

Worry-Free Living

GOD'S FORMULA FOR PEACE

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Press

DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this book to the ladies in my Thursday night Bible study at Tri County Baptist Church in Lady Lake, Florida, whom I have the delight of teaching each week.

Also to Michele Garwood, a new member of our class. She has done so many special things for the ladies and was such a help to me getting this book ready for publication.

Worry-free Living: God's Formula for Peace

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Plan of Salvation

Ephesians 2:8 and 9 tell us salvation is a free gift—we can't work for it. "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast."

Jesus Christ provided the free gift of salvation when He died on the cross for us. But we must each individually receive the free gift.

John 1:12—"But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name."

Romans 10:13—"Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved."

Have you been trying to earn eternal life by your good works? If we could do anything to earn eternal life in Heaven on our own, then Christ wouldn't have needed to die to pay for our sins. The price has already been paid. All we have to do is receive the free gift by believing Christ's death paid for our sins. Do you believe Christ paid for your sins when He died on the cross?

Have you ever received that free gift of salvation? If not, you could do that today by praying something like this:

Lord Jesus, I confess that I am a sinner and need Your forgiveness. I believe that Jesus Christ died for my sins and I cannot do anything to earn entrance into Heaven. I now trust only in Christ to save me and take me to Heaven when I die.

“Why Sink When You Can Swim” Verses

Genesis 18:25—“Shall not the Judge [Ruler] of all the earth do right?”

Job 23:10—“But he knoweth the way that I take: when he hath tried [tested] me, I shall come forth as gold.”

Psalm 18:30—“As for God, his way is perfect: the word of the LORD is tried [proved]: he is a buckler to all those that trust in him.”

Psalm 31:15—“My times are in thy hand.”

Psalm 34:4—“I sought the LORD, and he heard me, and delivered me from all my fears.”

Psalm 37:23—“The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD: and he delighteth in his way.”

Psalm 46:10—“Be still, and know that I am God.”

Psalm 91:1, 2—“He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the LORD, He is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in him will I trust.”

Proverbs 3:5, 6—“Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.”

Proverbs 17:22—“A merry heart doeth good like a medicine: but a broken spirit drieth the bones.”

Isaiah 26:3—“Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind [imagination] is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee.”

Isaiah 40:31—“But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint.”

Isaiah 43:2—“When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee.”

Isaiah 50:10—“Who is among you that feareth the LORD, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light? let him trust in the name of the LORD, and stay upon his God.”

- Jeremiah 29:11**—“For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end.”
- Jeremiah 31:3**—“Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love.”
- Jeremiah 33:3**—“Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and shew thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not.”
- Habakkuk 3:17, 18**—“Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: Yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation.”
- Luke 1:37**—“For with God nothing shall be impossible.”
- Romans 8:28, 29**—“And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son.”
- 1 Corinthians 10:13**—“There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.”
- Philippians 4:4**—“Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, Rejoice.”
- Philippians 4:6, 7**—“Be careful [anxious] for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.”
- Philippians 4:11**—“Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.”
- Philippians 4:13**—“I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.”
- Philippians 4:19**—“But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.”
- 1 Thessalonians 5:18**—“In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.”
- 2 Timothy 1:7**—“For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.”
- Hebrews 13:5**—“I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.”
- James 1:2, 3**—“My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience.”
- 1 Peter 5:7**—“Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you.”

Part One: Doesn't Everybody Worry?

L E S S O N 1

What Is Worry?

If someone asked you to define “worry,” how would you answer? Max Lucado, in his book *Fear Not*, defines “worry” in a couple of different ways: “Destructive anxiety [worry] subtracts God from the future, faces uncertainties with no faith, and tallies up the challenges of the day without entering God into the equation. . . . Worry is the darkroom where negatives become glossy prints.”¹

In this lesson we will look at two definitions, several Scripture verses that view worrying as being double-minded, and several verses that prove worry is a sin.

Worrying Is Being Double-minded

The word “worry” is a combination of two Greek words that mean “to divide the mind.”

1. Read James 1:5–8. What does verse 5 offer as a solution for a mind filled with worry?
2. God offers us His wisdom to help solve the problem we are worried about. How do we get this wisdom (v. 6)?
3. What warning does God give the person who trusts Him one day and then is worrying again the next day (v. 7)?

4. How does God describe the person who is up and down—full of faith and then full of fear and worry (v. 8)?

I read a devotional by a well-known preacher who refers to people who are up and down spiritually as having “elevator Christianity.” He says, “That type of elevator Christianity takes its toll spiritually and leaves non-believers wondering about the reliability of our faith.”²

5. How does God describe the double-minded person (v. 8)?

6. How does worry make a person emotionally unstable?

I appreciate the following insight into emotional instability:

Our emotional vocabulary includes some pretty interesting phraseology. We talk about . . . our heart stopping, or blowing our stack. . . . And when it’s time for these emotions to come gushing out, they take many forms: temper tantrums, endless ranting, sleepless nights, mood swings, . . . pity parties, and hissy fits. Unfortunately, all of these very popular options are not appropriate for Christian women. Proverbs 29:11 says, “A fool vents all his feelings, but a wise man holds them back” (NKJV).³

7. How does worry make a person’s thoughts unstable?

I once read that when we worry about tomorrow, we are “half-minded.” Half of our mind is on today and the other half on tomorrow. This drains our emotional strength to handle today’s problems, because we have only half of the energy we need. This thought echoes what God says in James 1:8 that “a double minded man is unstable in all his ways.”

