

Any Bobs in the room? Worrywarts? Murphy's law advocates? "Mountain-Out-Of-Mole-Holes" engineers? For a moment let's sympathize and empathize with them. Energy and food costs are skyrocketing. Inflation is hyper-inflating. Gas prices igniting. Housing market overvalued (way so). The government, as usual, is spending like a drunken sailor (endless checkbook?). Crime spiraling. War in Eastern Europe. China ready to pounce. Our southern border is nothing but 1954 miles of turnstile. Our denomination is unraveling.

Not only do we have "worries without" but "worries within" i.e., tremendous concerns over our families, interpersonal relationships, and physical and mental health. Unfortunately, it seems like the entire world has been living out, more intensely than ever, the realities of Job 5:7 and John 16:33

We are born for trouble as readily as sparks fly up from a fire.
In this world you have trouble.

The Warts of Worry

The most common New Testament word for "worry" is *merrimnaw* which means to have "anxious concern about possible danger or misfortune." Current psychology defines it as

A negative prediction about future events. Worry usually involves a specific thought or idea about unpleasant outcomes that is coupled with subtle feelings of fear, dread, apprehension, fret, and anxiety.

Listen to some of the ugly "warts of worry"

Every system in your body is affected by worry. In addition to raising blood pressure and increasing blood clotting, worry can prompt your liver to produce more cholesterol, all of which can raise your risk of heart attack and stroke. Muscle tension can lead to headaches, back pain, and other body aches. Worry can also trigger an increase in stomach which can lead to stomach aches, constipation, diarrhea, gas, or heartburn. Worry can affect your skin (rash or itch), impact your respiratory system, aggravate asthma, compromise your immune system, and make you more vulnerable to bacteria, viruses, perhaps even cancer.

Worry is the single most dysfunctional thing the average person does to ruin their happiness. Its effect is insidious, pervasive, and sadly, generally goes unnoticed by the worrier as it does its dirty work -- to erode their daily mood. As one person put it, "Worry doesn't prevent disaster: worry prevents joy."

In a world marked by anxiety it would greatly benefit us to take steps, even baby steps, towards achieving worry free lives, not only for our own sakes but as evidence of the peace of Jesus Christ ruling in our hearts. How? Via mind hack and exercise some mind-over-matter? Ignore/avoid our problems? Yoga? Get "comfortably numb" with self-medication of drugs and alcohol? Maybe binge eat, binge watch, or binge everything? Go Greek and adopt a philosophy called "ataraxia?"

Developed by Pyrrho and Epicurus, ataraxia is a *Limpid state, characterized by freedom from worry or preoccupation, a heightened state of calm and tranquility.*

Worry Proof- Jesus

Thinking and techniques like these, have left the carnage of breakdowns, ulcers, and are, at best, temporary fixes. To permanently eliminate worry, let's go with what our Designer/Creator/Savior brilliantly recommended in Matthew 6:25-34

25 Do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? 26 Look at the birds of the air; they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? 27 And can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your span of life? 28 And why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin, 29 yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these. 30 But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you-- you of little faith? 31 Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What will we eat?' or 'What will we drink?' or 'What will we wear?' 32 For it is the Gentiles who strive for all these things; and indeed, your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. 33 But seek first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. 34 "So do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring worries of its own. Today's trouble is enough for today.

“Do not worry about your Life”

“Do not worry about your life” Jesus begins. Why? Beyond the psychological and physiological reasons, we've touched upon, here are a few theological ones:

- Worry is a derivative of fear: fear of losing present control and fear of losing future control. As such, it is anti-faith and as Paul points out in Romans 14:23, “Everything that does not come from faith is sin.”
- Worry adds neither to the quality or quantity of our lives. Indeed, it drastically reduces both.
- Worry can compound and complicate today's challenges when combined with tomorrow's challenges. Now that's a “two-for” or “double whammy” we don't need or want.
- Worry is a terrible investment of our mental and emotional energies. One study claims that 98.9% of our worries never materialize and the 1.1% that occur, are usually not as bad as we imagined.

If Jesus adopted FDR's famous saying, “The only thing we have to fear is fear itself,” he would tell us, “The only thing we have to worry about is worry itself!

Baby Step I: Realize This

The first baby step toward a worry-free life is to realize our worth. We are the most valuable part of God's creation. Jesus says look at the birds. Do birds worry? No! They forage for the food God provides for them (our eagles). Does God take care of birds?

Yes! Say, you're more botanist than ornithologist. Do flowers worry about making it to full bloom? Hardly! Although they are the proverbial “here today, gone tomorrow” plant, God still makes them extravagantly beautiful, even more than Solomon's wardrobe and he was the most nattily attired of the kings of Israel. Are we worth more to God than birds and flowers? If you agree, stop worrying!

Baby Step II-Trust That!

If God takes great delight in caring for things like flowers and birds (and bees lol) and we are infinitely worth more to him than they are, should we worry? Jesus mentions three items over which we *terra firma* dwellers like fret over: what we eat, what we drink, and what we wear? This “trinity of worldly worries” speaks to the entirety of our physical and material needs. Jesus, however, says we do not “worry, hurry, super scurry” over our needs because we, unlike unbelievers, trust that our heavenly Father, “Will always provide for every one of our needs” (Philippians 4:19). Trust in God is a must and the second baby step to a worry-free life. If we need another Scripture to help us take that step, here’s 2 Peter 1:3:

*According as his divine power God has given us all things
for physical and spiritual life.*

Baby Step III: Seek It!

However, God didn’t put on this planet just to meet our physical and material needs which is why Jesus asks, “Is not life more than these?” Yes, life is also about getting spiritual needs met, and the greatest spiritual need is to get in and stay in the KOG! Thus, Jesus gives us our third baby step: “Seek first the KOG.” Instead of depleting mental and emotional reserves worrying about the physical stuff, use it to seek the spiritual stuff of the KOG. Seek the King of the KOG! Seek to help it flourish through the local church! This is what Jesus did and he never had one millisecond of worry during his entire 33 years here. If seeking the KOG eliminates worry, then let’s seek it with all we got! If we seek the stuff, we miss the Kingdom, but if we seek the Kingdom, we’ll get the stuff.

Conclusion: Altar Call for Peace

If we take the baby steps to Realize This, Trust That, and Seek it, it won’t be long until we are joyfully running into a worry-free life. Once this happens, it won’t matter what’s going on around us, whether good, bad, or indifferent. Let’s pray.