

FLIPPED

"THE FLIPSIDE OF WORRY" MATTHEW 6:25-34

This Week's Core Competency

Peace – I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, others, and myself. Philippians 4:6, 7, *Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. 7 And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*

Jesus asked, "Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life?" (Mt 6:27). In other words, all the worrying in the world won't make things any better, so why bother? In fact, it'll make things worse. "Waddifs" and "Howells," that's our problem. Waddif I lose my job? Howell I pay my bills? So many people in America are troubled by Waddifs and Howells that the National Institute of Mental Health has labeled their malady. It's called GAD, generalized anxiety disorder.

"I always thought I was just a worrier. I'd feel keyed up and unable to relax. At times it would come and go, and at times it would be constant. It could go on for days. I'd worry about what I was going to fix for a dinner party, or what would be a great present for somebody. I just couldn't let something go."

"I'd have terrible sleeping problems. There were times I'd wake up wired in the middle of the night. I had trouble concentrating, even reading the newspaper

We are continually being crucified between two thieves—the regrets of yesterday and the worries about tomorrow.

- Warren Wiersbe

or a novel. Sometimes I'd feel a little lightheaded. My heart would race or pound. And that would make me worry more. I was always imagining things were worse than they really were: when I got a stomachache, I'd think it was an ulcer."

"People with generalized anxiety disorder (GAD) go through the day filled with exaggerated worry and tension, even though there is little or nothing to provoke it. They anticipate disaster and are overly concerned about health issues, money, family problems, or difficulties at work. Sometimes just the thought of getting through the day produces anxiety.

"GAD is diagnosed when a person worries excessively about a variety of everyday problems for at least 6 months. People with GAD can't seem to get rid of their concerns, even though they usually realize that their anxiety is more intense than the situation warrants. They can't relax, startle easily, and have difficulty concentrating. Often they have trouble falling asleep or staying asleep. Physical symptoms that often accompany the anxiety include fatigue, headaches, muscle tension, muscle aches, difficulty swallowing, trembling, twitching, irritability, sweating, nausea, lightheadedness, having to go to the bathroom frequently, feeling out of breath, and hot flashes.

"When their anxiety level is mild, people with GAD can function socially and hold down a job. Although they don't avoid certain situations as a result of their disorder, people with GAD can have difficulty carrying out the simplest daily activities if their anxiety is severe.

"GAD affects about 6.8 million adult Americans and about twice as many women as men. The disorder comes on gradually and can

cont. pg. 2

begin across the life cycle, though the risk is highest between childhood and middle age. It is diagnosed when someone spends at least 6 months worrying excessively about a number of everyday problems." (<http://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/publications/anxiety-disorders/generalized-anxiety-disorder-gad.shtml>)
Jesus offers a remedy for disciples with GAD.

For Discussion

Sharon is worried about being worried all the time. Her husband is a hard-working man, but he's not very good at managing money; neither is she for that matter. They've faced significant financial problems for some time, but today's economy has pushed her over the edge. They've had to dip into savings to make ends meet, and Sharon is worried they won't be able to get by when John retires. Sharon is a Christian, but worry has consumed her. She doesn't sleep well, frets over what will happen if John loses his job, and is convinced no golden years lie ahead for them. Worry is taking its toll on her physically. She knows she shouldn't worry, which ironically has made matters worse. Nothing anyone says to her seems to make things any better. She needs to let loose of her regrets about yesterday and relinquish her worries about tomorrow, but how?

day 1 ENCOUNTER – read God's word to put yourself in touch with him.

Matthew 6:25-34

25"Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes? 26Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? 27Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life?

28"And why do you worry about clothes? See how the lilies of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. 29Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. 30If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? 31So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' 32For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. 33But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. 34Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about

itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

Cf. Luke 12:22-31

22Then Jesus said to his disciples: "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat; or about your body, what you will wear. 23Life is more than food, and the body more than clothes. 24Consider the ravens: They do not sow or reap, they have no storeroom or barn; yet God feeds them. And how much more valuable you are than birds! 25Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life? 26Since you cannot do this very little thing, why do you worry about the rest?"

27"Consider how the lilies grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you, not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. 28If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today, and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, how much more will he clothe you, O you of little faith! 29And do not set your heart on what you will eat or drink; do not worry about it. 30For the pagan world runs after all such things, and your Father knows that you need them. 31But seek his kingdom, and these things will be given to you as well. (NIV(c)1984)

EXAMINE – what the passage says before you decide what it means.

