

When I first met my wife Denise, I knew it was love at first sight, at least on my part. It wasn't very long after we had first started dating that I got up the nerve to ask her to marry me. It wasn't a planned out action, it was one of those spur of the moments decisions...it just kind of came out. We were visiting my parents and it was around Christmas, and after we told everybody I went back to Pascagoula where I was stationed in the Navy at that time, and Denise went to see her family.

It was on the way home flying on a plane that what I had just done really hit me. Now understand that I was an E-2 in the Navy, that meant that I made roughly about the same amount as a kid working part time at Burger King. I didn't have a place to stay-I was living aboard the ship at that time and I didn't have a vehicle and I had all of about \$250 in my savings account. I did the math and it didn't add up and I was worried sick. To me, Denise deserved to have the world, the moon, and all in between given to her and I could barely afford to take her to out to eat at McDonalds. I began to ask what if...What if I can't get on the housing list, what if I don't get promoted, what if Denise wants to go to a fancier restaurant than McDonalds.

When I got back to the ship, I was worried to death. I was going to marry a girl and not be able to give her all that she deserved. It just happened that night, for my nightly devotion, I looked at the passage, and it is the same passage that I want to read to you this morning. When I read it, it put my mind at ease and I slept well that night knowing I and my bride to be was in God's care. Let me read that text to you today, and I pray that it will give you the same comfort and reassurance that it gave me. (**Read Text**).

Worry is almost an epidemic for some in our nation, and who could blame them with so much going on today to worry about. People in Jesus' day worried about the necessities of life: food, drink, and clothing. We in the Western world worry about other things, such as cancer, terrorism, losing our jobs, our children's safety, and so on. But Jesus' words apply to our worries as well.

In this section, Jesus says no less than three times, Do not worry. Now if Jesus had said do not steal, or do not cheat we would automatically say that we shouldn't do those things and to do so would be a sin. Well, why is it when Jesus says do not worry, most of us don't consider worrying to be a sin? Worry, much like gluttony that we spoke of last week, has become an acceptable sin in our society.

Three times in this section Jesus commands, "Do not worry." But what exactly does that mean? I think there is a big difference between

concern and worry. Concern focuses on probable difficulties and results in action. Worry focuses on things you can't control and results in inaction.

When we are concerned, it's about realistic possibilities and we get ready for those. My wife's mom works at the health department there in Waveland, MS and she gets to hear all kinds of horror stories from around the state about some of the things that have happened to small kids. When Clarissa was real little, we had bought a playground set that had an uncovered sand play area, and Denise's mom knew that where we lived at that time we had an insane amount of stray cats in our area, so she said to us, "you better be careful with that sand area, cats will use it for a litter box and the kids will get sick from it. Now I could say, "Oh, mom, you worry about the silliest things," but she had a case down there where just a thing happened and she was concerned for her grandkids safety, and there was something we could do about it. We could cover up the sand box when not in use and other things.

And often the way to cure our concerns is to take some action. For example, if I am a student and I know that there is a big test coming up in a few weeks, if I am concerned I say, "This is a big test, I better study." And when I do I feel better about it. Or if I am concerned about my finances, I say, "My money is tight, so I better get on a budget and stick to it." And when I see that I feel at peace. That's being concerned. It deals with things you can control and you make preparations for those concerns, and you are at peace afterwards.

Worry on the other hand looks at situations that are beyond our control and so we do nothing about it except worry about it. Worry is always asking the question, "What if? What if I study for my test and forget everything? What if my spouse has an accident on the way home? What if a cat learns how to take the lid of the sand box. Worry focuses on those things that we can't control or change. So Jesus commands us, not to worry.

