

**The Most Excellent Way, First Baptist Church, Panama City**

# **“Overcoming Worry and Fear”**

**Part 2 - “What About Fear?”**

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## Part 2 - "What About Fear?"

There are a number of things that should concern us when we fall into the habit of worry. Worry can affect every area of our lives. When it becomes a habit, it is always something that takes precedence in our thought life. When worry becomes a problem it is because that is what we are doing with all of our problems, we just worry about them. When we are habitual worriers, we even tend to worry about what we have already prayed about. In other words, we give our burdens to the Lord and no sooner than we do, we take them back and begin to worry about them all over again. However, there is another "phase" of worry if it is not dealt with; that is when worry turns into fear and/or anxiety.

All of this can happen to the child of God who really does love God and really does have a desire to live in His will. The enemy comes along and accuses the worrier that they are "less than" and they are disappointing God, that they will never measure up and/or overcome their constant challenge with worry and fear. The good news is that it is NOT true!! We can overcome worry and fear, and we will overcome it like we overcome everything else that robs our joy and peace...by the instruction and application of God's Word.

So, if worry can and sometimes does manifest itself in fear, what does the Bible say about fear? What can we learn about it and is there such thing as "healthy fear"? Once we begin to identify one from the other, we can then prepare ourselves for what needs to stay and what needs to go.

### "Fear from a Biblical Perspective"

#### Godly Fear, the Fear of the Lord

**Proverbs 1:7 - The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction.**

Upon his request and God's provision King Solomon was the wisest man who ever lived apart from Jesus Christ. The Lord appeared to him in a dream (**1 Kings 3:5**) and asked him, "**Ask what I shall give you**". King Solomon's request was for wisdom and discernment and because he had not asked for riches and gain, the Lord granted his request and all these things as well. Solomon, the author of the **Book of Proverbs**, lays down an incredible truth for those that fear the Lord, **that it is the beginning of knowledge**. In other words, it is the head of knowledge!

He is saying that of all the things that are to be known this is the most evident, that God is to be feared. Here is the misunderstanding with many people, they assume the fear of the Lord is to be afraid of the Lord. Certainly, this may be part of our experience when we stray from the

will of God and then in turn rebel against God. The fear of the Lord simply means the Lord is to be revered, served and worshipped and Solomon is saying that this is so the beginning of knowledge that those that do not know this, know nothing. We are not equipped to benefit from the biblical instructions that are given to us unless our minds are not first surrendered by a holy reverence for God. In other words, this is where we start.

Jesus describes this truth in the New Testament.

**John 7:17 - If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself.**

We are told in this verse that one of the fruits of obedience is knowledge. In other words, the more knowledge we have the greater the tendency is for obedience. But Solomon tells us "**the beginning**" of knowledge will result from the "**fear of the Lord**". In the beginning of your journey to overcome the bondage of worry and fear, you will know enough when **you know to fear God** and you are careful in everything to please Him and fearful in every way of offending Him.

Here is part of the mix up due to the spiritual ignorance of those who profess to be followers of Jesus Christ. When we have "selective obedience" motivated by selfish gain, we are ignorant to the fear of the Lord! People ignorantly assume that the blessings of God are all motivated by the love of God. Yes, God does love us; however, the blessings from God are the result of the believer's obedience (not sinless perfection) to God and fear of God. So, we see that the "**fear of the Lord**" is a healthy fear and incredibly beneficial to all that possess it.

To confirm this truth, Solomon tells us in the second part of the verse that "**fools**", those that have no regard to God, "**despise wisdom and instruction**". There is no fear of the discipline of God, although many are eager for the blessings of God.

### The Application:

- What are some of the ways that is God teaching you to have a healthy fear of Him?
- There is a great danger in admiring the scriptures and despising instruction.
- The proper order, we are told, is to fear the Lord and allow Him to have supremacy in our lives, thus making us receptive to knowledge and instruction and not despisers of it.

