



# WORRY

SMALL GROUP OR  
INDIVIDUAL STUDIES

“God, why am  
I worried?”



## **Worry**

**"God, why am I worried?"**

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**By mutual agreement . . .**

**and in the Holy Spirit's power**

We will rely on the Holy Scriptures as our final authority,  
knowing that human ideas and opinions,  
even the ideas and opinions of God's people, will  
likely stray from God's truth from time to time.

We will listen to each other and show one another  
Christ-like love and concern.

We will contribute to the discussion in positive ways  
as we are able to do that.

We will use what we learn in this group to contribute  
even more fully to the overall ministry of

---

*(Put your congregation's name here.)*

We will attend each session unless an  
emergency prevents our attendance.

We will respect one another's schedules by  
beginning and ending on time.

We will keep everything we hear in this group confidential,  
sharing it with no one unless doing so  
is a matter (literally) of life and death.

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# How to Use This Course

Three ingredients will make it possible for you to maximize the usefulness of this course.

## ❖ 1—Spirit-Led Prayer

Only as God invades our lives and touches our hearts can we grow up in Him. Ask and keep on asking for the Holy Spirit's direction and help as you approach His Word. Even if you work through the questions in this study on your own (and perhaps especially then), you must rely on God to do His work in you, His holy work of drawing you to Himself. He's the only one who can connect us to Himself and keep that connection strong. He's the only one who can connect us to our brothers and sisters in the faith and keep those connections strong. We need to ask Him to do that.

## ❖ 2—Spirit-Led Care

That is, care for one another in your group. Dietrich Bonhoeffer once wrote, "Christianity means community through Jesus Christ and in Jesus Christ . . . we belong to one another only through and in Jesus Christ."

Only God can create the kind of care, the kind of community, the kind of connectedness that we see modeled by the early Christian church. It's His gift to His people, wrought by the power of the Holy Spirit working through Word and Sacrament. We can't make it happen, no matter how slick our techniques, no matter how smooth our approach.

God does this as we live in His grace through the forgiveness of sins received in Word and Sacrament. It is this Word and Sacrament that provides the kind of faith, the kind of acceptance in which His people come to know one another as brothers and sisters in the faith, and not as third or fourth cousins. Living by faith we, as the children of God, mirror the image of our Father, as did Jesus.



## ❖ **3—Spirit-Led As We Share**

How does that kind of love happen? We cannot drum it up by our own effort, no matter how up-to-date our methodology. Rather, God will gift us with caring hearts through His Word and Sacraments. Neither can we force any believer or group of believers to talk about their faith with one another, to share their needs and hurts with each other, or to admonish and console one another. We can, however, use what we know about human relationships to create a safe haven, an island of time and place, in which God's people can relax, get to know one another, and, eventually, feel free to be honest and open in sharing of joys and doubts and concerns in their life with God.

In this kind of setting, participants can experience the freedom to talk about their hurts and their faith with each other, if they choose to do that. They can encourage one another in the one true faith, just as the early Christians did and as the holy apostles also urge us to do as God's chosen people today (1 Thessalonians 4:18; 5:11).

## ❖ **On to the Practical**

As you develop small-group ministry in your congregation, you need to keep an overarching vision in mind. But to get small-group Bible study off the ground, and to keep it functioning effectively, you also need to think through some practical considerations.

### **Leadership**

Talk with your pastor about this. He has both the right and the duty to oversee any Bible-study program in your congregation. He himself may lead some groups. And he may decide to delegate some leadership tasks, approving those who will teach and taking care to see that they receive adequate training.

In general, all those who lead small-group Bible studies will be people who



- demonstrate an understanding of Law and Gospel, sin and grace, not just intellectually, but in their relationships with God and with other people ;
- demonstrate an ability to communicate the truths of the Scriptures clearly;
- express a desire to be used by God to disciple others;
- know or be willing to learn techniques that enable adults to examine and apply their faith to their daily lives;
- pray for the group and the congregation regularly;
- have time to plan, prepare, and lead a small-group Bible study on an ongoing, consistent basis;
- demonstrate the emotional and spiritual maturity to accept responsibilities of leadership, to receive direction and sometimes criticism with wisdom and grace, to share personal strengths and weaknesses with appropriate vulnerability, and to respond to others with Christ-like humility and love.

