

Why Do We Worry

By

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Introduction

One morning, as I was doing my daily reading, I came across a passage in Matthew, where Jesus instructs us not to worry. I immediately thought, “Is that possible? Is He serious? How can He really mean that?” It appeared that Jesus was telling us not to do something that was impossible. Everyone worries; it comes so naturally. Life is full of “stuff” that comes into our lives that causes us to worry.

But after reading the passage a second time and thinking about it, I realized that worry was really a matter of **choice, priority and relationship**.

This lesson discusses the pitfalls associated with worry and how to overcome our “natural” tendency.

Scriptures Used In This Lesson

Matthew 6: 25 – 34.

Romans 8: 28

Jeremiah 29:10 – 12

Psalms 37: 23 – 26

Proverbs 10:22 – 23

Philippians 4:4 – 7

Psalms 55:22

1 Peter 5:6 - 7

Psalms 23

Psalms 37:39 – 40

Matthew 11:28 – 30

Jesus Said, “Don’t Worry”

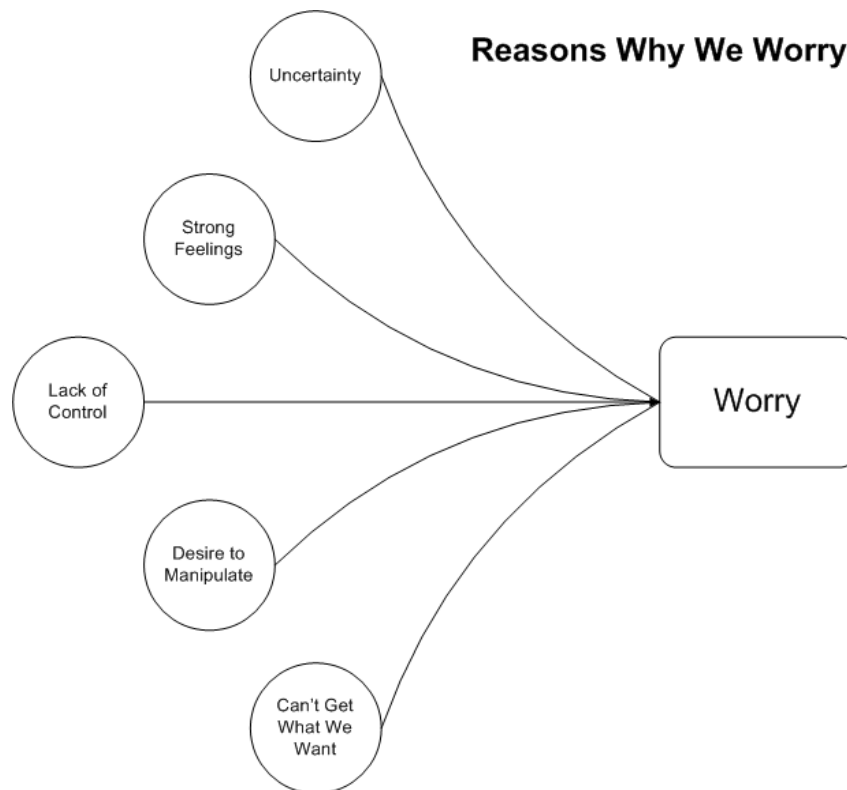
Read Matthew 6:25 – 34. Worry, for some, is considered a “natural” emotion. I’ve heard the following statements many times:

- “It’s natural for us to worry about things and people we love.”
- “It’s okay for us to worry. Everyone does it.”
- “I worry all the time; I can’t help it.”

But Jesus said, “Do not worry”. So why do we?

Reasons Why We Worry

The reasons we worry are many, but the diagram below illustrates some causes of the emotion.



Uncertainty – One of the main reasons why we worry is that we can't see the future, i.e. we are uncertain about how a set of circumstances will turnout. Our level of comfort depends on how far we can see into the future. Since we can't see very far, we worry.

What we forget is that God knows the future. Our comfort comes from residing in a God who has promised to work out every circumstance to our benefit. Read Romans 8:28. As Christians we have all been called into His Kingdom (His reign in our lives). And He has a purpose for each one of us.

Sometimes our struggles are part of God's overall plan for our lives. Read Jeremiah 29:10 – 12, as God encourages His people after they suffered in Babylonian captivity for seventy years. God doesn't forget and is ever mindful of His children.

