

Can I Really Trust God?

David Satcher, The Surgeon General of the United States from 1998 to 2002 issued a lengthy Report on Anxiety Disorders. The report states that every year over 16 percent of adults experience anxiety disorder. The National Institute of Mental Health identifies anxiety disorders as the most common mental health problem in the United States.

The Anxiety Books Store bills itself as “the consumer resource for anxiety disorders.”

Their ad says: *The Anxiety Book Store has over 220 current books and many other audio tapes. This includes books on panic disorder and panic attacks, obsessive-compulsive disorder, post-traumatic stress disorder and social anxiety disorder. Also included are books on fear of public speaking, fear of flying, worry, alternative help and medication. We have specific books for children and anxiety, children and OCD and children and shyness.*

We now have TV ads for Paxil and Prozac. If you go to the Paxil.com web site you can even take an online test to determine your anxiety level.

Now, I have no question about people with medical conditions taking some of these medicines. They can be very helpful. But I’m uneasy when they’re marketed to the public in general. As if the way to deal with all anxiousness and worry is to pop a pill. We as a society have become obsessed with our own personal comfort. Americans spend over \$5 billion a year on over-the-counter drugs. That’s many times more than any other nation on earth.

What is anxiety, and does the Bible have any thing to say about it? What is worry, and how does it relate to our quest for peace and comfort?

Turn to Luke 12 pg 1008

Luke 12 is a chapter that records an extended lesson Jesus taught to His disciples. They faced a series of temptations and so Jesus gives them a series of five warnings of things to look out for. These are five things that everyone of us are susceptible to.

In the past weeks we’ve considered two of Jesus’ warnings. The first was a warning about hypocrisy and the second was on covetousness.

Today we're going to look at warning number three. This one is beware of worrying.

The truth is, just like all of us are hypocritical at times, and all of us battle some form of covetousness, all of us worry. But think about this. Before the Fall, Adam and Eve didn't worry. Jesus, as He walked this earth didn't worry.

There are reasons why we worry and there's a solution to the problem of worry.

First of all, in light of the temptation to worry we need to set our priorities straight.

Read vs 22

Jesus' words in verse 22 start with the word "therefore." One of the fundamental rules of Biblical interpretation is, "When you see a 'therefore' ask yourself what it's there for."

On this case Jesus is clearly drawing a conclusion based upon what He's just said. What He's just said is, "Watch out for laying up treasure for yourself, instead of being rich towards God. Be careful of focusing on accumulating stuff to the detriment of your spiritual life."

We're to be investing in eternal treasures, not earthly treasures. That's easier said than done isn't it? What about the things we need to live? Where are those things going to come from? It's hard not to worry about money.

Especially when we live the way we do in this country. Listen to these current statistics:

70% of Americans are living paycheck to paycheck

Less than 30% use a written monthly budget to manage household finances 95% of husbands and wives argue about money related topics on a regular basis

55% always or sometimes worry about money

That makes Jesus' words, which were spoken 2000 years ago, intensely practical for us here today.

Read vs 23

As much as we need food, clothing, and shelter, those things in and of themselves don't define our lives.

Jesus said in Matthew 4 *Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.* Our life isn't defined by what we can afford, but it sure seems that way sometimes.

We even form our opinion of our own selfworth based on our income and the quality of the stuff we own.

We're talking about worry and anxiety this morning, and what better area for Jesus to zero in on than money worries.

Financial crises are situations that tend to perform an autopsy on us. The truth is they cut us wide open and you can see all the ugliness inside that we were, up to that point, able to conceal.

Financial crises should cause us to take a step back and ask ourselves a couple questions. The most important one being- "What does the way I'm responding to this situation tell me about where my heart really is?"

What's the number one cause of anxiety and worry in our lives? It's money! And I believe that the implication is, if you can learn to deal with worry that comes from reason number one, you'll be able to deal with worry no matter where it comes from. The same principles for overcoming worry apply, no matter what the source of the worry is.

So Jesus tells us *do not worry about your life.*

The word He uses for "worry" is *merimnao* in Greek. It's root is the word *meros* which means "a division or share." *merimnao* actually has to do with dividing the mind. Worry causes our thoughts to go off in different directions. We think, "what if this happens?" or "what if that happens?"