## Setting

Many people find a home conducive to the relaxed, casual atmosphere you want to foster. In any case, you will need a meeting place where

- from 6–10 people can sit comfortably and see one another as they converse;
- the chairs are comfortable;
- the room is suitably lighted, ventilated, and at a comfortable temperature;
- coffee, tea, or soft drinks and an occasional snack can be served without danger of damaging carpets or upholstery;
- children can be adequately supervised while they play away from the Bible-study group.

## Supplies

Everyone who attends should bring his or her own Bible. In addition you will need

- copies of this Study Guide for everyone (note the leaders materials in the back of this guide);
- pens or pencils, one for everyone;





- songbooks, hymnals, and perhaps an instrument to accompany singing during worship times;
- an empty chair or two placed prominently to remind everyone of the opportunity to invite guests—in particular, unchurched friends or relatives.

## ❖ **That First Meeting**

The first time you're together, you will want to spend some time getting to know one another and establishing rules for the group.

- Introduce yourselves to one another. Do this even if only one person is unfamiliar to the others. Tell your name. Tell a little about your family. And tell how you've come to be in the group. Use a timer and allow each person to speak for about one minute.
- Agree on ground rules about questions like these:
  - Who will bring snacks? How often?
  - Will we provide childcare? If so, how? Will we take turns, hire someone and agree to all chip in to pay for it? Or?
  - Will we meet in one location? Take turns hosting the group? Or?
  - When will we begin? End? (Include dates and also times.)
- Read the “By Mutual Agreement” statement located on page 3 of this guide. Talk it over until everyone understands it and you truly have reached mutual agreement. Promise to reread this agreement as you begin each session, at least the first several times you get together.
- Talk about participation. This study asks group members to work with partners or with three or four other people. Agree to listen to one another with respect. Also agree to allow one another the freedom to “pass” on any question for any reason without having to state that reason.
- Remind one another that everyone is entitled to an opinion. However, in this group all human opinions must take a back seat to the Holy Scriptures. You will share lots of thoughts and feelings with one another during the next few weeks. At least you will, if this course is written well, and



your leader(s) encourage participation as they should. Even so, we believe that absolute truth exists and that it can be known because the God who created the universe has revealed the truth for us in His Word. We bow to His wisdom. We submit to His truth.

## ❖ **Elements of Small-Group Bible Studies**

Most groups spend 60–90 minutes together in these four activities:

- Worship
- Bible study
- Prayer
- Fellowship

### **Worship (5–15 minutes)**

As most small-group Bible studies begin, participants spend a few minutes in worship. Often this includes singing, especially if someone in the group can play the guitar or piano. If the group does not include a musician, someone in the group can usually find an alternative that will allow everyone to join in singing two or three hymns or songs. Some groups find that they manage to sing quite well a cappella. Some use prerecorded accompaniment tracks from cassette tapes or CDs.

Keep in mind, though, that worship involves much more than simply singing a few random songs. Worship should help participants quiet their hearts as the Lord prepares them to hear what He will say to them in His Word.

Therefore, opening worship will almost always include a prayer for His peace and for hearts ready to receive His truth.

### **Bible Study (40–60 minutes)**

Our relationship with our Lord deepens as we immerse ourselves in His Word. In that Word He confronts us with our sin and then comforts us with His forgiving love in our Sav-



ior. Small-group Bible study at its best provides for both those processes to take place.

Materials appropriate for small-group study avoid a lecture format. Rather, they involve a mix of individual thought and writing, one-on-one discussions, and give-and-take conversations by the whole group. The leader facilitates, asks questions, provides nuggets of insight to push the group's process forward, and prays for participants while they think and talk with one another.

## **Prayer—(5–10 minutes)**

In the small-group Bible-study process, God's Word touches the hearts of His people. It probes pockets of hurt and sometimes of hardness. God's people talk with one another about life's most important issues. We think and laugh together. We question and cry together. It's only natural that we pray together too. It's not only natural, but necessary.

This kind of prayer models itself after that of the early church:



They raised their voices together in prayer to God. . . .  
After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly. (Acts 4:24, 31)



Committed by God's grace to one another and to the truth of His Word, God's people asked their Lord to intervene in their lives. Together they asked for His specific help with specific challenges and needs. They united their hearts in praise to Him for all He had done and for all that He had promised yet to do. They received from Him the power they needed to live as His witnesses in a world that is, even now for the most part, hostile to the claims of Christ. We join them in the same kind of prayer.

