



Discovery Series.
Condensed

What are you
WORRIED
ABOUT?



Looking
Deeper



Looking
Deeper



What are you worried about?

Some of us lie awake at night worrying about family members, health, finances or a thousand other things. Worry can show up in lots of different ways. It eats away at our minds, keeps us from staying focused and can result in migraines or panic attacks. Others try to hide worry behind anything that can provide a distraction. No matter who we are, we all have to deal with worry.

Is worry always a bad thing? It is right to have concerns. That shows we are responsible and care about what happens in our situations and to the people we love. However, it's how we handle our concerns that matters.

Do we just get worn down and drained by our anxiety? Many of the circumstances and challenges we face are totally outside of our control. Sometimes we face impossible choices; the fear of the future can feel like it never goes away; and events or mistakes from our past can continue to haunt us and fill us with anxiety.

Or do our worries direct us to depend on the God who cares for us (1 Peter 5:7)? The Bible says that there are no impossible situations for God; there is nothing that can overwhelm or defeat Him. So how can God help us cope with our worry?

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Turning to God

God never intended us to have to deal with or manage our problems or worries alone. He made us to live with Him in a safe, loving relationship. Jesus, who is God, came to earth over 2,000 years ago to die on the cross. In doing so, He took the penalty for the way we often reject and ignore God. He then rose to life again three days later. It is this new life with God that He offers to each one of us. Christians are people who trust in Jesus to bring them back into a new relationship with God. This means that, just as *they* now belong to God, so do their worries and concerns.

When we're worrying, we normally end up focusing on possibilities that have not yet happened or are beyond our control. But those who trust Jesus have the option to focus on God, not their stresses. When we worry, we are actually recognising the truth that we are not able to solve all our problems in our own strength. Times of worry are instead times to remember who God is: His character, promises and power.

Nothing happens in this world that God doesn't know about. The Bible tells us, "The LORD has established His throne in heaven, and His kingdom rules over all" (Psalm 103:19). God is the one truly in

charge of this world, and we can bring all our worries and fears to Him. Here are just a few important things to remember about God during stressful times:

He is everywhere. There is no place, no matter how alone we may feel, that God cannot be. He is everywhere (Psalm 139:7–12)!

He knows everything. He knows what troubles us and what scares us. God is fully aware of, and involved in, our situations. God knows and can meet our deepest needs (Psalm 33:13–14).

He is all-powerful. God has limitless power to act on our behalf. And we can trust His perfect timing to provide for us. He knows what is best for us, even if it isn't what we may expect (Matthew 19:26).

He cares for us. Because Jesus died for us on the cross, we can be certain that God loves us and that nothing will separate us from His love (Romans 8:38–39). We can place all our cares on His shoulders. He is even more concerned than we are about our health, work, friends and family.

He will never leave us. The more we worry, the more alone and helpless we can feel. But if we belong to God, we will never have to carry anything on our own. In Psalm 139, David (a soldier and king) wrote about God's continual presence. He said that God knew everything about him even before he was born (vv. 13–16). In fact, we can't escape God's presence, no matter where we go (vv. 7–12). Morning or night, land or sea, heights or depths, God is there.



But how do we give our worries to God?

The answer is not in what we do, but in what we believe. Are we trusting in our own feelings and abilities? Or do we trust the words and promises of the Bible—that God is powerful and trustworthy?

David knew what it was to trust God during desperate times. Even as he wrote about war, poverty and the men who were actively trying to kill him, David said that those who trust in God “shall be satisfied” (Psalm 37:19). The basic meaning of this is that those who trust in God *will find their expectation in Him fully met*. In the midst of our concerns, we need not be afraid. God will be with us and provide for us.

This isn't a promise that no bad things will happen to us. We will all go through hard times and worry about lots of different things. The promise in the Bible is that God can be trusted. We give Him our worries when we choose to trust and rely on Him rather than ourselves or anyone else.

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Jesus Himself explains that handing our worries over to God is a matter of priorities. We easily worry about food, clothing and the future, but Jesus said, “seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you” (Matthew 6:33). Jesus was saying that our first concern should

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.....

be getting to know God, becoming like Him (which is “righteousness”) and living for Him. That should be our priority. When it is, and we’re spending time with God, we’ll more readily know that everything is in His control.

We were made to rely on God, imitating His character and love. When, instead, we keep worrying about things in our lives, we end up distancing ourselves from Him.



Turning worry into prayer

Few of us have gone through the kind of problems Paul (a writer in the New Testament part of the Bible) faced. He spent his Christian life telling people about Jesus and the new life with God He offers. This also meant that Paul made a lot of enemies among his fellow countrymen who felt Christianity was a threat to their national security. Yet despite all the threats, beatings and imprisonments, he wrote: “Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which [is above] all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:6–7).

