



WORRY/FEAR/DESPAIR

SCRIPTURE VERSES (NIV)

Matthew 6:25-34

²⁵ “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.

Proverbs 3:5-6

⁵ 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.

Isaiah 8:11-12

¹¹ This is what the LORD says to me with his strong hand upon me, warning me not to follow the way of this people: ¹² “Do not call conspiracy everything this people calls a conspiracy; do not fear what they fear, and do not dread it.

Romans 8:15

¹⁵ The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, “Abba, Father.”

2 Corinthians 4:8-9

⁸ We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; ⁹ persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed.

Hebrews 12:1-3

Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, ² fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. ³ Consider him who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.

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5 THINGS TO DO IN A STORM

Rick Warren — July 15, 2016

When you're going through a storm, God is not distant or uninvolved. He is "I Am," and he is working in your life for your good. Here are five things God wants you to do if you feel like you're sinking in a storm.

Have courage, because Jesus is with you.

Don't ever argue with a fear. Just tell it where to go! Tell it to go talk to Jesus.

Take a risk in faith.

Don't ask God to bless what you're doing. Do what God is blessing. Ask him what he wants you to do, and then be willing to get out of the boat.

Stay focused on Jesus.

The moment you take your eyes off the Lord, you're going under. Matthew 14:30 says, **"But when [Peter] saw the wind, he was afraid and, beginning to sink, cried out, 'Lord, save me!'"** (NIV) When you focus on the wind and the waves — your circumstances — you're going to sink, just like Peter. If you look at the world, you'll be distressed; if you look within, you'll be depressed; if you look at Christ, you'll be at rest.

Don't doubt.

You don't need great faith to make it through the storm in your life. You just need faith in the right person.

Praise God.

Even in the storm, even when you feel like you're sinking, even when you're scared to death — praise him all the time. Thank God in the middle of the storm.

What storm is scaring you right now? What storm is sinking you right now? Why do you think God is letting you go through this storm?

He's letting you go through this storm for the same reasons he sent the disciples into the storm — to say, "I'm all you need. I can handle anything. I will come to you in the ninth hour. And I'll come walking on the very thing that scares you the most. I'm not asking you to come to me. I'm going to come to you."

Talk It Over

- ◆ What can you thank God for in the middle of your storm?
- ◆ How have you grown in your understanding of God because of the storms in your life?
- ◆ What can you do to limit the distractions that keep you from focusing on God?

ARE YOU AFRAID TO MAKE THE WRONG DECISION?

Rick Warren — August 17, 2016

“He guides me along the right paths for his name’s sake” (Psalm 23:3b NIV).

Often we’re afraid of making the wrong decision, and that creates stress.

Maybe you’re facing a decision about a major issue: “Should I hold on, or should I let go?” “Should I get in, or should I get out?” “Where should I go?” “Should I move?”

When you can’t make up your mind, you stagger through life. In fact, the Bible says when we remain double-minded, we become unstable in everything we do (James 1). The Greek word for unstable literally means “stagger like a drunk.”

But God says there is an antidote to our indecision. Psalm 23:3 tells us, *“He guides me along the right paths for his name’s sake”* (NIV). We handle the stress of decision-making by letting God guide us.

You may be thinking, “But I’ve tried this!” You asked God to guide you, but then you became more confused than before. You still couldn’t figure it out. Now you wonder, “Why is knowing God’s will so difficult?”

Is God playing games with us? Of course not! God wants to guide us. He wants us to know his will more than we want to know it. Our problem is we often look for the wrong thing when we’re trying to find God’s will.

For example, some of us look for a feeling. We want to be swept off our feet by some emotion so we can say, “That’s how I know what God’s will is!” Some of us want a methodical approach to God’s will. We want somebody to give us a recipe or a formula to apply. Some of us take a magical approach to God’s will. We’re looking for God to do some fantastic sign — write it in the sky, call us on the phone, send us a letter.

All of these ways lead to frustration and cause us to miss God’s will. God’s will is not a feeling or a formula or something he wants you to be frustrated or fearful about.

God does not want you confused, and he does not want you stressed over making any decision. He is there, guiding you every step of the way.

Talk It Over

- ◆ What is a big decision you’ve recently been faced with? How did you seek God’s will?
- ◆ Why does God want you to use the Bible to help you make a decision?

DON'T WORRY!

Rick Warren — February 7, 2016

“Don’t worry about anything.” (Philippians 4:6 NLT)

The number one source of stress in your life is worry. It keeps you up at night.

Why do you need to let go of your worry?

Worry is unreasonable for a couple of reasons. First, worry exaggerates the problem. Have you noticed if somebody says something bad about you, the more you think about it, the bigger it gets? Second, worry doesn’t work. To worry about something you can’t change is useless. And to worry about something you can change is stupid. Just go change it!

