



## Worry – Worry Steals Your Hope

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- Do you recall President Obama's 100<sup>th</sup> day in office?- you would know that because President Obama himself gave a speech marking that particular milestone, but also because many of the news outlets believed it was important to evaluate the president's job performance after 100 days on the job...
- most people usually get more than three months before their first performance review...but in this "instant gratification" world in which we live, apparently 100 days is more than enough time to fix the economy, stabilize the Middle East, catch the pirates, rid the world of swine flu, solve global warming, and bring about world peace...
  - after all, what does he think we're paying him for?...
- part of the process in this instant messaging day in which we live is that everyone was invited to weigh in on the evaluation...
  - send a text message, a tweet, or an e-mail and you can evaluate the President of the United States...and we'll put your view up on the screen and broadcast it to the world regardless of who you are...
  - never mind the fact that in some cases, a person can't even balance their own checkbook, still their thoughts on how the president has handled the economy are given instant credibility...
  - or people who can't get along with their own mother in law are asked to evaluate the President's approach to world peace...
  - but that is the day and age in which we live...everyone's evaluation matters...whether a person has earned any level of credibility to make such judgments or not...and whether what they say, or what they think, has any connection to truth and reality whatsoever
- what would happen this morning if I asked you to give your evaluation of God's job performance?
  - admittedly He's been at it longer than 100 days...
  - but what would happen if we set the screen up like a monitor on many of the TV news sets so you could send in a text, or a tweet, or an e-mail about how you think God is doing and whatever you wrote would appear on the screen?...
- now, here's the reaction I hope that would stir in you...
  - I would find that notion disrespectful...
  - it's one thing to have my views about how the president is doing, but I would never presume to be in a position to evaluate God...
  - really?...are you sure?...
- then let me ask you this – have you worried lately?...
  - do you realize that every time that happens, you've just sent an e-mail, a tweet, a text message about what you think of God's performance?...of His ability to keep His

promises...of the job He's been doing in the past and is capable of doing in the future?...

- how bad would it be if your evaluation had no connection to truth and reality at all?...

- with that in mind, let me invite you to open your Bible to Matthew chapter 6

- We are looking at **Finding Hope in Handling Worry...**

- because this is such an important subject (especially in this day and age in which we live), we want to be sure that we all have a very thorough understanding of what these verses teach...

- and more importantly, that we are working at handling worry in a way that honors God and produces genuine, thorough, lasting change...

### - Introduction

- The meaning of the word **worry** – **merimnaw** – and we learn 2 basic lessons from the meaning of the word...

**1. It divides you up**

**2. It tears you down...**

- that's exactly what the word merimnaw means...

**Matthew 6:25 – Is not life more than \_\_\_\_\_?**

Worry...

- it put blinders on your brain... you're thinking so much about that item, or that problem, or that issue, and that possibility...that it hinders you from seeing, and enjoying, and accomplishing things that are far more important...

- and the answer to Jesus' question is – yes, life is more important than that particular item...unless I've allowed worry to shrink my focus...where worry made me small.

- now we're ready to take on the next step in the logic, where Jesus explains that **Worry Steals Your Hope.**

- let's read our passage again – **read Matthew 6:19-34**

- so we're talking about how worry steals your hope...and with the time we have remaining, let's think about **3 truths about us that are revealed by our tendency to worry.**

### I. Worry Reveals Your Evaluation of Your Father.

- Jesus is trying to get His audience, and us, to think about simple concepts in nature...

- some writers believe that while Jesus was giving the Sermon on the Mount, a few common birds flew by so the Lord just brought them into the discussion...

- we don't know that for sure...but the Lord was the Master Teacher who tried to use ordinary examples to teach eternal truth...

- and the application question He wanted to come out of verse 26 was...

**A. Does God love you more than an insignificant bird? – v. 26**

- let's back up and think about that

**1. Consider the birds.**

- well, what about them?...[you might say -- I haven't thought about birds for a while (which by the way, proves the point...even when you weren't, God was...) – but now He says, look at them -- think about them...]

**2. They don't sow, reap, nor gather into barns.**

- do you think you'll see any birds driving tractors in the next few weeks?...[if it doesn't stop raining, we won't see any farmers driving tractors – but we're not going to worry about that...] – have you ever seen a bird on a John Deere?...
- no you've never seen a bird sow...or have some sort of organized harvest in the fall...
- they've certainly never done a barn raising...
- if you've ever seen a formal bird house, do you realize it was built by man?...
- they've got a racket going – they snicker behind our backs – why should we build our houses when all those junior-highers will do it for us in wood shop for free?...

- now, a couple of balancing points about this...

**a. This is not to suggest that birds do nothing.**

- an adult bird doesn't sit in its nest and wait for take out to be delivered...
- what did God send this time?...Pizza...Oh, I was hoping for tacos...
- no, an adult bird has some part in the food procurement process...

