

today's  
christian  
woman

LOVE GOD. LIVE FEARLESSLY.



# The Worry Addiction

Overcoming Anxiety's Hold on Our Lives



# The Worry Addiction

Overcoming Anxiety's Hold on Our Lives

Click on an article you'd like to read:

**3 INTRODUCTION**

No Worries?

*By Kelli B. Trujillo*

**7 LEADER'S GUIDE**

How to use "The Worry  
Addiction" for a group study.

**8 BUT WHAT IF . . . ?**

Trusting God when life is scary

*By Dawn Zemke*

**12 AFRAID OF THE RIGHT  
THINGS**

One fear puts all others in  
proper perspective.

*By Ruth Graham*

**16 FOCUSED ON GOD'S  
FAITHFULNESS**

Following Mary's example

*By Jane Struck*

**20 THE SPIRITUAL PRACTICE  
OF TRUST**

Choosing an alternative to worry

*By Keri Wyatt Kent*

**24 WINNING OVER WORRY**

Five strategies to stop fretting

*By Ginger Kolbaba*

**30 ADDITIONAL RESOURCES**

Books, articles, and Bible  
studies to help you further



Introduction

# No Worries?

By Kelli B. Trujillo

**“D**on't worry, it will all turn out all right.”

There was a time in my life when I thought I'd scream if I heard those words one more time.

It was my first pregnancy and a series of tests revealed some potentially life-threatening problems in my baby boy's brain. Well-meaning Christians in our small, close-knit church kept urging me not to worry, to just trust God.

Every time I heard a platitude about trust, I thought, *It doesn't always turn out all right. God sometimes allows tragedies to happen!* And every time someone assured me that my baby would be OK because God is good, I thought of all the babies who *aren't* born healthy.

## The Worry Addiction

### No Worries?

The exhortations not to worry and to simply trust rang hollow for me because they didn't address a very painful and uncomfortable reality: God does *not* promise that things will turn out "OK" in this life. Things *can* go horribly wrong.

Deep down we all know this potential for the awful to happen. And so we worry. And worry. And worry . . . until it's eating us up inside.

Ultimately, and with deep gratitude to God, I gave birth to a healthy baby boy. But the experience I walked through during those long months has stuck with me, pushing me to continue to question well-meaning platitudes, drawing me toward a more robust Christian faith that believes in God's protection but that can also remain true even in the face of tragedy.

We all *want* to believe that faith in God means we and our loved ones will always be safe from harm . . . but that isn't what the Bible offers us. Scripture, over and over again, acknowledges and candidly depicts the hardships and heartaches of the human experience.

And yet in this world where so much can go wrong, Jesus commands his followers, "Do not worry" (Matthew 6:25, NIV).

What did he mean?

He wasn't promoting a "Don't Worry Be Happy" mind-set (a la Bobby McFerrin's 80's hit) or a "*Hakuna Matata*" philosophy (as sung by *The Lion King's* Pumba and Timon). It wasn't a call to the ignorance, irresponsibility, or apathy that can accompany such an approach to life.

## The Worry Addiction

### No Worries?

And Jesus certainly wasn't inviting his followers to shut their eyes to life's problems, wish hard that they'd go away, and *poof!*, they'd magically get the perfect Christian life.

"Do not worry" in Matthew 6:25 is not equivalent to "do not think about" or "do not care about." New Testament scholar Craig L. Blomberg observes, "The KJV's 'take no thought' is definitely misleading." The point, Blomberg clarifies, is not that we ignore important matters, but rather that we "need not be anxious" because our trust is ultimately in God.

