Have you noticed that several of the teens in the church have passed their moms in height? Growth is taking place.

Physical growth is easy to spot. Spiritual growth is not so easy to notice, not even in yourself. What do you use to measure spiritual growth? Church attendance is not a good measure. Bible reading is not a good measure. Praying is not a good measure. So what IS a good measure? Becoming like Jesus in character and faith is what we should measure. So we can look at individual character qualities of Jesus and look for growth in them.

For example, we might consider the subject of worry. One of the things to examine in us is how much we worry. Worry is a common human reaction to the threat of loss. But worry is one habit we will grow out of as our faith in God increases. Worry will become less as your devotion to Christ becomes complete. Worry is kind of a measure of our faith in God and/or our commitment to his will.

We are still working our way through 1 Peter and are in chapter five again this morning and the subject is worry.

1 Peter 5:7 (NIV) Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.

The Greek word that is translated here as "anxiety" comes from a root that means divided. For the subject of worry this word means to be distracted. A divided mind is distracted. Worry distracts you from whatever it is you are trying to do. When you are worried about something you might say, "I need to concentrate on this project, but I can't stop worrying about that problem." Worry has distracted you from the task at hand. So worry affects your success at whatever it is you are needing to do now. It slows your progress. Worry can distract you from having faith in God. This is why God does not want us to worry. Let's look this morning at several facts about worry.

> Worry steals today's joy.

Solomon observed the same many centuries ago.

Proverbs 12:25 (NIV) An anxious heart weighs a man down...

Scientists tell us that worry is bad for our health. The worriers among us live shorter lives than those who do not worry. You can't enjoy today if you are anxiously living in fear of what may happen tomorrow. Worry steals today's joy.

> Worry won't change the future.

No matter how much or hard you worry, worry will not prevent bad things from happening. Nor will worry bring good things. Worry has no power to change the future in any way. Jesus said the same thing with a rhetorical question.
Matthew 6:27 (NIV)  Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life?

You can accomplish nothing either good or bad, by worry. You can't change the future at all by worry. All you do is steal today of its joy.

> **Worry opens you to temptation.**

The person who worries much is ripe for being influenced by the devil.

1 Peter 5:8 (NIV)  Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.

Verse seven and eight are connected. Worry, which is a failure to trust in God, opens you to sinful temptations. You look to control your life. You look for easy solutions to solve difficult problems. Both of these open you to the temptation to sin.

There was a recent article in the Washington Post about those with college debt falling victim to conmen. Those with large college debt are desperate to escape the burden they have put themselves under. So they are easy targets for anyone who promises to eliminate or reduce their debt payments. The conmen demand up-front fees and provide little or no real help to solve these debts. The debtors end up worse off than they started.

The devil would be glad to offer you solutions to your worries. But you will always regret saying yes to them.

> **Stop worrying because God cares for you.**  (1 Peter 5:7)

This is revealed all through the Bible. God cares for you. We are his creation and he loves each of us. He cares about each of us. He is ready to help each of us.

Some people worry because they refuse to believe that God cares for them as individuals. Some worry because they do not believe God can or will help with their problems. Some worry because they picture God as a person who cannot think about millions of people at one time. They think, "He's got bigger problems than mine to deal with." or "I'm a nobody. Why should he pay attention to me?"

Such beliefs reveal a lack of faith in what the Bible clearly teaches. God cares for you. He cares for each of us as individuals. He cares about every part of your life. He is fully aware of you as an individual.

Let me tell you how I know he cares for you. Every person has to be saved as an individual. God does not save groups of people. He saves individuals. That is why he introduced you to Jesus, the one who can save you.

God can multi-task completely. People can't really multi-task and accomplish quality work. Maybe you can walk, chew gum, listen to music, and think about your project all at the same time. But add another thing to think about and your quality of work goes way down.
But God is not like mankind. God has perfect knowledge of every person. God can think of more than one person at a time. He can plan to meet your need long before you know you have a need. God is aware of each of us all the time. He cares for you. Believe it. And because he cares for you, stop worrying.