**b. Nor is this to suggest that when humans sow, reap, or gather into barns, that such activity is sinful.**

- that is not the point of the comparison...
- the issue is, the ultimate reason a bird gets fed is because of the gracious provision of the God of heaven...
- and He cares in ways that boggle our minds about each one of them being fed...
- this time of year when I come into the church on Sunday mornings, the area right outside our main entrance is just loaded with birds...
- and they are usually singing like crazy...it sounds like there's millions of them...and you talk about sending a tweet – they make the average teenager pale in comparison to their tweeting...
- but this passage is telling us that...

**3. God is the one who feeds the birds.**

- all those birds outside – God knows every one of them...
- and He takes ultimate responsibility for their care...
- Scripture doesn't reveal the exact process – but we'll probably learn when we get to heaven that there was a contingent of angels in charge of goofy birds who flew into houses or stores --- [you can imagine an angel going to the throne – Harold's in Wal Mart again – Oh for crying out loud – take him this worm and tell him to stay outside...]
- and I'm not just trying to be silly here this morning – the text says – think about the birds....sure they have some part in the feeding process, but the ultimate reason they have any food at all is because of their great ingenuity and skill, it is because of the faithfulness of the One who is referred to in this text as your Heavenly Father...
- and then Jesus gives the point of the illustration...

**4. You are more important to Him than they are.**

- God likes birds a little bit...he likes you more...way more...
- and the take away of that is not for us to puff out our chests and say – “wow, we're really great because we're better than birds...”...no instead it's “God is really great because he would care about birds and us”...you are more important than they are because...

**a. You are made in His image – Gen 1:26.**

**b. If you know Christ, you are being remade in the image of God's Son – Romans 8:29.**

**c. If you know Christ, you have a promised inheritance – Titus 3:7.**

**d. If you know Christ, you have an eternal home in heaven – John 14:6.**

- obviously, none of those things could be said about birds...
- but here's the point – every time you and I worry about something in the future – we've just evaluated God...and you have said in essence, He doesn't love you enough to be sure that your legitimate needs are addressed...
- and because you can't trust His goodness...worrying is your only reasonable alternative...
- and if that were true – it would be one thing...but making that evaluation of our Heavenly Father when it so disconnected from reality is a serious error in judgment...

- now the same point is made about flowers...leading to the question...

**B. Will God care for you better than an impermanent flower? – v. 28-30**

- now, before we get into the verses, I probably need to clear something off the deck here...

- Are you extolling the virtues of dandelions?
- I have thought that six days a week it was OK to kill every dandelion in sight because they were of the devil...
- Some scholars claim that when Jesus was teaching this portion of the sermon on the Mount, He very well may have been pointing to dandelions...NEVERTHELESS

**1. Consider the lilies.**

**2. They don't toil or spin.**

**3. Not even Solomon in all his glory clothed himself like one of these.**

**4. If God so clothes the grass of the field, which is *alive* today and tomorrow is thrown into the furnace, *will He* not much more *clothe* you?**

- I'm not a big flower guy – if you want me to feel good – don't send me flowers, send me a pizza...
- but when you look at a flower, their beauty and intricacy is amazing...
- and Jesus, the Creator of the world said---that's the doing of our heavenly Father...
- and if He would care for a flower that's just going to be around temporarily and then thrown in the furnace for fuel...how much more would He provide for your clothing since you possess an eternal soul?...
- and the overall principle is hard, but it's true...

**C. Worry has less to do with your circumstances and more to do with your heart.**

- you are revealing your evaluation of your Father...
- you're saying that you don't believe He's capable of doing His job...that's your performance evaluation of Him...
  - that's a very important piece of this puzzle...
  - some people have the view that if they just had more \_\_\_\_\_, then they wouldn't worry...
  - they are being driven by circumstances outside their control...
    - if I had more money, if I had more respect, if I had better health, if I had greater security, if I had a better spouse, if I had more obedient kids...then I would worry less...
    - that is simply not true...

- there is not a direct relationship between the number of problems a person has, and the amount of time they spend worrying...
- it's all about the way you evaluate your heavenly Father in your heart...

- Scripture teaches that we are born on the other side of the tracks, separated from God because of our sin...
- that's how God showed His greatest care and concern when He sent His Son to die in our place...
- but if you're this morning and there has never been a definite time in your life where you trusted Christ as Savior and Lord...it would not be surprising that you would struggle with worry...because there is no other alternative available
- if that is your condition today, we would encourage you to repent and believe...
- but if you're a follower of Christ and you still find yourself worrying, consider the birds, and consider the lilies...and what those examples in nature tell us about the character of God...
  - and then ask this hard question – what kind of job evaluation have you been giving the Lord?...
- now you might say – well then, what do I do about this?...I know I worry way too much and I can see that this tendency says a very bad thing about my view of God...
- let's push it one step further...

