

# Road to Emmaus

## Biblical Counseling Center

### Understanding Worry and Fear Biblically

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November 2019

#### Introduction:

#### I. Initial Observations

A. Look at children to start

“...even if they live in an unassailable fortress, protected round the clock by loyalists who ward off all robbers, ghosts, and monsters, with loved ones always within calling distance, video cameras and alarms perpetually set, nightlights on before dusk, shielded from Stephen King, Walt Disney, Saturday morning cartoons, and all things creepy, they will – guaranteed- be afraid. Somehow, without anyone telling them, they know they live in a world that isn’t safe.”  
Ed Welch, *Running Scared*, pg. 16

B. Look at today’s disorders

C. Look outward and inward

“Emotions are an inherent part of what it means to be a person; they express the values and evaluations of a person and influence motives and conduct.” Brian Borgman, *Feelings and Faith*, pg. 26

D. What fear says

“I am in danger.” “I am vulnerable.” “I need and I might not get.” “I love that and have put my trust in that.” “I might die.”

E. What worry says

“I think there will be a danger” “Something I love or someone I love might be threatened in the future.” “If I imagine the worst then I will be prepared for it.”

## II. Definition of Worry

A. Worry is an apprehensive uneasiness of mind regarding the \_\_\_\_\_ and things that keep a person from fulfilling his or her current biblical responsibilities.

B. The Greek word *merimnao* is a compound of two words *merizo* (to divide) and *nous* (mind). So it literally means “a \_\_\_\_\_”.

“Worry divided the mind between worthwhile interests and damaging thoughts... Peace of mind requires a singleness of mind. The worrier robs himself of peace by dividing his mind. Worry divides the feelings, therefore the emotions lack stability. Worry divides the understanding, therefore convictions are shallow and changeable. Worry divides the faculty of perception, therefore observations are faulty and even false. Worry divides the faculty of judging, therefore, attitudes and decisions are often unjust. These decisions lead to damage and grief. Worry divides the determinative faculty, therefore, plans and purposes, if not ‘scrapped’ altogether, are not filled with persistence. Worry in the extreme leads to abulia, ‘loss of the power to will.’ Why? The mind is so divided it cannot act in one channel. It is like the mule who stood between two haystacks and starved to death trying to decide from which stack to eat.” John Edmond Haggai quoted in *In the Arena of the Mind*, pp. 30-31

C. It is not to be confused with the normal \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ towards your responsibilities, and planning is not a sign of worry. (2 Cor. 11:28, Phil. 2:20, Gal. 4:19, James 4:13-15)

## III. Worry Contrasted to Loving Trust-filled Concern:

	<b>Worry</b>	<b>Concern</b>
<b>Rooted in</b>		
<b>Focuses on</b>		
<b>Is</b>	Self-	Self-
<b>Moves</b>	One away from the	Towards to _____ it
<b>Promotes</b>		Believes all things and thinks no evil.
<b>Focuses on</b>		What can be _____ to help
<b>Says</b>	“I won’t even try”	_____ obediently and _____ on God’s grace
<b>Disposition of self</b>	Secludes	Sacrifices self and _____
<b>Trusts in</b>	Self and man	God. Truly believing.

#### IV. So, Is Worry Sinful?

A. Yes. We are commanded to not worry by \_\_\_\_\_. (Mt. 6:19-34)

B. Yes. We are commanded to not worry in \_\_\_\_\_ writings. (Phil. 4:6)

C. Yes. Because it exposes the roots of \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_

1. Mt. 6:19-25 Idolatry means to worship someone or something other than the true God.

- Definition of idol: “An idol is anything or anyone that captures our hearts and minds and affections more than God.” Brad Bigney, *Gospel Treason*, p.24

- Giving yourself to some person, goal, idea, concern or object rather than Jesus.

- Putting your desires above God’s desires and commands

- Allowing your worry about the future and things to be more important than thinking and acting God’s way.

- Worry reveals idolatry in the heart; a misplaced focus.

- What you worry about reveals your idols.

2. Mt. 6:25-34 Worry shows unbelief that needs to be conquered by faith.

- Jesus called worriers people of “little faith”.

- Worry is the fruit of remaining unbelief and doubt. Worry indicates living for someone or something other than the Lord.

- The worrier must focus on God’s care (vs. 25-30), God’s omniscience (v. 31-32), God’s promises (v.33), and pleasing God by carrying out today’s obligations (v.34).

D. Since it is sin, the answer is \_\_\_\_\_.

Idolatry and unbelief must be replaced by right praying, right thinking, and right acting (Phil. 4:6-9).

- Right praying: Confess worry as sin, present your requests, learn thankfulness.

- Right thinking: disciplining self to “dwell on these things” and planning accordingly to meet biblical priorities and responsibilities.

- Right acting: focus on fulfilling today’s responsibilities, living your theology, learning from productive biblical leaders.

## V. Helping people who are struggling with worry

Initial thoughts: We are able to combat worry through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Luke 12:11-12, “And when they bring you before the synagogues and the rulers and the authorities, do not be anxious about how you should defend yourself or what you should say,<sup>12</sup> for the Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour what you ought to say.”