A biblical example of how godly fear plays out in our lives:

## Matthew 14:28-33

At this time in the life of The Apostle Peter, he was a man that Jesus described “of little faith.” However, after Pentecost (**Acts 2**) he became a spiritual giant. As we can see in this story, his faith was activated by his fear. One of the awesome privileges we have as Christians is the privilege of seeing the lessons people learned in the Bible and learning from them ourselves. In this story we can learn how Peter turned his fear into faith because of his reverence for Jesus.

- **Verse 29** - Peter did the impossible thing; he walked on the water to Jesus.
- **Verse 30** - Peter did the conceivable thing; he saw the storm and had second thoughts; he doubted! For a moment he may have lost sight of Jesus and started back to the boat.
- **Verse 30** - Peter did the natural thing; he feared destruction....doubt will always lead to fear!
- **Verse 30** - Peter did the expected thing; he began to sink, he failed.
- **Verse 30** - Peter did the right thing; he prayed, “**Lord save me**”. Immediately Jesus stretched forth His hand and caught him. Peter overcame his fear by crying out to Jesus by faith.
- **Verse 32** - Again, Peter did the impossible thing; he walked on the water again with Jesus, to the boat.....AFTER Peter requested and Jesus granted his request.
- **Verse 33** - The disciples did the understandable thing; they worshipped Jesus.....“**the fear of the Lord**”!

We can recap this story and see a common response to dangerous circumstances. Peter started by faith and walked on the water. Then he saw the storm and had second thoughts, which led to doubt, which produced fear, which caused him to turn back that led to his failure.

Peter had already experienced “the fear of the Lord.” He had experienced the power of Jesus in a personal way and his life had already begun to change. But his fear of the Lord had been overcome by his fear of the circumstances. A holy reverence and awe for God will help us while we are in the storms of life and most importantly get us through the storms of life.

### The Application:

- Write down some of the fears that you may be experiencing because of your current circumstances.
- After you have written them down, take a few minutes in prayer and express those fears to the Lord and ask Him to help you to overcome them.

## Ungodly Fear, the Fear from the Enemy

Earlier, we described the fear of the Lord as being a holy reverence to the Lord, to serve and worship the Lord. When we describe the fear of the enemy, we would never give this description to him. Also, we are not talking about fear that causes us to tremble at the thought of our enemy. For our learning, you might notice the difference of our descriptions of fear. We have already learned some things that pertain to the "fear of the Lord" and now we will spend some time learning about the "fear **from** the enemy."

Overcoming our fears will be accomplished when we begin to learn to identify the source of our fears. Satan, if allowed, will keep you in the grips of fear to hinder you from trusting in the power of God that produces peace, joy, and contentment. He knows as long as you are in the grip of fear you will never experience these things that the Lord would have you to experience. Satan does not care how he hinders you, as long as he does. If he can distract our efforts from trusting God in the times when we are weak and in need, then he will be pleased with the results.

For those that have struggled with addiction and have begun to experience that "new work" being done in your life, there is a specific area of your Christian life that Satan knows all too well how to tempt you in. When we describe the "fear from the enemy" and begin to learn how to identify the source of that fear coming from our enemy, who is none other than Satan himself, we can attribute most of that fear to this one specific area. This particular area is not necessarily the fear itself, but what I would confidently say produces the fear. It has been something that we have all been guilty of at one time or another. But if it is ignored and allowed to grow it can affect every part of our lives. That, which I am speaking of, is **WORRY!**

One might ask how worry can become such a destructive stronghold in our lives. The answer is quite simple, because like all other sinful things that have the greatest potential for destruction in our lives, worry is sin. Yes, it is as difficult as it may seem not to worry, it is still sinful when we do. Hopefully, you would agree that although it makes no sense for us to worry, it makes perfect sense that when we do worry, it can produce some measure of fear. When we look at the loving attributes of God and the destructive objectives of Satan, it is quite easy for us to see that God wants us to trust and Satan wants us to worry. When we trust there is an absence of fear and when we worry there is an absence of trust which will always produce fear.

### Trust and worry from the perspective of Jesus:

**Matthew 6:25-34 - Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment? 26 Behold the fowls of the air: for they**

sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they? 27 Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature? 28 And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: 29 And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. 30 Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith? 31 Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? 32 (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. 33 But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. 34 Take therefore no thought for the tomorrow: for tomorrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.

