

## INTRODUCTION

Almost every church has a printed bulletin, and when there are printed words, there are bound to be some misprints—and the results are often hilarious. Here are my favorite church bloopers, actual excerpts from church bulletins:

1. Please join us as we show support for Alan and Amy as they prepare for the girth of their first child.
2. Join us for the Thursday lunch bunch—you'll hear an excellent speaker and heave a great lunch.
3. The music ministry invites any member of the congregation who enjoys sinning to join the choir.
4. A song-fest was hell at the Methodist Church last Wednesday.
5. The next song will be, "Angels we have heard get high."
6. Tonight's service: "What is hell like?" Come early and hear our choir.
7. Ladies, please support the rummage sale. Here's a chance to get rid of those old things not worth keeping around the house. Don't forget to bring your husbands.
8. Low-self-esteem support group will meet Thursday at 7. Please use the back door.
9. Weight Watchers will meet at 6:30, please use the large double door at the side entrance.
10. Missionary Bertha Belch will speak at Calvary Church tonight. Come hear Bertha Belch all the way from Africa.
- And last: 11. Don't let worry kill you—let our pastor help.

I brought this list to your attention because the last blooper leads into my message today. Worry CAN kill you - and I want to help. I don't want to help kill you; I want to help you learn how to deal with worry. In 1988, Bobby McFerrin wrote and recorded a song entitled "Don't Worry—Be Happy." It was one of those songs that you either loved or hated. A lot of people must have loved it because it went to #1 on the Billboard charts for awhile. One of the lines said, "In every life we have some trouble, when you worry, you make it double, don't worry—be happy." The phrase, "don't worry—be happy" was repeated over and over in the song. Bobby was half right. He got the "don't worry" part correct, but when you know the Lord, you understand that faithfulness is better than happiness. Jesus' advice is better than Bobby McFerrin's. He says, "Don't worry—be faithful!"

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. Consider 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! Who 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?"

"Consider how the lilies grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you, not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which are here today, and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, how much more will he clothe you, O you of little faith! And do not set your heart on what you will

eat or drink; do not worry about it. For the pagan world runs after all such things, and your Father knows that you need them. But seek his kingdom, and these things will be given to you as well."

None of us are immune from the problems of life that would tempt us to worry but as Bobby's song says, we all have trouble, but when you worry about it you have doubled your trouble. Often, you can't control the problems that come your way, but you *can* control whether or not you worry about those problems. Let's notice three important facts about worry, and then I want to share with you five worry-busters from the Bible.

## 1. WORRY IS HARMFUL!

We've all met people who are addicted to worry. We laugh about them and call them worry warts or worryholics. But that's like laughing about someone who has cancer. Both the Bible and medical science agree that worry is harmful to your spiritual and physical health. In his book on worry, Dr. Edward Hallowell writes:

"Excessive worry, or what I call toxic worry, can make you sick, it can cut down your enjoyment of life, and it can hamper your productivity. Toxic worry is bad for every system in your body: it increases the risk of heart attacks and strokes, it impairs digestion, it causes shortness of breath, it causes all kinds of musculoskeletal aches and pains, [and] it produces headaches and migraines." (Edward Hallowell, M.D., *Worry: Controlling it and Using it Wisely*)

Dr. Hallowell writes that he never knew a man to work himself to death, but he has known plenty of people who worried themselves to death.

Newspaper columnist Molly Ivens relates the true story of two young East Texas boys, John Henry Faulk and Boots Cooper. They were given the assignment of getting rid of an old chicken snake that was causing considerable loss in the chicken coop. So they pretended they were Texas Rangers out to arrest a dangerous criminal. They put on their cowboy hats and mounted their stick horses and rode into the chicken coop to run out the old snake. They looked around the nests on the bottom shelf—no snake. Then they stood on tiptoes to uncover the nests on the top shelf. They were about to decide the snake had escaped when suddenly the old chicken snake raised its head right in front of the boys. They were so scared that both of them tried to run out of the small door of the chicken coop at the same time, in the process they did considerable damage to themselves and the chicken coop. John Henry's mother was watching from the front porch and was laughing as the boys scrambled back toward the house. She said, "Why boys, what's wrong with you? You know perfectly well that an old chicken snake can't hurt you!" John Henry said, "Yes ma'am, but there's some things that'll scare you so bad that you hurt yourself!" That's exactly what worry does; it's a form of mental self mutilation. It's harmful!