Worry is unnatural. There are no born worriers. You might think you are, but you’re not. Worry is something you learned. Since worry is unnatural, it’s also unhealthy. Your body wasn’t designed to handle worry. When people say, “I’m worried sick,” they’re telling the truth. Doctors say a lot of people could leave the hospital today if they knew how to get rid of guilt, resentment, and worry. Proverbs 14:30 says, *“A peaceful heart leads to a healthy body” (NLT).*

Worry is unhelpful. Worry cannot change the past, and worry cannot control the future. All it does is mess up today. The only thing that worry changes is you. It makes you miserable! It’s never solved a problem. It’s unhelpful.

Worry is unnecessary. God made you, he created you, he saved you, and he put his Spirit in you. Don’t you think he’s going to take care of your needs? There’s no need to worry.

The first step in stress management is to refuse to worry about anything. Why? Because it’s unreasonable, unnatural, unhelpful, and unnecessary.

The Bible says in 1 Peter 5:7, *“You can throw the whole weight of your anxieties upon him, for you are his personal concern” (AMP).*

God personally cares about you and for your needs. You know all those things you’re stressing, anxious, and worried about? Let it go. Give it to God.

Talk It Over

- ◆ What does your worry say about how much you trust God?
- ◆ What is it you are worried about? What can you do to change it?
- ◆ How can you practically “throw your anxieties” on God?

IS FEAR HOLDING YOU BACK?

Rick Warren — August 24, 2015

“For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.” (Ephesians 2:10 NIV)

What keeps you from developing your full potential? Fear. What keeps you from becoming all God wants you to be? Fear. There are three kinds of fear that will keep you from developing your talents and accomplishing your purpose.

Self-doubt. It keeps people locked in a prison and unable to develop their potential. This is actually the fear of failure. But failure is not fatal! In fact, the fear of failure is far worse than failure itself. Failure is actually a good thing. Failure is how you learn what doesn’t work. And it’s how you grow into a better parent, partner, and professional. Don’t let self-doubt keep you down. I’d rather attempt to do something great and fail than attempt to do nothing and succeed.

Self-consciousness. If you worry about what other people think, nothing will ever get done in your life. You just have to do what God tells you to do. That’s all you’re accountable for. You’re not called to be the best in the world. You’re called to be the best that God made you to be.

Self-pity. There were two disciples that had spectacular failures. Peter and Judas both denied Jesus in clutch time, but they responded to their failure in very different ways. Judas went out and had a pity party and hung himself. Peter, on the other hand, wept bitterly, grieved about it, repented, asked God to forgive him, picked himself up, and went back to serving God. And 40 days later, Peter spoke to the whole city of Jerusalem on Pentecost, and 3,000 people became believers and the Church was born. Of all the people God could have used to start the church, he used the guy with the biggest failure. That means there’s room for you in the family of God!

Instead of living in fear, believe what God says about you in Ephesians 2:10: *“For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do” (NIV).*

Talk It Over

- ◆ In what part of your life are you concerned about other people’s opinion of you? How has your self-doubt kept you from reaching your potential?
- ◆ Why are we so afraid of failure?
- ◆ What failure in your life has kept you from reaching your potential? What purpose do you think God intended for that failure?

STOP WORRYING

Rick Warren — December 4, 2016

“Give all your worries and cares to God, for he cares about you” (1 Peter 5:7 NLT, second edition).

It takes more than willpower to stop worrying. You already know that, because you’ve already tried it. You’ve thought, “I shouldn’t worry about this,” and yet you just keep on worrying about it.

It’s going to take more than your willpower to stop worrying. It takes four things:

You have to get to know God. Jesus says in Matthew 6:32, *“People who don’t know God and the way he works fuss over these things” (MSG)*. If you don’t have a relationship with God, you have every reason to worry. You’ve got to get to know God! As a believer, you have a heavenly Father who has promised to take care of you. You are God’s child, and children get special privileges. When you worry, God says, “You’re my child. Why are you acting like an orphan?”

You have to put God first in every area of your life. Matthew 6:31-33 says, *“Don’t worry at all about having enough food and clothing Your heavenly Father already knows perfectly well that you need them, and he will give them to you if you give him first place in your life and live as he wants you to” (TLB)*. Any time you take God out of the center of your life and put anything else there — no matter how good it is — you’re going to worry.

You have to live one day at a time. The Bible says, *“So don’t worry about tomorrow, because tomorrow will have its own worries. Each day has enough trouble of its own” (Matthew 6:34 NCV)*. If you’re worrying about tomorrow, you can’t enjoy today. You miss today’s blessings. It’s OK to plan for tomorrow, but you have to live for today. Also, when you’re always worried about tomorrow, the future gets overwhelming. But God will give you the grace and strength you need when you get there. Right now, you only need enough power for today.

