

Letting Go of Joy-Stealers

June 11, 2024

Let Go of Worrying

All of us are aware of how worthless and harmful it is to worry, but the challenge is—how do we let go of it?

Matthew 6:25 – 29, 31 – 34:

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 important than food, and the body more important than clothes. Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life? And why do you worry about clothes? See how the lilies of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these... So do not worry, saying, "What shall we eat?" or "What shall we drink?" or "What shall we wear?" For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

When you read this passage, what does it tell you about how Jesus feels about our bad habit of worrying?

Jesus told us why we should not worry about these things:

- 1. The Father has pledged to take care of our needs.**
- 2. Jesus tells us not to worry because it just simply does no good whatsoever.**

Just think back on what you worried about last month or last year—or yesterday. What did you worry about the most? How many of those worries have actually materialized?

Worrying probably *contributes* to bad things happening; it certainly doesn't *prevent* them from happening.

Worrying can become a self-fulfilling prophecy

- 3. Worrying is a poor testimony to those around us.**

Isn't it true that most of the people around you are worrying? So, if those of us who are disciples of Jesus Christ worry just like everyone else, what kind of testimony is that?

The ideal woman is described in Proverbs 31 as a woman who can "laugh at the days to come" (v. 25). What does that say to you? Are you a woman who "laughs at the days to come"?

Just imagine that you're a mom or dad with a six-year-old child and she worries everyday whether or not she'll have food to eat, clothes to wear, etc. If your precious child did that, it would be offensive to you, would it not? How could she doubt that you would continue to take care of her as you always have done?





And yet, as children of God, isn't that what we do to God when we worry? It must be offensive to him when he sees us worrying because worry is always an indication that we're not trusting God in whatever we're worrying about.

Worrying is totally worthless, but even more than that, worrying is faithless! Paul wrote that "anything that does not come from faith is sin" (Rom. 14:23b). Worrying does not come from faith. Therefore, continually worrying about anything is a sin.

Difference Between Worry and Concern

The difference between a worry and a concern is the way we handle them.

Matthew 11:28 – 30:

Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.

If your burden of worry is heavy, then you're carrying the wrong burden. *"If it's not light, it's not right!"*

How to Get Over Habitual, Worthless Worrying

Worrying can become addictive. If you truly want to get over worrying, the first thing is to confess your worrying sins. What do you worry about most—and please be specific? I encourage you to ask God to forgive you for worrying about these things.

My most common worrying sins are:

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

How can you/will you replace worrying thoughts with right thoughts?

I will replace worrying thoughts with/by:

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

2 Corinthians 10:5:

We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.

Let Go of Unrealistic Expectations

Those who expect life to deliver a continual stream of satisfaction and contentment live in a world of disappointment.

Philippians 4:12:

I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want.

We need to enroll in Contentment 101 and learn this secret of contentment.

Philippians 4:13:

I can do all this through him who gives me strength.

The Phillips paraphrase translation puts it this way:

I am ready for anything through the strength of the one who lives within me.

Getting over unrealistic expectations is one of the best gifts you'll ever give yourself and that begins by learning the secret of contentment.

Common Areas of Unrealistic Expectations

Disappointment is caused by our expectations not being met. So, what expectation did you have/do you have that was not/has not been fulfilled and therefore caused/causes you to be disappointed?

Unrealistic Expectations of People

Most relationship struggles are created by our expectations not being met.

There is no person on earth who can be everything you want him or her to be. It is self-imposed misery to continually expect of others what they cannot or will not deliver.

Unrealistic Expectations of Things

Money and what it can buy have always claimed to be our gateway to security, contentment, fulfillment, success. Jesus warned us about it:

Matthew 6:24:

No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money.

Have you been thinking: "If only I had this, then I would be happy"?

Unrealistic Expectations of Ourselves

The Psalmist wrote: "He knows how we are formed, he remembers that we are dust" (Ps. 103:14). God knows how frail we are at best, and yet some of us never can accept our less-than-perfect condition.

One of my favorite classics is *Knowing God* by J.I. Packer, and I have this quote from his book written in my prayer journal to remind me of this marvelous truth:

There is tremendous relief in knowing that His love to me is utterly realistic, based at every point on prior knowledge of the worst about me, so that no discovery now can disillusion Him about me, in the way I am so often disillusioned about myself, and quench His determination to bless me. There is, certainly, great cause for humility in the thought that He sees all the twisted things about me that my fellowmen do not see (and am I glad!), and that He sees more corruption in me than that which I see in myself, (which, in all conscience, is enough). There is, however, equally great incentive to worship and love God in the thought that, for some unfathomable reason, He wants me as His friend, and desires to be my friend, and has given His Son to die for me in order to realize this purpose.

Jesus was aware of his disciples' inability to be perfect. Even at the time he needed them most, they failed him as he asked them to pray with him in the Garden of Gethsemane.

Matthew 26:40b – 41:

"Couldn't you men keep watch with me for one hour?" he asked Peter. ⁴¹ "Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak."

1 Corinthians 13:9 – 10, 12:

For we know in part and we prophesy in part, ¹⁰ but when completeness comes, what is in part disappears. . . For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.

Trying to be perfect can lead us to:

- dishonesty (We have to lie to be 'nice' and keep everyone happy.)
- illusion (We have to stay in control to be perfect.)
- denial (We cannot let ourselves know we have made mistakes.)
- defensiveness (We cannot let others show us our mistakes.)

The bottom line is that perfectionists live in fear—fear of being their real, imperfect selves.

The Source of Our Unrealistic Expectations

- First, we've been fed erroneous information from the world around us about what we should expect from people and things.
- Second, when we compare ourselves with others, we can form unrealistic expectations.
- Third, some of us have been shaped by our parents to expect too much of ourselves.
- Other sources?

Finding Victory Over Unrealistic Expectations

What can we do to keep from setting ourselves up for failure and disappointment because of unrealistic expectations of possessions, of parenting, of marriage, of careers, of ourselves—of life itself?

- Become intentional about enjoying the little things that come your way.
- Learn to appreciate what you do have and dismiss from your mind what you don't have.
- Develop a very strong attitude of gratitude.
- Others?



Philippians 4:8:

Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.

Hebrews 13:5:

Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you."

My recurring unrealistic expectations are:

I will become intentional about:

___Enjoying the everyday pleasant and good blessings that are from God

___Being thankful for what I have instead of focusing on what I don't have

___Appreciating the good in others instead of wishing they were different

___Giving myself a break and appreciating how God has created me