## **Fellowship (10–20 minutes)**

Christian fellowship means so much more than this



spring's softball league or last Friday's fish fry. Of course, there is nothing wrong with playing softball or sharing a meal with other believers. But God intends that Christian fellowship (*koinonia*) cut more deeply below life's surface than that.

As we said earlier, only God can create genuine fellowship. It's His gift to His people. We can, however, provide unstructured time over coffee or lemonade before and after the more formal group time. This will free participants to laugh together, to cry together, to ask one another about ongoing personal and family concerns and simply to enjoy one another as members of God's family.

We witness spontaneously to one another about what God has done for us in Christ's cross and, then too, about what He is doing for us in our day-to-day lives. We have the chance to share specific prayer requests one-on-one and to become aware of needs God would use us to meet for each other. In short, we have a chance to be the church, the family of God, for one another.

## ❖ How to Use This Course

Remember Alfred E. Newman and his motto? Who, me, worry? Many of us grinned and admired his chutzpah during our days in elementary school or junior high.

But then we grew up. We became the ones paying the bills. We took on the responsibility of house or car, babies or aging parents. We took over the profit and loss statement for the farm, factory, or family business.

Who, me, worry? Yes. Me. And quite a lot at times. Despite my Lord's promises. Despite His faithful love demonstrated again and again. Even despite His commitment to me as He bled and died on Calvary's cross. Yes. Me. I do worry. I don't want to worry. But I do. And I don't know quite what to do about it.

This course addresses worry head-on. It confronts both the "little worries" and the fire-breathing dragons of worry that singe our necks when the sky falls in on us.

Session 1 defines worry and helps participants identify specific areas of worry that most often trip us up. It goes on to



delineate God's process for overcoming worry—the process of repentance.

Session 2 zeros in on God's powerful promises to defend us even if the earth itself moves off its axis. It leads participants to consider how the desire to control our own lives can lead us into worry and through worry into deep fear. It takes participants through the difficult process of relinquishing control and putting their lives back into the Savior's strong and loving hands.

Session 3 looks at worrisome situations at the outer limits of personal threat—unemployment, bankruptcy, natural disasters, and death itself. It suggests ways that Christ's suffering, death, and resurrection for us can enable us to cope and even to live in victory when we face life's most enormous problems.

Session 4 concludes the study by examining specific strategies our Lord has given us for confronting and overcoming our worries by His grace.

May the Lord Jesus fill your hearts with His peace as you study His Word and apply it to the worrisome situations you encounter in your lives!



# Worry—What Is It?



## Setting Our Sights



“I moved from the big city because there were so many people around I was always worried about being robbed or attacked,” the new woman at church was explaining. “Now that I live in a rural area, I’m worried because I seem so isolated!”

It seems that everybody worries about something. Too many people, or too few. Am I working too hard? Am I working hard enough? Am I “balanced” in family, work, play? So many things flood in on us in everyday living. Life ratchets up our pace a notch or so every month. Or so it seems. And that doesn’t count problems like our health or job security or the responsibility of aging parents or (you fill in the blank).

How do we handle so much? How do we cope with things we don’t understand or don’t have time to process?

Some of us (most of us?) worry. Right? But what exactly is worry, and how does it affect us? Is worry bad? We’ll address these questions in this session.

## Getting Started

As a group, draw a picture of a model “Worry Wart.” What are his/her characteristics? How does s/he react to a worrisome situation? Keep the picture in front of you throughout this session and those that follow.



# Digging In

1. How do you define worry? Write your own definition. Then have each person in the group share his/her definition. After all have shared, write a group definition of “worry.”

2. Each of us experiences worry a bit differently. Each of us faces different personal challenges, and so we tend to worry about different things.

Identify some of your worries by completing the following list. Work on your own to check all the items about which you have worried at some time. You will not share specifics with anyone in your group, so be honest with yourself.