- * Box "therefore" indicating *result* in vv. 25, 34.
- * Underline "I tell you" in vv. 25, 29.
- * Highlight "life (2x)," "what you will eat or drink," and "food" in one color in vv. 25.
- * Highlight "body (2x)," "what you will wear," and "clothes" in another color in v. 25
- * Circle the repeated word "worry" in vv. 25, 27, 28, 31, 34 [2x].

- * Bracket the rhetorical questions in vv. 25, 26, 27, 28, 30, 31.
- * Circle "hour" and "life" in v. 27.
- * Box "so" indicating *result* in v. 31.
- * Box "for" indicating *reason* in v. 32.
- * Circle "pagans" in v. 32.
- * Box "but" indicating *contrast* in v. 33.

day 2

EXPLORE – the answer to these questions to better understand what the passage means.

Consult the explanation of the message and the notes to follow if you need help.

1. Verse 25 begins with "therefore." What is "therefore" there for?
2. Turn the *rhetorical question* in verse 25 into a *declarative sentence* that conveys the same meaning.
3. Explain how Jesus argues from "lesser" to "greater" in verse 26.
4. Put the point of verse 27 in your own words.
5. Explain how Jesus argues from "lesser" to "greater" in verses 28-30.
6. To what kind of person does "O you of little faith" refer?
7. Jesus gives two reasons why disciples should not worry. What are they?
8. Explain the *contrast* introduced in verse 33.
9. "Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness." What do you think that means?
10. Verse 34 begins with "therefore." What is "therefore" there for?
11. **Discussion:** Read verse 33. Talk about the extent to which you live the other way around.

day 3

EXAMINE – an explanation of the message to better understand the meaning of the passage.

Jesus opens this portion of his sermon with the word "therefore," a word that points to a logical relationship between what he is about to say and what he has just said in the previous verse or perhaps paragraph. The word generally indicates result and naturally leads to a question. What is the "therefore" there for? One author explains, "The discourse now turns naturally from the negative reference concerning wealth to the impropriety of anxiety in the true disciple. If the disciples are not to be preoccupied with treasures on earth, if they are not to compromise the single-mindedness of their commitment, it would seem worth asking how their basic needs are to be met. Jesus teaches them not to be anxious about their daily needs but to trust their heavenly Father" (Donald A. Hagner, *Word Biblical Commentary*, v. 33a, *Matthew 1-13*, 161).

Are you a worrywart, someone who's inclined to worry unduly? By the way, the term was coined in 1956 by J. R. Williams, a cartoonist, in his comic called "Out Our Way." According to those familiar with the strip, Worry Wart was the name of a character who, ironically, caused others to worry unduly—just the opposite of our current use of the term. Or are you a worrywart, someone whose incessant worrying causes others to worry? In either case, Jesus wants to have a word with you.

To all his worrywart disciples Jesus says, "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear" (Mt. 6:25). Then he goes on to explain why, arguing from *greater* to *lesser* (v. 25) and then *lesser* to *greater* (v. 26; cf. Mt 7:11). First, he reminds his disciples that life is greater than food, and the body is greater than clothes. By implication, God, who has given us life and a body, *greater* things, will also undoubtedly give us food and clothing, *lesser* things. Then he illustrates his point. You are worth more to your heavenly Father than the wild birds, yet he feeds them. And they don't even sow or reap or store away in barns like you do (v. 26). What's more, you are worth more than the wild grass, yet he clothes it with the lilies of the field. They don't labor or spin, nevertheless not even Solomon was dressed as splendidly as one of them (vv. 28-30). On top of it all, why bother worrying since it accomplishes nothing? All the worrying in the world won't extend your life by a

single hour (v. 27). Finally, he reminds them that fretting over daily needs is the preoccupation of pagans. They "run after all these things," he says. "Such people cannot claim to be members of the heavenly family, and it is not surprising, accordingly, that they should be anxious and ask questions like these [see v. 31]. As they see it, they must seek the supply of these necessities by their own efforts and out of their own resources. Anxiety is natural for them" (Leon Morris, *The Gospel according to Matthew*, 161). Not only that, worry went hand in hand with paganism. "Anxiety characterized pagan religions, which were dominated by fears of a capricious and despotic deity who constantly had to be appeased" (Craig L. Blomberg, *Matthew*, NAC, 126). Not so with God's people. His providence is focused on them like on Joseph of old.

