

Worry: In Every Situation, Trust God

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Preacher: Chris Willis

[0 : 00] I'm going to start with a question. How many of you worry about anything? This is by show of hands. How many of you worry about anything?

I don't think the ceiling's too low for me to reach high enough for how much I worry about things. It's normal for us to worry, particularly in today's world, where actually there's so much going on.

We are used to busy lives. We are used to trying to keep track of so many things. It's normal to worry about things, whether it is money or food or work or our friends or our family or the weather or whether there's going to be any traffic on the road.

Sometimes we have big things. Sometimes we have small things. I think it's normal for us to worry. So I'm going to start today by slightly controversially saying that actually the passage that we read earlier from Matthew contains my most hated three-word phrase in the English language.

Do not worry. I absolutely hate it when anybody says those words to me. If anything, that is going to make things worse. So I keep it no secret that I struggle occasionally with depression much more regularly and sometimes much more severely with anxiety.

[1 : 38] For somebody with anxiety, worry is a normal part of my life. If I wake up in the morning and probably quite often the first thought going through my head is some kind of worry about the day.

Maybe it's a, have I woken up too late? Am I going to be late into work? Maybe it's a, what if there's more traffic than there usually is? Or what I've had a few times where our water stopped running.

So what if I can't have a shower before I go out this morning? Or all sorts of different things that a lot of people, a lot of people might think about these things and then just move on. And then just say, well, okay, look at the time.

Say, okay, I'm not up late. Look at the, look at the traffic and say, well, there's not a lot I can do about that. So I just go and I get there as soon as I can. And I'll give a little bit more time to make, to make sure I don't end up too late.

But to give you a little bit of insight into how my mind works, how the mind of somebody with anxiety works.

[2 : 41] Last term, I was having a number of health issues. I had to have several doctor's appointments and ended up in A&E; in the hospital twice.

It is nothing major. It is, as far as we've been able to work out so far, it's a food intolerance. It's just gone on so long that it started creating quite serious problems for me.

And I would wake up through the night. I'd wake up with pain in my stomach. And most nights when this happens, I would get up.

I would have a drink. I'd take an antacid. And I'd sit in bed for about an hour. And then by the end of that hour, the pain's settled enough that I can lie down again and I can go back to sleep.

And hopefully not wake up again. But then I get one night when, actually, I wake up at about 1 o'clock in the morning. And I do all of that.

[3 : 39] And by 2 o'clock, the pain's not going away. By 3 o'clock, the pain's not going away. And I start thinking, okay, this is a much bigger problem. I can't get back to sleep at all.

And my mind starts questioning, what is going on? Why is it getting this bad? And I did start questioning. And I did raise it with the doctor. Is this stomach cancer?

There is a history of it within my family. So I started worrying about that. It's not. It got to about 4 o'clock in the morning. And I decided, okay, I'm going to call NHS 111.

So I did that. And while I was on the phone, waiting for it to be answered, I then started thinking, but actually, what if it's not as bad as I think it is?

What if I'm just wasting their time and there's somebody else who needs to speak to them more? Who's in an emergency? Emergencies. Just to say, all of these thoughts can come after us. Just say, if there is an emergency, you do not call 111.

[4 : 37] You call 999 for an ambulance. But those thoughts don't go through my head at the time when anxiety is taking over. And then I don't get through to anybody. And I get told, do I want to request a call back?

Yes, I do. The moment I do that and I hang up the phone, I then start thinking, what if I do fall asleep and I miss the call? They're not going to get back to me. I'm going to have to go through all of that again. And all of these thoughts just continue spiraling, getting worse and worse and worse.

And then I start thinking, gets to about 5, 6, 6 o'clock in the morning, I start thinking, I haven't slept at all tonight. I've still got to go into work in the morning. The only way I can get there really is driving.

But what if I'm too tired to drive? What if I fall asleep at the wheel? I might crash and I could end up back in hospital. Or worse, I could die. That's a slight fictionalization of the thoughts that went through my head.

But actually, when anxiety takes control, it can often go a lot like that. On Wednesday morning, so with moonbeams, there's not many of us around to be able to set up at the moment.

[5 : 44] And I was running a bit late because I was stuck in traffic. And I started worrying about that. I started worrying, well, we're not going to get everything set up in time. And people are going to be upset with me because I'm late.

And that's going to reflect on me. And I'm going to have to meet with the trustees. And it's going to reflect badly on my job. And those thoughts start going on. And then even this morning, I wake up.

