

Don't Worry. Be Happy.

Don't Worry Be Happy

A lesson on how to live a worry-free
and enjoyable life.

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INTRODUCTION

You may already have learned that as a Christian you are not exempt from life's challenges. The number of situations that can cause worry, stress, tension and/or anxiety are too numerous to list. Not only that, listing them would serve only to highlight the problems, not the solutions. It is the solution to our worry that matters. You know for yourself what it is that is consuming your thoughts right now, or has at some time in your life. Jesus Himself acknowledged that worry can be an issue. He said: *"Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own."* **(Matthew 6:34, NIV)**

Five hundred years ago, Michel de Montaigne said: *"My life has been filled with terrible misfortune; most of which never happened."* Psychology Today proves, statistically, the truth of that statement: *"The average person reported three to four testable worries per day. The result? A whopping 91 percent of worries were false alarms. And of the remaining 9 percent of worries that did come true, the outcome was better than expected about a third of the time. For about one in four participants, exactly zero of their worries materialized."*

Many people who worry on a regular basis just assume that they are a 'worrier'. They believe it is built into their personality, and they just accept it. There is more than one problem with that. First, Jesus told us not to do it. Beyond that, worry has been linked to shrinking brain mass, lowered IQ, heart disease, premature aging, marital problems, clinical depression, and even development of dementia and Alzheimer's.

This booklet is intended to provide solutions, so we won't focus on what won't work. However, let me share a few things quickly that will not solve your 'worry' problem.

- When you have a real-life problem, trying to convince yourself that there is nothing to worry about is not the solution. Doing so is faux faith. You can't talk yourself out of reality.
- When you have a real-life problem, avoiding any attempt at solving it or finding a solution to the situation will not make it go away.
- When you have a real-life problem, trying to hide your emotions, or keeping them inside, will simply add to your troubles. Suppressed emotion becomes volcanic over time. They boil up to the point where they erupt, often in illogical and inappropriate ways at inappropriate times.

- When you have a real-life problem, overthinking it doesn't normally find a solution. Your thoughts become somewhat like a whirlpool that draws your mind deeper and deeper into what you have already told yourself could become a hopeless situation.

So, if the tools that people typically use to deal with their worry do not work, what will? Perhaps this is a hint: *"But blessed is the one who trusts in the LORD, whose confidence is in him. 8 They will be like a tree planted by the water that sends out its roots by the stream. It does not fear when heat comes; its leaves are always green. It has no worries in a year of drought and never fails to bear fruit."* **(Jeremiah 17:7-8)** Where is your confidence? Is it in your own ability to fix things? Is it in fate, the hope that things will find a way to work themselves out? Maybe you have no confidence at all. If your confidence is wholly and completely in God you will not fear. You will not worry.

Let's see what we can glean from Scripture to help us, as people of faith, deal with life in this world.

EASIER SAID THAN DONE

Jesus said this in His famed Sermon on the Mount: *“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?”*

26 *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?*

27 *Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life?*

28 *“And why do you worry about clothes? See how the flowers of the field grow. They do not labor or spin.*

29 *Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these.*

30 *If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith?*

31 *So do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’*

32 *For the pagans run after all these things, and your*

heavenly Father knows that you need them.

33 But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

34 Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own."

(Matthew 6:25-34, NIV)

To make His point, He uses our most base needs as a teaching tool. Don't worry about food, water, having clothes to wear, or about life in general. The things we worry about are usually far less critical to our lives than these things.

I'm not saying, or implying for one second, that Jesus was wrong in saying what He said. I just know that if I was hungry with no apparent way of attaining food, I would struggle with this. Imagine opening the fridge, and all that is left is a nearly empty container of margarine. Imagine opening the cupboard, and you can see the back of it without obstruction. Imagine opening the bread drawer and it is empty. That's it! You literally have nothing to eat, and there is no money in your wallet. How do you respond? Jesus said not to worry about it. God knows your cupboards are empty. If we don't understand biblical principles, that's easier said than done.

