

THE GOSPEL MESSAGE

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Worry or Concern?

Dan Huff

I want us to consider something that produces gray hair, wrinkles, irritableness, hinders our daily tasks and shortens our lives. It is worry. We live in perilous times. Currently, the world, our nation, and our brethren are facing the various challenges that the Covid -19 has brought. I don't have all the answers, but the Bible gives us some principles on this subject that we can live by and confidently build our lives on. God has not left us without counsel from above. We all at some time in our lives have found ourselves worrying—whether it be over loved ones, family difficulties, financial matters, when vehicles don't run as we expect them to, when we have to deal with health issues, when we have deadlines that we must meet, and the list can go on and on.

What is the difference between worry and concern? The two can be confusing, and sometimes it may seem the two are the same. Worry and concern do have some similarities: they both are mental activities, they can take a lot of energy and effort, and they both have the potential of focusing us on important issues. However, there are some profound differences. As a general principle, worry is based in fear—often fear of the unknown or fear of things that are beyond our control. Concern, on the other hand, is when we see a problem and can make plans or preparations (within reason) for the future. We see a specific need that we can meet and make necessary efforts to do so. Concern is a close cousin to compassion. Concern does what is reasonably possible, and what it cannot do must prompt faith in and reliance on the capable hands of the Lord.

What does God have to say about worry? Some words the Scriptures use are “fret” and “anxious.” Some of the clearest teaching on this topic is given by our Lord in the Sermon on the Mount, in **Matthew 6** beginning in **verse 25**: “do not worry about your life.” Did Jesus forbid us to plan ahead? NO! Planning for tomorrow can be time well spent, where worry about tomorrow is time wasted. We do have a responsibility and a part, as other Scriptures teach. What benefits if any does worry give? “Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life?” (**6:27, NIV**). We must be careful; worry can choke our joy and be a primary source of stress. Worry depletes our strength and deceives us by painting a picture that appears hopeless. David, inspired by God, said, “Cease from anger, and forsake wrath; Do not fret — it only causes harm” (**Psalms 37:8**).

Fretfulness and worry only cause harm; they immobilize us, reduce our productivity, and can negatively affect the way we treat others. They can and do harm spiritually—they weaken our faith and ability to trust God. For example, consider the ten Israelite spies who lost sight of God, His power, and faithfulness, and rebelled against God (**Numbers 13**). Worry, much of the time, places the focus on us, and our weaknesses and inabilities. Concern often places the focus on others, and God's abilities and faithfulness. After worry, we still have the same problems; they haven't gone away, but now we have added to our problems—gray hair and problems we cannot see internally. Jesus says we need to prioritize. “But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be

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added to you” (Matthew 6:33). “Trust in the Lord with all your heart, And lean not on your own understanding; In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He shall direct your paths” (**Proverbs 3:5-6**).

How can we overcome this monster we call worry? Paul gives us great counsel in **Philippians 4:6-8**. Notice how it begins with “don't be anxious” or “don't worry” (verse 6). Then he gives us a prescription for worry.

1. “but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God.” Always start with seeking the Lord and His will. We can pray for the Lord's wisdom, and seek His assistance (**James 1:5**). “Count your many blessings, name them one by one. Count your many blessings, see what God has done!” When meditating on all the blessings God has bestowed upon us, we are reminded of His constant care, His great faithfulness, and His abiding love. Since He has provided in the past, won't He also provide for today and in the future?
2. The Lord offers sweet peace. That doesn't mean He will take away the problem, but we can be in harmony with

continued on the next page...

Him through the problem. He provides calm for our souls, when we wait on Him. *"But those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint" (Isaiah 40:31)!*

3. Replace our worry with *"...whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy — meditate on these things" (verse 8)*. This describes God Himself, His word, and all of the precious promises that He has offered to His children! Meditate, take thought, and set your mind on these things.

Let us not worry, but from a heart of compassion do what we can, and what we cannot do, let us wait and trust in the Lord. *"Therefore, humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time, casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you" (1 Peter 5:6-7).*

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Be Prepared

Joshua Riggins

Because the sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set on them to do evil. Though a sinner does evil a hundred times, and his days are prolonged, yet I surely know that it will be well with those who fear God, who fear before Him. But it will not be well with the wicked; nor will he prolong his days, which are as a shadow, because he does not fear before God (Ecclesiastes 8:11-13).