In this teaching Jesus uses the phrase "take no thought," three separate times. A term that you and I are more familiar with that means the same thing would be, "do not worry". Jesus did not repeat this caution three times simply because He did not have anything else to say because we know that Jesus never wasted words just for the sake of speaking and this certainly was not the case here. It teaches us that it is pleasing to God and helpful to ourselves when we live life in such a way that frees us from the bondage of worry.

What Jesus is NOT saying is that we should remove ourselves from the responsibilities of this life and become irresponsible and self-deserving of everyone and every "system" that is out there for our every need. However, in this three times repeated command He IS saying that we should not divide our hearts and minds from our total dependence upon Him because of the cares and needs of our circumstances. In doing so we run the risk of reverting to old ways of providing for ourselves which often have not and will not be honoring to God.

This "thought or worry" as it is described here is a disquieting and sometimes tormenting thought that leaves the mind in suspense, disturbs, and even sometimes robs the mind of our peace and joy in the Lord. It has a way, if allowed, of disturbing our sleep, our confidence, our relationships, and our well-being. It can affect our hope in the Lord and hinder us from considering the reality of what He has already done for us that can also be our strength in time of need.

Worry is also a distrustful, unbelieving thought. God has already promised in His word that He would provide ALL our NEEDS and to think in any other way is to be distrustful concerning the promises of God. So, we see that our worry springs from our unbelief in God's promises and leaves us to ourselves with the feelings of anxiety for which God has never purposed for us to experience.

1. **Verse 25 - A Simple Instruction** - Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?

Jesus begins His instructions with the most important foundation of the entire teaching, **"take no thought for your life."** In other words, our life is obviously our greatest concern and rightfully so, it should be.

While Jesus is instructing us concerning our senseless worry of what we will eat or what we will wear many of us have found that during our addiction these are two of the things that we may have successfully stopped worrying about completely. He was not teaching that these things do not matter; He was teaching that in the big scheme of things they are not the most important things in life and if these are needs that we have in our lives, and they are, then He will supply these needs.

Caring about something and worrying about something are two very completely different things. Satan's objective, as we know, is to steal, kill and destroy and if he can get us to "medicate" our worries instead of "dedicate" our worries to God, he will be successful in his objective. This explains why one of the most common ways that people struggle when coming out of their addiction is anxiety. While they were self-medicating with their drink/drug of choice their worry was being blanketed by their addiction.

The new life in Jesus Christ brings us into an incredible privileged "position" in Christ. We now have the privilege of **"casting ALL of our care on Him, because He cares for us!" (1 Peter 5:7)**

Yes, perhaps for the first time in a long time you are trying to get clean and stay that way and it can at times present you with a feeling of anxiousness and worry. **CAST IT ALL ON JESUS!** He will take your worries and replace them with peace and contentment.

**The Application:**

- What do you worry about that you have not prayed about?
  - When you cast your cares upon the Lord try to discipline yourself to leave them there.
2. **Verses 26,28-30 - A Simple Comparison** - Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they? 28 And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: 29 And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like

one of these. **30 Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?**

We see here the providence of God concerning the things of nature. We know that there are all sorts of species of birds and yet we also know that all of them are fed. It is rare that any of them perish because of a lack of food, they are fed, and they are fed with food that is best for them. Jesus is teaching us that all that a bird needs is provided by God, and they do not even store up more for themselves, but daily depend upon His provision.

Then He makes an encouraging comparison, **"Are you not much better than they are?"** YES, you are! God is the Owner and Master of the birds and all other animals, but besides all this, He is your Father, and you are His child and more important than all of these. The comparison is quite simple; the dependence of nature upon God makes them completely careless for tomorrow and it should be for us as well.

While we witness the providence of God in the care of the things in nature, there is a way that He instructs us in scripture to do it. Notice, that God says for us to **"consider the lilies of the field."** To consider means to "examine carefully." Could it be that you and I miss so many things in the average day that God wishes to show us about His creation that will teach us better that He has everything under control?

