

# Damsel in Distress

## #1 Dealing with Worry

### I. Introduction

*Merimnao* is anxious care, troubled thought, or worry. It comes from a combination of two words: Merizo "to divide" and nous meaning "mind." Worry, then, means "to divide the mind" between worthwhile and damaging thoughts.

A. Phil. 4:6 "Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done. "

B. In the book of Luke:

The apostle Luke focused on this term quite a lot.

1. In Luke 12:25 (see also Matt. 6:27), Jesus asked who can MERIMNAO himself into being a little taller?
2. In Luke 12:22 (see also Matt 6:25), Jesus tells His disciples not to MERIMNAO over what to eat, what to drink or what to wear.
3. In Luke 12:11, Jesus tells His disciples not to MERIMNAO over what to say in difficult spiritual situations.
4. In Luke 10:41, Jesus admonishes Martha with His classic double name calling, "Martha, Martha, you are MERIMNAO about many things...but one thing is needful..."
5. In Luke 12:26, Jesus chuckles to Himself and summarizes: "If you can't add to your height by worrying (and that would be the easiest thing to do by MERIMNAO)," He asks us, "Why then are you worrying about ANYTHING?"

C. Matthew concludes the thought in Matt. 6:34:

"Therefore do not be anxious (MERIMNAO) for tomorrow, for tomorrow will care for itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own." (NASB)

## II. The Problem

- A. Worry is a sin...it violates some of the basic commandments of God and robs us of a meaningful relationship with Him. When it takes over our thought processes it reflects a lack of faith in God's ability to work out the details of our lives.

It's unbelief!

At least for the moment – we don't believe God knows all things

At least for the moment – we don't believe God loves us unconditionally

At least for the moment – we don't believe God is in control of things

Matt. 6:30 "If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith?"

- B. Worry is a disease...it robs us of our enthusiasm for living, our vitality and eventually our health. It paralyzes us. We become incapable of rational thought. It's a useless merry-go-round. Ralph Waldo Emerson once remarked, "worry is the torment of pain endured from evils that never arrived."

Prov. 12:25 "Anxiety weighs down the heart, but a kind word cheers it up."

- C. Worry has friends

Anger

Envy

Self pity

- D. Worry accomplishes absolutely nothing!

Matt 6:27 "Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life?"

- E. Worry can become a lifestyle...it shapes us like other habits. Our attitudes are fixed as we approach each situation with an anxious spirit. We become consumed with the "what ifs" of life.

Matt 6:34 "Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own."

## III. So what? How to stop worrying

- A. Some practical thoughts (article by Melinda Smith, Robert & Jeanne Segal)
1. Create a worry period (it breaks the habit of worrying all the time). Postpone all the worrying until that period. Go over your "worry list."
  2. Ask yourself if the problem is solvable. Determine if it's an imaginary "what if." Can you control its outcome?

3. Learn to accept uncertainty. "Worry is seen as a way to predict what the future has in store – a way to prevent unpleasant surprises and control the outcome. The problem is, it doesn't work."
4. Challenge anxious thoughts. What is the cause of the anxiety?

Cognitive Distortions that Add to Anxiety, Worry, and Stress	
All-or-nothing thinking	Look at things in black-or-white categories, with no middle ground ("If I fall short of perfection, I'm a total failure.")
Overgeneralization	Generalizing from a single negative experience, expecting it to hold true forever ("I didn't get hired for the job. I'll never get any job.")
The mental filter	Focusing on the negatives while filtering out all the positives. Noticing the one thing that went wrong, rather than all the things that went right.
Diminishing the positive	Coming up with reasons why positive events don't count ("I did well on the presentation, but that was just dumb luck.")
Jumping to conclusions	Making negative interpretations without actual evidence. You act like a mind reader ("I can tell she secretly hates me.") or a fortune teller ("I just <i>know</i> something terrible is going to happen.")
Catastrophizing	Expecting the worst-case scenario to happen ("The pilot said we're in for some turbulence. The plane's going to crash!")
"Shoulds" and "should-nots"	Holding yourself to a strict list of what you should and shouldn't do $\frac{3}{4}$ and beating yourself up if you break any of the rules.
Labeling	Labeling yourself based on mistakes and perceived shortcomings ("I'm a failure; an idiot; a loser.")

B. The antidote to worry: Prayerful Trust

Matt 6:25 "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes?"

1. Focus on the big picture (Matt. 6:25)

"Is not life more than..."

2. Focus on the one thing (Luke 10:38-42)

"...listening to the Lord's word, seated at His feet....Mary has chosen the good part..."

3. Focus on prayer (Phil. 4:6-7)

Prayer with Thanksgiving is the key!