## **II. Worry Reveals Your Need for Change – Ephesians 4:22-24.**

- look over at a different passage of Scripture now – Ephesians chapter 4...
- these truths are not in the Bible simply to frustrate us, or convict us alone...the point is, and God stands ready to help you change...
- one of the first steps is...

### **A. Learn to ask; What does this episode of worry reveal about my view of God?**

- you will never become what God desires until you are willing to slow up and ask significant questions about what is going on in your heart and in your mind?...
- this doesn't happen when the TV's blaring or you're running all over town...
- sometimes the smartest thing a person can do is slow down and think...the Christian life is a thinking person's endeavor...
- now, please look at this passage in Ephesians 4:22-24---

#### **1. The primary difference between the unsaved life (old man) and the saved life (new man).**

- feeling oriented/principle oriented – worriers are invariably feeling oriented people...

#### **2. The 3 step principle for change and growth.**

- [put off, change thinking, put on –

- now let's add what we saw from Matthew six and this discussion of the birds and the flowers...

### **B. Put off thoughts that dishonor God.**

- 1. The belief that God doesn't know about your need.**
- 2. The belief that God doesn't care about your need.**
- 3. The belief that God doesn't have the power or the resources to meet your need.**

- now let's stop right there and run a couple of practical hypothetical situations through this grid...we'll complete the cycle in a minute...but let's be sure we've got an eye on the practical applications of all of this...
- 1. Let's say there's a young lady here today who is single but would prefer to be married...
  - and if she was just patently honest about it, she would say that she thinks about that topic a lot...she worries about whether she'll ever find a spouse [by the way, I'm certainly not saying that's true of every single person here – but imagine someone like that...]
  - here's the problem – the world would say that she would increase her chances of being married if she would loosen up sexually...
  - if she would dress in more provocative ways...or if she would go to parties or places where overt sexual activity was just known to be part of the equation...
  - or if she would give into the sexual advances of some young man who has been showing some interest...
  - let's say that right now she is very close to giving in...she's worried that she might not ever find a spouse and she is considering ignoring God's Word in order to obtain that item that she's so worried about...
  - what's going on here?...such a person has forgotten the birds...she's forgotten the lilies...
    - she acts as if God doesn't know, or if God doesn't care, or if God doesn't have the power and resources to help her...
- 2. Or maybe there a married man here today who is struggling financially...and maybe he's the only one who knows at this point...
  - he's kept up a veneer of success...his wife and family are accustomed to a certain kind of lifestyle and it's becoming harder and harder to provide for that...
  - and he's worried...especially about losing the respect and admiration of his family...
    - he doesn't want to admit that they're in trouble...
    - he doesn't want to lead them to make some cuts...
      - but there are some ways to get some more money...
      - the problem is, they're wrong...
      - he could start padding his expense account...
      - he could start cheating on his taxes...
      - he could begin misrepresenting the product in order to increase his sales...
- and see – the issue here isn't just about stealing [just like the other story isn't just about sexual purity)...fundamentally each example involves a wrong view of God that worry has revealed...and biblically speaking, that has to be acknowledged, and it has to be put off.

## **B. Put on thoughts that are in line with Scripture.**

### **1. If you are in Christ, nothing can separate you from God's love.**

**Romans 8:37-39 - But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.**

### **2. God will never leave you nor forsake you.**

**Hebrews 13:5 – Make sure that your character is free from the love of money, being content with what you have; for He Himself has said, “I will never desert you, nor will I ever forsake you.”**

**3. God will never give you more than you can bear.**

**1 Corinthians 10:13 - No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it.**

**4. God will always have a purpose for whatever He allows.**

**Jeremiah 29:11 – ‘For I know the plans that I have for you,’ declares the LORD, ‘plans for welfare and not for calamity to give you a future and a hope.  
Romans 8:28 - And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to *His* purpose.**

**5. God will always provide all the resources you need.**

**Philippians 4:13 - I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.**

- and it might be helpful for you to write these kinds of verses down on index cards and have them ready when you start to worry...
- a summary of what we're saying today is – you overcome worry with right theology...with biblically correct thoughts about the Father...

### **III. Worry Reveals an Opportunity to Trust the God of Scripture**

- a good summary verse
- **Proverbs 3:5-6 - Trust in the LORD with all your heart And do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He will make your paths straight.**

--- the hope isn't that God will do everything in our time---the hope is that He has a plan, that's it's good, and that we can trust Him even when we're in a period of uncertainty...

- could make the same application to the other two stories
  - single girl worried about marriage and considering speeding up the process her way
  - married man in financial trouble considering stealing...

The bottom line here is that GOD is GOD – not you-not me-not circumstances.

When you get to the point that this truth is your resting place, you are where you need to be. ARE YOU THERE?