There are three key words used by Paul that describe how we should handle our worry.

Prayer. Prayer is simply talking to God. It is a time in our day when we choose to focus on God, His character and His promises. Prayer is talking to God about who He is and who He has made us. It is a

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great way to respond to what we read about Him in the Bible and helps us to really reflect on how great, powerful, loving and awesome He is. Prayer lifts us out of our troubles to see the world from God's perspective.

Supplication. This is just a fancy word for "requests". As we think about God's greatness and His love towards us, we can confidently ask Him to help with our worries and struggles. He is able to cope with them and guide us through.

Thanksgiving. Thankfulness seems alien to those who are worrying. But it is actually a correct and powerful response to anxiety. Christians have so much to be thankful for—they have been saved by Jesus, brought back to God and promised a place in heaven (John 14:1-6). When we bring our worries to God in thankfulness, it doesn't mean we're thankful for

.....	our struggles. It means we're
<i>Christians</i>	thankful because we know
<i>have so</i>	what God has done for us in
<i>much to be</i>	the past and we know that,
thankful for—	even though we may not be
<i>they have</i>	able to see it right away, He is
<i>been saved</i>	working for us in the present.
by Jesus	We can thank Him for loving
.....	us, understanding our problems
	and for His promise to provide
	for us.

What's the outcome of praying? Lightning-bolts from

the skies that fix our problems immediately? No. When we give our worries to God, He will answer in His perfect timing, even if that isn't as quick as we want. But what we will be able to experience when we pray is "the peace of God, which [is above] all understanding". It's above understanding because technically nothing about our circumstances changes when we pray. Our problems will still be there. But Paul says we'll experience peace. This peace is based in our confidence in God, rather than in the absence of problems.

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What worry can do for you

Worry can either bring us closer to God, or it can drive us away from Him. The cure to worry is not independence, but God-dependence.

When it comes to worry, followers of Jesus stand out in two ways: what they are concerned about and what they do with their fears. Christians have exactly the same worries as everyone else, but as they get to know God better, they realise that they can trust all their concerns to Him. If all their concerns are being handled by God, they are freed up to focus on God's concerns. What is God concerned about? His concern is to see more and more people trusting Jesus and coming back into a relationship with Him.

And this should be our first concern too. But it can't be if we are distracted firstly by our worries. This doesn't mean our everyday concerns aren't valid or serious. They are; and God knows this. But God can do more for us than we can on our own. He loves us and will provide what we need. If we can start to give our worries to Him, we will begin to see how dependable He is. And as we grow in confidence, seeing that our lives are in His hands, we will be able to share our confidence with others. In this way we will join God in His concern for the many people who still don't know Him.



A worrier's story

We received this story from someone who struggled with worry and anxiety. With God as their focal point, this person told us how they found a better way to handle their stress:

“God challenged me about my worry through Philippians 1:6: ‘He who has begun a good work in you (which starts at trusting Jesus) will complete *it* until the day of Jesus Christ’. But I soon realised the process of becoming like Jesus doesn’t take six easy lessons or six months, but continues until we are in heaven with Him.

“God showed me four disciplines which had a huge effect in my life: read, pray, trust and obey. **Read** the Bible. **Talk** (pray) with God (this isn’t just five minutes here and there. Talking with God is a way of life). **Trust** God for the things we cannot control. **Obey** Him in the things we can control.

“These four disciplines are about depending on God. But we must actually practise them, not just know about them. The blessing of being in a weakened condition and running out of our own resources is that it helps us actually come to God and ask for His help.

“As I began to include these disciplines into my life I found that I got to know Jesus so much better. He began to prove His sufficiency to me in the everyday

things I worried about. And as He continued to come through for me, I began to trust Him more and more, growing in confidence.

“The four disciplines of reading, praying, trusting and obeying meant there was something for me to do with my worry—bring it to God. As I did, I allowed God to do His work in my life. I began to find less and less reason for worry.

“Although we may think we are doing God’s service by impressing people and coming across as strong, we may be depriving them of the last hope they had that God might have something for them. This is because their reaction to strength is not, ‘Oh, that’s for me!’ Instead they say, ‘I could never be like that.’ But if they see a weak person who has learned to be strong and is still learning to receive strength from God, they will be filled with hope. They will say, ‘Wow! If that works for them, maybe there’s something in it for me.’”

If you are struggling with worry or anxiety, tell one of your church leaders or another Christian you know so that they can pray with you. They will be able to help you turn worry into something that brings you closer to God in dependency, rather than something that pulls you away from Him.

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