



WHY WORRY? • Worry

What Do I Need to Know About the Passage?

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 Christians because we have a heavenly Father who loves and cares for us and has infinite power and ability to meet our needs, as well as a complete knowledge of what our 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 in the next section Jesus 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 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.

What's the Big Idea?

In this study, we'll examine Jesus' teaching on worry and see that it's futile and ignores God's provision for us.

What's the Problem?

When we focus on this world rather than the kingdom, not trusting the Father to provide what we need, we experience worry and fear and miss out on the joy in His provisions for us.



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 12:32-34

In this last section Jesus gives what sounds like some pretty weird advice: He tells the people to get rid of the very thing they are worried about losing. There is a great (if not disturbing) illustration of this principal in a film called *The Usual Suspects*. Uber bad guy, Keyser Soze, comes home to find his wife and kids taken hostage by a rival bad guy with the threat that unless he yields control to his competition, his wife and kids will die. His solution? He whips out his gun and kills his own wife and kids so that no one will have any leverage on him. I suppose it also helped him that everyone in the criminal world was then terrified of his ruthlessness.

Though murdering your family is hardly the application we are looking for, Soze is following Jesus' principal: Take the very thing you are disposed to worry about (money in the case of Jesus' audience) and give it away. It's the surest way to break its control over you.

It also frees you to focus on the things about which worry isn't possible; things that can't run out, be stolen, or be destroyed. When we believe that it's true that the Father has been pleased to give us the kingdom, everything else we worry about seems less important.

It's instructive to consider the only time Jesus is clearly depicted as worried or frightened in the gospels. Do you remember? It was in the Garden of Gethsemane before the crucifixion. He was so overwhelmed with dread He was literally sweating blood. In His terror, His solution was to surrender the thing He feared losing and embrace the suffering. That's how salvation and ultimately resurrection comes – via surrender and death.

This lesson is consistent with the inverted values of the kingdom. If you want to save your life, you must lose it. If you want to have everything, possess nothing. Encourage your group to consider what they most fear losing and whether they might need to give it away, trusting God who has promised to give them the kingdom and a thousand things besides.

What's Our Response?

The study follows the flow of Jesus teaching. The applications are sequenced:

1. We need to change our thinking about worry. However, without changing the focus of our hearts, our thinking will not change. So . . .
2. To change our hearts we need 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. So . . .
3. Jesus gives the application of giving away our possessions, killing the thing we fear to lose and elevating the value of the things we cannot lose.

What Are the Questions?

Luke 12:22-34

LAUNCH

When you are stressed and worried what do you tend to dream about at night? Do you have a particular recurring dream that alerts you to dread in your life? What do you most often worry about?

Read 12:22-28.

1. Jesus has just been talking about greed. How is greed related to worry?
2. In vv. 24-28, Jesus gives two main illustrated lessons about worry. What are they?
3. How have you experienced those lessons?
4. In the first century, worry would have focused on food and clothing (12:22). What are the big worries today?
5. In what ways have you already seen God provide and take care of you? Why do you think you struggle with these issues?
6. If Jesus stopped His sermon at 12:28, do you think you would have the instruction you need to stop worrying? Why or why not?

Read 12:29-31

7. In 12:29, Jesus warns about setting our hearts on these issues that cause us to worry. How is worry a problem of the heart?
8. What does Jesus teach as the heart cure?
9. What does seeking His kingdom involve personally? Relationally? In ministry?

Read 12:32-34

10. This is weird advice. How does it apply to worry?
11. Can you think of a time when Jesus was worried?
12. What did He do in that circumstance?

APPLY

13. Is there something you are currently “running after” like the pagans in v. 30?
14. Jesus paints a beautiful picture of the Father’s tender care for us. Think about the things that worry you in relation to this picture. What might look different in your life if you were to experience this at a heart level?
15. Is there something you need to give away that would demonstrate trust, refocus your heart and help you to see God’s provision? What is it?

What Are the Answers?

1. Both are a wrongful focus on our need to provide for our future and ourselves.
2. The futility of worry and the provision of God.
3. Allow the group to discuss.
4. Allow the group to discuss.
5. Allow the group to discuss.
6. 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.
7. Worry is a result of setting the focus of our hearts on the wrong things.
8. To focus our hearts on seeking after God and His kingdom.
9. Seeking deep fellowship with God. Serving others. Involving oneself in community and ministry.
10. It's an instruction to voluntarily surrender the very thing we are worried about losing. You might illustrate the point using the story from the film *The Usual Suspects*. See "What Do I Need to Know About the Passage?"
11. In the Garden of Gethsemane Jesus was worried about the suffering He was about to go through.
12. He followed His own direction, giving away His life and surrendering to the terror of crucifixion.
13. Allow the group to discuss.
14. Allow the group to discuss. Help your group be vulnerable and get to what they really believe in any given situation about God's heart for them.
15. Allow the group to discuss.

Memorize

Therefore, I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat; or about your body, what you will wear.

Luke 12:22