At times we may bandy about the phrase "don't worry about it" as if it's a casual thing. Yet this command of Jesus may be one of the most difficult acts of faith he calls us to. It's the choice to acknowledge the dangers and potential heartaches of life in this world, yet to turn one's focus and attention onto God as all in all. To take captive thoughts of anxiety that wreak havoc on our emotions (2 Corinthians 10:5), and with courageous determination to cast them away from our hearts and onto God himself (1 Peter 5:7). Obedience to this command means that we bring God our honest hope for all to be well, while also saying to him, *I trust you—your will be done, even if it isn't what I hope.*

I unintentionally disobey this command of Jesus' on a daily, even hourly, basis. Why? Perhaps worry is wired into our DNA. In a sense, we worry because we love, because we hope, because we cherish. God made us that way, and I think he understands the sincere motivations that may drive our worry. Yet when we worry, we tend to stew in those anxieties and let them eat us up, pondering all the horrific what ifs. Instead we can respond by honestly bringing those worries to God in prayer, seeking his peace, and relying upon his help.

## The Worry Addiction

### No Worries?

This TODAY'S CHRISTIAN WOMAN download examines this perplexing, challenging, and life-changing command of Jesus. As you explore the articles and consider the Reflect questions, my hope is that you are as convicted, encouraged, and inspired as I have been by the wise words contained in these pages.

May God grant you—and me!—the grace to grow in trust and to fully surrender our worries to him.

Grace and peace,

*Kelli B. Trujillo*

Managing Editor, TODAY'S CHRISTIAN WOMAN downloads  
Christianity Today International



Leader's Guide

# How to use “The Worry Addiction” for a group study

**“T**he Worry Addiction” can be used for individual or group study. If you intend to lead a group study, some simple suggestions follow.

- 1. Make enough copies for everyone in the group to have her own guide.**
- 2. Depending on the time you have dedicated to the study, you might consider distributing the guides before your group meets so everyone has a chance to read the material. Some articles are quite long and could take a while to get through.**
- 3. Alternately, you might consider reading the articles together as a group—out loud—and plan on meeting multiple times.**
- 4. Make sure your group agrees to complete confidentiality. This is essential to getting women to open up.**
- 5. When working through the Reflect questions, be willing to make yourself vulnerable. It's important for women to know that others share their experiences. Make honesty and openness a priority in your group.**
- 6. End the session in prayer.**



# Afraid of the Right Things

One fear puts all others in proper perspective.

By Ruth Graham

**T**he shot through the rattlesnake's head had all but demolished it. The rattler was still twisting on the driveway as the family gathered around to see the latest snake kill. One of the dogs eased forward to finish it off, and the snake struck again. The dog jumped back.

Then one of the grandchildren reached out to touch it. Bill grabbed him and held him back, explaining how deadly even a dead snake can be. The young grandson, totally without fear, was determined to grab its tail. Again the mangled head struck out. The boy jumped back, getting the message. Rattlesnakes and copperheads, the only two poisonous snakes in our region, are to be feared.



## The Worry Addiction

### Afraid of the Right Things

"Education," wrote Angelo Patri, "consists in being afraid of the right things."

We taught our children to be careful with matches and to be respectful of open fire; fear of house fires and forest fires prompts sensible precautions. We also taught the children never to run into the street without first carefully looking both ways; a proper fear of cars is also legitimate—as are accepting rides from strangers, using un-prescribed drugs, not wearing helmets when riding motorcycles, breaking the law, and dishonoring one's parents or one's country.

There is one grand, noble fear we are taught from Genesis to Revelation. It is "the fear of the Lord." This is more than "being scared of" though there is a hint of that in it, too. It is "a reverential trust," not only a fear of offending, but a loving to the point one would not want to offend.

"Those who fear the LORD are secure; he will be a refuge for their children" (Proverbs 14:26).

"Fear of the LORD is the foundation of true wisdom" (Psalm 111:10).

"Oh, that they would always have hearts like this, that they might fear me and obey all my commands! If they did, they and their descendents would prosper forever." (Deuteronomy 5:29)

"To guard against all such blasphemous chumminess with the Almighty; the Bible talks of the fear of the Lord—not to scare us but to bring us to awesome attention before the

## The Worry Addiction

### Afraid of the Right Things

overwhelming grandeur of God," writes Eugene H. Peterson in *A Long Obedience in the Same Direction*.

