

HOW TO HANDLE WORRY

The pressures of modern life can be staggering. Coping with competition, financial stress, mounting family demands, tragedies, unscrupulous people, threats of violence or war, enticements to evil, and a host of other factors has become more and more difficult. An increasing number of men and women are struggling to maintain emotional stability. Every age group is affected. Even believers in Christ are succumbing to the overwhelming barrage of trials and perplexing situations that face them every day. In fact, it seems that more Christians are experiencing emotional problems than ever before.

Does this mean, however, that we must cave in under the pressures of our circumstances? Must we become victims of our fast-paced and demanding society?

I say, “Absolutely not!”

We who are born again have the Spirit of God dwelling within. We have a living hope, an anchor for our souls. And we have the Bible, God’s Word, which gives us the instruction and encouragement we need to withstand the tensions and temptations of life. In this study we are going to consider the subject, “How to Handle Worry.” As we do, my prayer is that you will see the vast resources available to believers, that you will learn how to appropriate them, and in turn that you’ll be successful in mastering your emotions.

Worry is one of the most widespread and crippling emotional problems of our day. None of us is immune to it.

Experts tell us that worry originates not from the outside, but from within. It’s not your job or your schedule, or your commitments or other people that produce it; rather, it’s how you yourself respond to the external pressures that lead to anxiety. When you analyze it carefully, it’s really an internal problem. And that very fact places the responsibility for its control upon you.

In the balance of this lesson, therefore, I’ll give you several suggestions to help you handle worry successfully.

TRUST IN THE LORD

The first step in overcoming worry is to learn to

trust in the Lord. The person who is overwhelmed with worry is very likely trying to solve all of his problems and to meet all of life’s demands in his own strength and wisdom. The wise person has learned to place his trust in God. I like what the psalmist wrote:

Why art thou cast down, O my soul? And why art thou disquieted within me? Hope in God; for I shall yet praise Him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God (Psalm 43:5).

Please notice the three words, “Hope in God.” That’s good advice for all of us! The person who looks to the Lord has taken an indispensable step toward overcoming anxiety.

DON’T FORGET TO PRAY

A second means of overcoming worry is to pray. In Philippians 4, the apostle Paul gave us this wise counsel:

Be anxious for nothing, but in everything, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus (Philippians 4:6,7).

I realize that sometimes you don't feel like praying. In fact, when you're down, the thought might even enter your mind, "What's the use? It won't do any good anyway." But friend, so often it's when you *don't* feel like praying that you need it the most.

In the words of an old hymn, the favorite of millions,

O what peace we often forfeit, O what needless pain we bear, All because we do not carry Everything to God in prayer.

And prayer not only changes things - it changes *people*. There is something about talking with the Heavenly Father that refreshes the spirit and removes anxiety. As you pour out your concerns to the Lord, you begin to see that in relation to His great power, infinite wisdom, and unbounded love for you, your fears are not nearly so bad or insurmountable as you thought. The indwelling Holy Spirit brings a calmness to your soul. The tensions you've kept bottled up inside are relieved. Yes, you feel better when you talk with God.

LIVE BY THE DAY

Another way to overcome worry is to live one day at a time. Jesus said,

Be, therefore, not anxious about tomorrow; for tomorrow will be anxious for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is its own evil (Matthew 6:34).

As a rule, we've got our hands full with our present problems. So why take on tomorrow's troubles as well?

It's also true that much of what we worry about never happens anyway. How foolish, therefore, to be anxious over nothing! Let me illustrate what I mean.

For years I was almost terror-stricken at the very thought of my father's passing. When I was but a lad, he suffered his first heart attack. Then, while I was in seminary, he was again bedridden with the same problem. This time he received strict orders from the doctors to take a complete rest. It was during those days of convalescence that I first took his place on a Radio Bible Class broadcast. Realizing how mightily God had blessed my father's ministry, and how thousands had been led to Christ through his faithful witness, I would often shudder at the thought of his death. I trembled at the prospect of having the responsibility of the ministry suddenly thrust upon my shoulders. My heart would skip a beat whenever the phone rang late at night. My first thought would always be, "Is this it?"

Now that my father has been called home to Glory, I realize how unwise, yes, how sinful I was to worry. I had justified my anxiety by reasoning, "I have due cause for concern. Not only will I lose a wonderful father, but also in one instant the heavy weight of a worldwide ministry will come crushing down upon me." How faithless I was! How much peace and quietness of mind was forfeited because I insisted on worrying instead of just trusting the Lord!

I share my experience with you so that you may learn from my mistake. When the time came which I had been so anxious about for many years, I knew a peace beyond understanding - a calm and confidence I had never dreamed possible. I sensed the undergirding and strengthening of the Lord in a marvelous way, and I've found God's promise to Paul to be a living reality in my own life, "My grace is sufficient for thee!"

Yes, why worry about our tomorrows when God so graciously provides for our todays?

REMEMBER GOD'S FAITHFULNESS

A fourth way to overcome worry is to remember that God is faithful. The prophet Jeremiah declared, *It is because of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not. They are new every morning; great is Thy faithfulness* (Lamentations 3:22,23).

Every believer can testify to the great faithfulness of God. I personally like the way J. Danson Smith expressed it:

Unto this day God has guarded and guided; Unto this day He has graciously planned; Unto this day He has sweetly provided, Yes, has provided with bountiful hand.

Unto this day God has well undertaken;

Unto this day He has kept by His grace;

Why then should spirit or mind be now shaken, Though future pathways we may not now trace?

BE AWARE OF GOD'S PRESENCE

Another suggestion to help you overcome worry is that you remember God is always with you. Read these encouraging words of Hebrews 13:5,6.

Being aware of God's presence is a most helpful antidote to worry. When I rest upon the assurance of verse 5, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee," I can confidently declare, "I will not fear what man shall do unto me" (v.6). I can be certain that there is no lonely road, no darkened house, no hospital waiting room, no place at all that He is not there to comfort, sustain, and strengthen me. Yes, child of God, be aware of God's presence. It can do wonders for you!

BELIEVE GOD FOR EVERY NEED

My final suggestion to help you overcome worry is: Believe God for every need. In the Sermon on the Mount, the Lord Jesus addressed Himself to the matter of anxiety:

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?

Therefore, be not anxious saying, What shall we

eat? or, What shall we drink? or, With what shall we be clothed?

For after all these things do the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.

But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you (Matthew 6:30-33).

If God takes care of the birds of the air and the lilies of the field (and He does), will He not much more care for His own children? Once we understand and really believe that, we have taken an important step to victory over worry.

God's provision for our needs goes far beyond that of food and clothing. He is able to provide for every necessity of life. Think, for example, of what He promised in Philippians 4:19, "But my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus." With that promise, no believer should ever allow himself to be a victim of crippling worry over the necessities of life.

Now of course, that verse does not say that God will supply all of our *wants*. We can be certain, however, that all of our *needs* will be met from the endless supply of "His riches in glory by Christ Jesus." Surely that resource has far more in it than we could ever exhaust!

REVIEW

Remember these six suggestions for overcoming worry:

- Trust in the Lord
- Don't forget to pray
- Live by the day
- Remember God's faithfulness
- Be aware of God's presence
- Believe God for every need

As you follow these suggestions, it is possible to know the freedom from exhausting anxiety and troubling care. And remember, friend, don't let your concern about the future, about things that may never come to pass anyway, rob you of your joy and peace today.

by Richard W. De Haan