Worry Is Sin

Surely God wouldn't call worry sin! God knows that women will worry; after all, we are the weaker vessel (1 Peter 3:7). We may not be as strong as men physically, but worry is about mental strength, not physical strength. God made women and men with a mind that can trust Him with their problems. God not only knows we can trust Him, He commands us to trust Him!

Look at these verses that remind us that worry is sin:

8. In Philippians 4:6 what does God command us to do?

9. In Matthew 6:34 what is God's command?

10. In James 4:17 what does God say we are doing when He commands us not to do something and we still do it?

God tells us not to worry about tomorrow. However, having a plan for tomorrow can relieve a great deal of stress that leads to worry. David Powelson says that "a plan is not a formula. A football coach doesn't know a single thing that's going to happen after the opening whistle. He doesn't even know who's going to kick off until they flip a coin. But he's not unprepared. He goes in with a *game plan*, a basic orientation to the game ahead."⁴

11. What are some things you can do in the evening as you plan your schedule for the next day?

12. What is one of the first things you can plan to do tomorrow morning that can help relieve stress and worries of the day (Mark 1:35)?

Barbara Johnson suggests that the best advice for each new day is to “hope for the best, get ready for the worst, and then take whatever God sends.”⁵

13. How would making a to-do list for the next day relieve some of your stress and worry?

When you have your to-do list made and God gives you a different to-do list, what do you do? I like what Elizabeth George says in her book *Loving God With All Your Mind*. She says she gives “God Plan A for the day. Giving God my schedule for the day means laying before Him all the projects I want to get done.” But she also gives “God Plan B for the day. . . . When I give Him Plan B, I am acknowledging His right to create an alternative plan for my day. . . . Realizing that God is behind any unexpected event, I can then more easily accept whatever happens.”⁶

Charles Stanley asks how we handle unexpected circumstances. When God interrupts our plans with a sudden shocking circumstance, how do we keep from falling apart with worry?

Few of us are prepared for the worst when it comes. Often tragedy strikes without notice—the sudden death of a loved one, a layoff at work, or a medical report confirming a terminal illness.

These events and many more have the potential to turn our world upside down. How do we handle circumstances that leave us suddenly feeling out of control and frightened?⁷

14. When these tragedies strike, God’s promises can carry us through the difficult times. What does God promise in the verses below?

James 1:5

Isaiah 40:31

Isaiah 26:3

In *The Unfailing Promise*, Richard Lee points out,

If we are really under the care of God, we have nothing to worry about at all. If the Divine Being who rules this world really lives within our hearts, then He can give us inner peace and calm that will enable us to face any of the storms of life. If God can keep the universe going, and He lives within your life, He can certainly keep you going as well.⁸

15. Read Proverbs 3:5 and 6. How do we know we can trust God's wisdom and strength when we feel our world has been turned upside down and nothing makes sense?
16. Proverbs 3:5 and 6 tell us to totally trust God. What are we told not to do?
17. When we can't understand what God is doing, we are forced to trust God or to keep worrying and trying to figure out what to do next. If we trust Him, what does He promise in verse 6?

Richard Lee says "there are no easy answers to the problems of life," but he identifies what leads to freedom from worry:

Each problem must be faced directly and confidently knowing that the power of God is on our side. The real antidote to worry is spiritual maturity, which leads to true freedom from worry's bondage. No one matures overnight. Don't be discouraged if you are not yet what you wish to be, for it is only as you continue to grow in your walk with Christ that you will become all that God intends for you to be.⁹

18. Have the verses we have studied convinced you that worry is sin? If so, what are you going to do about it? If not, why not?



From My Heart

I never really thought much about a double mind being offensive to God. It seems like He is saying, “If you don’t believe I can help you, don’t bother asking.” Have you ever been in the midst of a situation that you have worried about for a prolonged length of time? You keep telling the Lord, “I don’t know what to do.” In God’s providence you remember or someone reminds you about James 1:5: “If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him” (NKJV). However, it doesn’t seem to help. God didn’t give you any answers. Why? You didn’t ask in faith, believing God would guide you right. You prayed telling God what you wanted Him to do and what you did not want Him to do. You had a double mind. You wanted God’s will and your will.

I approach every day with what I call “palms-up living.” Palms-up living has helped me so much in freeing me from worry so I can have God’s wisdom. Basically, I’m saying, “Whatever, Lord. Give what You want; take what You want.” Only when I pray for wisdom with no strings attached can I expect the wisdom I need to move through my difficult situation. Remember, God calls a double-minded person “unstable in all his ways” (James 1:8). I promise you that palms-up living will bring great stability to your faith.

From Your Heart



Would your friends call your relationship with Christ “elevator Christianity”? If so, do you want to change? What do you need to do? If you already practice palms-up living, what have you learned and gained from saying, “Whatever, Lord”?

Endnotes

1. Max Lucado, *Fear Not* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2009), 15.
2. Charles Stanley, *On Holy Ground* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1999), 207.
3. *Living Above Worry and Stress* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2003), 35, 36.
4. David Powlison, *Worry: Pursuing a Better Path to Peace* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing

Company, 2004), 27.

5. Barbara Johnson, *Boomerang Joy: Joy That Goes Around, Comes Around* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998), 169, quoted in *Living Above Worry and Stress*, 77.
6. Elizabeth George, *Loving God with All Your Mind* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 1994), 54–55.
7. Stanley, *On Holy Ground*, 167.
8. Richard Lee, *The Unfailing Promise* (Waco, Texas: Word Books, 1988), 95–96.
9. *Ibid.*, 96.