Imagine that you fell and tore your last pair of pants. They are literally torn to the point of being unwearable. You open your closet door and are quickly reminded that you have no other pants, nor do you have the resources to purchase another. Jesus reminded us that God clothes the fields by adorning them with flowers. Why would we worry? Jesus said we don't need to.

I remember the first time I heard the word 'Cancer' as it applied to me. Jesus said: "*Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life?*" (**Matthew 6:27**). I'm thankful for what I knew about God and His Word, because in the natural not worrying was easier said than done.

The struggle is real. None of us **want** to worry. We all want to have such complete trust in God that we just know every detail of our life is looked after, just like He takes care of the birds of the air. We want to be the kind of Christian that can face an empty cupboard, a bare closet, an empty wallet, and a negative report of a doctor and sincerely say: "No worries. God's got this". Sometimes we even claim to be that kind of Christian, but lay in our bed, sleepless, at night.

When Jesus instructs us to not worry, is He asking us to dream the impossible dream? Is it a challenge to inspire us to do better, all the while knowing it is an unattainable goal? Is it akin to: *"15 But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; 16 for it is written: 'Be holy, because I am holy.'"* **(1 Peter 1:15-16)**. We all know that perfect holiness is a target we will reach only in standing through our relationship with Christ, but never in practicality while on this earth. Is living worry free another one of those unreachable goals that we are to strive for, all along knowing that we will never completely lay hold of it on this earth – like the carrot before the horse? Is it a lesson that is easy for the Son of God to say, but impossible for us, sinful man, to do? I don't think so. I really don't, but achieving it will require that we faithfully apply biblical principles. Let's take a look at them

A DIJON KIND OF FAITH WILL DO IT

You knew that I was going to talk about faith, didn't you? Of course I have to start there. Jesus taught this to His disciples: *"Truly I tell you, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you."* (**Matthew 17:20, NIV**)

When Mary wondered about the possibility of being pregnant with God's Son, the angel said to her: *"For no word from God will ever fail."* (**Luke 1:37, NIV**). The King James version says it this way: *"For with God nothing shall be impossible."*

In His sermon, Jesus made some profound statements that, I'm sure, was intended to make our understanding of faith simple. He said: *"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?"* (**Matthew 6:26, NIV**). He continues to use

nature, something everyone sees and understands, as His example of God's provision: "*And why do you worry about clothes? See how the flowers of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. 29 Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. 30 If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith?*" **(Matthew 6:28-30)**. There certainly is a great deal of reassurance in these words. God cares for even the least of His creation, and His provision is glorious.

If you have been a Christian for any length of time, you probably have a good understanding of the doctrine of faith. You have probably read these verses numerous times and heard great sermons preached on the subject. Your theology is such that you know that God is both able and trustworthy in any and every circumstance, and yet there are times when you find yourself overcome with worry. You are not alone. So, what is our problem?

Real life issues often challenge us in the area of faith, especially if they are things that we have never experienced before.

The Apostle Peter did an amazing thing. He walked on water. That's crazy! The only time I have

done that is when it has been minus 25 degrees Celsius for a while, and the ice on the river or lake is over a foot thick. It took no faith at all. But Peter walked on liquid! He had faith. He had amazing faith. Here is a small portion of the story: *“Lord, if it’s you,” Peter replied, “tell me to come to you on the water.”* 29 *“Come,” he said. Then Peter got down out of the boat, walked on the water and came toward Jesus.* 30 *But when he saw the wind, he was afraid and, beginning to sink, cried out, “Lord, save me!”* 31 *Immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught him. “You of little faith,” he said, “why did you doubt?”* (Matthew 14:28-31, NIV). Peter had great faith, but there was a line that his faith couldn’t seem to cross. When the wind came up and the waves began to slap against his knees, it drew that line.

We shouldn’t have, but I believe that most of us have lines that we struggle to cross.