## 2. WORRY IS USELESS!

Worry is a waste of time. In verse 25 Jesus asks, "Who of you by worrying can add one hour to his life?" The word He uses can also mean adding one inch to your height. Worry won't make

you live longer; it will actually shorten your life. Worry won’t make you any taller, instead it will cause you to be stooped over and defeated.

Our word “worry” comes from an Old Anglo Saxon word, *wurgen*, which means “to strangle.” When you worry, you are choking your mind and cutting off the fresh air of faith. Here’s the progression. If you’re a worryholic, you think about the very worst that *might* happen, and then you imagine that it *could* happen, and then you become obsessed with fear that it *may* happen. That’s the point at which healthy concern becomes unhealthy worry.

My mother was a wonderful person, but she was a worryholic. It robbed her of so much joy in life. She was deathly afraid of flying. I flew with her one time, and from the time she sat in her seat, she kept her eyes glued on the wing, fearing that it was going to drop off at any second. About an hour into the flight, I said, “Mom, if you need to go to the bathroom, I’ll watch the wing for you.” She could even laugh about worrying so much. Her favorite line was, “Don’t tell me worrying doesn’t work. The things I worry the most about never happen!”

Psychologists have conducted a great deal of study on worry and one report says of the things people worry about: 40% concerns fears about future possibilities that never happen; 30% of worry is about things in the past that can’t possibly be changed; 12% is worry about health (when nothing is wrong with us); 12% is worry about insignificant and trivial issues; only 6% of the things we worry about deserve our legitimate concern.

The challenges in life can be divided into two broad categories: those things you *can’t* do anything about (like the weather); and those things you *can* do something about. Don’t worry about the first category, because there’s nothing you can do about those things. Don’t worry about the second category, because if you *can* do something—do it, don’t worry about it! Many years ago, I learned a little poem that has helped me overcome worry. It says, “For every evil under the sun, Either there is a cure, or there is none. If there be one, seek ‘till you find it. If there be none, never mind it!” Jesus said, “Do not worry” because it’s a waste of time!

### **3. WORRY IS SINFUL!**

Worry is not just some harmless habit. I’m convinced that worry is the #1 sin among Christians. The opposite of worry is trust in God. In verse 28 Jesus says, “Oh you of little faith!” In Romans 14:23 the Bible says, “That which is not of faith is sin.”

When you worry, you are disobeying the Lord and demonstrating a lack of faith. God has promised He is going to take care of you. When you worry, you are actually saying, “God you are a liar! I don’t really believe you are going to take care of me, so I’d better worry about this problem.”

Someone has said that “worry is practical atheism.” A worryholic may not be a theological atheist, but they might as well be. You can proclaim you believe in God until your face turns blue, but when you worry you are saying, “I don’t believe God exists,” or “I don’t believe God can be trusted to take care of me.” A Christian who worries is a contradiction of terms.

When Ken Warren was giving his spiritual gifts messages, he said there is a difference between ignorance and stupidity. If you don't know any better, you may claim ignorance. But when you've been informed by God's Word and you refuse to change, that's stupidity. It's sin. As Forest Gump's mother said, "Stupid is a stupid does." Maybe you didn't know worry was sin. Now, you know, so you can start having victory when you *confess* it as sin and *repent* of it. That means, "don't worry—be faithful."

Now, I'd be a poor teacher indeed if I told you worry was a sin but didn't give you some practical ways to stop worrying. Let's consider **FIVE BIBLICAL WORRY-BUSTERS**.

## 1. RECOGNIZE THAT GOD CARES FOR BIRDS, FLOWERS, AND YOU!

When Jesus taught, He used common, simple things like birds and flowers to teach profound truth. Just picture Him as He is saying, "Consider the ravens" just as a flock of birds fly by. Then He points to the wild flowers and uses them as an example of God's care. You may not understand the doctrine of Divine Providence, but you know something about birds and flowers!