We live in a world wracked by fears and anxieties. But God reassures his church, even as they look at hardships coming their way, "Don't be afraid of what you are about to suffer" (Revelation 2:10). We are to fear only the Lord.

It is the fear of God that puts all other fears in proper perspective.

*Ruth Graham, author and wife of Billy Graham, died in 2007. This article originally appeared in her By the Way column in the March 4, 1983 issue of CHRISTIANITY TODAY. It was published online at ChristianityToday.com in June 2007.*

## Reflect

- *There is much to fear in our world. What are some of the latest headlines, local crimes, future forecasts, or international crises that make you feel afraid? What, specifically, do you fear in each case?*
- *How might you define fear? How is fear connected to worry? How is fear connected to trust?*
- *How would you define "fear of the Lord"? How does it compare or contrast with your earlier definition of fear? How does fearing God relate to worry and to trust?*

## The Worry Addiction

### Afraid of the Right Things

○ *Read the following: Psalm 111:10; 112:1; 147:11; Proverbs 14:26–27; 31:30; Isaiah 33:5–6; and Revelation 15:3–4. Now try to create some of your own "proverbs" about fearing the Lord that communicate essential ideas. To get started, use statements like these:*

- *A person who fears the Lord . . .*
- *Fearing God enables us to . . .*
- *I fear the Lord because . . .*
- *When I fear God, I can . . .*

○ *Ruth finishes her article with an insightful observation: "It is the fear of God that puts all other fears in proper perspective." How have you experienced this truth in your own life?*



## But What If . . . ?

Trusting God when life is scary

By Dawn Zemke

**M**y name is Dawn, and I'm a worrier.

In fact, I've pretty much always been a worrier, even as a child. *What if I get stuck with Mrs. Paxton as my third grade teacher?* I'd fret. (You could hear her yelling all the way down the hall.) *Will I have any friends in my class? Who'll sit with me at lunch?* And perhaps worst of all, *What if I'm the last one picked for kickball teams?*

I wish I could say I grew out of my worrying as I got older, but the truth is, I've just found different things to worry about. Late at night, when the house is still and dark and my family is sleeping—that's prime worry time.

## The Worry Addiction

### But What If...?

*Will I be able to meet that article deadline? How are we going to afford a new car? With all the bad stuff out there, how can I possibly keep my kids safe?* All that worrying might be understandable, even acceptable, but for one important factor: God has never given me reason to worry. Quite the opposite—he's gone out of his way to take extremely good care of me.

When my father, the sole breadwinner for our family, died in a car accident when I was nine, God provided for all our needs. Then after I graduated from college, God gave me a wonderful Christian husband, who also happens to be my best friend, and two beautiful, healthy children. He allowed me to be a stay-at-home mom (on my husband's teacher's salary, no less!). And when the time came for me to re-enter the work force, God opened the door to a new career doing something I'd always loved.

Yet even after all these examples of God's faithfulness, I can't seem to give up my worrying ways. This past spring, as my son graduated high school and prepared to attend college, I was at it again. Even with generous scholarships, the monthly price tag for his tuition was going to be more than our mortgage payment. How would a music teacher and an editor for a not-for-profit Christian magazine possibly foot the bill?

God must have sighed and shaken his head at my fretting.

Before that first bill arrived in the mail, our church offered my husband a part-time job to be the director of contemporary music. His salary? Just a little less than that monthly tuition payment.

## The Worry Addiction

### But What If...?

God tells me he'll take care of me: "'For I know the plans I have for you,' says the LORD. 'They are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope'" (Jeremiah 29:11). And he's made it clear he doesn't want me to worry: "Look at the birds. They don't plant or harvest or store food in barns, for your heavenly Father feeds them. And aren't you far more valuable to him than they are?" (Matthew 6:26).

He's told me. He's shown me. So why do I persist with the worrying?

I guess in the end it's a matter of trust. While I believe that "God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God" (Romans 8:28), I worry (there's that word again) that I won't like the things God may choose to work that good.