**Solutions to worry:**

1. **Believe that God cares for you, and trust him to meet your needs.**

   God is looking to you for faith in Him. He is looking for you to believe in his ability to meet your need. He is looking for trust that he knows what is best in your life.

   Believe he cares for you. Believe he wants what is best for you. Focus on what you believe about God. Spiritual truth must shape our lives. So focus on the truth of God's word when you are anxious, fearful, worried, or distressed.

   A woman in England during World War II had withstood the bombings of her city much better than most were doing. When asked the secret of her peace in the face of such danger she replied, "Well, every night I say my prayers and then I remember God is always watching, so I go to sleep. After all, there's no need for two of us to lie awake."

   Here was a confidence in God and a dedication to his will. There she knew her life was in the hands of God, so there was no reason to worry.

2. **Give your life to God's will, whatever that may be.**

   Jesus gave his life to bring us to God. As his followers we are called to give our lives to him.

   When we are worried, it is because we fear losing something. You have something now that you don't want to lose. You don't want to lose the house, or your job, or your health. You don't want to see any major changes to your current lifestyle. You don't want added problems to take care of. You don't want your health to change for the worse. And now, something is threatening your life as it is now. Something is threatening to disrupt your plans, your agenda, your desires.

   But if you have given all of these to God, then there is nothing to lose. Give your complete self to God. Give your current life to God and any future life to God. Give your desires, your fears, your hopes. Give your lifestyle, your level of income, your comforts and possessions. Give your life and health to Jesus. Give it all to Jesus today and you won't have to worry about losing it tomorrow.

   Give your today to Jesus and so do not worry today. Give tomorrow to Jesus and do not worry about tomorrow. Accept today whatever God has in plan for you tomorrow, and there will be nothing left to worry about.

3. **Practice gratitude.**

   Remind yourself all the time to be thankful all the time. Use sticky notes or other reminders if you need to until you develop gratitude as a habit. Put them on your mirror, our steering wheel, your desk. When worry or fear sneak into your mind, revert to prayer. Put these thoughts and
threats into God's hands. Speak your faith in God, your trust in his wisdom. Give your fears and concerns, and then end your prayer with, "Your will be done."

Philippians 4:6-7 (NIV) Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.

> God promises us peace.

Worry steals the joy of today. But God promises joy and peace when you pray your worries into his hands.

Philippians 4:6-7 (NIV) 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, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

This process of praying worries to God and receiving peace usually takes a good bit of praying. Remember that on the night Jesus was arrested he did this very thing. He was anxious about the cross and spent several hours in prayer. But finally he was able to put everything in the hands of God and he received the peace that carried him through the next hours successfully.

Let me wrap this up with one more story. Many years ago, a lady in Sydney, Australia had cancer. Yet she showed much courage and peace in the face of death. At one point she was seeing one of her doctors who gave her more bad news. She took it so well that the doctor was surprised and asked her why. She said it was because she was covered with feathers." That surprised the doctor even more, so the woman explained.

She was part of a small prayer group made up of women. And for them, being covered in feathers was a figure of speech for having faith in God. It came about from the experience of another woman in the group.

One day she was out driving and was stopped at a traffic light. Suddenly a man opened the back door of her car, got in, put and pistol to her head, and said, "Drive on." She was very afraid and began trying to remember some Bible verse that might help her. She thought of Psalm 91, verse 4, which reads, "He will cover you with his feathers, and under his wings you shall find refuge." So she began to say to herself, "I'm covered with feathers. I'm covered with feathers."

In her fear she kept saying it louder and louder until she was almost shouting it, "I'm covered with feathers. I'm covered with feathers!"
Then the man ordered her to pull over to the side of the road and let him out, saying, "You're crazy."

Christian, you are covered with feathers. So stop worrying.

As you experience God's faithfulness your faith in him will grow. You will learn to trust him with more and more of your life. You will become more and more committed to his will as the Holy Spirit changes you from the inside out. And your worries will grow weaker and weaker.

God has a miraculous life for each of us if we will believe on Jesus and receive him, every day, as Savior and Lord.