Even the birds are valuable to God. We love birds at my house. We have two pet finches and we buy bird seed in 50-pound bags and have several bird feeders and bird houses. We even have a Martin house, but so far we've only housed sparrows in it. In all my years of watching birds, I've never known a bird to have an ulcer or die from worry.

Perhaps you've heard the poem of the imaginary conversation between two birds:

"Said the robin to the sparrow, 'I'd really like to know,  
Why these anxious human creatures rush about and worry so!'  
Said the sparrow to the robin, 'I think that it must be  
That they have no heavenly Father such as cares for you and me!'"

When Jesus spoke of "lilies" He was talking about the wild flowers that spring up and cover the hillsides after a rain. Nobody had to plant them, they just grew and bloomed.

Now, there's an important lesson about birds and flowers, but you must stop and dig below the surface. God feeds the birds, but they are hard workers. Most years we have bluebirds nest in a couple of our houses. The mother and daddy bird work like crazy to build the nest and then to bring food to the baby birds. Baby birds just open their mouths and receive the food, but when they mature, they go out and start working hard for their own food. When Jesus says God will make sure you have food, He doesn't mean you can just sit around and open your mouth or hold out your hand. He wants you to work hard. Birds teach us the importance of diligence.

Flowers are beautiful, but they are totally dependent. They can't grow on their own, but they don't worry about it. Flowers can't produce what they need: nutrients, moisture, and light, they can only accept them. Flowers teach us the importance of dependence. Here's the lesson: We should be as diligent as birds and as *dependent* as flowers! Don't worry about food. Work hard like birds and God will make sure you have enough to eat. Don't worry about having clothes to wear. Like the flowers, God will make sure you have something to wear. God didn't promise

you'd have gourmet food or designer labels, but He *does* promise He will meet your needs. The flowers and birds are His creation, but we are His children!

So don't worry about your food or clothes! Don't worry—be faithful!

## **2. RECEIVE TODAY AS A GIFT—FORGET TOMORROW'S WORRIES**

Jesus knew one of the greatest dangers of worry is that it distracts our attention from NOW. Jesus says exactly that in Matthew 6:34: "Give your entire attention to what God is doing right now, and don't get worked up about what may or may not happen tomorrow. God will help you deal with whatever hard things come up when the time comes." (*The Message* paraphrase)

I've heard worryholics say something like: "I'm just afraid that something bad is going to happen in the future!" You're correct, something bad IS going to happen to you in the future. Bad things happen to all of us but God is good—all the time. Instead of focusing on bad possibilities of the future focus on the goodness of God today—and forever. It's okay to consider the future and plan wisely for the future, but don't *worry* about the future.

Corrie Ten Boom said it well: "Worry does not empty tomorrow of its sorrows; it empties today of its strength." Psalm 90:12 teaches us that we are to number our *days* not our years. Every day of life is a precious gift of God, so let worry about tomorrow ruin your today.

Did you hear about the clock that had a nervous breakdown? It ticked once every second. One day it started thinking about the fact it would have to tick 60 times each minute, 360 times each hour, 8,640 times a day, 3,153,600 times a year ... and if it ticked five years that would mean 15,768,000 ticks! The clock couldn't stand it so it went to a chronographic psychiatrist—a clock doc. The little clock was all upset. He said, "There's just no way I can tick 15,768,000 times!" The clock doc said, "How many ticks do you have to tick at a time?" The clock said, "Just one." The doc said, "Well, don't worry about the next tick, just think about each tick at a time and you'll be okay." The clock decided to do that, and it left ticking right along. You see, life will give you a beating but you can keep on ticking, if you just think about each tick as it happens!

## **3. REDUCE ANXIETY BY SIMPLIFYING YOUR LIFE**

One reason people worry is because their lives are so complicated. They have so many activities and demands that they can't do everything well, so they worry about it. The busier you get, the more anxious you become. In the story Jesus told about how different kinds of people receive the good seed of the Word of God, He spoke of one type of person who has such a cluttered life that the Word of God can't really produce fruit. Is He describing you when He said in Luke 8:14, "The seed that fell among the thorns stands for those who hear, but as they go on their way they are choked by life's worries, riches, and pleasures, and they do not mature."

