

# CHAPTER 10, SESSION 22: LEARNING TO LIVE WITHOUT WORRY

## CHAPTER CHALLENGE

For many people the common struggle is that deeply rooted worry cannot be uprooted by reading one chapter, doing one spiritual practice, or participating in this entire study. For this reason some folks may resent the chapter because it implies that worry is easily addressed. Generally, however, individuals in the class find it very helpful to engage in prayer in such a specific way. For those who continue to struggle with worry even after reading this chapter, do not feel compelled to remove worry from their life. Encourage good discussion around the issue of worry, examining where it comes from and how it is lived out in their lives.

Also notice the subtle connection between the soul-shaping exercise of “prayer” and the idea in *The Good and Beautiful God* of putting our stories (narratives) within the context of God’s bigger story (meta-narrative). This idea may be helpful for the group in terms of understanding how narratives are at work in the midst of our worries and also our prayers.

## SUPPLIES

- Blank paper and pens
- A copy of Matthew 6:33 for each participant
- Optional recording and lyrics to “Don’t Worry, Be Happy”

## WELCOME

It may seem too obvious and a cliché, but a funny way to start class would be listening to the Bobby McFerrin song “Don’t Worry, Be Happy.” While we respect Mr. McFerrin’s musical ability, we aren’t convinced that these lyrics hold the key to eliminating worry. Listen to the song as a fun reminder that worry is a common problem without an easy solution.

Here’s a little song I wrote  
You might want to sing it note for note  
Don’t worry, be happy.  
In every life we have some trouble  
But when you worry you make it double  
Don’t worry, be happy.  
Don’t worry, be happy now.

### *Chorus*

Don’t worry, be happy. Don’t worry, be happy.  
Don’t worry, be happy. Don’t worry, be happy.  
Ain’t got no place to lay your head  
Somebody came and took your bed  
Don’t worry, be happy.  
The landlord say your rent is late  
He may have to litigate  
Don’t worry, be happy.

### *Chorus*

(Look at me -- I’m happy. Don’t worry, be happy.  
Here I give you my phone number. When you worry, call me,

I make you happy. Don't worry, be happy.)  
Ain't got no cash, ain't got no style  
Ain't got no gal to make you smile  
Don't worry, be happy.  
'Cause when you worry your face will frown  
And that will bring everybody down  
Don't worry, be happy.

*Chorus*

(Don't worry, don't worry, don't do it.  
Be happy. Put a smile on your face.  
Don't bring everybody down.  
Don't worry. It will soon pass, whatever it is.  
Don't worry, be happy.  
I'm not worried, I'm happy...)

RECITE COLOSSIANS 3:1-17 TOGETHER

Then begin the silence.

5 MINUTES OF SILENCE

PRAYER TO END THE SILENCE

You may offer a prayer of your own, ring a meditation chime, or simply say "Amen" to end the silence.

SOUL-TRAINING [15 minutes]

If you are in a group of six or more people, divide into groups of three or four. The soul-training exercise for the week was prayer. Regarding the relationship between prayer and worry, the author writes:

God has instituted prayer as one of his means of caring for us. We are invited to turn our cares into prayers. And when we do, we put the matter into God's hands. This does not take away our responsibility in dealing with our concerns, but it places the concerns in the larger context of the kingdom. It allows God to use the resources of the kingdom to meet our needs. When we do this, Paul says, we discover a peace that surpasses our understanding (p. 180).

Use the following questions to discuss your experience of prayer.

1. In what ways did you see the kingdom of God at work in the areas you prayed about?
2. Did you find greater peace as you offered these prayers? If so, how did it affect you?
3. What did you learn about God or yourself from the exercise?

ENGAGING THE CHAPTER [35 minutes]

THE MAIN IDEA OF THIS CHAPTER is that people who live in the kingdom of God never need to worry about their lives.

Read through the following questions before you begin discussion. Note any questions you especially want to discuss. Depending on your group size and the conversation, you may not have time to discuss all of these questions.

1. The author differentiates between worry and caution. Describe the difference.
2. In this chapter we explore the relationship between the media and our fears. Reflect for a few minutes on the news media you consume. What fears do they play on? How does the media influence your awareness and openness to God's kingdom? Discuss these questions with two other people in your group.

3. Review the section entitled “Jesus’ Narrative: Things Not to Worry About” (pp. 175-78). As a group reflect on the various points from this section that you find either challenging or helpful.
4. Commentators Dale C. Allison and W. D. Davies note that “anxiety is foolish and accomplishes nothing except to put God out of the picture” (p. 179). Do you agree with this statement? Explain. Why are the kingdom of God and anxiety mutually exclusive?
5. In discussing Matthew 6:34, the author writes, “Jesus says that the kingdom operates only in the present moment. We can only live in the kingdom today. We can’t live in it tomorrow. So worrying about tomorrow is a useless distraction. Just as we count on God today, we can count on him tomorrow. But we aren’t in tomorrow, and never will be; we live only in the present, in *today*” (p. 180). How does this differ from our culture’s typical notion regarding tomorrow?

### BREAK [5 minutes]

### ENGAGING THE WORD AND EXPERIENCING TRANSFORMATION [20 minutes]

The author tells us that Matthew 6:33 “is the key to the Sermon on the Mount” (p. 178). Go to the section “One Day at a Time” (pp. 180-81), and highlight points that are especially helpful or challenging to you. Once everyone has had a chance to discuss, prayerfully engage Matthew 6:33 using the following steps.

1. Give each person the photocopy of Matthew 6:33.
2. Have each person read the verse aloud, slowly. Leave a brief pause between each reading.
3. Once everyone has read the verse, spend 5 minutes in silence savoring the passage.
4. Read the following: *To apply the passage to our lives, write a list of your activities from yesterday on a blank sheet of paper. Allow time for everyone to complete a full list.*
5. Then say: *Ask yourself this question, “How do I seek first the kingdom of God in the midst of these activities?” This quote from the chapter may be helpful: “What does it mean to seek the kingdom of God first? It means making the reality and the principles of God’s kingdom our first and primary concern. ... We continually look to God and what he is doing in the midst of ordinary life” (p. 178).*
6. *Below your list write ways you can seek first the kingdom of God in the midst of ordinary life.*
7. *Form groups of three or four and discuss the ideas you have generated so far for seeking first God’s kingdom. Allow the conversation to be creative—perhaps new ideas will surface as you share and discuss.*
8. Regroup and have the sub-groups share ideas they created.

### GO IN PEACE [5 minutes]

Close your time together by having a volunteer in the group read this quote:

As long as we live in fellowship with our good and beautiful God in his mighty kingdom, we have nothing to fear, not even fear itself. For nothing in life or death can separate us from the love of God (Romans 8:38-39). When we know this to be true, we can let go of worry and begin living with confidence and joy (p. 182).

### FOR THE COMING WEEK

- ☞ Read chapter 11, “Learning to Live Without Judging Others.”
- ☞ The soul-training practice is to go the entire day without gossiping.