One friend's husband has lost his job and they're barely scraping by. Another's teenaged son is battling cancer. Is God taking care of them? Of course! But what form will that caring take? One might lose a house. Another might lose a son. God can provide a new job, and he can heal. But *will* he?

And now I've reached the root of my worry. God did promise to take care of me. But he didn't promise the road will be smooth. And oh, I want that road to be smooth!

So I'm learning to trust and accept God's care for me, whatever direction it may take. I say learning, because even as I type those words, a little voice in my head hisses, *But...!* It's against my nature to give up that control, to allow God to choose the things he'll work for good in my life. But I know if I can pull it off, there'll be a blessed sense of freedom. And a lot more time to spend on things other than worrying.

## The Worry Addiction

But What If...?

In a year and a half my daughter will head to college. That means two tuition payments.

I think I'd better get started.

*Dawn Zemke is a freelance editor. This article was published on [TodaysChristianWoman.com](http://TodaysChristianWoman.com) in 2010.*

## Reflect

- *What issues do you most frequently worry about? Which of the items do you see as real, legitimate reasons for concern? Which are not? Which fall somewhere in the between?*
- *Despite experiencing God's faithfulness in our lives, it is quite difficult to stop worrying. Why do you think that is? What does a persistent habit of worry say about us?*
- *Jeremiah 29:11 is often cited as a reason not to worry; in fact, some Christians mistakenly take it to mean that God promises a cushy, comfy, problem-free life. But read the passage in its context in **Jeremiah 29:1–14**. This message is spoken to God's people who are in exile—their homeland had been plundered and destroyed, they've been separated from family members (many who've been murdered), and they're now being told by God to settle in for the long-haul in the foreign, pagan culture of Babylon. God spoke these words to them as they were suffering tremendous hardship. How does this context inform your understanding of this verse?*
- *What does it really mean to trust God has good plans and a hopeful future for us? How can the principle in **Genesis 50:20** and **Romans 8:28** aid us in choosing to trust rather than worry?*



# Focused on God's Faithfulness

Following Mary's example

By Jane Struck

**“A**ll who heard the shepherds' story were astonished, but Mary kept these things in her heart and thought about them often” (Luke 2:18–19).

Over a decade ago, I had an encounter with God I'll never forget. I was in the thick of a personal crisis so frightening to me, I literally couldn't function. With desperate, convulsive sobs, I cried out to God, pleading for his help.

Then—in the thick of my hysteria—the Lord spoke directly to me with four commonplace, yet powerful, words: *Everything will be OK*. I vividly remember the undeniable strength, unquestionable authority, and incomparable compassion in God's voice. I'd never experienced anything like it before—and have not since. In that single moment, joy and inexplicable peace surged through my spirit.



## The Worry Addiction

Focused on God's Faithfulness

I couldn't believe the Almighty God of the universe had actually looked down on my distress, in all its ignoble basket-case glory, and had responded so intimately to my pleas. As I composed myself, wiping away my tears, I felt hopeful, knowing without a doubt God saw, cared, and, yes, controlled my family's future.

Lest you think I'm the type of woman who regularly claims to hear God "speak" the reality is, I can count on one hand the times God's communicated to me in ways other than through his Word. But God knew I needed immediate rescue from my emotional Chernobyl. So he graciously provided something big and irrefutable, something special and dramatic and supernatural, to tuck away in my heart. Then, whenever fears and doubts would creep back into my mind, I could relive this experience again and again.

I think Jesus' mother, Mary, and I have that in common. As I read the first few chapters in Luke's Gospel during this Advent season, I'm moved by the fact God inspired Luke to reveal how Mary soaked up all the marvelous messengers and mysterious prophecies that surrounded her son's birth. Mary was obviously an incredible young woman—modeling the type of faith and trust and obedience I aspire to. Yet at the same time, being human, she too probably found comfort in having something big and dramatic to hang onto.