Strong Feelings – As a parent, I am keenly aware of how worry over our children can become a dominant force in our lives and can even "consume" us. We love them and don't want to see any harm come to them. We spend over a decade actively protecting them, so worry can become a way of life. The same is true for any other person or thing towards which we have strong emotions.

But read the comfort God gives through David in Psalm 37: 23 – 26. God cares about the things we care about. He knows how precious our children are to us. The Bible says that they are a reward to us (Psalm 127:3). So if the Almighty cares about our children, we can rest that they are in His hands...the Great Provider and Protector.

Lack of Control – For some, control of a situation is crucial to their sense of “peace”. Control provides security; so without it, they feel a sense of insecurity that leads to worry.

What’s forgotten again is that God is in control. He is sovereign. We have to trust God *through the situation*, whether the immediate results turn out like we want or not.

Desire to Manipulate – The desire to manipulate is related to control, but adds in a little deceit. Our motives are not completely pure and are not completely revealed. Our intentions may be “good”, but the means by which we bring them about involves deceit or concealment. In order to get the desired result, sometimes we will:

- Tell the truth, but not all of it
- Tell a “white lie”
- Give enough information to lead someone in the direction we want them to go
- Ask “leading” questions

We have to remember that deceit is what the devil used to cause Eve to sin. Jesus even refers to the devil as “the father of lies” (John 8:44). “White lies” chip away at our relationship with our Father. A diminished relationship causes us to be separated from Him. Separation from Him leads to death.

Can’t Get What We Want – There are times when our desire to get what we want is so strong that we worry. We never stop to ask:

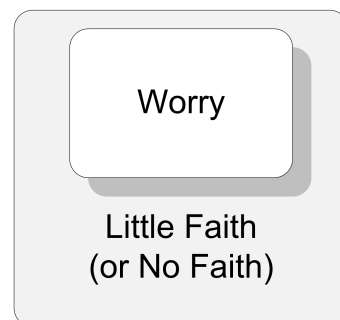
- Is this what God wants me to have?
- What is God’s timing in this situation?
- Is this consistent with God’s plan for my life?
- Is this really good for me at this time?
- Why can’t I wait?

When God provides the blessing, it is truly a blessing; a manipulated “blessing” usually comes with trouble. Read Proverbs 10:22 – 23.

What’s Really Behind Worry

So What’s Behind Worry?

All of these things lead to worry. But what do they all have in common? The key is given in Matthew 6:30. Read the verse again. Notice how Jesus refers to those who worry. Jesus refers to those of “little faith”, but sometimes we exhibit “no faith” in dealing with our situation. Our emotions may be so intense that we totally forget about God. There are times when we have determined that we will do things our way, regardless; we have no confidence in God and willfully leave Him out of the picture. Worry is about faith, or the lack thereof.



Key Point: Worry is really a lack of faith in God.

