

Spiritual Practice: Replacing Worry

Why do you worry? It is a question that Jesus poses in the Sermon on the Mount. It is a question that probes our hearts as we determine where our trust and hope lies. Worry is what we do after we have planned, prepared and acted properly. When we continue to stew about something, we have crossed into the world of worry. **Worry is a disproportionate level of concern based on an inappropriate measure of fear.**

Worry keeps me focused on my own limited resources. Trust keeps my attention on God's abundant resources. Jesus, through the Sermon on the Mount challenges where our hearts lie while at the same time challenging what we understand about the Kingdom of God at work in and through us. Do we believe his provision to sustain us in the life he is calling us to live?

Seeking the kingdom first means facing our trials and troubles not with anxiety but with trust that God can and will work in them. Most of our worries are due to the bad habits we learned while living outside of the kingdom of God, when we trusted in things like money and approval, even though they always disappointed.

Prayer helps us deal with our worries in several ways. First, we realize that the provision of the kingdom of God is available to us in every circumstance, large or small. Second, we see things from God's perspective, which puts our problems and concerns in a new light.

I find that the practice of writing my prayers forces me to think about my concerns: are they driven by false narrative or centered on the advancement of the kingdom? Be very specific in your prayers. Why? Most of our prayers are so vague that we would not even know if God had answered them.

This week each morning set aside 10 to 15 minutes.

- **Think about all of the things you might be anxious about.**
- **Write them down in your journal or a notebook.**
- **Ask what you can do to remedy each of these situations.**
- **Make a note to yourself to do the things you can do.**
- **Turn everything else over to God.**
- **Write your request to God and be specific.**

Adapted from James Bryan Smith.
The Good and Beautiful Life: IVP Books.