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Overcoming Worry

A man named Carl Hurley tells a funny story about an old garbage can he was trying to throw away. He said a trashcan is the only thing a garbage man will never take. One week, he set out a rusty garbage can and assumed that the garbage man would see the old empty can, pick it up and throw it into the garbage truck. When he came back that afternoon, the can was still there. The garbage man had not taken it.

The next week he decided to turn the can upside down, assuming the garbage man would see the holes in the can and take it away. But when he came home later, the can was still there. The garbage man did not take it.

So the next week, he had another idea. He took a sledgehammer and beat the can with it until it was smashed, then set it in front of the home with the other cans. He thought the garbage man would surely take it then. But when the man came back home in the afternoon, there was the can again, and the garbage man had actually tried to fix it and stretch it back into shape.

Carl was fuming! Why wouldn't the garbage man take that can? So he decided to go to the hardware store and buy a chain and a padlock. He wrapped the chain around the can and attached it to a tree with the lock. He left the can there all night. What happened? Someone stole the can, and he finally was able to get rid of it!

Worry is a lot like that trash can. We know we need to get rid of it, but is this easy to do? No. We have a hard time pushing worry away. We worry when we may lose our job, when our child gets sick, when we have financial problems, or when our spouse leaves. When all of these things happen, whom do we tend to blame? God. But God is the only One who can alleviate our worries.

Honestly, I feel kind of awkward preaching a sermon about worrying. All of us, including myself, worry from time to time. Some people worry over big things and some over little things. But the point is that we all worry. I sometimes worry about my wife, children, finances, directing Deaf Missions and other things that show up. Honestly, it was difficult for me to develop this lesson and preach this sermon, because we are all guilty of it. So, I am going to depend on Jesus to preach to us about worrying in this sermon. He encourages His followers, and He encourages us, too, in Matthew 6:25-34.

"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? 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. Are you not much more valuable than they? Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life?"

And why do you worry about clothes? See how the lilies of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. If 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? So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own."

First, let's consider the **CONSEQUENCES** of worrying. Jesus made it very clear in verse 27 that worrying will not add a single hour to our life. Worry is not good for our health. Often, our mind races more than it needs to. We lose sleep. We overeat or do not eat enough. One man told me that when he worries, he eats too much chocolate! Many people experience health problems as a result of worrying. Most often, it causes unnecessary stress.

I have a story for you about J. Arthur Rank, who was a top executive. He decided to limit his worrying to one day a week. He chose Wednesday as the day he would worry. When anything happened during the week that might make him feel stressed or bother his ulcer, he wrote it down and put it in his worry box and left it there until the next Wednesday. He would open the box and worry about it then. But an interesting thing happened. On the following Wednesday, when he opened his worry box, he found that most of the things that he could have worried about during the past six days were already settled. It would have been useless to worry about them.

Here are some interesting statistics about worry. An average person's anxiety is focused on:

- 40% – things that will never happen
- 30% – things about the past that can't be changed by worrying
- 12% – things involving criticism by others, which for the most part are not true
- 10% – about health, which gets worse with stress
- 8% – about real problems that will be faced

Only eight percent of our anxiety deals with things that will really happen! These statistics show us that most of the time we worry about things that will never happen! How ridiculous is it that so often we worry about things that never happen! So why do we worry?

Now that we have considered some of the consequences of worry, let's consider how we can cure it. What are some **CURES** for worrying? How can you overcome worry?

First, **spend time with God**. Jesus encouraged us in verse 33 to “*Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness.*” Read the Bible and pray. As you read and pray, turn your worries over to God. Mary C. Crowley once said, “Every evening I turn worries over to God. He's going to be up all night anyway, so I might as well give them to Him.” That's great advice for us!

Second, **look at the animals and flowers**. Jesus told us to look at the birds in the air and the flowers in the fields. We are more important than birds and flowers. Since God takes care of them, He will care for us, too. When you are worried, look at the animals and flowers. Let them remind you that God always has and always will provide.

The third thing to do is to **control your worry**. In verse 34, Jesus instructs us not to worry about tomorrow. Each day has enough trouble. Focus on today and what you can control. Don't worry about the things you cannot control.

Here's a story from *Bits and Pieces*. It is a summary of a story about a man named Connie Mack, who was one of the greatest managers in the history of baseball. One of the secrets of his success was that he knew how to lead and inspire men. He knew that people were individuals. One year, his team had the best record and clinched the pennant well before the regular season ended. So before they needed to prepare for the championship games, he decided to give his two best pitchers the last ten days off so that they could rest, enjoy themselves and not have to worry until they came back to play in the World Series. One pitcher spent his ten days off at the ballpark; the other went fishing. Both men enjoyed their time off and performed well when they came back. Mack never criticized a player in front of anyone else. He always did it in private. He also learned never to criticize right away but to wait 24 hours, so he could consider his comments and calm down first. Then he would talk to the player about his mistakes. Why? He did not want to speak without thinking and become overly emotional and too critical.

In his first three years as a major league baseball manager, Connie Mack's teams finished sixth, seventh and eighth. He took the blame for that and decided to demote himself to the minor leagues to give himself time to develop his skills as a coach. When he came back to the major leagues again, he handled his players so successfully that he developed some of the best teams ever.

When people asked Mack about his secrets to being a good manager, he had a simple answer. He said, "I don't worry." He then explained, "I discovered that worry was threatening to wreck my career as a baseball manager. I saw how foolish it was, and I forced myself to get so busy preparing to win games that I had no time left to worry over the ones that were already lost." Mack decided to focus on one game at a time. When that game was finished, then he would prepare for the next game. That's why he was successful.

We need to do the same thing. It is important that we focus on one day at a time. We can't worry about what happened in the past or what will happen in the future. It is also important to control your possessions. Often we worry about having more things. But the

more things we have, the more we have to worry about.

Control what you watch and read. We have global news brought into our house every day on CNN, Fox, CBS, ABC and other TV networks. We read newspapers every day that tell us about bombings, murder, war, child abductions, and nasty politics. We are bombarded with these things every day, and they are all negative. You may notice that the weatherman always talks about there being a 30% chance of rain. Why doesn't he say, "Wow, I'm excited! There is a 70% chance of sunshine!" But television news today seems to only focus on negative things. It's good to be informed, but I encourage you to be careful about what you receive and to control what you worry about.

Now, I want to be clear that worry is not the same as concern. They are different. Concern says, "This is an issue and I'm going to deal with it, and with God's help, I can get through it." Worry says, "I don't know. I don't know what is going to happen. I don't know if I'll get through this. I just don't know." Do you see the difference?

And I want to emphasize that worry is one of the devil's greatest weapons. It will steal your joy, steal your contentment, and steal your happiness. Don't allow it to do that! And we become so wrapped up in worry about yesterday and about tomorrow that it is difficult to find peace today. Through a relationship with Jesus and spending time with Him, we can experience true peace. If you do not have a relationship with Jesus, I encourage you to make your decision today to accept Him. Then you can start to experience peace, and your worry will be reduced.

Finally, I challenge you to accept these words from God in Proverbs 3:5-6, *"Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight."*



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