Our English word "worry" comes from an old Anglo Saxon word that means "to strangle." Corrie Ten Boom, who survived the Nazi death camps in WW2 said, "Worry does not empty tomorrow of its sorrow, it empties today of its strength."

Don't worry. There's a lot more to life than the thing you're worrying about. Don't worry, get your priorities straight.

We need to admit the painful truth: our priorities are often inconsistent with God's

priorities for our lives. We pursue those things that we want and at times we give very little thought to what it is that God wants for our lives.

Simple, it's putting the Kingdom of God first and pursuing His will for our lives rather than going selfishly after our own desires which are often contrary to what God would have us to do.

So how do we change our priorities? **Read vs 24**

According to the Mosaic Law, Jews could eat "clean" birds, such as dove and others birds that fed on grains, but not "unclean" birds, like the raven, hawks, vultures, and owls which feed on dead animals.

I believe Jesus purposely chooses the raven for an example because it was despised by the Jewish people.

The rich fool in the parable in the preceding verses was ready to tear down his barns and build bigger ones because of a big harvest. His problem was, he didn't include God in his life. His trust was in his riches and he died.

You know, when ever anybody asks about how much someone left in his will, the answer should always be "all of it."

Some people try to take it with them but it doesn't work. A Sacramento, Calif., funeral director Melvin Lincoln was convicted of defrauding an insurance company after he tried to fake his own death and that of his wife. He was discovered when he tried to renew his driver's license.

The rich man in the parable has every advantage; the raven has none. Yet the raven has an even greater advantage -- God. God himself provides food for this "unclean" raven. God himself makes a way for this discredited bird.

When we worry we leave out the God Factor. Jesus says, "God feeds them." And then Jesus reminds his disciples that they are of much greater value than birds. This is the argument of lesser to greater. If God even feeds unclean birds, isn't He going to take care of us?

The obvious answer is, of course He will. I had a woman tell me once, "I was sitting in a bar and I noticed a hundred dollar bill on the floor. I looked around, put my foot

over it, and pulled it to where I could pick it up!" And she said, isn't it great how God supplies our needs."

You know what the sad thing was? She was serious.

God doesn't go out and fill bird feeders every morning for the ravens. They spend their day finding food and devouring it. It's not an easy life. God isn't going to just drop money our way. Especially in a way that violates His character. We have responsibilities to work hard and to be wise with what we have. But in the end we thank God because ultimately everything comes from His hand.

When life is going smoothly or we have an abundance of possessions we tend to get spiritual amnesia; we easily forget that God is the source of all that is good. When that happens, says Ronald Sider, "We trust in ourselves and in our wealth rather than in the Almighty."

God wants us to know that we have is a gift from Him. Richard Foster writes: *"We work [but] our work does not give us what we have. We live by grace even when it comes to daily bread. We are dependent on God for even the simplest elements of life: air, water, sun. What we have is not the result of our labor, but of the gracious care of God. When we are tempted to think that what we own is the result of our own personal efforts, it takes only a little drought or a small accident to show us once again how radically dependent we are for everything"*

The sinful way we end up thinking is actually is idolatry: taking credit for what God has done and for what only God can do. We see everyone around us as competitors, which leads to division and strife.

We start believing that we are in control, which leads to spiritual anemia. But it also leads to anxiety. If everything you have and want to keep and ever hope to have depends solely on you, then your life will be a continuous, anxiety-filled, striving.

If your personal peace and comfort are at the top of your priority list, I'll guarantee the only time you'll have peace and comfort will be those rare times when all of life is running smoothly. Otherwise you'll be a slave to your circumstances.

- I. *In light of the temptation to worry we need to set our priorities straight.*
- II. *Secondly, In light of the temptation to worry we need to give up our fears.*

Read vs 25

There's an organization called LPA, or Little People of America, that provides support and information to people of short stature and their families.

Membership is open to people who are no taller than 4'10" in height.

