



Day 1

- ◇ *Proverbs 12:25*
- ◇ *Isaiah 41:10*
- ◇ *Matthew 11:28-30*

Why We Worry

If worrying was a professional sport, many of us would be the Most Valuable Player on our team. Can you identify with this? It's so hard not to worry when troubles loom all around us.

The word worry has a few definitions in the dictionary. The one we'll refer to in this Plan is *to torment oneself with cares and anxieties*. Every time we worry, we're tormenting ourselves. No one else is making us do it or doing it to us—we're *doing it to ourselves*.

When we worry, we're allowing our minds to dwell on difficult circumstances, overwhelming fears, and other stresses that are weighing us down. We're consumed over actual things we're facing or potential situations that *may never* occur. Worry causes extreme distress to all areas of our bodies. It prevents us from sleeping, impacts our relationships, affects our appetites, and causes us to perform poorly at work.

We tend to worry about what matters the most to us. It is also the place where we tend to trust God the least. When we have an extra amount of pressure put on us, we're under stress. We worry about things we're stressed about. Something we're facing at work or home, with a friend or family member, or a fear that has overtaken us that we can't seem to overcome affects us. And when we are stressed, we look for ways to cope. Some choose denial and others choose substances. Many choose worrying as their coping mechanism.

Imagine that worry is a fire. The more we allow worry to occupy our thoughts, the more fuel we are putting on the "worry" fire. The more we do this, the bigger the worry fire we'll have to put out later. Most of our worry is directed toward things that *might* happen. The truth is that if you're worrying about it, it's dictating your life. It does nothing but make the problem bigger.

What if we didn't worry at all? How much extra time in the day would we have to devote to things that are positive and actually make a difference? The return on our investment would be unbelievable! We have a certain amount of mental and emotional energy each day, and we mustn't give worry any of it.

Over the next few days of this Plan, we'll learn about what Jesus said about worry, how we can stop this toxic cycle, and how to never let it have its way in our lives again.

Reflect

- Would you consider yourself to be a person who worries? On an average day, how often do you dwell on things that you have no control over?
- Ask God to reveal His truth to you over the next few days in regard to worry.

Day 2

◇ *Matthew 6:19-34*

◇ *John 14:1*

◇ *John 14:27*

◇ *Philippians 4:19*

What Jesus Said About Worry

In Matthew 6, Jesus is continuing His Sermon on the Mount that began in chapter 5 and extends through the end of chapter 7. In this popular teaching, Jesus gives instruction about prayer, anger, adultery, as well as other topics. He'd just finished speaking about money and possessions when He journeys into the topic of worry.

No one can serve two masters. For you will hate one and love the other; you will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and be enslaved to money. That is why I tell you not to worry about everyday life ... Matthew 6:24-25 NLT

Jesus told us not to worry because He knows that our infatuation with money will take our affection off serving God. But our worries often go beyond money struggles. There are many other concerns we face daily that seem to warrant a worry stance. Let's look at why Jesus told us not to worry:

Worry Benefits No One

Jesus taught that worry is futile. It produces no fruit. There's absolutely nothing that comes from it. Worrying would make sense if it was productive. But it isn't. Worrying about a situation doesn't prevent it from happening. Yet, we engage it in often instead of making the choice not to. (We'll talk more on Day 3 about how to overcome this unprofitable cycle.)

Worry Is Unnecessary

Jesus told us in Matthew 6 that the birds in the air and the flowers in the field are provided for. And they're just birds and flowers! How much more does He care for us? An immense amount! He cares for us more than He cares for other created things. He didn't die on the cross for them—He died for us! So, if they're provided for, won't we be?

Worry Exposes Our Devotion

Whether we worry about money, people, or careers, if we spend our time worrying, that's what we are devoted to. We should devote ourselves to the people whom God has put in our lives and do the best in the jobs we've been given. But according to Matthew 6, we are to seek the Kingdom of God first and then, everything will be added to us.

There are times in our lives when we have some legitimate concerns about where things are headed either for us or those we love. The Apostle Paul says in Philippians 4:19 that God " ... will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus." (ESV)

God's provision doesn't mean we'll get everything we want or even everything we may think we need. In fact, Paul wrote Philippians 4:19 from prison! Yet, he still recognized that all of his spiritual needs were met in Christ. The same is true for us: when we abide in Him, we'll have everything we need.

If you feel stuck in this pattern of worry, Day 3 will offer you some suggestions on how to live differently in the future.

Reflect

What do you typically worry about? (relationships, career, health, etc.)

What negative effects has worrying caused you?