I think, so I had a great day. So I was prepared for this morning.

I had already rehearsed the sermon I'm giving three times by yesterday morning. And I went down to Maidenhead to spend the day with my best friend, my godson.

And it was a fantastic day. And I got back and I was feeling quite relaxed, ready for this morning.

[6 : 45] And then I went to bed at a good time. And I got to sleep quite quickly, which is unusual for me. And then I woke up this morning and I could start to feel something in my stomach again.

And I was like, oh no, I must have eaten something yesterday that had milk in it. And I didn't realize it. And I then start worrying again. And it just goes on and on and on.

And for me, it is so, so difficult to control it so much of the time. So what do the words do not worry really mean for somebody in that position?

Well, for me, the words do not worry just start me worrying even more. I then start worrying about the fact that I have been worrying and people don't want me to worry. That's why they are my most hated words.

Because so many people say them and so many people do not realize the effect that it actually has. I've got a video that I want to play.

[7 : 44] I usually use a video, either whether it's in the old age or when I'm preaching. Partly because I like to have something else to kind of emphasize the point. Also because it helps me to kind of refocus a little bit.

So let's have a watch of this video. I have something to tell you.

And it's kind of hard to admit. It's a place of vulnerability that to you, I would like to submit. I'm coming clean with you in the hopes that you'll benefit. And be set free from these shackles that are so prevalent.

Sometimes my anxiety gets the best of me. It drains the life right out of me until I can barely stand. I've heard from more than enough of you to understand that this isn't only my issue.

So hold on tight. Because this isn't going to be a comfortable conversation. From the time I was a kid, the weights of anxiety have never hid. But I did. I would lie down and feel the rhythm of my heart beating out of my chest.

[9 : 11] I would try to sleep, but this new master wouldn't give me any rest. I would try to pray to God and ask him to take away this worry, stress, and anxiety away from me. But there were so many nights that I believed lies about the God I couldn't see.

Years later, still the battle rages. Evil tries to break in and tell me lies about the Rock of Ages. They say God's not with you. He doesn't care. He won't take care of you.

He doesn't hear your prayer. When I believe these lies, I stare. Stare into a darkness of reality without a good God. Without a holy God. Without a merciful God.

Without a loving God. But that is not our reality. Yes, sometimes my anxiety gets the best of me. You could say I'm prone to anxiety, but I don't use that as an excuse.

We all have burdens to bear, but God doesn't want us to stare into the darkness of reality built by lies about who he is and who we are. He wants us to stare at the eyes of our loving Father who says everything will be all right.

[10 : 16] But will it? Will it really? What about my family, my friends, my hopes, my dreams, and everything in between? But it strikes me when I step back when neglected to see.

Not one mention of God in my laundry list of anxieties, probably because he's the furthest thing from my mind when it's consumed by worry. I think about me, my friends, my family.

But not the God who's orchestrating it all for his glory. My anxieties draw me inward and leave me stuck inside. But God is calling me to look on him because his face he'll never hide.

His truth he'll never compromise. His character he'll never change. His love will forever reign. And our anxieties he'll take. If we take his hand with faith and see that he's already taken our anxieties for our sake.

So we can rest. But no anxieties will still come. Until his kingdom come. Still our faith is placed on him.

[11 : 18] Because his will be done. We've been looking at the Philippines for the last few weeks.

And the letter that Paul writes to Philippians gives us an example of how to live. Particularly during times of struggle. When times are difficult.

But throughout the letter Paul points to Jesus. And says Jesus is how we should live. Last week Andrew asked us a question. How would Jesus live your life today?

Would he worry about food? About money? About friends, family? About health? Or if he was living my life with the anxiety that I have.

Would Jesus give in to that? If there was any time that you could say to Jesus. Look you should probably be a little bit worried about now. I'd say it was in the Garden of Gethsemane.

[12 : 33] And actually when Jesus was in the Garden of Gethsemane. Praying to God. He had his friends there. But they were asleep. Three times they fell asleep. So for all intents and purposes he was there alone.

In a garden it was dark. Like it was very likely dark. And Jesus said to God. If there is another way. Take this cup away from me.

Was that Jesus worrying? Maybe. Probably not. We'll see. But I'm going to come back to that. I know some of you are probably waiting to say.