Now remember, and we have hit on this hard here in this series and the last, and that is that whenever God says do not do something, there is a reason behind it. And Jesus says do not worry because He knows how destructive it can be for us. *Now the word for worry is derived from an Anglo-Saxon word which means to choke or to strangle. And that's what worry does to our joy, to our spiritual life, to our friendships and to our health.*

So as we look at why we are told not to worry, one of the first reasons is because when we worry it destroys our health. Not too long ago, there appeared in a leading medical journal an article entitled, "Is Stress the Cause of All Disease?" The author of the article says that at the beginning of

the century, bacteria were considered to be the center of attention. Today, mental stress has replaced bacteria.” Charles Mayo, of the famous Mayo Clinic, wrote, “Worry affects the circulation, the heart, the gland and the whole nervous system. I have never met a man or known a man to die of overwork, but I have known a lot who died of worry.” Now when a person worries excessive, it’s not long before you begin to see it on their face. They look tired, wore out, sickly, and that’s because by worrying they are putting unnecessary stress on their bodies.

Second worry not only is unhealthy but it is also a waste of time. Jesus said, “Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life?” What good is it going to do. Worry is like racing your engine when the car is in neutral. You're wasting gasoline, putting unnecessary stress on the motor, and making no progress at the same time. It accomplishes nothing.

One study showed that the average person's anxiety is focused in the following ways: 40 percent on things that will never happen; 30 percent on things about the past that can't be changed; 12 percent on other people's opinions that cannot be controlled; 10 percent about personal health, which only deteriorates with stress; and only 8 percent on real problems that will soon be faced. Now that’s amazing! Think about it, Ninety-two percent of the worrying we do is about things we can't control! What a waste of time! Some one has said that Worry is wasting today’s time to clutter up tomorrow’s opportunities with yesterday’s troubles.

It is so useless. Charlie Cullen suggested that, if we are going to worry, at least we ought to do it scientifically. First, write down all your worries. Transfer the anxiety from your mind to a piece of paper. Second, schedule a definite time every week as your "worry hour." Perhaps four o'clock Thursday would be a good time. Then, when the designated time arrives, sit down and start worrying to the best of your ability. If someone asks you what you're doing, just explain, "I'm going down my list of worries. I'm on number four now: the birth of my grandchild in four weeks." "But," Cullen adds, "be sure to take your list with you,' because you're going to look awful silly sitting there trying to remember what is was you were supposed to be worrying about!"

So why is worry such a common problem today? Some of it has to do with our temperament. Some are sanguine temperaments who almost never worry. Pressure rolls off them like water off a duck's back. If things go well, fine; if not, they "stay loose" anyway. They are the kind of people who never get ulcers they just give them to everybody else!

Another cause of worry is the affluence of our age. Solomon said in Ecclesiastes 5:12, "The sleep of the laborer is sweet, whether he eats little or

much, but the abundance of the rich man permits him no sleep.” It is wrong to assume that the more material goods one has, the more secure he will feel and the less he will worry. Just the opposite is true: the more one possesses, the more he has to protect, to insure, and to worry about.

Another factor that creates anxiety is experience. One might assume that the older we get, the less we worry. But the opposite is true: anxiety often increases with age because we have witnessed tragedies occur and we know terrible things can happen. You may not worry about being struck by lightning, but if you had been struck by lightning twice in your life, you'd be watching the sky a bit.

But the worse part about worry is that it shows a lack of trust in God. Worry says that I don't believe God is going to take care of things. Now you can understand why the Bible commands us not to worry. Oswald Chambers said that worry is "infidelity" against God because we are communicating that we don't believe God looks after the details of our lives.

So how can one win over worry? It's a serious sin that many of us commit daily. It's unrealistic to think that there is an easy cure. But Jesus said, "Look at the birds of the air". There are several important lessons can be learned by observing the birds-lessons that will help us to overcome our worry.

First we need to learn from birds is to trust that God will take care of us. Jesus said, "Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them" Probably everyone has heard it said of some petite person, "She eats like a bird." But there are some birds that eat two or three times their weight in food every day! If a human ate "like a bird," he'd be consuming 200, 300, maybe even 500 pounds of food every day. That would be some grocery bill!

