

WHY WORRY? • WORRY



Photograph by Greg Schneider/Worldwide Challenge

WHAT'S THIS ABOUT?

In this study, we'll examine Jesus' teaching on the subject of worry.

WHAT DO I NEED TO KNOW?

LUKE 12:22-34

Context

In the previous section, Jesus told the parable of the Rich Fool, warning against greed. This section flows naturally from this topic, as Jesus tells His disciples that in contrast to greed, they can trust God to provide for their needs.

Change Your Thinking: Luke 12:22-30

Jesus begins by looking at the futility of worry. Because worry in the first century swirled around food and clothing, these issues receive explicit treatment. Jesus returns to a familiar form of Jewish teaching we saw in the last study, an argument from the lesser to the greater. Jesus notes that God provides food for the birds and clothing for the flowers and then asks the question, "How much more valuable are you than birds?" The answer is obviously, "a great deal more."

Jesus further brings out the futility of worry when He asks, "Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life?" Jesus' point rings experientially true. Worry, in the end, changes nothing; it is a fruitless activity.

Last, Jesus mentions that worry is an activity in which the pagan world engages. His point is that worry makes sense for those who don't know God, because they have no assurance that God will care for them. In contrast, worry is inappropriate for the Christian, because they have a heavenly Father who loves and cares for them and has infinite power and ability to meet their needs, as well as a complete knowledge of what their true needs are.

Jesus in this passage seems to address the mind as he unravels the illogic of worry. However, ceasing to worry is much easier said than done. Most people know they shouldn't worry, but don't seem to have the ability to stop. That is why Jesus in the next section deals with the root of worry—the heart.

You Can't Change Your Thinking Until You Change Your Heart: Luke 12:28-31

In 12:29 Jesus says not to "set your hearts" on these needs which produce worry. His point is that at the root of the problem is a heart that is set on the wrong thing: meeting our needs alone. Instead, Jesus says to "seek first the kingdom of God." In other words, set your heart on seeking God and serving Him, as well as meeting the

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needs of others. Ultimately, it's not just our thoughts that need to be redirected to halt the encroachment of worry; it's the direction and focus of our heart.

When we focus on God, our worry recedes as we gain a fresh perspective on what truly matters. This realigns our priorities. We also gain an assurance that God is going to meet our needs as we are engaged in fulfilling His will. This sense of assurance is further strengthened as God actually does meet our needs, and we taste of His wonderful provisions. This is a prescription for worry that truly works!

You Can't Change Your Heart Without Taking Action: Luke 12:31-34

In 12:32, Jesus' exhortation to "not be afraid" is parallel to His statement "you of little faith" in 12:28. Fear, in many ways, is the opposite of trust and faith. Jesus begins this section by saying not to fear, but at the same time is basically saying to trust God and have faith.

Jesus instructs His disciples to specifically give away their possessions. This is an important principle. It is easy to say that what we need is to put our hearts on God and His kingdom. What Jesus is doing is giving them a very practical application that will bring this about. In taking this step, they are actually stepping out in faith and trusting God to meet their needs. By directing their treasure toward the kingdom, they are directing their hearts toward the kingdom, for Jesus says, "Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." This action causes a redirection of the heart.

Thus our worrisome thinking changes only when the focus of our heart is changed, and our heart changes focus only when we take specific steps to seek first God's kingdom.

This study is accompanied by an article. Take the time to read it over before the study. Hand it out to the group at the end of the study and have them read it this week.

WHAT IF THERE'S A PROBLEM?

Jesus uses as an example from nature—how God cares for the birds and flowers. In our 21st century minds, nature is not always a helpful way to picture God's care and concern. We tend to view nature, right or wrong, as somewhat brutal and random. Two things are worth noting. One, the 1st century view of nature, and God's working within nature, is probably much different than our own, and presumably did underscore to Jesus' listeners an example of God's care. Two, the argument hinges on a "how much greater than" analogy, and Jesus' point is still left extremely clear; God deeply cares and provides for His children.

WHAT'S YOUR POINT?

The study follows the flow of Jesus teaching. First, we need to change our thinking about worry; however, without changing the focus of our hearts, our thinking will not change. The answer is to seek God and His kingdom, but our hearts are not really redirecting without taking very practical steps to trust God to provide and seek His kingdom. Therefore, Jesus gives the application of giving away their possessions, thus serving God and others, as well as stepping out in faith and trusting God to provide. The application is in the last question, which asks the group what similar step they might take, that would express these things.

MEMORY VERSE

Luke 12:22 "Therefore, I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat; or about your body, what you will wear."

WHAT ARE THE ANSWERS?

1. Both are a wrongful focus on our need to provide for our future and ourselves.
2. God will take care of us, worry can not change the outcome, and this is how the pagan world behaves.
3. Give the group time to write down their answers.
4. Allow the group to share.
5. No. At this juncture He has only addressed the thinking component of worry. The real problem is the heart and how that must be changed.
6. Worry is a result of setting the focus of our hearts on the wrong things.
7. To focus our hearts on seeking after God and His kingdom.
8. Seeking deep fellowship with God. Serving others. Involving oneself in community and ministry.
9. Seeking God's kingdom should not be separated from loving, serving and ministering with, and to, God's people. There is always a strong community focus to the kingdom.
10. Allow the group to share from their experience.
11. They are parallel statements: Fear, in many ways, is the opposite of faith. Jesus begins this section by saying not to fear, but at the same time is basically saying to trust God and have faith.
12. The idea of putting our hearts on God can be too vague and ethereal.
13. In taking this step, they are actually stepping out and trusting God. By directing their treasure toward the kingdom, they are directing their hearts toward the kingdom, for Jesus says, "Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."
14. You might share with the group your own action point.