

ACTION STEPS FOR THE WEEK

Monday Action Step 1	<p>You may consider an extended quiet time where you ask God to reveal areas of worry in your life</p> <p>Ask others to isolate areas where you worry</p>
Tuesday Action Step 2	
Wednesday Action Step 3	<p>Is there something that you believe God is calling you to do, but fear and worry have kept you from doing it?</p> <p>Take a step toward doing it this week!</p>
Thursday Action Step 4	
Friday Action Step 5	<p>Find a quiet spot and ask God to reveal areas of your mind that need renewal</p> <p>Don't be afraid to ask those you trust about areas of your life that need renewal as well</p>
Saturday Action Step 6	
My biggest area for prayer and work this week	

DAILY DEVOTIONS

WORRY



Give all your worries and cares to God, for He cares about what happens to you.
 ~ 1 Peter 5:7

MONDAY

READ: Matthew 6:19-34

When my wife and I (Mark) were interviewing for a job at Christ's Home for Children in 2008, we were taken out to eat by our perspective employers. Everything was going fine in our interview until an elderly gentleman seated at a table behind us suddenly stood up and grabbed his throat.

A moment earlier, everyone at that table was laughing and enjoying their food, just as we were doing at our table. In a blink, that was all gone. Choking and panic had quickly stolen all of it away. My wife, who was closest to the man, got up and worked to dislodge the food. Fortunately, everything ended well. The food was spit up, the man was attended to by paramedics, and was fine.

However, for those constantly choked by worry, the ending is rarely so happy.

1. When the man started choking, all the joy and laughter was taken from his table. How has worry done the same with your life?
2. What does Jesus say about worry in our Scripture for today?
3. What should be your primary focus at all times according to Jesus here in our Scripture?
4. Just as my wife worked to dislodge the food from the choking man, so we need to allow Jesus to come alongside us and dislodge the worry choking us. In what areas of your life do you need Jesus to do "the Heimlich" on worry?

PRAYER (Note: Check Actions Steps on back for more)

- ◆ Thank God for His ability to handle any issue in your life
- ◆ Confess to God, if necessary, allowing worry to choke out the joy in your life, as well as choke out God's plan for you
- ◆ Ask God to root out all worry in your life
- ◆ Ask God to focus you on His kingdom above all else

SATURDAY

READ: Romans 6

Sam had way too much to drink. His friends implored him to hand over the keys, but Sam muttered he was fine. He didn't need anyone to drive him anywhere. Stumbling out of the bar, the whole world seemed to be spinning around him in a hazy blur.

The moments that followed were just as hazy. The honking of a horn, a flash of light, high pitched screeching of tires, and the sickening thud of flesh on metal. Three days later, Sam awoke in the hospital attached to wires, aching, and regretful.

We can all be like Sam. God is calling for us to give over the keys to our lives, yet we stubbornly insist that we don't need anyone to drive us anywhere. We obstinately believe that we are completely capable of doing it ourselves. Unfortunately, the results are usually just as painful and regrettable for us as they were for Sam.

1. What keeps you from relinquishing full control of your life to God?
2. Verse 18 calls us to be a "slave of righteousness." How does talk of becoming a "slave of God" make you feel?
3. Romans 6 also tells us that we are slaves to whatever we choose to obey. So if you don't want to be a slave of God, what do you want to enslave you?
4. Why is God the best and only master you should want?

PRAYER

- ◆ Thank God that He is capable of guiding your life
- ◆ Confess to God, if necessary, choosing to be a slave of yourself, your sin, our culture, etc. instead of God
- ◆ Ask God to lead you under His gracious yoke
- ◆ Ask God to use you to bless others
- ◆ Spend a few minutes in prayer for tomorrow's service

FRIDAY

READ: Romans 8:5-17; 12:1,2; Ephesians 4:22-24

I (Mark) have a problem with my ears that is a little embarrassing, but I will share it with you because we're all friends, right? Because of my many sinus infections, I get a lot of drainage that seeps into my ears. This leads to much wax build up on my ear drums. In fact, one evening just a couple months ago, I had so much build up, I literally could not hear a thing!

Going to the doctor's, I had a procedure done called a "lavage." (Just a fancy word for "wash.") The doctor injected a high speed spray of water and cleaned out both ear drums. I was a new man!

Like my ears, our minds can get a lot of gunky buildup. Stress, worry, bitterness, frustration, sinful thoughts, and more all pile up in there. The key to cleaning it out is to go to the Great Physician and seek His renewing or "lavage" for our minds.

