

WORRY NOT

by Ashley Young and Michele Hershberger

KEY VERSE:

Luke 12:32 "Do not be afraid, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom."

FAITH STORY:

Luke 12:22-34

FAITH FOCUS:

Jesus told his disciples not to worry about their lives, what they eat or what they wear. He illustrates God's provision by speaking of the ravens; they neither sow nor reap, yet God feeds them. Jesus then says that people are much more valuable than birds, and uses the illustration of the lilies of the field to reaffirm God's provision. Jesus tells the disciples not to strive for what they are to eat or to drink, and not to worry - their Father already knows what they need. Instead the disciples are to strive for God's kingdom and the rest will be taken care of. Jesus referred to His disciples as a little flock, and told them that it was their Father's good pleasure to give them the kingdom. Jesus told them to sell their possessions and give alms, to make themselves purses that never wear out, and store up unfailing treasures in heaven that will never be taken away or destroyed. Jesus said that where their treasures were, their hearts would be also.

SESSION GOAL:

To help youth understand that if they seek after God's Kingdom, they don't have to worry about their lives – God's got it under control!

SESSION OBJECTIVES:

By the end of this session, the students will:

- List things that Jesus specifically tells us not to worry about.
- Identify things that they worry about.
- Identify what to do about problems rather than worry.

MATERIALS NEEDED AND ADVANCE PREPARATION:

- 1 Bibles and Pens
- 2 One piece of paper for every 3 or 4 students.
- 3 Candy bars –enough for students to each choose one.
- 4 Chalkboard or dry erase board and marker
- 5 3" strips of green fabric ribbon—one per student
- 6 Video camera and a way to view the footage the students shoot
- 7 Share your own personal story or invite a guest speaker to tell a story of trusting God in a big way—of choosing to trust God rather than worry.

SESSION OUTLINE

FOCUS: (7–10 minutes)

Give every student a piece of green ribbon when they come in.

Explain to students that in mood rings, the color green means that you're anxious or worried. Ask students to imagine that they are wearing a mood ring right now, and if they are worried about anything, to tie the ribbon on their finger.

Divide students into groups of 3-4. Give each group a paper and pencil. Ask them to come up with a list of harmful effects of worrying.

Share the lists with the group. Give candy bars to the group with the longest list.

CONNECT: (5 minutes)

Ask: Why do you think we are talking about worrying? What does worrying have to do with our Christian faith? What do you think the Bible says about worrying?

Allow time for students to answer each question before you continue.

EXPLORE THE BIBLE: (20–30 minutes)

Make sure all students have a Bible and ask them to turn to Luke 12. Ask for a volunteer to read Luke 12:22-31 while the others follow along. Discuss the following questions.

Who is speaking in this passage?

To whom is Jesus speaking?

What four things does Jesus tell them not to worry about?

Why do you think Jesus mentioned those four?

What do you think is the key verse that "sums it all up" in this passage?

Ask for another volunteer to read Luke 12:30-34. Discuss the following questions.

Why do you think God wants to give us the Kingdom?

Why do you think Jesus would ask the disciples to sell their possessions and make treasures in heaven? What do you think treasure in heaven is? Why can't it be destroyed or stolen?

What do you think Jesus meant when he said, "Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."?

Why do you think this conversation was important enough for Luke to remember it when he wrote the book of Luke?

Share a mini-lecture on Jubilee based on the Insights from Scripture.

Break students into groups of 4-6 and ask them to choose one of the following options:

- 1 Write and perform a rap song based on this scripture.
- 2 Make a video based on this scripture.

Teacher tip: Students can do a modern-day retelling of the scripture, interview Jesus about the scripture themes, or find other creative ways to re-tell what they feel is the “heart” of this passage.

Ask students to share their song and video.

APPLY: (10–15 minutes)

Share your story, or ask your guest to share their story of a time when they trusted God in a big way, or when they chose to trust God rather than worry.

Divide students into groups of 3-4. Ask them to come up with answers to the following questions and then to plan to act them out so the rest of the class can guess what they are portraying.

- 1 What do you worry about?
- 2 What things do you have to worry about today that the disciples did not have to worry about?
- 3 What did the disciples have to worry about that you don't have to today?

Discuss:

- 1 Jesus said that God already knew what the disciples needed. Does God know what you need? Does God want to give you what you need?
- 2 Do you believe this? If so, how could this affect your life?
- 3 What does it mean to you that God has everything under control?
- 4 How can you communicate to others that you believe God is taking care of you?
- 5 What does it mean to seek God's Kingdom first?

(It means different things to different people. God calls one person to voluntary poverty and another to run a business and give millions away, and another person to go to Africa. It's not one thing—it's listening and obeying and trusting enough not to worry.

RESPOND: (5–10 minutes)

Ask students to turn to Philippians 4:6 and read it together: “Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.”

Ask youth what this verse says they should do about things that they worry about. Invite students to tie their green ribbon somewhere so they'll see it often as a reminder to pray about their problems instead of worrying about them.

Distribute the remaining candy bars to everyone. Say: I knew you all would want one, even before the evening began, just like God knows what you need even before you ask.

Ask students if they have any prayer requests, and then pray together.

Close your class time with this prayer:

*God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change;
courage to change the things I can;
and wisdom to know the difference,
Living one day at a time;
Enjoying one moment at a time;
Accepting hardships as the pathway to peace;
Taking, as Jesus did, this sinful world as it is, not as I would have it;
Trusting that Jesus will make all things right if I surrender to his will;
That I may be reasonably happy in this life
and supremely happy with him forever in the next. Amen*

INSIGHTS FROM SCRIPTURE:

When Jesus spoke of worry to his disciples, he had already been with them for a while. He knew what they worried about and why. This sermon about anxiety took place in a crowd of thousands of people, so although it was directed at the disciples, it was not exclusive. Later in Luke 12, Peter asks if the parables are just for them or for everyone. Jesus tells a parable to explain that it is for the person that does what is right with the information he has heard.

One might ask if this passage encourages laziness. Probably not. Jesus was giving this teaching in the context of a Jubilee society. Initiated in the wilderness (1280 BCE), Jubilee helped ensure a just society where people who got down on their luck could get a second chance. But, obeying these stipulations required lots of trust in God. Every 7 years, people let the land rest and didn't plant crops. Every 7 years, all slaves were released with money to get started on their own again. Every 7 years, all debts were cancelled. And every 50 years, the land returned to its original owners. The rich voluntarily gave up what they had to allow those who had suffered misfortune to try to re-establish a decent living. Yet it didn't kill initiative because it only happened every 50 years. So, when Jesus said not to worry about what one would eat or wear, he may have been speaking in the context of Jubilee.

WORKS CITED:

Niebuhr, Reinhold 'Serenity Prayer'

WORKS CONSULTED:

Lindsell, Harold 'Study Helps' *NRSV Harper Study Bible*