- |                          |               |
|--------------------------|---------------|
| ___ Marital relationship | ___ Job       |
| ___ Lack of a spouse     | ___ Vacation  |
| ___ Relationship         | ___ Taxes     |
| ___ with parents         | ___ Church    |
| ___ Relationship         | ___ issues    |
| ___ with God             | ___ Health    |
| ___ Habitual sin         | ___ of family |
| ___ Own health           | ___ member    |
| ___ Speeding ticket      | ___ Financial |
| ___ Deadlines            | ___ situation |
|                          | ___ Children  |

3. After you have completed your checklist, zero in on one of the items you find most worrisome right now.



**a.** How do you react when you think of this issue? Take into account both your physical and emotional responses.

**b.** What do you want to do in response to the worry?

Take a few minutes to write a description of your reactions.

**4.** We've considered a definition of worry and looked at some of the things about which we may worry. What is the effect of worry in our lives? That's easy. In a word—STRESS. The stress produces physical symptoms and emotional response. Stress may even affect us socially as we pull away from people, ashamed to admit our worries or sensing that no one can help us with our problems. How many of these effects did you include when you grew your group's model "Worry Wart?"





## Hitting Home

1. The physical, emotional and social effects of worry are real. What about spiritual effects? Reconsider the worries you identified in the list on page 16.

**a.** How do **you** respond to God when you are worried? (*Check as many as apply.*)

I pull back from Him.

I forget to include Him in my problem.

I run to Him for help.

I feel guilty about worrying and embarrassed to ask Him for help.

I begin to doubt His care.

I get angry at Him.

I feel closer to Him.

**b.** Does your view of God change? If so, How?

**c.** What is it that you want to say to God when you are worried?

2. Together read the section from Jesus' Sermon on the Plain.





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 is 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" (Luke 12:22–31).



**a.** Jesus describes some worries common to all people of all time: What will I eat (if the harvest fails, if I lose my job, if the economy slides)? What will I wear (if my credit cards reach their limit, if the guy in the senior class asks me out, if I don't lose this weight, if the river floods my house again)? What reasons does Jesus give to show we should not worry about food and clothing?



**b.** The word *worry* appears four times in this section. Underline *worry* each time it occurs. How would Jesus define “worry”?

**c.** What does Jesus call those who worry?

**d.** So what is the cause of worry?

**3.** Worry may seem to be an inevitable part of our daily lives. The frustration for the Christian is that we fall into worry when we know it's not what our Lord wants for us. We don't want to be “of little faith” in our strong God! But how do we stop worrying? How do we develop the kind of faith that evicts worry from our hearts?

**a.** It may sound harsh, but we've already seen the truth—worry is a sin. Jesus says, don't worry. We do it anyway. As Christians, we know what to do with sin. What?



**b.** What does God do then? Are you sure?

**c.** Find Philippians 2:13 in your own Bible. If you can, underline it. Now rewrite it in your own words, words that capture the meaning of God's promise to you personally.

**d.** Yielding up our worry or turning the temptation to worry over to God will work, trying hard not to worry won't. Why?

**4.** Our comfort comes in knowing that all of our worries are best left with God. He has the power and ability to deal with all our problems—big and small. He has the vision to see the end from the beginning in any circumstance. But how can we trust this more? How can what we know in our heads and say with our mouths settle down more and more firmly in our hearts?

**a.** Read Philippians 4:4–9 on p. 43. What does the Holy Spirit counsel here about combatting worrisome thoughts? Underline the



appropriate words. Then summarize them here.

## Wrapping Up

Heavenly Father, thank You for sending Your Son, Jesus Christ, to be my Savior. You gave so much for me, and I know you will also provide everything else I need. Still, worry is very present in my life. Forgive me for worrying. Through the merits of Your Son, Jesus, who conquered worry through a perfect trust in You, remind me again in the midst of my daily challenges of Your presence and power. Use Your Word of promise to give me new strength to trust You more fully and to seek first Your kingdom. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

## The Extra Mile

During the coming week notice what things tend to cause you anxiety. Make a mental note of your worries. Consider the following texts. Each gives us an example of someone who is worried. Where do you see yourself in these texts? What has God done to calm your worries for you?

**Luke 10:38–42**

**Luke 12:13–21**

**Romans 7:14–25**



## **Helps for the Leader**

SAMPLE

# 1—Worry—What Is It?

## Getting Started

(*About 10 minutes.*) Before you ask the group to open their books, ask several volunteers to talk about why they want to study this topic. What questions do they bring with them? What issues do they hope to address?