It's been weeks since we were in Luke 12, but like real estate, scripture is all about location, location, location. If you slip back up to the verses preceding this, Jesus just told the story of a wealthy entrepreneur who had so much he had to tear down his warehouses and build bigger warehouses. But he died before He got to a place of being able to enjoy any of it. The point Jesus

made is in Luke 12:15 where He said, "Watch out for greed. A man's life does not consist of the abundance of his possessions."

If you didn't hear that message on December 30, you may want to get the tape. If there is one message that keeps getting pounded in our heads by our culture is "things do matter." The message of our culture is "grab more and more stuff!" It blares from the television commercials; it stares at you from the pages of magazines and newspapers. Americans are like the donkey that has a carrot extended in front of it on a stick. The donkey sees that carrot and moves toward it, but the carrot just moves away. He is always wanting and pursuing it, but he never gets it.

Here's a great word for the 21<sup>st</sup> century, try it on for size: CONTENTMENT. People worry because they aren't content; they are always striving for the next level, the next job, the next thrill. A recovering worryholic is someone who has learned the secret of contentment.

I came across a quote from a 14-year-old boy I thought was amazing. I don't know his name, but he demonstrates unusual maturity. It's all about learning to be content.

It was spring, but it was summer I wanted, the warm days, and the great outdoors. It was summer, but it was fall I wanted, the colorful leaves, and the cool dry air. It was fall, but it was winter I wanted, the beautiful snow, and the joy of the holiday season. It was winter, but it was spring I wanted, the warmth, and the blossoming of nature. I was a child, but it was adulthood I wanted. The freedom, and the respect. I was 20, but it was 30 I wanted, to be mature, and sophisticated. I was middle-aged, but it was 20 I wanted, the youth and the free spirit. I was retired, but it was middle age I wanted, the presence of mind, without limitations. My life was over, but I never got what I wanted.  
(Written by a 14-year-old boy)

That's why people worry. They haven't learned the simple secret of contentment. The apostle Paul wrote in Philippians 4:12-13: "I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want: I can do everything through him who gives me strength."

You should work hard and always be striving to grow and mature as a Christian. In other words, never be content with your spiritual maturity, but you must learn to be content with what you have. If you don't learn simple contentment, worry will rob you of the joy of *now*.

#### **4. REFUSE TO CARRY YOUR BURDENS ALONE**

We worry about our problems when we try to carry them alone. Many of the burdens we have to carry are far too heavy to bear alone. A wonderful worry-buster is to learn how to unload your burdens.

I love the funny story about the guy who had a reputation for being a worryholic. He was always anxious and miserable from worrying. One day he showed up for work and there was an evident transformation in his attitude and countenance. He was smiling and happy as if he didn't have a care in the world. One of his co-workers noticed and said, "Man, what happened to you? You

look great!" The former worry-wart said, "Oh, I have hired a professional worrier to do all my worrying for me. It's great. I pay him and he worries for me; anything that I might worry about, he does it." His coworker said, "That's a great idea! How much do you pay him?" The man said, "I pay him \$5,000 a week to worry for me." His coworker said, "Wait a minute! \$5,000 a week? You don't make that much money location-how are you going to pay him?" The guy said, "That's not my worry-it's his!"

Wouldn't it be wonderful if you could find someone who would take all your worries? That's exactly what God has offered to do, for free! The Bible says in I Peter 5:7: "Cast all your anxiety on Him because He cares for you." What an invitation! You can say, "Lord, I won't worry about this anymore, I'm just going to unload this burden on You." God says, "Go ahead, I'm a lot stronger than you are!" Why do we find that so hard to do? Do we think we're being NICE to the Lord when we insist on carrying our burdens alone?

James Seward wrote: It is His Will that I should cast my cares on Him each day; / He also bids me not to cast my confidence away. / But, Oh! how foolishly I act when taken unaware, / I cast away my confidence and carry all my care!

Right now, if you so choose, you can simply choose to cast your cares on the Lord and you'll feel like a great weight has been lifted off of your shoulders. But sometimes you may need another person to help you carry a load. As the Body of Christ, we *are* the hands, and the shoulders, and the back of the Lord. As brothers and sisters we should be willing to help carry the burdens of others. Paul writes in Galatians 6:2 "Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ." The law of Christ is to love God and to love your neighbor as yourself. When you offer to support and pray and help someone, you are being the Body of Christ.