1. What do you think it means to "renew your mind"?
2. In Romans 8, we see that whatever controls our mind controls our destiny, so what is controlling your mind?
3. Is your mind becoming more like the culture or more like Christ? What evidence do you have for your answer?
4. How will a renewing of your mind change your perspective when it comes to worry, money, possessions, etc?

PRAYER (Note: Check Actions Steps on back for more)

- ◆ Thank God for the truth of His Word
- ◆ Confess to God, if necessary, allowing your mind to be overrun with thoughts contrary to God and His Word
- ◆ Ask God to renew your mind
- ◆ Ask God to guide you into a life that is consecrated to Him

TUESDAY

READ: Luke 12:13-34

Have you seen the Travellers' Insurance commercial with the dog and his bone? As the song, "Worry, Worry Worry," plays in the background, a mid-sized white pooch restlessly dreams of protecting his bone. He hides it in his doghouse then pulls it out. He buries it then digs it up. He even puts it in a safety deposit box at a local bank but then closes out that account. Finally, he gets Travellers' Insurance to place their red umbrella over his bone, and he at last is able to get a good night's sleep.

This commercial points out, in a humorous way, something very serious—we worry a lot about our money and possessions. It is interesting then that in our Scripture for yesterday and today that before Jesus launches into a sermon on not worrying, He introduces both sermons with illustrations about money and possessions.

1. What percentage of your worrying would you say is focused on money and possessions' issues?
2. Why do you think Jesus prefaced both His mini-sermons on worry with illustrations about money and possessions?
3. What is Jesus' solution in both of our Scripture passages?
4. Jesus says that where your treasure is there your thoughts (or heart) will also be. If this is true, where is your heart? Explain:

PRAYER

- ◆ Thank God for being able to take care of all your needs
- ◆ Confess to God, if necessary, not having your heart fully focused on Him because of worry, stress, etc.
- ◆ Ask God to focus your heart *totally* on Him
- ◆ Ask God to root out any and all worry in your life

WEDNESDAY

READ: Genesis 26:1-11

Bob Johnson recently celebrated the 20th anniversary of his salvation day. At dinner that night, Bob excitedly shared the details of his conversion with his family as he recalled that blessed day 20 years earlier.

However, in bed that night, Bob had difficulty falling asleep. Though he had accepted the Lord 20 years prior, for about 18 of those years Bob had also felt a call into ministry. Yet, each time he thought it through, he could not seem to make it work in his mind. How could he leave his job with a family support? How could he just start over? Now that he had waited so long, those answers seemed even harder to answer. All those worries were keeping Bob from fulfilling God's will for his life. Unfortunately, Bob has yet to realize: worry = distrust of God.

1. Before this week, have you considered that your worry actually shows distrust of God?
2. In our Scripture, God had just got done telling Isaac that He would be with him and bless him and provide for him, yet what did Isaac do when fear and questions welled up in him?
3. How did Isaac's actions show distrust for God?
4. How have your thoughts and actions shown distrust for God?

PRAYER (Note: Check Actions Steps on back for more)

- ◆ Thank God for His promises which never fail
- ◆ Confess to God, if necessary, showing distrust of God by letting worry keep you from His perfect plan for your life
- ◆ Ask God to strengthen your faith and trust in Him
- ◆ Ask God to deepen your commitment to stay strong and live for Him regardless of the doubts that may assail you

THURSDAY

READ: Matthew 8:23-27; 14:22-33

George Mueller, one of my "heroes of the faith," once wrote, "The beginning of anxiety is the end of faith, and the beginning of true faith is the end of anxiety."

I guess for a picture of anxiety we need to look no farther than our Scripture passages for today. In both stories from Matthew, we find the disciples with more than their fair share of worry and anxiety. Hard to believe, especially in Matthew 8, considering that Jesus is right there with them in the boat!

Now, it is easy for us to come down hard on the disciples and lament their lack of faith. Yet, how many times have we been in situations—with Jesus living right in our own hearts—and melted with fear, stress, anxiety, and worry?

1. How much, would you say, are you like the disciples in our Scripture passages?
2. How did the disciples display their lack of faith?
3. How does your lack of faith usually represent itself?
4. With disappointment surely dripping from His voice, Jesus laments the disciples lack of faith. Do you think Jesus has done this with you as well? Why or why not?

PRAYER

- ◆ Thank God for His tests which grow and deepen your faith and trust in Him
- ◆ Confess to God, if necessary, worrying about things even though He is right with you every moment
- ◆ Ask God to fill you with faith and trust in Him
- ◆ Ask God to grow you closer to Him