The fearsome angel who announced Mary's unprecedented pregnancy. The glorious heavenly choir and guiding star. The wise men with their gifts. The divine dreams that protected them from destruction. Even the prophecies of Simeon and Anna at the Temple in Jerusalem. Mary "thought about [these things] *often*" (italics mine). Perhaps pondering

## The Worry Addiction

Focused on God's Faithfulness

these supernatural events eased Mary through mundane moments of mothering. Or erased any niggling doubts about whether her boy would one day really become Messiah. Or gave her patience while she waited for Jesus' ministry to jumpstart.

I like to think one reason God provided Mary with these encounters was because he knew one day she'd see her son, this Child of Promise, nailed to the cross. But in any moment of need or worry or desperation, Mary could relive memories of miracles to find the assurance God *was* at work to fulfill his purposes for a world so desperately in need of rescue. These frequent remembrances created in her a stronger faith, a deeper trust, and a firmer belief in God who sees, cares, and is in control.

Whenever I feel stilted in worship or steeped in worry, I think back to my mysterious encounter with God years ago. I recall the awesome sense of his presence, the unexpected way he met me, the unequivocal sense of his inexpressible completeness and authority. I journal about it, chew on it, relive it to remind myself how personal, how compassionate, how incredibly awesome my God is. This and other special memories of God's work in my life are treasures in my heart, just as Mary's were in hers.

*Jane Struck is the former editor of TODAY'S CHRISTIAN WOMAN. Jane blogs at [betseynjanes.blogspot.com](http://betseynjanes.blogspot.com). This article, originally called "Divine Encounters," was published on [TodaysChristianWoman.com](http://TodaysChristianWoman.com) in 2010.*

## The Worry Addiction

Focused on God's Faithfulness

### Reflect

- *When have you experienced God's presence or his faithfulness to you in a special way? And in what "everyday" ways, perhaps taken for granted, is God showing himself faithful to you right now?*
- *The NIV renders Luke 2:19 this way: "Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart." The Message paraphrase of this verse says, "Mary kept all these things to herself, holding them dear, deep within herself." Do you, too, often think about the good things God has done for you? Why or why not?*
- *How might intentionally focusing on God's provision and presence in your life provide you with comfort and assurance of God's care as you face off with worry and anxiety?*
- *Jesus commands us "Do not worry" (**Matthew 6:25**); this same imperative is reiterated by Paul in **Philippians 4:6**. Read **Philippians 4:4–9**. How does this passage describe the mind-set and emotional life of a Christian?*
- *How might you need to change the focus of your thoughts in order to live in peace rather than anxiety? Practically speaking, how can a person actually do this? Share examples and ideas.*
- *What's one specific truth about God or experience you've had with God that you want to intentionally think about often, like Mary, in order to strengthen your trust in him?*



# The Spiritual Practice of Trust

Choosing an alternative to worry

By Keri Wyatt Kent

**O**ne of the most startling and challenging commandments of Jesus is this: do not worry.

You may not even have noticed those three little words take the form of a command, or considered worry a sin to confess or avoid. But with this simple directive, "Do not worry about your life . . ." (Matthew 6:25, NIV) Jesus calls us to trust him, and to let go of having to control the outcome of every situation. When we do that, we will have joy, even in challenging circumstances. To do so requires a certain emotional detachment, a conscious letting go of needing to control the outcome of every situation.

## The Worry Addiction

### The Spiritual Practice of Trust

It's not that we don't care; we do. But we cast our cares on him and let go of trying to control things that are truly beyond our control. Many of us are professional worriers. In fact, even our prayers are shaped mostly by worry. We get on our knees not to commune with God but to handle damage control for him, to alert him to what's going on in this crazy world and to suggest solutions.

Trust is a choice, the alternative to worry. Other people may misinterpret our trust as carelessness or irresponsibility. But really, we are simply turning over our lives, one moment at a time, to God's excellent and dependable provision. Trust is a spiritual practice that transforms us, that helps us obey the command against worrying.