## **5. REALIZE THAT PLEASING GOD IS ALL THAT REALLY MATTERS**

Jesus gives us the short cut to worry-free living in verse 31. He says, "seek His kingdom, and these things [food, clothes, other needs] will be given to you as well."

We worry because we don't think we can live to everyone else's expectations; you don't have to worry about whether or not you can. You can't. Since most of us have been born and raised in America, we've never had a real king or queen ruling over us. The idea of a kingdom is something we get from reading history or fairy tales. Throughout history or literature there have been all different kinds of kingdoms but they all had one important factor in common. Every kingdom has a king. You can't have a kingdom without one. Instead of trying to figure out what the Kingdom of God is, just concentrate on the King, Jesus. The only thing a loyal subject in a kingdom has to do is to *please* the king. If you don't please the king, you are in trouble!

You can please King Jesus by loving Him, obeying Him, and serving Him. He is a loving, caring King who has both the inclination and the resources to meet all the needs in your life. So instead of seeking to have all your needs met, seek to honor and please the king. Don't focus on doing a hundred different things, just focus on pleasing God. 200 years from today, none of us will be alive. All these things that you are worrying about today won't matter then. But if you dedicate

your life to pleasing God, in 200 years you'll recognize it as the smartest thing you ever decided to do. In a million years, it will be the **ONLY** thing that really matters.

Are you worrying? Don't worry—be faithful! Are you afraid? Don't worry—be faithful! Now, you may be thinking, "If he only knew what I'm going through, he wouldn't be standing up there telling me not to worry!" My friend, I don't know what you're going through, but God does and He cares. And He is the one telling you not to worry. You say, "Well, He's God, He doesn't have anything to worry about!" Well let's listen to one more voice. There once was a man who had been stoned several times and left for dead, he had been shipwrecked, thrown to wild beasts, and hunted by a vicious mob who wanted to kill him. He was in prison waiting to have his head chopped off. While he was in prison, surrounded by Roman guards, he wrote a letter, and here's one of the things he said, (Philippians 4:6-7): "Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and petition with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the **PEACE OF GOD THAT TRANSCENDS ALL UNDERSTANDING**, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus."

If you will refuse to worry and instead seek the King and ask Him for peace, He will give it to you. The world doesn't understand this kind of inner peace, and it only comes from God. But when you have this peace from God, it protects your mind like those Roman guards surrounded Paul.

Life is way too short to waste time worrying. Bishop Taylor Smith used the quote this little poem: "The worried cow would have lived 'till now; If she'd only saved her breath; But she feared her hay wouldn't last all day and she mooed herself to death." Don't waste your life worrying!

Life only has two handles. When the difficulties and challenges of life confront you, you can grab the handle of worry and fear. Or you can grab the handle of faith and trust. You can't grab both handles at the same time. Will you say, Lord, today, I will let go of the handle of worry and fear and I will start taking the handle of faith in you with both hands and *I will not let go* of my faith and trust in You. From this day forward my motto will be "Don't worry—be faithful!"



## OUTLINE

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2. WORRY IS USELESS!
3. WORRY IS SINFUL!

## FIVE BIBLICAL WORRY-BUSTERS

1. Recognize that God cares for birds, flowers, and you!

2. Receive today as a gift—forget tomorrow's worries

"Give your entire attention to what God is doing right now, and don't get worked up about what may or may not happen tomorrow. God will help you deal with whatever hard things come up when the time comes." *Matthew 6:34 (The Message paraphrase)*

3. Reduce anxiety by simplifying your life

"The seed that fell among the thorn stands for those who hear, but as they go on their way they are choked by life's worries, riches, and pleasures, and they do not mature." *Luke 8:14*

4. Refuse to carry your burdens alone

"Cast all your anxiety on Him because He cares for you." *1 Peter 5:7*

"Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ." *Galatians 6:2*

5. Realize that pleasing God is all that really matters

"Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and petition with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the PEACE OF GOD THAT TRANSCENDS ALL UNDERSTANDING, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus." *Philippians 4:6-7*



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To put it in Texas terms, “You’re mighty welcome to use any and all of my ingredients; just make your own chili!”

For the Joy...  
Pastor David Dykes