Well that's not where Jesus ended his prayer. And you're absolutely right. But we're going to come back to that. It's the question of did Jesus ever worry? Is it normal to worry?

Is it okay to worry? I think it's human nature for us to worry. When I asked us how many of us worry about anything. I think the majority of us put our hands up.

[13 : 39] We over the last week. Last Sunday when the groups we had with the youth and children downstairs. And on Friday when we do our thought for the week as well. We asked the youth and the children about worry.

We asked them what did they worry about. And they named a number of things. And then we asked them what do they do when they worry.

And they gave us a variety of different answers. Several of them said that they just tried to ignore it. They just bury it. Pretend it's not there. That's always going to come up again later.

And then we read out the passage for them that says do not worry about anything. And one of our young people last week said something that I actually had to stop and think about.

I didn't have an answer for. They said to us isn't it important for us to worry about having food to eat or what we're going to wear.

[14 : 41] In their words we don't want to go hungry and we can't do anything. And we're not going to go out the house naked. And I had to think about that. And actually the answer that came to me there.

The answer that I felt like God gave us there is Jesus never says don't care about these things. When Jesus was talking with the rich man who asked him how do I get into heaven.

He said follow the law. He said tick done that. Then Jesus said sell everything you have. Give the money away to the poor. I don't think Jesus said that simply because the rich man cared about money.

Everybody, a lot of people cared about money. But actually the rich man cared more about money than he did about God. I do think it's important for us to care about making sure we are eating properly and healthily.

For us to care about our health and go to the doctors when we need to. Take medication if we've been prescribed it. Sleep when we are supposed to be sleeping.

[15 : 53] I do think it's important for us to care about the clothes that we're wearing. To look presentable. To make sure we're wearing something decent. What we shouldn't be doing is caring more about these things than we care about God.

Is it normal to worry about these things? Yes, I'd say it's human to worry about these things. But when Jesus says do not worry, that's because we so often put these worries ahead of God.

As the guy said in the video, when we give in to worry, I'm worrying about my friends, about my family, about what I'm going to eat, about my paycheck.

And God is so far back in that list. We're putting all of these things ahead of God. Paul, interestingly, did not say don't worry about anything.

He said don't be anxious about anything. So the question is what is the difference? Well, as I said, I think we all worry.

[17 : 06] But actually, as somebody who struggles with anxiety on a regular basis, I know how that feeling changes from when I'm worrying about something to when I'm anxious about it, to when I'm struggling with that anxiety.

The difference there, the point that it goes from being one to the other is the point that I lose control. It's the point that all that's going through my head is the things that I'm worrying about.

It's the point that I forget that there are other things to care about. It's the point that I forget that God is there to help me and to help us find a way through.

Do not be anxious about anything. Do not give in control to your worries. One of the questions that we ask the youth and the children is what do you do when you worry?

And actually, we were impressed by some of the answers. Some of them were we just tried to ignore it, pretend it's not there. One of our kids very honestly said, on Friday, very honestly said, actually, I sometimes get quite angry about it, and I don't always know why.

[18 : 25] But in every single group that we ask the question, and I asked it in three groups, two youth, one with the kids. In every single group, at least one person said, talk to somebody.

And I was really impressed with that answer. For two reasons. Going back to the first week of the series when Simon spoke to us.

He talked about how the book of Philippians, every time, or the majority of times, Paul is using verbs in the book of Philippians. He's using the plural. He's saying, we do this together.

Not you go and do this, and that's church for you. We do this. Church is about doing things together. Another one of the questions that Simon asked that week is he talked about a poster.

So you can probably tell my research for this morning was listening to the sermons we've had so far. But talking about a poster of Jesus is the answer. Now, what is your question? And actually saying, well, Jesus isn't the answer to every question.

[19 : 31] When I was a teenager, our joke used to be whatever question we're asked in church is God, Jesus, Bible. Those are the three answers. But actually, are we so arrogant as to think that our answers are that simple?

Are we so arrogant to think that if we're struggling with anxiety or with worry or any other weaknesses, that all we need is God, Jesus, Bible.

We don't need to talk to each other. We don't share those weaknesses. Talk to somebody. And actually, if that wisdom can come from one of our teenagers, can come from one of our nine-year-old children, then I think that wisdom should come from us as well.

Whatever we're worrying about, whether it's big or whether it's small, talk to somebody. I know in my life, the moment that things change isn't the moment that I reach the bottom of the spiral and think there's nothing more for me to worry about anymore.