Day 3

◇ *Philippians 4:6-7*

◇ *1 John 4:18*

◇ *2 Timothy 1:7*

How To Stop The Worry Cycle

On Day 2, we learned a lot about worry. So, now that we know, what do we do? We have to recognize when we're worrying and replace those uninvited thoughts with ones that not only bring a good return but help us live in peace.

Pray Instead

In Philippians 4:6-7, we're told not to be anxious or worried but to pray instead. Easier said than done, isn't it? Author Max Lucado said, "No one can pray and worry at the same time." We typically choose worry instead of prayer. It's more natural for us. Let's change that and make praying our go to instead of letting worry overwhelm us. The more we pray, the less we'll worry.

Entertain Healthy Thoughts

Worry often causes us to think about what-if scenarios that may never happen. When we do this, we must arrest our thoughts and stop them in their tracks. Imagine yourself literally grabbing that worrisome thought from out of thin air. Instead of going back to that thought, use God's Word to supply you with truth because it's our source of hope.

Live Grateful

Most people who live in gratitude are typically joyful. And you know what else? They don't usually spend their time worrying. So, look for ways to be grateful. Maybe it's a daily journal where you write down a few things each day. And every day we can thank God for His creation, for it reminds us of just how awesome He is.

Finding freedom from worry takes time. We've created the habit of worry, so let's un-create it by employing these ideas. Even though this takes time, it doesn't mean you won't find success. When you stop worry in its tracks and pray instead, that's success! If you fail on the next thought and worry instead, show yourself some grace. Simply start over.

The more honest we are about how much we worry, the more we can eradicate it from being a normal part of our lives. Worrying is normal, so let's strive to go against "the norm." Let's choose to pray instead, entertain healthy thoughts, and give God thanks for the blessings in our lives.

Reflect

Think of the one thing that you typically worry about the most. If it's caused by something you're listening to or watching, consider limiting or eliminating that source.

Come up with a prayer for this particular worry. Whenever that thought comes to mind and you're tempted to worry about it, voice this prayer instead. Don't be discouraged if you have to do this 50 times a day. Change your mindset and recognize that you're praying 50 times more a day!

Day 4

- ◇ *Psalms 121*
- ◇ *Isaiah 40:28-31*
- ◇ *Romans 8:35-39*
- ◇ *1 Peter 5:7-8*

Remind Yourself

Worry is our inability or unwillingness to trust God. Ouch, that kind of hurts, doesn't it? But if we really get to the issue of worry, we have to admit that we just don't know if God will do what we want Him to do in our lives. So we worry and ask questions amidst our doubts. Will He...

...protect our kids?

...heal our marriages?

...provide for our families?

...bring healing?

Since we don't know what lies ahead, we must choose to walk in faith and trust the God we have come to know. When we remind ourselves of what He has done in the past, we can rest in the present and have hope for the future. There is so much we can remember about God, His ability, and His character. Here are just a few things:

- *He is everlasting, never becoming tired or growing weary while simultaneously depositing new strength in us (Isaiah 40:28).*
- *He is our Provider of help, never sleeping but instead, watching over us (Psalm 121:2-4).*
- *He grants overwhelming victory to us and never allows anything to separate us from His love (Romans 8:35-39).*
- *He holds our concerns because He cares so deeply for us (1 Peter 5:7).*

This God, *our* God, is the One whom we can trust. There's no one like Him anywhere, ever. He's all-powerful, all-knowing, and present all the time. There's never a place where we'll be that He's not already there. He guides, comforts, supplies, strengthens, and provides for us because we are His children, and He adores us. Reminding ourselves of this and living it out every day should help us eradicate the symptom of worry from our lives.

We weren't born to be *worriers*. We were born to be *warriors*. The same power that raised our Savior from the dead is available to us through our Heavenly Father. Here is what God says about us:

- *He says that we are His children and co-heirs with Christ Jesus. (Romans 8:17)*
- *He calls us more than conquerors. (Romans 8:37)*
- *He created us as His masterpiece and His workmanship, to do good works. (Ephesians 2:10)*
- *He has chosen us, and we are His very own possession. (1 Peter 2:9)*
- *He has called out of darkness into His marvelous light. (1 Peter 2:9)*

Eliminating worry from overtaking our lives just takes intentionality on our part. We have to stop toxic, worrisome thoughts so that they don't stop us from living the life God has called us to. And we do this by claiming and applying God's truth to our lives and trusting Him *in faith* since we can't see what tomorrow holds. Our God is good all the time and has the very best plan laid out for us to be a part of.

Reflect

What is your biggest takeaway from this Plan? How will you implement this in your life?