### The Application:

- If we were, by faith, as unconcerned about tomorrow as the birds of the air and the lilies of the field are, we would sing as cheerfully as they do!
- When you consider this comparison that Jesus is making, who would you say does more worrying, you, or the birds?

**Psalm 40:1-3 - I waited patiently for the LORD; and he inclined unto me, and heard my cry. 2 He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings. 3 And he hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God: many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in the LORD.**

3. **Verse 27 - A Simple Question - Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature?**



The measure of a cubit pertains to our size, not our age. However, the application can be the same for both. Jesus is teaching us that we did not arrive to the size (or age) that we are on our own, but by the divine provision of God. We have grown to where we are today by the goodness and power of God!

### The Application:

- When the Bible shows us something that is good, we are always encouraged to continue in that which is good.
- What good does it really do for us to worry if the Lord instructs us not to?

#### **4. Verse 32 - A Comforting Awareness - (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.**

The Gentiles here are likened to unbelievers. They seek after the things of the world because they do not know any better things to seek after. But before we seem too judgmental and harsh, we may have been and still are guilty of the same.

Many of us may have been, while in our addiction, guilty of seeking after whatever and whoever we felt would satisfy our needs. Our methods were twisted and deceptive and the return for our efforts was the same. When we give our lives to Jesus Christ, we no longer worry and fret for the things that we once thought would satisfy us. Our needs are supplied by God who would never give us anything that we did not need or anything that would ever harm us.

Our reason for a trust such as this is found in the verse; **God already knows what we need!** He said this earlier in the same chapter.

**Matthew 6:8 - Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him.**

He is your Father that loves you and pities you and is ready to help in your time of need. Therefore, it is best for us to go to our knees and not to our fears when we have need of something or need to rid ourselves of something, because we are told that **"we have not because we ask not"** (James 4:2).

#### **5. Verse 33 - A Prioritized Solution - But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.**

Jesus tells us that when our greatest concerns are the concern for spiritual things then our concern of other things will not cause us to worry and fear. Our responsibility is to **"seek,"** to

desire, to pursue and aim toward these things. It is a sincere seeking, a careful concern that we are to put forth our energy.

**Three things we see in the verse:**

- **The Object of the Seeking - The kingdom of God and His righteousness.**

We see that heaven is our destination and holiness is the way. We are not insinuating that we get to heaven because of our own righteousness; we know that is not true. By our trusting Jesus Christ as our Savior, we now have the "righteousness of Christ". However, we know that we are to pursue righteousness in our walk with the Lord. We know that because Jesus told us to do so.

**Matthew 5:6 - Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.**

**The Application:**

- A genuine desire for righteous living is revealed in a life of practical purity and holiness. It is not a life that we are ever better than anyone else, but a life that is lived to please the Lord and not ourselves.
- You can be confident that one of the many blessings of the pursuit of righteousness is a life that is free from the cares, worries and fears of this world.

- **The Order of the Seeking - Seek ye FIRST!**

Let your cares for your relationship with the Lord and your service for the Lord take first place over all other cares. We must seek the things of God more than all other things and if ever the other things come in competition with that, we will find ourselves experiencing greater challenges for doing so.

**Warning:** Many people put God first just long enough to allow Him to put things back in order. However, before too long their need for Him is carelessly replaced for something else or someone else. There is a great danger in putting God first and then allowing yourself to be deceived into thinking that He does not need to stay there. If God allowed worry and fear to get your attention and it has increased your dependence upon Him, allow Him to KEEP your attention and dependence from here to eternity!

- **The Reward for the Seeking - All these things shall be added unto you!**

When we seek the things that God would have us to seek, we will have everything else that we need. What an incredible difference that this truth, if we believe it, will make in our lives. When we believe that the best way for us to be provided for in this life is to pay close attention to the next life, we will have all that we need. We will no longer be dominated by worry that will continue to produce fear, but we will be filled with peace that will produce contentment!

**Verse 34 - The Bottom Line - Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.**

DON'T WORRY, BE HAPPY!