Instead of putting our daily needs and wants, especially wants, *lesser* things, first and letting God's kingdom and his righteousness, *greater* things, take care of themselves, Jesus tells us to put first things first, *a la* Stephen Covey who advises, "The main thing is to keep the main thing the main thing" (*First Things First*, 75-193). According to Jesus, God's kingdom and his righteousness is the main thing and disciples keep it that way. They ought to put greater needs, their partnership with God in what he's doing in the world and their obedience to him in his will for their lives, first. Those who take care of these *greater* needs will not have to worry about their *lesser* needs, for God himself will see to those. "In this context ["seek"] means that his disciples are to make the kingdom of heaven the center of their continual, daily priorities . . . and to pursue the increasing perfection of the Father through their practice of 'acts of righteousness'" (Michael J. Wilkins, *The NIV Application Commentary: Matthew*, 299).

One can understandably excuse the preoccupation of Christ followers in third world countries with the *necessities* of life, *i.e.*, with raw survival, but our preoccupation with the *luxuries* of life is inexcusable. One author describes well the situation of Christ followers in the west. He writes, "A few years ago I was sent a complimentary copy of *Accent*, a new glossy magazine whose full title was *Accent on good living [sic]*. It included enticing advertisements for champagne, cigarettes, food, clothing, antiques and carpets, together with the description of an esoteric

weekend's shopping in Rome. There were articles on how to have a computer in your kitchen; how to win a luxury cabin cruiser or 100 twelve-bottle cases of Scotch whisky instead; and how 15 million women cannot be wrong about their cosmetic choices. We were then promised in the following month's issue alluring articles on Caribbean holidays, staying in bed, high fashion warm underwear and the delights of reindeer meat and snowberries. From beginning to end it concerned the welfare of the body and how to feed it, clothe it, warm it, cool it, refresh it, relax it, entertain it, titivate and titillate it."

Then the writer nailed Jesus' point. "Now please do not misunderstand this. Jesus Christ neither denies nor despises the needs of the body. As a

matter of fact, he made it himself. And he takes care of it. He has just taught us to pray, 'Give us this day our daily bread.' What is he saying then? He is emphasizing that to become engrossed in material comforts is a false preoccupation. For one thing, it is unproductive (except perhaps of ulcers and yet more worry); for another it is unnecessary (because 'your Father knows what you need', 8 and 32); but especially it is unworthy. It betrays a false view of human beings (as if they were only bodies needing to be fed, watered, clothed and housed) and of human life (as if it were merely a physiological mechanism needing to be protected, lubricated and fuelled" (John R. W. Stott, *The Message of the Sermon on the Mount*, TBST, 162, 63).

The Message of the Passage

Christ's disciples don't fret over their daily needs; instead, they seek God's kingdom and his righteousness, and trust that he will providentially provide for them.

day **4** **EMBRACE** – how God spoke to you in his word.

Our desire is to not be merely hearers of the word, but doers of the word as James suggests in James 1:22. Try some of the challenges below to apply what you have learned this week.

- **Journal your thoughts on the passage:**

–Write about what God wants you to know . . .

–Write about how God wants you to feel . . .

–Write about what God wants you to do . . .

notes STUDY – the commentaries to answer the questions.

v. 25 *therefore* Lit., "on account of this" [Gk. *dia touto*]-what follows results from what precedes. "If the disciples are not to be preoccupied with treasures on earth, if they are not to compromise the singlemindedness of their commitment, it would seem worth asking how their basic needs are to be met. Jesus teaches them not to be anxious about their daily needs but to trust their heavenly Father" (Hagner, 161).

