

Are you choked with worry?

Those who've walked behind mowers cutting acres of lawn understand the word choked. The word aptly describes the mower's response to overgrown or wet grass. The motor struggles, overheats, and stalls while the underside of the mower and discharge chute demand regular scraping and clearing (with the engine stopped, of course!). The clumps of wet clippings suggest the bailer should be next piece of equipment across the lawn.

Our mental facilities, like the mower, are easily choked when we apply them to solving the wrong problems or when we dwell on the wrong concerns. Scripture defines that practice as worrying. In the Parable of the Soils (also referred to as the Parable of the Seed and Sower) Jesus compared soil type and the resulting harvest with varied responses to God's Word. Matthew, Mark, and Luke used the word *choke* to describe the outcome of sowing seed in thorny soil. This group of listeners with their honed habit of worry neutralized the power of God's Word. Their Bible study investment yielded no return.

And the one on whom seed was sown among the thorns, this is the man who hears the word, and the worry of the world and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful.

Matthew 13:22 NASB

but the worries of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things enter in and choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful.

Mark 4:19 NASB

The seed which fell among the thorns, these are the ones who have heard, and as they go on their way they are choked with worries and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to maturity.

Luke 8:14 NASB

The meaning of the word *choke* used in these verses is to strangle completely, to drown, or to crowd. Something competed with the newly-germinated plant and destroyed any chance of a harvest. Did you catch the problem? This hearer's mind, divided among many pursuits, became consumed with worry.

Worry describes constant concern over something or someone, often outside our control. Our minds become fixated on the issue effectively ignoring all other operations. Is the practice healthy? Experts suggest longterm worry affects the human body in the same manner as unrelenting stress. The [Mayo Clinic](#) offers a summary of the common effect of stress on three key areas—body, mood, and behavior.

Common effects of stress on your **body**...

- Headache
- Muscle tension or pain
- Chest pain
- Fatigue
- Change in sex drive
- Stomach upset
- Sleep problems

Common effects of stress on your **mood** ...

- Anxiety
- Restlessness
- Lack of motivation or focus
- Irritability or anger
- Sadness or depression

Common effects of stress on your **behavior**...

- Overeating or undereating
- Angry outbursts
- Drug or alcohol abuse
- Tobacco use
- Social withdrawal

If excessive worrying and high levels of anxiety go untreated, they can lead to depression and suicidal thoughts. (Source: [WebMD](#)).

After explaining the significance of the soil type to the harvest, Jesus moved on to minister in other towns. The group got into a boat to cross to the other side of the Sea of Galilee (8 miles at the widest point). Ministry is hard work, and Jesus in His human body was tired and fell asleep.

A fierce wind whipped the water into violent waves intent on swallowing the tiny craft. Hope drained from the disciples as they worked to keep the boat afloat. Recall some of them were lifelong fishermen, and this was not their first storm. Overtaken by panic and with their strength exhausted they shook Jesus awake. He was their only hope.

They came to Jesus and woke Him up, saying, "Master, Master, we are perishing!"...
Luke 8:24 NASB Selected

How could Jesus sleep at a time where experienced mariners were certain of disaster? Jesus was confident in His direction and His Father's care. He was certain He would reach the destination and continue His ministry. Much of our worry arises when we fear we've lost our way in the

middle of contrary circumstances, and we begin second guessing our choices. Take note that serving God and living for Him do not energize a heavenly force shield to keep contrary winds at bay.

Jesus did not waste the teachable moment. He rebuked the wind and waves then asked the men, "Where is your faith?" Pause and consider the evidence testifying to His power. At this point in Luke's narrative Jesus had restored the sanity of demon-possessed individuals, healed the sick including Peter's mother-in-law, cured diseases, treated Peter, Andrew, James and John to an outrageous fishing outing, cured a man of leprosy, and restored both a paralytic and a man with a non-functioning hand. Interesting that howling winds erase our memories and remove the very thoughts that should bolster our courage.

Wherever you and I may be on this day, no matter the boiling cauldron of issues spilling into our lives, worry can be conquered by faith. Is God big enough? Does He have power? Are His resources unlimited? Has He always proved Himself faithful? We can slap a spiritual-sounding "yes" after each questions, but the crucial query is, "Do I believe?"

Browse these New Testament teachings on the practice of worry and pay attention to the underlined words.

For this reason I say to you, **do not be worried about your life**, as to what you will eat or what you will drink; nor for your body, as to what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air, that they do not sow, nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not worth much more than they? **And who of you by being worried can add a single hour to his life?** And why are you worried about clothing? Observe how the lilies of the field grow; they do not toil nor do they spin, yet I say to you that not even Solomon in all his glory clothed himself like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the furnace, will He not much more clothe you? You of little faith! **Do not worry then**, saying, 'What will we eat?' or 'What will we drink?' or 'What will we wear for clothing?' For the Gentiles eagerly seek all these things; for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. **So do not worry about tomorrow**; for tomorrow will care for itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

Matthew 6:25-34 NASB

And He said to His disciples, "For this reason I say to you, **do not worry about your life**, as to what you will eat; nor for your body, as to what you will put on. For life is more than food, and the body more than clothing. Consider the ravens, for they neither sow nor reap; they have no storeroom nor barn, and yet God feeds them; how much more

valuable you are than the birds! **And which of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life's span? If then you cannot do even a very little thing, why do you worry about other matters?** Consider the lilies, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; but I tell you, not even Solomon in all his glory clothed himself like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass in the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the furnace, how much more will He clothe you? You men of little faith! And do not seek what you will eat and what you will drink, and **do not keep worrying.** For all these things the nations of the world eagerly seek; but your Father knows that you need these things. But seek His kingdom, and these things will be added to you.
Luke 12:22-31 NASB

Why would God feel the need to repeat the crucial message that we are to refrain from worrying? Could it be that malady easily infects us?

Luke chapter 10 shares the story of harried Martha bustling about to serve a meal while her sister Mary relaxed. (Read [Martha's side](#) of the story.) Martha's stress pushed her into a full-blown uproar, and she confronted Jesus over the injustice of the situation. Note the answer Jesus gave Martha implies a need to evaluate and prioritize our choices.

But the Lord answered and said to her, "Martha, Martha, you are worried and bothered about so many things; but only one thing is necessary, for Mary has chosen the good part, which shall not be taken away from her."
Luke 10:41-42 NASB

Charles R. Swindoll states, "Worry occurs when we assume responsibility for things that are outside our control." (Source: Day by Day with Charles Swindoll, Copyright © 2000 by Charles R. Swindoll, Inc.).

Paul summarizes the teaching on conquering worry with this open invitation.

Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.
Philippians 4:6 NASB

Are you choked with worry? There is One who cares.

Do **you** have faith to believe in Him?