

Jesus asked, “**Can all your worries add a single moment to your life?**” (Matthew 6:27 NLT) The answer is no. But does that stop us from worrying? I don’t think so. Show of hands: How many of you are worried about the price of gas, or your job, or your kids, or your health, or your parents, or the war, or our nation, or anything else? If you didn’t raise your hand you are either you weren’t paying attention or you are a saint. We put a lot of time and energy into worrying about all sorts of things that might happen, but usually don’t happen. Has worrying added even a single hour to our lives? When Jesus asked that question, he expected everyone to say “No.” I guess we all know that worrying doesn’t add to our lives.

Studies now show that worry can shorten our lives. Why do some people get ulcers? Worry? A 40 year study reported last December by the Mayo Clinic shows the long term effect of worrying on our lives. The study of some 7,000 students at the University of North Carolina concludes that the pessimists had a significantly greater likelihood of dying sooner. Pessimism and worry are not identical, but they are related. Pessimism is an outlook about things in general. Worry is a response to specific things. The root of both is a shortage of hope and trust. So get rid of worry and you are likely to live longer.

Jesus makes is clear. He wants us to trust God. He pointed to the birds that don’t plant and are fed by God the Father. He pointed to the flowers that don’t make clothes and are more beautiful than anything man can make. Now Jesus spoke these words to people who had to plant and harvest, who had to work to make clothing. He wasn’t telling them to stop doing those things. He wanted them and wants us to understand that our lives are a more than all the work that we do.

Jesus tied the call to stop worrying to God’s Kingdom. Jesus said, “**Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and live righteously, and he will give you everything you need.**” (Matthew 6:33 NLT) Jesus connects optimism and hope to God’s Kingdom. God’s Kingdom consists of God and His people. If you are part of God’s Kingdom, and all who faithfully follow Jesus are part of His Kingdom, then you might be pessimistic about things in the short run, but you’ve got reason to be optimistic about God’s activity in the long run. Because Jesus has won the ultimate victory, we who follow Him have nothing to worry about in the long haul.

My mother was a very strong Christian woman. She loved and served the Lord. She taught the Kindergarten Sunday School class at our church for 40 years. She only took time off to have her five kids. My mom had one glaring weakness. She was a first class worrier. I’m sure that my brothers and my sister gave her plenty to worry about; of course you know I didn’t. But when my Mom was dying of cancer, she didn’t worry. She had a confident hope and trust in God’s

promises. When it became apparent that she was going to die, she knew that she would soon be with her Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and looked forward to our family reunion in heaven. She showed on her death bed that if you are a faithful follower of Jesus, you have nothing to worry about in the long run.

Jesus says instead of worrying we should seek God's Kingdom. But sometimes we object that the things we worry about are not long term issues. Will I get a good report from the doctor? Will my kids stay out of trouble? Will I be able to afford to go on vacation this year with the high gas prices? At other times we object that normal anxiety is a good thing. Everybody worries from time to time. Sometimes that kind of worry can lead us to take preventative measures against potential problems. A third objection is that Jesus is just too logical and that we just aren't that logical. After all, our worries are usually more emotional than logical. We can live in the fear that Murphy's Law is right. "If anything can go wrong, it will go wrong and at the most inopportune time."

We object to being told not to worry. But these objections really tell us that we are missing the point of what Jesus is talking about. He is not Dr. Phil with a prescription on how to avoid worry. Jesus point is very simple. "Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and live righteously, and he will give you everything you need." To seek means to put a lot of effort into something. Jesus doesn't just say that we should rely on the eventual arrival of God's kingdom to keep us from worry. Jesus says we should actively work for the spread of God's Kingdom. When we do that, some of the things that we worry about will become non-issues because we've got more important things on our minds.

Now I can't guarantee that by doing this the normal worries of life will go away. We can't love someone and not be concerned about them. We can't watch the news and not wonder about conditions in our world. But we can focus enough on God and His love for all people that we can have more confidence in Him. Hope ultimately is trusting in the long run that gives us confidence in the current situations of life. So instead of crying out in despair, we can fold our hands in prayer.

Worrying won't add a single minute to your life. But when you put your trust in God and open your life to Him, you're more likely to live a longer, more fulfilled life. The hope that we have in Christ is long term, but it is a living hope that is connect to our lives right now. The hope that we have in the Lord and His Kingdom gives us confidence and energy for today. So take Jesus' words to heart, "So don't worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring its own worries. Today's trouble is enough for today." (Matthew 6:34 NLT) Remember that God's love and God's kingdom last forever. So put your trust in Him. Amen.