v. 25 *worry* "Worry' is the key word of this entire section, since it occurs six times (vv. 25, 27-28, 31, 34 [2x])" (Blomberg, 125). "'Do not be anxious' is emphatic in this context. [*merimnan*] here means 'to be anxious' in the sense of being fearful. The cognate noun [*merimna*] occurs in 1Macc 6:10 and Sir 42:9, where it is associated with sleeplessness [cf. "So he called all his friends and said to them, 'Sleep departs from my eyes and I am downhearted with worry'] . . . In the present passage, the meaning is defined by the vitally important items in view. To be anxious for such things as our passage enumerates is to be anxious about *survival itself*. This is thus a paralyzing anxiety that can only enervate discipleship" (Hagner, 163 italics added). "The people to whom Jesus is speaking in the SM [Sermon on the Mount] may have included some of the wealthy, but the vast majority of them are peasants, who live most of their lives hand to mouth, eking out a living from the Galilean countryside. What they can produce from the land goes for food supplies until the next harvest, feed for their work animals, extras seed for next year's crops, and enough to sell or barter for other necessities. But whether they work their own land or are tenant farmers, they are required to pay any surplus as taxation to the dominant group of rulers, who use it to underwrite their own high standard of living" (Wilkins, 301).

v. 25 *life . . . body* Luke expresses the meaning of the rhetorical question in a declarative sentence, "Life is more than food, and the body more than clothes" (12:23). Jesus argues from the *greater* to the *lesser* in v. 25 (see also vv. 26, 30). God, who has given Jesus' disciples life and a body, will most certainly give them food and clothing (297). "This attitude removes people from preoccupation with their own worldly success; it discourages the wealthy and the comfortable from concentrating on their own success and the poor and uncomfortable from concentrating on their own misery" (Morris, 157).

v. 26 *sow, reap, store away* "This listing covers the normal cycle of producing food by planting, harvesting, and storing it . . . the force of the comparison lies in the fact that human beings—also part of God's creation—do indeed sow, reap, and store food . . . since God provides food for the birds who do not even take part in the process of raising, harvesting, and storing food, how much more so will he provide for this valued own who do" (Robert Guelich, *The Sermon on the Mount*, 337, 38)

v. 27 *hour . . . life* Cf. "add one cubit to his stature?" (NKJV; cf. NIV margin); "add one single cubit to your span of life" (NJB; cf. RSV). Jesus seems to mix his metaphors here but his point is plain enough—worry is futile, so why engage in it. "The NIV marginal note 'single cubit to his height' is a somewhat more natural translation of the Greek than 'single hour to his life,' but it does not fit as well into the context. Adding a foot and one half to one's height is not the trifling amount Jesus' flow of thought seems to demand, and stature does not fit the context of provisions of food and clothing nearly as well as longevity" (Blomberg, 125; cf. Morris, 158, 59).

v. 30 *little faith* "'Little faith' (*oligopistos*) is a favorite expression of Jesus, found mainly in this Gospel. It is only directed to Jesus' disciples, indicating that 'little faith' is not absence of faith but deficiency of faith" (Wilkins, 298).

v. 32 *pagans* Or "Gentiles" (NASB, NRSV, NJB); "nations" (NKJV); "unconverted" (the NET Bible; cf. "unbelievers" [TEV]).

v. 33 *will be given* The passive voice implies divine action, i.e., "and God will give you all these things" (cf. Php 4:6). Some might protest, "It is not true to say that all birds are adequately fed and that all lilies reach their fullest beauty. Droughts and other catastrophes cut short the lives of both birds and flowers as well as of humans who trust in God. It simply is not the case that those who seek first the kingdom of God find invariably that all things necessary for life are added to them. And how unwise it is to counsel 'Do not be concerned about tomorrow' (Matt. 6:34). Careful planning can avoid the worst effect of drought and plague. Compare Prov. 6:6" (Douglas R. A. Hare, *Matthew*, Interpretation, 74). One commentator suggests a way to address this problem "is to reserve all guarantee for the age to come" or to interpret it "in light of Luke 12:33 and Mark 10:30a, which presuppose the sharing of goods within the Christian community. When God's people corporately seek first his priorities, they will by definition take care of the needy in their fellowships" (Blomberg, 126). Another writes, "The passage does not mean, however, that food, drink, clothing, and other such necessities will come to the disciple automatically without work or foresight. It addresses only the problem of anxiety about these things" (Hagner, 166, 67).

Family Time

Family time will help you take a break from your busy schedule and spend time connecting with your family.
Tips for your Family Time: Keep it simple! Be flexible! Do it often! HAVE FUN!!