If you are like me, it is a bit tempting to fall into this trap. I like to tell myself things like, "I can eat a good sized bowl of ice cream daily, and it won't affect my waistline." And yet, over time doing so creates a need for new pants. In behavioral economics, this is called Normalcy Bias. What has happened in the past is more likely to happen in the future. So cataclysmic events are of less probability than they otherwise might be. As an example, a robber might begin to think himself invincible, because he's never been caught before.

The wise preacher, Solomon, reminds us that just because a judgment isn't executed speedily doesn't mean it isn't going to happen. Poor behavior is not excused by the lack of consequences. God sees. God knows. And His judgment will come.

Peter tells us that normalcy bias affects the way the world perceives impending judgment. It hasn't happened; therefore,

it can't happen. **2 Peter 3:3-4**, *"knowing this first: that scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts, and saying, 'where is the promise of his coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation.'"*

We live in a world whose primary goal is their own desires. They want to feel good, and so they go to the flesh's lusts to fulfill that desire. God's judgment is given no thought, because life as they have it is normal. It exists as it always will exist, so they think.

And if we're not careful, we can fall into this same trap. We focus all our attention on this life and pretty soon, this life is the normal. Financial success. Travel. Family. Play. Yard work. Cleaning. You name it, and we have a thousand items to keep our minds from focusing on things above. If they become our normal, then we too fail to account for the judgment of God.

Peter continues on in **2 Peter 3:5-9** to remind us that God's impending judgment is coming, whether now or in the unknown future.

For this they willfully forget: that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water, by which the world that then existed perished, being flooded with water. But the heavens and the earth which are now preserved by the same word, are reserved for fire until the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men. But beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.

It is encouraging to me that God waits. He waits because he wants to allow time for obedience. Let's not let his delay be our downfall. He doesn't want us to forget whose word upholds this world and whose word will determine our final destination. The Lord is not slack. Let us be prepared at all times.

In **Matthew 25:1-13**, we read about a group of individuals who failed to prepare. One point to make as we begin this passage: Christ likens the kingdom of heaven to this. The body of believers is like this passage. He isn't comparing us and the world. He's comparing us with us. That is a frightening notion to me, because it means that I could be one of these foolish attendants if I don't prepare here.

Ten virgins went out to meet the bridegroom. In today's society, these would be his attendees at the ceremony. The groom came from a distance to go to the house of his bride, and he took her from her home and brought her to his home or the home of his family. Along the journey, it was announced that the bridegroom comes and attendees rushed into the procession in hopes to participate in the festivities of the evening. Though they knew not the time in which the bridegroom would come, they had to be ready.

Five of the young ladies were prepared. They had oil at the ready, in case there might be a delay. Five hadn't thought that far ahead. Their normal bias told them he would probably be here soon and they wouldn't have to spend the extra money.

As happens from time to time, there was a delay. So, the group slept. While they're sleeping, the bridegroom came. At the call, those who had prepared were ready to meet him. Those caught unprepared tried to get supplies, by which time it was too late.

Judgment is going to come, whether we are prepared or not. And when it comes, no one else is going to be able to stand in our place. We must have our own lamp filled with oil. If, however, we've allowed the world to influence us, and taken our normal from the fleshly experience, we're going to find a shortage of spirit when the Lord comes to collect his own. BUT, if we make heaven our focus, and seek the one who is above, then we are going to find one who calls us sons because our lamps are full of His spirit.

The bridegroom is coming (2 Peter 3:10-13). Will we be ready!?

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Manna and Quail

Michael Allen

I've always wondered how the Children of Israel dealt with eating the same things day in and day out as they wandered in the wilderness for 40 years. How many men jokingly asked their wives, "What's for dinner tonight?" How many recipes were exchanged as people tried to create subtle variations in their never changing diet? These things may or may not have happened, but we do know that eventually they tired from the constancy of their diet (Numbers 11). Writers outside of this time period referred to manna in a different light, calling it "the bread of heaven" and "angel's food" (Psalm 78:24-25).