There is always something more that I can worry about. But it's the point that I say, stop. I can't go any further.

[20 : 47] I need to talk to somebody. So actually, when I come in in the morning, if I've been worrying as I've been getting up and when I'm driving in, and I'm sure Linda has probably had almost too much of this from me, but actually, if there is something on my mind, I say when I get in.

I live alone, so there's nobody I can speak to by the very beginning of the day, but as soon as I'm around people, as soon as I get to work, I start my day and I say, actually, I'm kind of thinking about this and this is going on.

And the vast majority of times, it's something so small that it's probably a bit stupid to be worrying about. Occasional times, it is something bigger.

It's worrying about, am I going to be able to buy food at the end of this month? It's worrying about, am I ever going to get somebody in to rent a spare room that I've got?

It's worrying about, this happened last week, or I was late in this morning. What are people going to say to me? It's a mixture of things.

[22 : 00] Paul says, do not be anxious about anything. My challenge is, can I make it through that 25-minute car journey and not allow myself to give in control to that worry and instead talk to somebody about it?

If we look at the verbs in the plural, do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, commit it to God. In prayer and petition, give it to God.

Paul isn't saying, if you're worried about anything, find a quiet corner, sit down and pray, although that is good to do. It's always good to start our day with prayer.

And it's always good to, especially if we wake up worrying about things. But actually, what Paul says is, pray together. Talk to somebody and pray together.

Our series, as we go through the book, Letter of Philippians, is titled Unchained Joy.

[23 : 03] Finding joy through these struggles. Paul found joy through his time in prison, when he knew that any day he could be given his sentence for execution.

He still found joy during those struggles. It's from that situation that Paul writes these words, do not be anxious about anything. If any of us have anything to worry about, surely it's Paul, who's in prison, who's waiting to be told when, not if he's going to be executed, when he's going to be executed.

But Paul says, do not be anxious. But talk to somebody. Share your worries and your anxieties. And together, pray and give these things to God.

So how do I find joy in a life that so often is controlled by anxiety? When actually, trying to maintain that control is difficult for me.

Because it doesn't take much for my brain to start spiraling off on its own. It doesn't take much for, no matter how much I focus on good things, anxiety always has a way to predict the worst case scenario.

[24 : 30] But actually, I think I have found joy through that. I've preached twice since last summer. The first time was on joy. The second time was on prayer.

Now it's bringing them both together. But for me, I have found joy through my struggles, through my difficult times. Not because, not because I can always see an end to them.

Not because I don't worry about them. But actually, because I know that whatever I'm going through, I can always trust that God is there. I can always trust God.

So when Paul, so we could slightly edit that verse a little bit. Paul says, do not be anxious about anything. But in every situation, trust God.

Those are five words that even I can remember. In every situation, trust God. So when I'm driving in the morning, even if my mind is spiraling out of control, I can hold on to the thought of trust God.

[25 : 37] Commit it to him through prayer and petition. So coming into land with a final summary.

If this is all you hear this morning, because you're still focused on the fact that I started by saying the Bible has my most hated three words. A summary of that is actually, if you talk to somebody who struggles with anxiety or who is worrying about something, if it's big or small, never tell them do not worry.

Likelihood is you're only going to make it worse. Point two, if you are that person, no matter what you are worrying, talk to somebody.

We were never meant to do church alone. Church has always been about doing it together. Don't be so arrogant that you can't share your weaknesses with one another, but talk to somebody.

And point three, when you've spoken to somebody, when you've told them off for telling you not to worry, sit down together and through prayer and petition, do not be anxious, but in every situation, trust God.

[27 : 06] It's not if we worry, pray to God and trust him. We all do. It's when we worry, do not give in control to that worry, but in every situation, trust God through prayer and petition.

Father God, Jesus, thank you that although you sat in the Garden of Gethsemane and you asked the Father if there is another way, but you still went to the cross and you did so faithfully and you did so joyfully and you did so trusting the Father, that he knew what was right for you and what was right for all of us.

We thank you that you care about our situations, however big or however small, that you care about the things that we care about, that you care about the things that are on our mind and cause us to worry.

But we pray that every time we start to worry about things, we won't give in control, we won't give control, we won't give in to anxiety, but that through prayer and petition, in every situation, we'll be able to trust you.

Amen. Amen. I understand the problem here, I understand the problem there within you. Amen. God bless you. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

[28 : 46] Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.