You have to trust God to care. *“Give all your worries and cares to God, for he cares about you” (1 Peter 5:7 NLT, second edition)*. How do you do that? One way is to memorize God’s promises in the Bible. They’re like an insurance policy for believers. When you know something’s covered, you don’t worry about it anymore. Another way is to pray. If you prayed as much as you worried, you’d have a lot less to worry about. What’s the result of taking these four steps? Incredible peace of mind: *“You will experience God’s peace, which is far more wonderful than the human mind can understand” (Philippians 4:7a TLB)*.

Pray this prayer today: “Dear Father, I admit that I often forget that you are with me. I often forget what you’re like. Would you please forgive me for that? I need to get to know you better. I need to get to know your Word and your promises better. Help me to put you first in every area of my life. Help me to live one day at a time. Help me to not worry about tomorrow but instead focus on what you’re doing in my life right now. I want to trust in your promise to take care of every one of my needs — financial, relational, physical, social, spiritual, and emotional. Help me to trust you more and worry less. I pray in Jesus’ name. Amen.”

SEE GOD'S BIGGER PICTURE

Rick Warren — February 10, 2016

If you want to be a happy person, you need to look at every problem from God's viewpoint. Happy people have a larger perspective. They see the big picture. When you don't see things from God's point of view, you get discouraged, frustrated, and unhappy.

No matter what's going on in your life — the good, the bad, and the ugly, God is working out a plan. Paul knew this. He says in Philippians 1:12, ***“I want you to know, my dear brothers and sisters, that everything that has happened to me here has helped to spread the Good News” (NLT).***

Ever since Paul became a Christian on the road to Damascus, he had dreamed one great dream: He wanted to preach in Rome, the center of the universe at the time. His dream was to preach the Gospel in the most important city in the world.

But God had another idea. Instead of sending Paul to Rome to preach crusades, God made him a royal prisoner of Caesar, who was at that time Nero. Nero was about as wicked and as bad as you can get.

As a royal prisoner, Paul was chained to a royal guard 24 hours a day for two years, and the guard was changed every four hours. Over two years in prison, he witnessed to 4,380 guards. Who's the real prisoner here? Who had the captive audience?

This wasn't Paul's plan, but it was God's all along. There were two results of it that we know for sure.

Philippians 4 says that within two years, some of Nero's own family had become believers because of Paul's witness in the royal court in Rome.

Secondly, it's kind of hard to get a guy like Paul to stop moving. In prison, he was forced to be still and, as a result, wrote most of the New Testament. I wonder which had a bigger impact: his preaching in the Colosseum or the books he wrote, such as Romans, First and Second Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians. These seven books have revealed Jesus to millions of people over the years?

Paul knew that God had a bigger plan, and he could be happy because he saw what God was doing through his problem.

Any time you have a problem that's starting to get you down, you need to do what Paul did — learn to see it from God's point of view. Ask, “What is God doing here? What's the bigger picture? What's the bigger perspective?” Then you'll be able to face the problem in faith.

Talk It Over

- ◆ Think of a problem that has you discouraged. How might your discouragement change if you look at it with God's bigger perspective?
- ◆ How have you seen God work in the midst of a difficult situation in your past?
- ◆ Why do you think God is allowing you to struggle through a hard time?— learn to see it from God's point of view. Ask, “What is God doing here? What's the bigger picture? What's the bigger perspective?” Then you'll be able to face the problem in faith.

WORRIED? PRAY!

Rick Warren — February 22, 2016

In Philippians 4:6-7 we find one of the most difficult verses in the entire Bible to obey: ***“Don’t worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done. If you do this, you will experience God’s peace” (NLT).***

It’s not easy to stop worrying about the often-scary, everyday parts of our lives, but God tells us how in the next part of the verse: “Pray about everything ... and thank him for all he has done.” Grateful prayer brings peace. God says, when you start to worry, pray.

Parents understand the power of grateful prayers. Most parents wouldn’t appreciate their children always making requests without saying “thank you” for what they’ve already received. God sees it the same way. He wants us to ask him for what we need and want. More than 20 times in the New Testament, we’re told to “ask” him. But he wants us to ask with gratefulness.

The Bible urges us to be specific in our requests — and our praises. Instead of a simple “thank you for everything,” he wants us to tell him what we’re grateful for. When I say to my wife, “I’m so grateful for you,” she tells me to be specific. She likes to hear what I appreciate about her and what I’m grateful for about her. God does, too. So when you pray, tell God what you’re thankful for. Prayer is one of the most important ways we tell God “thank you.”

Thanking God in advance is a big step of faith. When we have the faith to thank God ahead of time, miracles happen. The more thankful we are, the more God works in our lives. The Bible says that God inhabits the praise of his people. He uses our thanksgiving as an instrument of power in our lives.

So, what are you thankful for?

Talk It Over

- ◆ Being as specific as possible, for what are you thankful to God? Spend some time in prayer thanking God for those things.
- ◆ What are some ways you believe God will bless you in the future? Thank God for those things — even before they happen.