Here is another interesting story. Jesus, Peter, James, and John came down from the mountain where Jesus had been transfigured, and had a meeting with Moses and Elijah. When they arrive at the bottom, they meet a man who had brought his demon possessed son to be delivered. In Jesus’ absence, the remaining disciples attempted to deliver the boy, but could not. This is part of the conversation between

Jesus and the boy's father: *"It has often thrown him into fire or water to kill him. But if you can do anything, take pity on us and help us."* 23 *"If you can'?"* said Jesus. ***"Everything is possible for one who believes."*** 24 Immediately the boy's father exclaimed, *"I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!"* (Mark 9:22-24, NIV). Jesus, of course, delivered the boy from the demon.

What impresses me here is that the man acknowledged that his faith had a line that it couldn't seem to cross. He truly believed in Jesus, and yet there was a point at which he began to doubt. Was it that he believed that Jesus could do it, but for some reason, doubted that Jesus would do it for him? Was it that the severity of the demonic activity in his son that caused him to doubt? Was it that the son had been possessed for so long that it was hard to believe that anything could be different? I can't read the father's mind, but I can point out what Jesus said: *"Everything is possible for one who believes."*

We often plant our mustard seed faith under a rock, preventing it from being able to grow past a certain point. The angel said to Mary: *"For with God nothing shall be impossible."* (Luke 1:37, KJV). And to the demoniac's father, He said: *"Everything is possible for one who believes."* (Mark 9:23, NIV). Nothing is impossible. Everything is possible. If we could let this truth sink about 18",

from our head to our heart, imagine how worry free our lives would become. Dijon kind of faith **will** set you free from worry and anxiety.

Here are a few other verses that are worth sticking on your fridge or bathroom mirror when you are facing circumstances that become an obstacle to your faith, an obstacle that is causing you to worry.

- *“...but those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.”*
(Isaiah 40:31, NIV)
- *“So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.”* (Isaiah 41:10, NIV)
- *“Cast your cares on the LORD and he will sustain you; he will never let the righteous be shaken.”* (Psalm 55:22, NIV)
- *“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. 29 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. 30 For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”* (Matthew 11:28-30, NIV)
- *“So we say with confidence, “The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can mere mortals do to me?”*
(Hebrews 13:6, NIV)

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- “*When I am afraid, I put my trust in you.*” (**Psalm 56:3, NIV**)
- “...say to those with fearful hearts, “*Be strong, do not fear; your God will come, he will come with vengeance; with divine retribution he will come to save you.*” (**Isaiah 35:4, NIV**)

SEEK YE FIRST

Often, our problem is focus. We look at life's circumstances from a horizontal view rather than a vertical view. It's not that God isn't here with us, but a horizontal view of Him is blocked by mixed up priorities and the circumstances of life. As Jesus said, we get hung up on things that God can easily take care of, while Kingdom things that He would like us to prioritize get left undone. In Jesus' mind, looking at life horizontally is the cause of much worry, and is a very unchristian view of things. *"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?"* (**Matthew 6:25, NIV**) *"For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them."* (**Matthew 6:32, NIV**)

My family started going to church regularly when I was eight years of age. From that time on I don't

remember not singing this chorus, and I don't remember not loving it. It is the secret to prioritizing life as we should. It is the secret to faith. It is the secret to being worry-free. *"Turn your eyes upon Jesus. Look full in His wonderful face, and the things of earth will grow strangely dim in the light of His glory and grace."*

If we choose to view things horizontally, we choose to look at the circumstance head on. Sometimes that circumstance is bigger than our natural ability to figure it out or overcome it. If we choose a vertical view we stare our limitless God right in the face, eliminating the need for worry. God is the solution to any and every circumstance. Jesus offered this invitation: *"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest."* (Matthew 11:28, NIV).

An Irrevocable Promise

But there is more! There is a promise that comes along with prioritizing kingdom things over the things we often worry about. When we choose to live our life with a vertical view, rather than a horizontal one, we will be rewarded in such a way that the things we worry about are provided before the need for worry exists. *"But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well."* (Matthew 6:33, NIV)

How To

I am well aware that such spiritual truths, like seeking God, can seem like pat answers. Sometimes we preachers leave out the 'how' portion. I have to admit that sometimes the 'how' requires great discipline until it becomes our natural way of living. Living life with a vertical view doesn't come easy at first. We Christians may be citizens of heaven, but we live here, on this earth. On this earth there is constant activity, responsibilities, and obligations that consistently capture our attention. It is often within those things that we find reasons to worry.

