

October 22, 2023

## Missing PEACE – (Part 4) Breaking the Grip of Worry

In this series we are covering a number of topics to help us experience the PEACE we are missing (**Anxiety, Depression, Negative Thinking, Trauma, Burnout**) Today's topic is **WORRY**.

**According to The World Health Org**—Americans are the most WORRY-filled society in the world!

Maybe not the best thing to be the best at!

**Daily stress and worry plague a majority of American adults — 60 percent, according to a new nationwide Gallup poll.**

### I. WHAT WORRY DOES

- We already know that too much worry and stress are really bad for our MENTAL health, and PHYSICAL health.
- Today we focus on what Jesus taught about what it does to us SPIRITUALLY.

#### A. **It CHOKES you**

*Mark 4:19 (NIV) 19 but the **worries** of this life, the deceitfulness of wealth and the desires for other things come in and **choke the word**, making it unfruitful.*

The worries of this life...chokes off God's word. A worrier might hear God's word but it bears no fruit.

God's word should bring peace, but that message of peace isn't getting through to a worrier.

God brings love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, and self-control, but the fruit of God's Gospel, the fruit of the Spirit isn't getting through to a worrier.

Have you ever experienced that? I sure have.

**QUESTION:** Why do we who have access to so much more than most of the world worry more than the rest of the world?

It has to do with our focus.

Here's a little video test about focus.

## VIDEO The monkey business illusion

The point of this “test” is that **whatever you focus on affects you.**

*Mark 4:19 (NIV) but*

1. the worries of this life,
2. the deceitfulness of wealth and
3. the desires for other things come in and choke the word, making it unfruitful.

VIDEO CLIP. The 2 minute CLIP of Tyler Staton (last WEDNESDAY’s) verse of the day video 1 Chronicles 16:11.

**whatever you focus on affects you.**

## ... WHAT WORRY DOES

### **B. It BLINDS your ability to FOCUS**

*Matthew 6:23–25 (NIV) But if your eyes are unhealthy, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light within you is darkness, how great is that darkness! <sup>24</sup> “No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money. <sup>25</sup> “**Therefore** I tell you, **do not worry** about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes?*

Worry is what I do when the eyes of my heart are focused on the wrong things!

When my eyes are unhealthy I focus on the wrong things! And when I focus on the wrong things the light within me is darkness!

No wonder Jesus says, “Do Not Worry”.

If I don’t pay attention to the connecting word, “*therefore*”, I miss his point. When he says “*Do not worry*”, my reaction is a push back like: “*Yeah right!, That’s easier said than done!*”

Trying to break away from my worries is like wrestling an octopus.

It’s not so easy wrestling this octopus while it’s choking us.

But Jesus does not simply say “*Stop it!*”! He teaches; illustrates, and explains.

Let’s focus now on Jesus’ explanation about what worry does!

*Matthew 6:34 (NIV) Therefore **do not worry** about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.*

## . . . WHAT WORRY DOES

### **C. It FIXATES on FUTURE problems without FIXING anything**

It is a lie to by worrying over tomorrow’s problem we can control it somehow! We can’t. There are too many unknown variables about tomorrow.

Controlling the future is God’s department, not a human department. We are not equipped to control every future contingency!

- Concern focuses on challenges and moves you to take action.
- Worry focuses on what’s beyond your control and results in inaction.

**Worry is stewing without doing.**

**The primary danger in WORRY is that it steals our focus away from God.**

When you focus on the darkness you won’t see the hope God has for you. Focusing on the darkness leads to more darkness. It leads to dark dominoes falling.

**God—I don’t really trust you!**

**God—I don’t trust your plan!**

**God—I don’t believe you are with me!**

**God—I’m not sure you are really good!**

Since the future is the future, there is little you can lay your hand on today about tomorrow. You can only do something today.

Worrying does not control the future. We do not actually know what tomorrow will look like.

That’s why worry tears us apart.

**Nothing gets better from worry, in fact, your mental health gets worse.**

**But what do you do...if you find yourself in this spot?**

## II. WHAT TO DO TO BREAK ITS GRIP

*Matthew 6:33 (NIV) But seek first his [God's] kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.*

Whenever you're worried, freaked out, panicked, and don't know what to do, do this! Seek first God's kingdom and His righteousness. Seek first His presence. You seek first His goodness, and then everything else will be added unto you.

**IMPORTANT QUESTIONS:** Is God really first in your life? Is he first in your day? When you wake up in the morning, does your mind drift to all the things you have to do that day? Or do you bring your thoughts toward the bigness of God? When you think about the financial pressures, do you tend to put him first in whatever he blesses you with? Or do you put him last, or do you consider him even at all? Do you let your mind go to the worst possible scenario? Or do you take your mind toward the GLORY AND GOODNESS of God?

You have to decide where your focus will be!

*But seek first his [God's] kingdom*

This isn't just talking about "Pie in the sky, by and by." This isn't just thinking about the "Kingdom of God" in the future.

When Jesus said to "seek first God's kingdom" he was explaining more than the good news of getting into the kingdom of heaven later, he's explaining about the kingdom of heaven getting into us, our children, marriages, and families. He's explaining about the God of peace, and the peace of God experienced in our own lives now!

This is how you break the grip of worry! Seek God and his Kingdom FIRST!

**VIDEO.** The 4 minute Tyler Staton verse of the day video 1 Chronicles 16:11.

# Talk It Over

## MISSING PEACE

### Part 4

#### Breaking the Grip of Worry

### SMALL TALK

1. Can you share a recent situation that made you feel worried or anxious and briefly explain why it had that effect on you?

### VIEWPOINT

2. **Read Matthew 6:25-34.** What does Jesus teach us about the futility of worrying about our daily needs and life in general?
3. According to this passage, what are some examples of God's provision for the natural world, and how can we apply this understanding to our worries?
4. How does the concept of seeking God's kingdom first relate to overcoming worry in our lives, as mentioned in Matthew 6:33?
5. Jesus advises us not to worry about tomorrow (Matthew 6:34). What are some practical strategies for living in the present and not being consumed by worrying about the future?

### GETTING PERSONAL

6. How might applying the principles from Matthew 6 help you handle a similar situation as described in question 1?
7. In what ways do you currently seek God's kingdom in your daily life? Are there areas where you could improve your focus on God's priorities instead of your worries?

### MAKING PROGRESS (THIS WEEK)

1. What are some concrete steps you can take this week to prioritize seeking God's kingdom in your daily activities?