Whether or not this was fully appreciated at the time, we know that God sustained a large group of people in an inhospitable wilderness. In reality, they did not have the resources to sustain them even for a brief period of time, let alone 40 years (Deuteronomy 8:15-16). During their time in the wilderness, they were constantly supplied with food and water, clothing that didn't wear out, and we are even told that their feet did not swell up from all of the walking that they did (Nehemiah 9:20-21). God sustained them with everything that they needed to survive, until it was time to cross over the Jordan River into the Promised Land (Exodus 16:35, Joshua 5:12)

Jesus ties these events to our circumstances today in John 6

when He spoke to the people at Capernaum about the events surrounding the feeding of the five thousand and the wandering in the wilderness. In verse 35, He tells them, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst." He further connects this in Matthew 4:4 when tempted by Satan when He quotes the words of Moses in Deuteronomy 8:1-5, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God." These parallels are easy for us to see as we wander around in the sometimes inhospitable wilderness that we live in today. It is also a place we would not be able to navigate without direct assistance from God, let alone survive spiritually. Each and every day, the perils of temptation surround us at every turn and threaten not only to lead us astray, but also work to occupy our thoughts and to take captive all of our free time.

God has given us all that we need so that no peril of the spiritual wilderness would be too much for us. (1 Corinthians 10:13). And all that He provided has been designed to sustain us until such time as we cross the spiritual Jordan River. As we enter into God's Promised Land, our needs for spiritual manna and quail will transition to a way that we can receive God's word directly (Revelation 7:13-17, Revelation 22:1-5). The challenge facing each and every one of us is the same as those who wandered in the wilderness. As we live our day-to-day lives, we need to always make sure that we don't complain about our circumstances. All that we have in the world was given to us by God. Sometimes it may feel like we are wandering, but God has always had a plan for us, and He has given us directions through His word. The challenge then for us is to appreciate His blessings, follow His directions, and keep moving forward. A wonderful land of promise awaits us.

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Glory to God!

The church in Martinsville, IN rejoiced when Eric Douglas was baptized for the remission of sins on March 15.

The church in Eldon, MO rejoiced with Perry and Jacqueline Foster were buried with Christ in baptism on March 23.

"What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he loses one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness, and go after the one which is lost until he finds it? And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and neighbors, saying to them, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost!' I say to you that likewise there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine just persons who need no repentance" (Luke 15:4-7).



Please check your expiration date!

Blessed Are the Dead

Wilma Ruth Deyarmin, 85, of Bolivar, PA went to be with the Lord on March 12. Sister Wilma was a member of the church in **Bolivar**. She is survived by her husband of 63 years, **Johnny**. Wilma enjoyed crafts, crocheting, sewing, quilting, cooking, baking, canning, taking pictures and hosting the many evangelists that came to the area. She could be found pulling weeds from around her house. Wilma read her Bible avidly.

Elva L. Holliday, 97, of Macon, MO fell asleep in Jesus on March 20. Sister Elva was a member of the **White Oak Church of Christ**, Ethel, MO. Elva is survived by her nephew, **Fred (Beverly) Meeks** and her niece-in-law, **Leota Meeks**.

Special Meetings

The church in **Lawrence, KS** has canceled their weekend meeting set for May 2-3 due to Covid-19.

The **Murray Road Church of Christ, Lee's Summit, MO** has scheduled their annual **Memorial Day Meeting** for **May 23-24, 2020**.

The church in **Kirkville, MO** continues to plan for their "20/20 Vision" meeting **July 25-August 2, 2020**. Please mark your calendars! There will be classes Monday through Friday with teachers **Rick Sparks, Mike Kirby, Tad Morris, Kevin Crittenden** and **John Morris**. Also, two VBS classes each week day with **Doug Twaddell**. And lots of singing, praying and Christian fellowship! More details to come!

Following our nine day meeting will be a "Restoration History" Tour, August 3-8. Join evangelists **Rick Sparks & Mike Kirby** and elder **Dan Green** for a tour of the early nineteenth century American Restoration Movement. Tour highlights will include visiting locations that were once home to restoration leaders.

We will see famous restoration sites in Missouri, Illinois, Indiana, West Virginia, and Kentucky. The locations that we plan to visit will include the Old Mud Meetinghouse, the Shaker Village, Cane Ridge, the home of Alexander Campbell, the Historical Society in Bethany, Butler

University, Culver Stockton and Sand Creek.

For more details contact **Corey Salter**:

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www.lsgrouptours.com/restoration-tour.

2020 Meetings

May 23-24.....Murray Road, Lee's Summit, MO

June 13-14.....Vandalia, IA

June 20-21.....Excelsior Springs Youth Meeting

June 29-July 3.....Midwest Bible Campout, Eminence, MO

July 25 - August 2.....Kirkville, MO

September 5-6.....Pleasant Hill, IA

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