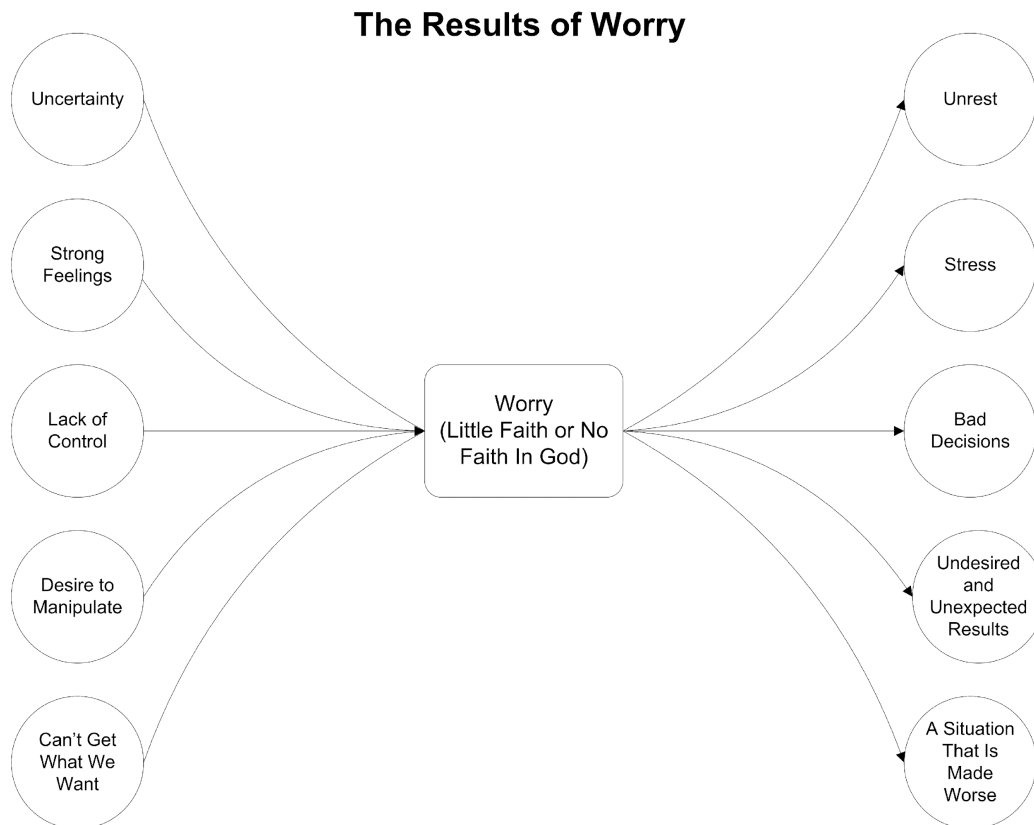
Can you think of a current situation where you are not trusting God? Why not? What will it take for you to change and start trusting Him? In the past, has worry given you the outcome you desired?

And what does worry or a lack of faith lead to? Nothing good, as the graphic below illustrates. The outcomes of worry are:

- Unrest
- Stress
- Bad Decisions
- Undesired and Unexpected Results
- A Situation That Is Made Worse Than It Was Originally

All this equates to a diminished or no relationship with our Heavenly Father.

Can you think of examples of how someone you know worried about a situation and encountered one of the outcomes above?



God has prepared a way of peace in our lives, no matter what happens. Too often we **choose** a more difficult path. We want what we want, when we want it. We truly act as “little children” at times. The **priority** of our lives is based on what we want, not what God wants. And this damages our **relationship** with Him. This is how worry is really a matter of choice, priority and relationship.

Which of the outcomes did you experience the last time you worried about a situation? Has worrying about a situation ever brought you the lasting, desired results you wanted? Why do you continue to worry about situations?

The Solution

So what’s the solution to worry? It’s all about faith. God encourages us to trust Him. Read the following scriptures:

Philippians 4:4 – 7

Psalm 55:22

I Peter 5:6 - 7

Psalm 23

Psalm 37:39 - 40

God loves you. He values your relationship with Him. He values your *trust* in Him.

When our youngest son was in junior high school, he would occasionally ask me for money so he could go see a movie the coming weekend. I would tell him, “Sure. I get paid on Friday and I’ll give you some money then.” He would say, “Okay”, and that would be the end of the conversation about the movie. When Friday came around, I would go into his room after I got home from work and would lay some money on his desk. A couple of hours later, before he left, he would say, “Thanks for the money” and then leave.

Because we had a relationship, he trusted me and my word. He did not try to manipulate me or his mom during the week. He did not stay awake at night wondering if I would keep my word. Because of what I had done for him in the past, he had confidence in my word. He slept with peace.

How much so we ought to be with God. We should sleep with peace knowing that He will keep his word. The solution to worry involves the following:

1. We need to remind ourselves of what He had done for us in the past.
2. We need to know what His Word says (the scriptures above are examples).
3. We need to continually build our relationship with Him (through prayer and meditation on His Word).
4. We need to make a decision to trust Him. Sometimes there will be a conflict between what we know is true versus what we feel. In this case trust will be a decision.

Key Point: Sometimes trust in God is a decision.

With which of the four points above do you most struggle? Why? What can you do to correct it?

Summary

Read Matthew 11: 28 – 30. Jesus could not have made it any more clear. Jesus is the key to our peace. He is the reason we don't have to worry. Sometimes it's scary because we imagine all the unpleasant consequences that could happen. But at some point, we have to make a decision to trust Him, and leave all the circumstances to Him. And you *can* do this...because He cares for *you*.