

Choke City

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Though we live in what has been called the “Age of Anxiety,” this has apparently been an issue of every generation. In Luke 12, Jesus devoted an entire section of His sermon to the subject of worry, even addressing it “to His disciples” (12:22). But there is a stark difference between what they were worrying about and what we worry about.

Jesus told them not to be anxious about what they were going to eat or what they were going to wear. Most of our worries about food involve the number of calories or trans fats in our meal. Our worries about clothing typically involve whether our outfit matches or is in style. If Jesus had to rebuke His disciples about worrying about the necessities of life, what would He say to us about the things that occupy our thoughts and attention?

Our word worry comes from an Old English word that means to “choke” or “strangle.” When the wolf came and bit down on the throat of the sheep, the shepherds would say that he was worrying the sheep. Jesus used it in this very same way in the Parable of the Sower. The seed that fell among the thorns was “choked with worries and riches and pleasures of this life” (Luke 8:14).

I certainly don’t mean to imply that the things you worry about are trivial or unimportant. I just want us to be careful that we don’t allow worry to choke us to the point that we become unfruitful.

Worry chokes our faith. Faith and worry cannot coexist. Just like you have to choose between God and mammon, you have to choose between faith and worry. Jesus’ solution was to look around. Consider the ravens (12:24). God feeds them; will He not do for His children? This passage inspired a poem by Elizabeth Cheney called *The Robin and the Sparrow*. “Said the robin to the sparrow, ‘I should really like to know why these anxious human beings rush about and worry so.’ Said the sparrow to the robin, ‘Friend, I think it must be that they have no heavenly Father such as cares for you and me.’”

“Your Father knows” (12:30). Instead of acting like people in the world who have no understanding of God’s power and promises and provision, remember that He knows. If He is capable of solving our most difficult of problems, the forgiveness of sins, is there anything He cannot do? Let faith in God choke out your worry.

Worry chokes our time. “Which of you by being worried can add a single cubit to his life’s span” (12:25). Worrying about something doesn’t change anything. Life is short enough as it is. It is a “vapor” (Jam. 4:14) that vanishes away. How much briefer does

life become when the time we do have is stolen away by anxious care? That's why it has been said that man is crucified between two thieves: the regrets about yesterday and the worries about tomorrow.

Worry doesn't lengthen life. It shortens it. You can worry yourself sick. And into the grave. And all too often, we worry about things that never happen. Let the value of your time choke out worry.

Worry chokes our peace. "And do not keep worrying" (12:29). Does anyone ever say, "I'm just going to worry for 10 minutes and then stop"? Worry is something we keep on doing the more we do it. In so doing, it takes away the opportunity to "Be still and know that I am God" (Psa. 46:10).

Isn't that why we pray to God? Instead of being anxious, we are to make our requests known to Him. The result is that the peace of God will "guard our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 4:6-7). Even when life is out of our control, it is still in His hands. Let the peace of God choke out worry.

Worry chokes our concentration. As important as we think our worries are, "Life is more than food, and the body than clothing" (12:23). The Greek word for worry means "to tear apart." Worry divides and distracts our interests from that which is truly important. It causes us to be torn in different directions. Worry sets our minds on the things of the world and not on the things above.

"Seek for His kingdom, and these things shall be added to you" (12:31). When we focus on being a Christian, we will gain the proper perspective on everything else in life. Let your concentration of the eternal choke out your worry of the temporal.

"Be on guard, that your hearts may not be weighted down with...the worries of life, and that day come on you suddenly like a trap" (Luke 21:34). We are quick to see that Jesus said you can lose your soul over greed. But you can lose it just as certainly over fretful, anxious care. That IS something to be concerned about!