But even though birds have to find so much food every day, they trust that God will supply their need. The other day I went out side and saw a bird pacing back and forth on the wire outside my house, so I went up to the bird and said, "What's a matter bird?" and it said, "Oh, preacher am I glad you are here. The nest market bubble is about to burst, the worm stock is dropping, I got 4 hungry mouths to feed, my feathers are a mess, What if I can't find any worms, what if a mean man comes and knocks my nest down. I am just so afraid." Now I hope you know I'm kidding. You don't see birds acting like that because birds know that God is going to supply their every need. They are created to trust God's endless supply.

But birds do two things that shows us what it means to trust in God's care. They trust God to supply their need, and they work hard to assist him. Birds don't sit in the nest all day and expect God to drop food in

their nests. Early in the morning they start looking. Birds trust, but they are diligent in searching for their needs to be supplied. Sometimes when we sit around worrying about what we will eat, what we will drink, what we will wear...God says get up and take care of it. Trusting God doesn't mean laziness or indifference. It does mean realizing God is taking care of us.

God has promised to meet our needs. The things that Jesus said for us not to worry about was the necessities of life. Folks in those days didn't know if there would be food to eat in a week or two. And water was scarce, and most only had one outfit to wear. So these were legitimate concerns. But God knows that you need those things. Now it may not be what you want, but God will take care of your needs. When Denise and I first were married, we didn't have any money, but we never went hungry. If we make a reasonable effort, God has promised to provide for our needs. We made meals stretch, but we were never hungry. That's what makes worry a serious sin. It is accusing God of being a liar.

The next thing to do to overcome worry is to have our priorities in order. Seek first the kingdom of God and then everything else falls into place. Ms. Mary Stokes of our church did an illustration at the Nursing home a while back to illustrate this. She took a bucket and asked filled it up with some rocks and asked if it was filled, we said yes, but then she poured some gravel, and asked us again, then she poured sand, and asked again, and we said yes, then she poured water into it. Her point was that when you have your priorities in order, things fall into place.

Let me say, that is why weekly worship is so important. When you attend your church's worship services each week, it's a regular reminder that God is bigger than your problems and that He is the most important thing in your life. Ruth Bell Graham said, "I've learned that worship and worry cannot live in the same heart. They are mutually exclusive."

So when you are tempted to worry, ask yourselves a few questions to help you get your mind off your worries and to depend on God. First, ask yourself have I prayed about this? The Bible commands us to pray about everything. Remember what we sing in What a Friend we have in Jesus, "What peace, we often forfeit, O what needless pain we bear, All because we do not carry Everything to God in prayer! Pray about it.

Second, ask yourself "Do I believe what I say I believe?" Martin Luther once went through a period of depression. After he had moped around the house for several days, his wife came down for breakfast one morning wearing all black. "Who died?" he asked. "God did" she said. "That's ridiculous!" Luther said. "Well, then, why don't you act like it?" she asked. Do you believe there is a God in Heaven who loves

you as a father and will take care of your needs as He promised? Then act like it!

Third, ask can I survive the worst possible scenario with God's help? Instead of fearing the worst, face it. What is the worst thing that could possibly happen? Can you handle it with God's help? God has promised to be with you and strengthen you through the Holy Spirit so that you can face those times.

Fourth, ask yourself, "One hundred years from now, what will it matter?" One hundred years from now, you will be with the Lord. The problems that seem gigantic now will appear so small then.

Finally, ask "Am I making the most of today?" Since you cannot control the future, don't let worry rob you of the chance to live today to the fullest. Someone said that Worry pulls tomorrow's cloud over today's sunshine.

This may all sound to easy, but I want to give you a good example. If anyone had reason to worry, it was the apostle Paul. As he sat in a Roman prison knowing his life was in grave danger, he wrote to his friends in Philippi about how he had learned to be content whatever the circumstances, saying, ***"I can do everything through him who gives me strength"*** (***Philippians 4:13***). He gave the Philippians this advice about worry: "Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." Trust in God and cast your cares on Him for He cares for you.

Said the robin to the sparrow, I would really like to know, Why those anxious human beings, rush and worry so. Said the sparrow to the Robin, I think it must be, They have no heavenly father like the one that cares for you and me.