Just like being very tall can present it's challenges, so can being very short. Little People of America provides a way for very little people to help and encourage each other.

On their web site is this statement: *As adolescence can be an especially tough time for young people with dwarfism, LPA offers support and guidance to teens and young adults on many issues.*

I would assume it would be tough. Adolescence is a tough time for most everybody. But you know, as much as a very short teen might wish that they were taller, all the worrying in the world isn't going to change their height.

Actually, the word Jesus uses, that some Bibles translate "stature" and others translate as "life" is a word in the original that means: "age, time of life" and sometimes as "bodily stature."

Worry doesn't change anything, does it? It doesn't increase our height and it doesn't increase our time on earth.

A very wise man once gave me some advice. He said, "If you can change something that's problematic, do it. If there's nothing you can do, don't worry, because worry doesn't change anything. Only do what accomplishes something. Anything else is wasted time and energy."

Worry doesn't change anything, it's counterproductive, it results in all kinds of medical problems, and keeps us from seeing God's hand in our lives.

Worry has all these negative effects, but somehow we still think it's our duty to worry. In fact if we're not worried, people might think we don't care. We're irresponsible. So we do the responsible thing. We worry.

At the heart of worry is fear. Concern is natural. We're going to be concerned with the issues of life. Worry is different. Worry is a lack of trust in God.

To see the difference **turn with me to Luke 22 Read vs 39-45**

Jesus was in anguish in the garden. Jesus knew full well what He was facing: separation from the Father, becoming sin for us, bearing the wrath and judgment of God.

This was an incredibly intense moment. Jesus was in agony. He prayed more earnestly than we could ever imagine. He was so engrossed in the gravity of the moment that His sweat was mixed with blood.

Remember, the night was so cool Peter would warm himself at a fire, but Jesus was sweating.

He was so aware of what He was facing He prayed, "Father if there's another way, let's do it." Then He got up from His prayer and followed the will of the Father.

Jesus Christ was concerned, that's obvious. But He wasn't worried. How do I know? Because He prayed, *"nevertheless not My will, but Yours, be done."*

He was saying, "Father this is the most trying event a human being could ever face, but I trust You! It's all in Your hands."

Back to Luke 12 Read 26-30

What are some life events that cause us to feel anxious?

The doctor informing us we have less than a year to live. The car finally dieing when there's not a penny extra in the budget after the bills are paid. A prolonged illness that we can't seem to shake. An impending surgery. A concern that we're about to loose someone we're in a love relationship with. Aging parents who need care. Wayward children. A job or home situation that has us at our wits end.

There's no shortage of anxiety producers in life. But did you notice something about our list? All of these things are oriented on some unpleasant experience in the future.

They are all things that are accompanied by troubling feelings. And our temptation is to let our feelings take control.

Did Jesus have troubling feelings in the garden? I have to believe He had the epitome of troubling feelings. But He didn't let His feelings run His life.

You know the real danger here? God promises something to His children. Romans 8:28 *And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.*

God's got this great plan to make us more like His Son. Rom 8:29 says: *For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son*

God's at work through the events of life working to make believers more Christlike. The hall mark of Christlikeness is trust in God.

When we live to please ourselves; when we let feelings run our life; circumstances that God designs to teach us to trust and obey Him more become temptations to fear and worry instead.

The problem, as we often see it, is the troubles of life. "If I didn't have all these problems I wouldn't be anxious all the time.

The real truth is, troubles aren't the issue. Troubles are going to come. It's our attitude toward God that is the issue.

God takes care of birds, and flowers, He even takes care of the grass of the field.

And here's the challenge: *"O you of little faith."*

Worry, fear, and anxiety are faith issues. They're some of the hardest things of all to deal with. We know that, God knows that, and so He calls us to trust Him.

- I. *In light of the temptation to worry we need to set our priorities straight.*
- II. *In light of the temptation to worry we need to give up our fears.*
- III. *In light of the temptation to worry we need to learn to trust God.*

We'll never be freed from our fears by meditating on our fears. We won't be free by repeating, "I'm not going to be anxious. I'm not going to be anxious. I'm not going to be anxious."

All that will do is remind us of our anxiousness!