Unlike other practices, such as prayer, study, solitude, and so forth, the practice of trust is not something we can schedule. We have to wait for situations that would cause us to worry or fear, and in the midst of that situation, choose to believe that we are safe in the arms of God. We have to sail along and wait for a rogue wave or a sudden wind shift, and trust we will not capsize. We must be attentive to see the opportunity in a moment of struggle.

To choose to trust does not mean we don't care, but that we place our cares in the hands of one who cares for us.

In my book, *Deeper into the Word*, I wrote:

*In English, the word "care" has two nearly opposite meanings. If someone cares, they are interested and concerned. If someone has a care, they perhaps have an anxiety or worry. Having someone care for us can alleviate our cares.*

## The Worry Addiction

### The Spiritual Practice of Trust

*Likewise, in New Testament Greek, there are different meanings, but in some cases, several different words to signify those meanings. Merimna (and the verb form merimnao) means anxiety, or to have a care (this word is translated worry in Matthew 6:25). . . . Epimeleomai means to take care of, to provide for. It is used both in Luke 10 to describe the Good Samaritan's care for the wounded man, and in 1 Timothy 3:5 to describe the role of a bishop or overseer of the church—perhaps, some scholars suggest, alluding to a parallel between these two roles.*

*. . . 1 Peter 5:7 exhorts believers to give our anxiety over to the care of Jesus: "casting all your care (merimna) upon him, for he cares (melei) for you" (NKJV). It's an interesting play on words—we can release our cares (our anxiety, worries) to Jesus because of his care (his deep concern and loving provision) for us. This word care, when it refers to God, reminds us of his amazing love for us.*

*Jesus noted in Matthew 13:22 that the "cares (merimna) of this world" can choke out our spiritual growth. When life throws us challenging circumstances, we have a choice to make: will we worry or trust? Will we believe God is in control or expect the worst? This is the only place we have the opportunity to engage in the practice of trust—in the trenches of difficult circumstances.*

## The Worry Addiction

### The Spiritual Practice of Trust

Do you engage in the spiritual practice of trust? What will it take for you to embrace the truth that Jesus cares for you, deeply, and that you can entrust him with all your cares?

*Keri Wyatt Kent is a speaker and author of eight books, including **Deeper Into the Word: Reflections on 100 New Testament Words** (Bethany House, 2011). This article was published in **BuildingChurchLeaders.com** in 2011. © Keri Wyatt Kent.*

## Reflect

- *Read Jesus' full teaching about worry in **Matthew 6:25–34**. In what ways could Jesus' words in this passage be misunderstood or taken out of context? Brainstorm several possible misinterpretations of this passage.*
- *Now, setting aside those misunderstandings, how would you summarize the true essence of Jesus' teaching? How might **Matthew 6:19–24** add to your understanding of this passage?*
- *"Do not worry" is a command; so, when we worry, are we sinning? If so, in what way? Is it possible for worry to not be a sin? Explain.*
- *Keri writes, "Trust is a spiritual practice that transforms us, that helps us obey the command against worrying." What does it mean to truly trust God? What doesn't it mean?*
- *Read the following passages that speak about trusting God: **Psalm 13:5; 20:7; 56:3–4; 112:7; Proverbs 3:5–6**. How do these passages speak to current worries you are struggling with?*
- *What would it mean for you to choose trust over worry in your life right now? Be specific.*



# Winning Over Worry

Five strategies to stop fretting

By Ginger Kolbaba

**E**ver since I can remember, my mind worked overtime thinking about all the dreadful events that could happen to my loved ones or me. I worried about major tragedies: plane crashes, rape, cancer. I even worried about minor situations: missing a payment due date, wearing the wrong thing to a social outing, having bad breath. However, most of those what-ifs were never realized.

Until, that is, the day my worst dread became a reality: My father was diagnosed with cancer. Finally my worries were justified. But now I had to decide: Who would be my companion through this crisis? Anxiety—or God?



