



## Week 1: Freed from Worry

### Big Idea

When we trust God with the worry in our lives we are acknowledging that He is all-powerful.

### Ice Breaker

What is the strangest or most funny thing you have seen someone (not in this group) worry about?

### The Problem

It's just plain hard not to worry. There are so many things to worry about: job, family, money, health, world issues, etc. We all worry, and it holds us hostage because it takes away our focus on God and makes us not trust Him. But some of us like worry, and when there is nothing to worry about, we worry about what might happen. Worry is the opposite of faith. It is the sin of distrusting the promises and the power of God. Worry does not come from God, it comes from the enemy.

1. How would you explain the difference between “concern” and “worry”?
2. How might irritability and impatience be a symptom of worry in your life? What other indications of worry do you see in your life?
3. How does worry distract us and put our relationship with God on “hold?”
4. What worries are distracting you from focusing on God this week?

God has a lot to say about worry. Check it out:

“...I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from his love. Death can't, and life can't. The angels can't, and the demons can't. Our fears for today, our worries about tomorrow, and even the powers of hell can't keep God's love away.” (Paul in Romans 8:38)

“For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline.” (Paul in 2 Timothy 1:7)

“Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. 7And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.” (Paul in Philippians 4:6-7)

“Humble yourselves, therefore, under God’s mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time. 7Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.” (Peter in 1 Peter 5:6-7)

“Then Jesus said to his disciples: “Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat; or about your body, what you will wear. Life is more than food, and the body more than clothes. 24Consider the ravens: They do not sow or reap, they have no storeroom or barn; yet God feeds them. And how much more valuable you are than birds! 25Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life? Since you cannot do this very little thing, why do you worry about the rest? (Jesus in Luke 12:22-25)

“But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.” (Jesus in Matthew 6:33-34)

5. Which of these above verses from God’s Word speaks to you the most where you’re at right now? Why?

When Jesus said do not worry about your life, he meant your whole life. The word “life” is “psuche (s□’ k□)”. It’s a Greek word that’s translated as life, and it means your whole life in total. It means your mental life, your physical life, your emotional life, and your spiritual life. It means your yesterday life, your today life, and your future life.

6. What are some practical steps you have taken to not let worry/anxiety distract you from God and rule your life? What keeps you from taking these steps more often?

Here are 3 steps we can take when faced with a worry that immobilizing us and distracting us from God:

## **Step 1 - I will do what God asks me to do.**

Changes in our lives require action on our part. Some Christians tend to over spiritualize and think that God will just get them a job, or protect their kids if they pray hard enough. James 1:22 says “Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.”

God asks us to do what is wise. For example, if you don’t have a job, it would be wise to put together a resume. If your kids misbehave, it would be wise to teach them what is right. If your marriage is struggling, it would be wise to talk to someone to get help.

## Step 2 – I will give God what I cannot do.

Often what happens is we give stuff to God and when he doesn't act quick enough or in the way we want we begin to worry and we take it back because we think we can do better. Worry is about us thinking that we can do better and our God is too small. The answer is to change your view of God. If we totally trusted Him with what we cannot do on our own and we saw him as all powerful, we would not worry.

Step 3 – No matter what happens I will trust God.

In the Old Testament, a faithful follower of God named Daniel (of "lion's den" fame) had 3 loyal friends who got persecuted for their faith. They were to be thrown into a fiery furnace to be burned alive (a "worry" most of us thankful never have to face). In the midst of this, they exhibited an incredible faith in God that trusted Him even if things didn't work out how they had hoped: "If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to save us from it, and he will rescue us from your hand, O king. But even if he does not, we want you to know, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up." (Daniel 3:17-18)

7. Which of these 3 action steps comes easiest for you? Which one do you usually carry out?

8. Which of these 3 action steps is the hardest for you, that you need to work the most on at this point?

## What's Next

Go around the group and have everyone share 1 specific anxiety to pray about. Have someone in the group record all of these, and then email them out to the group (confidentially).

Pray right now for each of these (either one person prays for them all, or each person prays for the person on their right).

Next, pray every day between now and the next time your small group meets, over each of these issues. Next time you're together, share how God showed up.

# For Further Study

## Read Matthew 6:25-34

What are your top three worries?

What three worries did Jesus discourage among His followers? Why? (6:25)

What benefits does worry bring? (6:27)

What comfort can followers of Christ find in the beauty of nature? (6:30)

What priorities should we have in life? (6:33)

If God is really in control of the universe, why do we worry so much about so many things?

What worries do you struggle to keep under control?

What can help you entrust your worries to God?

What steps can you take today to change your priorities from worldly ones to kingdom ones?

## Read Luke 12:22-34

Why did Jesus start talking about worry? (12:22)

What is more important than food or clothes? (12:23)

What does God want us to seek? (12:31)

Where can treasure be found? (12:33)

Why do we worry about food and clothes?

What situations bring out the worrier in you?

What has worrying done for you?

How can we store up treasure in heaven?

When can you pray?

# Week 1 Leader's Guide - Freed From Worry

1. Help people see the difference between “concern”, which is typically something valid that we need to pay attention to (like being concerned about my toddler playing in the street or concerned about someone’s health) and “worry,” which typically is something that wears us down and centers around things we can’t control. You may even ask for specific examples of concerns vs. worries. The trick is not to let people justify what’s really worry/anxiety as being a valid concern, if it’s really not. J
2. The point here is to help people recognize how much worry they have in their lives that perhaps they weren’t aware of, and to see how much worry actually affects them. Some examples might be: losing sleep, becoming short-tempered, turning to vices (smoking, eating, spending, etc.).
3. Worry totally takes our focus off of God and what He promises and is capable of, and instead focuses us on the problem/challenge, and on our own limitations. Worry moves us towards inaction, rather than prompting us to take action in steps of faith.
4. Encourage everyone to share an answer to this question, and push them to share something “below the surface level”, if they are OK with it. Ask follow-up questions to get at the root of the worry. Remember to affirm people’s worries, even if it’s something that may “seem small.” Worries are BIG issues to people!
5. Challenge everyone to answer this, and to explain “why.” This is an important exercise in people not just reading Bible verses as just words from the Bible that aren’t relevant to them or that they don’t understand, but instead to meditate on God’s Word and allow Him to speak into their lives through it.
6. The challenge here is to really get practical with it—if we all leave just saying “let’s try to worry less!”, nothing will change. Help people think through practical steps, like calling a friend when they feel anxious, going to God in prayer, reading through specific books of the Bible, reading other books about trusting God, having steps to work through the challenges, etc.
7. This question is meant to affirm people and help them see the things they DO already do to combat worry. So let it be an encouraging time.
8. Challenge everyone to pick one, and come up with a plan to hold them accountable to do it. This is about taking what we’ve discussed and now putting it into real practical action.