Then ask everyone to open their study guides and read today's goal statement ("Setting Our Sights"). If your group is new to the Connections series, you may want to skim "How to Use This Course" also. Pay particular attention to the agreement found on page 3 of this guide. Stress especially the statements about confidentiality, the "pass" option, and the importance of everyone's participation.

Then ask someone to serve as the group's "artist." Together, the group will create a picture of a "Worry Wart." Use a large piece of newsprint and colored marking pens for the portrait, if possible. Follow the directions in the study guide as you work together on the drawing. Note that you will refer to the picture throughout the course, so make sure that it will be available next time.

Note: If newsprint is unavailable, have a large piece of paper tablecloth or several sheets of typing paper taped together for your drawing.

## Digging In

1. (*About 5 minutes.*) Be aware that since this is your first session together, some participants may not feel comfortable sharing freely in a group. Give individuals a few moments to



write their own definitions and then allow volunteers to share their thoughts. Don't force anyone to share.

Then read a definition from a good dictionary. Let the group compare their definition with the dictionary definition.

**2.** (*About 2 minutes.*) Read the directions to the group. Before participants begin the exercise, assure them that no one will be asked to share the specifics of their answers.

**3.** (*About 5 minutes.*) Again, let individuals work on this exercise. Assure them they can keep the details private.

Then discuss the exercise as a group. How many participants did not check a single item in number 2? How many checked 1–5 items? Who checked more than 5?

What kind of reactions do group members experience when they worry? Does worry attack everyone in the same way or are there differences? Talk about these questions together, but be aware of your time constraints. Move the conversation ahead as necessary to make sure you have enough time to work through the biblical material of the lesson thoroughly.

**4.** (*About 1 minute.*) Return briefly to the “Worry Wart.” Would anyone like to add anything? Change anything? Accept reasonable responses.

## **Hitting Home**

**1.** (*About 5 minutes.*) Read the introductory paragraph to the group. Then give individuals time to answer questions *a–c* on their own. Again, assure them that no one will see their answers. After a few moments, ask for comments. What does worry do to our relationship with God?

**2.** (*About 2 minutes.*) Read the passage from Luke 12 together aloud.

**a.** (*About 1 minute.*) Read the paragraph to the group. Then ask them to find the appropriate words from Luke 12: “Life is more than food” ; “God feeds [the ravens]”; “how much more valuable you are”; and so on.

**b.** (*About 2 minutes.*) Let the group wrestle with how





Jesus might define worry. Accept responses that reflect the text you just read.

**c.** (*About 1 minute.*) Jesus calls those who worry (all of us), “You of little faith.” The cause of worry is a lack of trust in God’s care and love.

**3.** (*About 5 minutes.*) The first paragraph ends with two rhetorical questions. After you have read them, simply move into the exercise that follows. It outlines the process the Bible calls “repentance.”

**a.** Perhaps no more appropriate answer can be given than to quote the apostle John, “If we confess our sins, [God] is faithful and just and will forgive us our sin and purify us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9).

**b.** See the verse quoted above. We can be sure of our complete forgiveness because God has promised to forgive us for Jesus’ sake.

**c.** Help participants personalize this verse as they paraphrase it. It promises that God not only gives us the power we need to *do* His will, He also supplies all we need to *want* to do His will. All we must do is receive these things from Him, open our arms and our hearts to receive them.

**4.** (*About 4 minutes.*) After you have read this paragraph, ask participants to turn to Phil. 4:6–9, either in their own Bibles or on p. 43. You will return to this text in session 4, so you need not deal with it fully now. Do, however, invite participants to underline as indicated and share their insights with the group. Accept reasonable answers that come from this text.

## Wrapping Up

(*About 1 minute.*) Pray the prayer together, perhaps holding hands around the circle in your group.

## The Extra Mile

Before you dismiss the group, call attention to this section of the lesson. Encourage each individual to work through these Bible passages during the coming days. Ask them to see



what insights they gain as the Holy Spirit speaks His Word to their hearts. Send the study guides home with the participants to make this study possible.

In addition, ask everyone to jot down the worries that come to mind during the days ahead. This will help them prepare for the next session.

SAMPLE