We need to give up our fears, but we do that by learning to trust God.

Read vs 31

In Matthew 6:33 Jesus added another important dimension to this idea of seeking God's kingdom. He said: *"But seek **first** the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.*

This isn't an option, this is a command. This isn't what we do when all else fails. This is where we start. This isn't to be our last resort. This is to be our life's passion.

Are we so occupied with survival that we are distracted from Jesus Christ and his kingdom? Then all we're left with is struggle. But if our thoughts and mind and prayers focus on Jesus and His kingdom, then we have a promise that he'll supply every need that we have in relation to the abundance of his riches in Christ Jesus.

Read vs 32

Continued worry and fretting are sinful because worry represents unbelief, or at least only a tiny bit of belief mixed with a whole lot of unbelief. Our worry represents fear which drives us and panics us. Our worry is sinful. But in the midst of our fear, Jesus speaks to us: "Do not fear, little flock."

This is very precious, isn't it. You get the sense of God saying, "I know about your fear and anxiety. I know about the worries of life that trouble you so much. I'm not here to punish you for your anxiety, I'm here to comfort you. I'm here to direct your thoughts to me. Don't fear. Trust me, I'm giving you my kingdom."

Ralph Wilson asks: What does that mean? What is this kingdom he is giving us?

And then he answers: The full inheritance that belongs to the King, The full attention that is the right of the royal family, The full privilege of reigning alongside the King, The full provision of every need that we have, The full pardon for all our sins against the King and his kingdom, The full love and favor of the King himself, and a whole lot more that we scarcely understand.

God says, "Trust me. In fact, trust me so much that you..." **Read verse 33 & 34**

What's the antidote for the sin of trusting money? Generosity. Realizing that money, and how we use it, becomes a barometer of our heart.

It's been said you can tell the measure of a person's spiritual commitment by looking at their checkbook.

We need to trust God. Part of trusting God is going through the process of changing our heart focus. Changing it from trusting what we have in this life to trusting the God of eternity. That's how to really be rich.

That's how to become more and more free from the grip of worry and anxiety.

Why can we trust every thing to God? Because God has taken care of the biggest problem anyone on the planet could ever have.

Our biggest problem isn't our parents, our boyfriend or girlfriend, our bank account, our car, or our house payment, or our health.

Our biggest problem is that we're sinners under the condemnation of a holy God.

The Bible says, *...there is not a just man on earth who does good And does not sin.* It says, *For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.*

People like to think that they make up the rules of life. It's God who sets the rules. God sets the rules based upon His own character and nature and we've broken them.

The Bible says breaking those rules has earned us something. It says, *For the wages of sin is death.* That's spiritual death. Death in hell forever, separation from God.

That's the wage of sin. And we're all standing there with the pay stub in our hands.

A holy God could justly send us all to hell. That would be his prerogative. But the God of the Bible is not only holy, He's also a God of love.

Now at first that seems to present a dilemma. A God of love desires to bring us to heaven but a holy God can't allow sin to go unpunished.

God solved the dilemma. We couldn't. We could try to live up to God's standards, but that wouldn't atone for past sins. We couldn't provide absolute holiness anyway.

God solved the dilemma by sending His sinless Son to stand in our place. In theological terms we call that “Substitutionary Atonement.”

Jesus Christ took the punishment we deserve and God freely offers forgiveness to all who will believe it. Jesus said, *Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life.*

God has taken care of our eternal problem by performing the greatest act of self sacrifice the world has ever seen. The Bible explains: *For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.*

God did the work. Now He says to us, “Trust Me.” Believe that I placed all of your sins upon Jesus at the cross. Believe that His death and resurrection is sufficient to give you eternal life and make you part of My family.”

Have you believed God today? The Bible answers the question, “...what must I do to be saved?” The answer? *“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved...”*

The follow-up question is this. If you’re one says, “That’s me. I believe Christ died for me.” Then are you anxious? Are you worried about life? If you can trust God with the most precious possession you have, your soul. Then how could you possibly not trust Him with the temporary and passing things of this life?

The Bible say this in the book of Philippians: *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 surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.*