, and sure enough, he did.

That then is the reality of our existence. Worry itself is useless. It always hurts but never helps. Also, 40% of the things we worry about won't happen and we can do very little or nothing about most that do.

That's the reality and it helps us to reason with our worry. Thoughts and emotions are bound together. If something conditions our thoughts it conditions our emotions as well. So, we bring the reality I just explained before our minds and keep it there. That in turn diminishes the emotional component of worry – anxiety or fear.

Treasure Kingdom Things

Jesus reveals a second thing we do to eliminate worry, in verses 32-33.

In verse 32, He declares that most people eagerly seek - or as I'm going to say it, "**treasure**" – worldly things. There are many such things, the four primary of which He identifies in chapter 6: (1) the approval of others (verses 1-18); (2) wealth (verses 19-24); (3) outer beauty (verses 27-30); and (4) earthly life itself (verse 25).

Now, we can appreciate worldly things and wisely use them. But we shouldn't treasure them and Jesus explains why in verse 21. He declares, "**for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.**" That is a profound psychological insight. Jesus is saying that our entire personality, including our thoughts and emotions, is directed toward the things we treasure. Do you realize what that means? If we treasure worldly things, we're going to worry.

Verse 19 explains why. It's because they're subject to risk or threat. We all know that by experience. Worldly things can be denied us or easily lost. So, we'll worry if we treasure them, and I mean either way. If we don't have them, we'll worry we won't get them. And if we do have them, we'll worry we'll lose them.

I know a retired couple (not from our church) who are living on a substantial retirement fund. They aren't worried about having enough to live on because they have it. But they are worried about losing it. "**You know how volatile the stock market is,**" the man told me. "**Just because we have enough income this year doesn't mean we'll have it next year.**" He's right. The moral of the story is that if we treasure

worldly things, whatever they are, we're going to worry.

But if we treasure kingdom things, we won't. That's because God always supplies them and they can't be taken when He does. So, there's no reason to worry about them and if we're rational, we don't.

Jesus reveals what kingdom things are in the Bible. So we study it and learn them and then treasure or eagerly seek them.

He reveals one, for instance, in 6:1-18. It's the approval of God. When I was young, I treasured the praise of my peers and fretted about not getting it. Now, I don't treasure their praise at all and don't fret about not getting it. I only treasure getting God's praise, which He supplies. Playing to an audience of One not many, in other words, has removed a major source of worry from my life.

Jesus reveals another kingdom thing in verses 28-30. It's inner beauty. He teaches there that God clothes those who follow Him with an inner beauty that shines so brightly that their outer appearance is hardly visible at all – William Wilberforce and Mother Teresa, for example. The results of a new study show that over a third of American women are worried about losing their looks as they age. But suppose those women treasured inner beauty instead of outer. As Jesus makes clear in verses 28-30, God supplies that and it isn't lost as we age. Treasuring it, therefore, would remove a major source of worry from their lives.

That then is the second thing we do to eliminate worry as a factor in our lives. Treasure kingdom things.

Rest in God's Greatness

Jesus reveals a third thing in verse 26-30. He observes there that Father God highly values birds and flowers. And He gives the birds food and clothes the flowers with beauty because He does. But He values us far more than He does them. If He takes care of them, therefore, how much more certainly will He take care of us as well.

God being able to care for birds, flowers, and us assumes something about Him – His greatness. He exists and is utterly competent. He's all-powerful, all-knowing, all-wise, and everywhere present. And He's able

to take care of us because He is. He provides, protects, and works all things out for our good (Romans 8:28). Those all things include cancer, unemployment, poverty, rebellious children, unfair criticisms, purposeful snubs, terrorist attacks, and more?

So, we rest in God's greatness. We entrust the outcomes in those things and all things to Him. Recognizing that we are beyond harm in His hands, we experience the opposite of worry, which is peace. We cease striving inwardly and outwardly about the outcomes of all things.

Francis of Assisi is our model for this. Francis once gathered 5000 Friars together in an open plain for something akin to a camp meeting. At one point in the meeting, he rose and preached a moving sermon that he ended this way: "**(Don't have) any care or anxiety concerning anything to eat or drink or the other things necessary for the body, but concentrate only on praying and praising God. And leave all your worries about your body to Christ, because He takes special care of you.**" Francis didn't worry about what almost all people worry about the most – what Jesus called "**your life**" and "**your body**" in verse 25. He rested in God's greatness and was at peace instead.

To be at peace is an extraordinary attainment that depends on far more than our own competence and efforts. That "far more" is the supernatural graces and powers of the Holy Spirit. Those graces and powers are available to anyone who does this – routinely engages Jesus and His kingdom at hand. So, we learn the central activities by which we engage Him and it and then routinely practice them. Doing so then enables the Holy Spirit to create certain conditions of character within us, one of which is peace rooted in God's greatness.

Conclusion

I leave you in closing with the words of educator and preacher Haddon Robinson, "**What worries you masters you.**" How right he is. So, reason with your worry. Treasure kingdom things. And rest in the greatness of God. You won't be a worrywart if you do.