The apostle Paul said something so profound in his second letter to the Corinthians that there are endless applications. Disciplining our self to have a vertical view of life during challenging situations is one of them. *"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.**" (2 Corinthians 10:5, NIV).*

The arguments and pretension that set themselves up against God are; that He isn't there to help us, that He is silent in our situation, that we have been left alone, that He doesn't care enough. Another lie may be that God is getting us back for something we

have done wrong. We must remember that God is a gracious God. If there is something between him and us, the Holy Spirit will reveal that to us. Repentance is the key that unlocks the door to that grace.

Typically, people don't admit that they believe any of these lies. That would make us sound like we lack faith. But our state of worry defies our declaration of faith.

It is essential when these lies cause us to slide into the grips of worry and anxiety that we follow two of the Apostle's principles in combination. The first is in **2 Corinthians 10:5**: 1. "...*take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.*" 2. The second is found in **2 Thessalonians 5:17 (NIV)**, "...*pray continually*". Grab a hold of that lie and give it to God in prayer.

We must develop this practice immediately when worry consumes our thoughts and emotions. Stop in our tracks. Tell yourself and Satan that you won't believe the lie you are being told. Then, pray a prayer of faith, expressing your trust in God to fulfil this promise: "*all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose*" (**Romans 8:28, NIV**).

WE NEED EACH OTHER

Throughout the Scripture we are taught to make ourselves available to other believers. There is strength in numbers. *“Also, if two lie down together, they will keep warm. But how can one keep warm alone? 12 Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken.”* (**Ecclesiastes 4:11-12, NIV**). We are taught to pray for one another. *“Carry each other’s burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.”* (**Galatians 6:2, NIV**). We are to gather together in fellowship for the purpose of loving and supporting other believers who are in a difficult place in life. Church is a great place to do that *“And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds 25 not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.”* (**Hebrews 10:24-25**). *“Anxiety weighs down the heart, but a kind word cheers it up.”* (**Proverbs 12:25, NIV**).

The problem is that others don't know that we need their support, encouragement, love, and prayer if we don't confide in them. We have to stop being an island unto ourself. So often, we try to deal with our circumstances alone.

- We feel that we should have the ability to crawl out of whatever hole we are in by ourself. To involve others makes us feel weak
- We think we are going through whatever the experience is because of wrong decisions or lack of wisdom. It's embarrassing to think that others would know that
- We don't want to come across as a Christian who lacks faith
- We don't want to be a burden to others

The reason that the Scripture makes it so clear that we are to be there for each other is because He uses people to be His ambassadors of love and encouragement. He speaks through people. He hugs through people. He shares wisdom through people. Godly love is one of the fruits of the Holy Spirit given to believers to be an expression of God's love to others. Encouragement and wisdom are gifts of the Holy Spirit given to individuals to be God's representative in the

lives of others.

Listen to this carefully. When we seek the support of other believers, we are NOT a burden to them. Instead, we are giving them opportunity to be used of God. If we don't seek their support, we are robbing them of that blessing.

We need each other! God speaks, works, and blesses through others. Relying on other believers is an expression of faith in God to encourage us, direct us, and bless us through the family of God.

BE HAPPY

Bobby McFerrin, in his song that matches the title of this booklet (he thought of it first), presented a message that goes beyond what we often teach in our churches, but the message is still incomplete. Bobby is right that we should replace worry with happiness, but he doesn't tell us how to do that. He just tells us to do it. The first verse of his song includes this message:

*In every life we have some trouble
But when you worry you make it double
Don't worry. Be happy
Don't worry. Be happy now*

God wants more for us than to just live a worry-free life. He wants us to be happy. In fact, He wants more than that for us. Someone wisely said that "happiness is dependent on happenings". Happiness is circumstantial. God wants us to experience something that is unwavering despite circumstance. He wants something deeper for us. Our peace and joy are bullet-proof

blessings of God.