Turning the calendar page to August reminds us that summer is winding down. To beat the heat of these long days of summer, plan a COOL indoor family movie night. Choose a movie the whole family would enjoy. For help making a decision on one, go to www.pluggedin.com. This website provides reviews on movies, music and video games from a Christian perspective. Have each family member wear his or her pajamas and gather all the pillows in the house to make a giant cushion to watch your movie on. Pop popcorn, make pizza and cookies and settle in for fun night at the movies. As you are watching the movie, look for talking points. When it's over, take the opportunity to learn what your kids think about certain topics by asking questions. Did the main character have a choice to make? Do you think he/she made the right choice? What would you have done? Was there a villain in the movie? Why do you think the villain acted the way he/she did? You could even have family members make up alternative endings to the story. Talking with your kids provides an opportunity to discover what they are learning and how they are processing information from the world around them. You may even learn something new from listening to them!

What Does The Bible Say

Weekly Verse: Matthew 6:25-34

1. According to this passage how does God take care of the birds?
2. What kinds of things does the text say we worry about?
3. What does verse 33 say we should do instead of worrying?

What Do You Think

1. Jesus says that we are more valuable than the birds or the grass in the field. How does He take care of us?
2. What are some ways we "seek first His kingdom"?
3. What happens when we seek His kingdom first?

What R U Going To Do

Have an open discussion with your family about things they are worried about. Create an environment where kids feel safe to share their biggest fears. Sometimes just talking about your fears and worries out loud helps them seem not so big. Pray together as a family asking Jesus to take your worries and meet your needs.

MEMORY TIME

Post the kid-friendly Core Competency and the Memory Verse throughout the house.

Core Comp

Peace - I live without worry because things are good between God, myself and others

Memory Verse

Matthew 6:33, "But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness,
 and all these things will be given to you as well."

KIDPIX COUPON

I memorized CC ____ and Verse _____. Family completed **Say** _____ **Think** _____ **Do** _____

Child's name _____ Grade ____ Parent's signature _____

Earn tokens by completing the Bible study portion of this page.
 Questions: Kids@pantego.org

30 CORE COMPETENCIES

10 CORE BELIEFS

Trinity *2 Corinthians 13:14*

I believe the God of the Bible is the only true God - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Salvation By Grace *Ephesians 2:8-9*

I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.

Authority of the Bible *2 Timothy 3:16-17*

I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.

Personal God *Psalms 121:1-2*

I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.

Identity in Christ *John 1:12*

I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.

Church *Ephesians 4:15-16*

I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.

Humanity *John 3:16*

I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Compassion *Psalms 82:3-4*

I believe God calls all Christians to show compassion to those in need.

Eternity *John 14:1-4*

I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish His eternal kingdom.

Stewardship *1 Timothy 6:17-19*

I believe that everything I am or own belongs to God.

10 CORE PRACTICES

Worship *Psalms 95:1-7*

I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.

Prayer *Psalms 66:16-20*

I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.

Bible Study *Hebrews 4:12*

I read the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.

Single-mindedness *Matthew 6:33*

I focus on God and His priorities for my life.

Spiritual Gifts *Romans 12:4-6*

I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.

Biblical Community *Acts 2:44-47*

I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world.

Giving Away My Time *Colossians 3:17*

I give away my time to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Money

2 Corinthians 8:7

I give away my money to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Faith *Ephesians*

6:19-20

I give away my faith to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Life *Romans 12:1*

I give away my life to fulfill God's purposes.

10 CORE VIRTUES

Joy *John 15:11*

I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.

Peace *Philippians 4:6-7*

I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, myself, and others.

Faithfulness *Proverbs 3:3-4*

I have established a good name with God and with others based on my long-term loyalty to those relationships.

Self-Control *Titus 2:11-13*

I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.

Humility *Philippians 2:3, 4*

I choose to esteem others above myself.

Love *1 John 4:10-12*

I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.

Patience *Proverbs 14:29*

I take a long time to overheat and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.

Kindness/Goodness *1 Thess. 5:15*

I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others.

Gentleness *Philippians 4:5*

I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.

Hope *Hebrews 6:19-20*

I can cope with the hardships of life and with death because of the hope I have in Jesus Christ.

About the Authors

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The mission of THE SCROLLS is to help you develop the beliefs, practices, and virtues of a follower of Jesus Christ called The 30 Core Competencies through your own active reading of the Bible. Send any questions or comments you may have about this lesson to Tom Bulick. His e-mail address is tbulick@pantego.org.