2 Tim. 1:7, “for God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control.”

1 Pet. 5:7, “casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you.”

### **For the Christian, overcoming worry is relationship, not a technique!!!!**

- A. Listen carefully to your counselees and what they might be valuing and trusting in as they express their worries.
- B. Convey to your counselees the hope we have in Christ, in His Word, and in the Holy Spirit. Share testimony of the hope you have.
- C. Help your counselees come to understand that worry is sinful.
- D. Help your counselees see the sins beneath the sin: idolatry and unbelief.
- E. Lead your counselees to repenting of their sin of worry and to trust and rely on God.
- F. Help your counselees have a fresh sight of God as one who cares and will provide and can be trusted. Passages like Haggai 2, Ps. 27, John 16:32, 2 Tim. 4:16 – 17 and others can help.
- G. Have your counselees keep a journal of temptations, victories, and failures, recording what they were desiring and choosing to believe during these incidents. As they review their journal, have them pray prayers of praise and thanks for their victories and of repentance and asking help for their failures.
- H. In times of temptation teach them to pray, to worship the Lord, recall His promises, focus on God’s attributes (like sovereignty, love, wisdom, goodness, power, etc.), and act in faith.
- I. Have them memorize specific verses that speak to their issues, like Phil. 4:6-8, 1 Pet. 5:6-7, and Mt. 6:33-34.
  - John Piper offers these verses for these specific situations (John Piper, *Future Grace* Chapter 3) :
  - 1. Risky new situation or a meeting you are anxious about: Isa. 41:10
  - 2. Worried about feeling useless and empty: Isa. 55:11
  - 3. Worried about being too tired or weak or incompetent do to your work: 2 Cor. 12:9
  - 4. Anxious about a decision: Ps. 32:8
  - 5. Anxious about facing an opponent: Rom. 8:31
  - 6. Worried about the welfare of loved ones: Mt. 7:11, Mk. 10:29-30
  - 7. Worried about getting sick: Ps. 34:19
  - 8. Worried about getting old: Isa. 46:4

9. Anxious about dying: Rom. 14:7-9

10. Worried about disappointing God and falling away from him: Phil. 1:6; Heb. 7:25

J. Encourage them to get ongoing help from another believer and not go this alone.

## **VI. Fear**

### **A. Definition of Fear:**

1. An unpleasant emotion caused by the belief that someone or something, whether real or imagined, is dangerous, likely to cause pain, or a threat.
2. Biblically, the Hebrew and Greek words convey a mild uneasiness to a stark terror depending on the object of the fear and the situation.
3. The fear of God or of manifestations of the divine became a subcategory of fear in the Bible. While the normal meaning of fear as dread or terror is retained in the theological use of the terms, a special nuance of reverential awe or worshipful respect becomes the dominant notion.

### **B. Some fears are right.**

1. Fear of God (Eccl. 12:13-14, 2 Cor. 5:10, Prov. 1:7)
2. Fear of danger (Job 41:33, Gen. 4:14-15, 1 Cor. 6:19-20)
3. Fear due to guilt (Pr. 28:1, Mt. 14:1-2, Lev. 26:17-18, 36)
4. Fear is basically right and good when it moves us toward God and towards doing right.

### **C. Many fears are wrong.**

1. Fear of man. (Jn. 12:42-43, Luke 12:4-5)
2. Fear of temporal rather than eternal. (Luke 12:4-5, 1 Cor. 4:5)
3. Fear of things we cannot change. (Prov. 3:25, Gen. 4:14)
4. Fear is basically wrong and sinful when it is allowed to motivate thinking and behavior that is unbiblical and moves us away from God.

D. How to overcome fear.

1. Develop a strong focus on God. (Gal. 1:10, 2 Cor. 5:9-10, Isa. 26:3, Ps. 46:1-10)
2. Deal with any guilt properly. (Pr. 28:1, 1 John 1:9, Mt. 5:23-24)
3. Develop love as the put-on for fear. (1 John 4:15-21, 2 Tim. 1:7)
4. Adopt a mindset of fearful situations being viewed as an opportunity to grow. (Rom. 8:28-29, Mt. 5:16, 1 Cor. 6:19-20)
5. Memorize and meditate on key Scriptures to exercise and build faith. (1 Pet. 5:7, Ps. 118:6, Ps. 27:1, etc.)

**Resources:**

Booklets-

What to do When Fear Overcomes You by Jay Adams  
Fear: Breaking Its Grip by Lou Priolo  
What to do When You Worry All the Time by Jay Adams  
Worry by David Powlinson  
Anger, Anxiety and Fear by Stuart Scott  
Living in a Dangerous World by William Smith  
Stress by David Powlinson  
Anxiety: Anatomy and Cure by Robert Kelleman  
Social Anxiety by Amy Baker

Books-

Breaking the Worry Habit...Forever by Elizabeth George  
Calm My Anxious Heart by Linda Dillow  
Down but Not Out by Wayne Mack  
In the Arena of the Mind by John Vandegriff  
The Joy of Fearing God by Jerry Bridges  
Loving God with All Your Mind by Elizabeth George  
Overcoming Fear, Worry and Anxiety by Elyse Fitzpatrick  
Running Scared by Ed Welch  
Trusting God by Jerry Bridges  
What Do You Think of Me? Why Do I Care? By Ed Welch  
When People are Big and God is Small by Ed Welch