- He wants us to experience supernatural peace
- He wants us to experience supernatural joy

Because real peace and joy come from God, neither of these things are dependent on circumstances, or the 'happenings' that are taking place in our lives.

If you are a Christian, you have the presence of the Holy Spirit in your life. As we talk about this, let's not forget that the Holy Spirit is the third member of the Trinity. He is God! *"And you also were included in Christ when you heard the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation. When you believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, 14 who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession—to the praise of his glory."* (**Ephesians 1:13-14, NIV**).

In his letter to the Ephesians, Paul mentions that one of the benefits of the Spirit's presence is that we are guaranteed to receive all that is rightfully ours as a child of God. To the believers in Galatia, he writes that one of the many great blessings of the Spirit's presence is that He makes it possible for the character of God to be superimposed over ours. We simply need to yield to His perfect character rather than our flawed one. That said,

two of those characteristics are 'joy' and 'peace'. "*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace...*" (**Galatians 5:22-23**). These things are the very opposite of worry and anxiety.

To the church in Philippi, Paul applies this to the subject at hand: "*Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. 7 And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*" (**Philippians 4:6-7, NIV**)

How many days do you stop and think: "God lives in me."? That is a tremendous thought any day of the week. When we are facing circumstances that may cause our flawed nature to worry, recapturing the truth that the God of all creation lives inside of us is pretty powerful.

Does God worry? No! Did the Red Sea experience get Him all riled up? Did He panic when the Israelites faced enemies or lack of food and water in the desert? Not at all! Was Jesus distraught over 5000 people who had followed Him into the Israeli desert and became very hungry? Nope. He just fed them. Was Jesus worried about the storm on the Sea of Galilee that could have easily capsized their boat? Nope. The

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Scripture records these words to the disciples: “*“You of little faith, why are you so afraid?” Then he got up and rebuked the winds and the waves, and it was completely calm.*” (**Matthew 8:26, NIV**). God in us does not worry. There is never a moment that He is not at perfect peace and full of joy. His peace and joy is always available to us because He is in us. We simply need to learn to yield to His nature, not our flawed one. “*Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding. 6 in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight.*” (**Proverbs 3:5-6, NIV**). When we follow this instruction, worry is replaced with God's peace and joy no matter what is going on in our life. Receive it.

Don't worry. Be happy.

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CONCLUSION

Following are some of the lyrics to "Firm Foundation (He Won't)" as written by: Cody Carnes, Austin Davis, Chandler

*Christ is my firm foundation
The Rock on which I stand
When everything around me is shaking
I've never been more glad
That I put my faith in Jesus
'Cause He's never let me down
He's faithful through generations
So why would He fail now?
He won't
He won't*

*And I've still got joy in chaos
I've got peace that makes no sense*

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*So I won't be going under
I'm not held by my own strength
'Cause I build my life on Jesus
He's never let me down
He's faithful through every season
So why would He fail now?*

Living a worry-free life is not an allusive dream. “*He's faithful through generations
So why would He fail now? He won't*”. We would never admit to believing these things, but acting as if God lacks interest in our circumstances, or is unable to solve every problem, means we have bought in to Satan’s lies. Our problem is often that we cling to the problem.

Sometimes, even as people of faith, we forget that mustard-seed faith can move mountains. We look at our situations horizontally rather than vertically and our thoughts get consumed by the situations that lie before us rather than the God who is above us, around us, and even in us. We are too focused on the problem to see that solution. We allow our lives to be controlled by circumstances that are temporary rather than living for things that are eternal, nullifying the promise of God in **Matthew 6:33**. We don't give others the opportunity to

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be ambassadors of God's love and encouragement to us. We forget that God lives in us, and that He is God who doesn't worry. Instead, He is a God who calms storms and miraculously provides what we need in the desert. He is a God of peace and a God of joy.