## The Worry Addiction

### Winning Over Worry

While praying for my dad, I recalled Jesus' words in Luke 12:25–26: "Can all your worries add a single moment to your life? And if worry can't accomplish a little thing like that, what's the use of worrying over bigger things?" This message comes from the man who often didn't know where he'd eat or sleep; who constantly endured public criticism from many important people; who knew he'd die an excruciatingly painful death. I was ashamed. I didn't want anxiety to cripple me. I wanted to trust God and experience peace. "OK, God," I prayed through clenched teeth, "I'm turning Dad's health over to you. I'm trusting you want the best for my family. And I won't worry about something I can't control." That prayer was the toughest I ever prayed.

To follow through on my prayer, I began searching for strategies to rid myself of worry and fill my life with hope.

#### **I. Pray in faith.**

For me, prayer wasn't the problem. The problem was telling God my worries and asking for his help, then holding on to them, like a tug-of-war. I kept reminding God to be as concerned about the situation as I was.

When I progressed from my 20s to 30s with no husband, I grew panicky. Oh, how I prayed and worried I'd be single forever. Finally, God impressed upon me he couldn't answer my prayers if I didn't have faith—the opposite of worry. He didn't promise that he'd answer "yes," just that he'd answer. I took a leap of faith and said, "God, I'm going to trust you know what you're doing. And if that means I never get married, then I'm not going to waste my life worrying about being single." When worry reared its ugly head again,

## The Worry Addiction

### Winning Over Worry

I repeated that prayer. God didn't immediately answer with a "yes." But I discovered the more I prayed that prayer, the more I meant it. God eventually gave me a spouse, but by then I was enjoying my life so much, I'd stopped worrying about my marital status.

### 2. Choose health.

Studies show worrying can lead to tension headaches, hypertension, muscle tension, diarrhea, vomiting, sweating, irritability, poor memory, insomnia, and even obsessive-compulsive behavior.

Whenever I tense up and feel nauseated, I meditate and breathe deeply. In his book *The Anxiety Cure*, Christian psychologist Dr. Archibald Hart explains meditation and its benefits as the "literal embodiment of Psalm 46:10, 'Be still, and know that I am God.' . . . It is all about worship, a devotional act" of imagining "Jesus standing in front of you, beckoning you to hand over all that bothers you." Then I "select an attribute of God and focus on it. His love, compassion, grace."

I also exercise to combat the physical effects of worry. When I'm exercising, I can think only about breathing. After all, who has time to worry when you're just trying to huff and puff around the track one more time?

### 3. Learn to laugh.

Proverbs 17:22 says, "A cheerful heart is good medicine, but a broken spirit saps a person's strength." I realized I needed to lighten up, to force myself to find whatever humor I could, and not take myself so seriously. So what if I messed up and called a coworker the wrong name? So what if I miscalculated the traffic and was late to the business meeting I was leading?

## The Worry Addiction

### Winning Over Worry

I've learned to apologize, laugh about it, and move on. (I use the "I'm blond at the roots" excuse.) By tomorrow, everyone will have forgotten. And if not, it'll make a great story in a year—or ten.

#### 4. Practice gratitude.

In Philippians 4:6–7, the apostle Paul says, "Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and *thank* him for all he has done. Then you will experience God's peace, which exceeds anything we can understand" (italics added). I decided to test this promise one day during a nine-hour road trip. It was raining so hard I couldn't see the pavement. My anxiety meter was running high, so I decided to list aloud all the blessings in my life. The list's length amazed me! Focusing on the positive calmed me enough to think clearly, make wise driving decisions, and actually enjoy the ride. I couldn't control the weather, but I *could* control my anxiety.

#### 5. Acknowledge God's power.

1 Peter 5:7 says to give all your worries to God, for he cares about what happens to you. But who is God, really? I tended to make him just a little bigger than I was—until I studied Isaiah 40. God basically says: Do you want to know how big I am? Compared to me, people are like grass.

With such a big God on my side, why should I worry? Granted, devastation in life does occur. Your family files for bankruptcy, your teenage daughter gets pregnant, your husband dies in a car accident. Those are absolutely times of concern. But they're also times when God reaches out to say, "I'm sovereign. Do you trust me? Allow me to take control." Then he lets you choose.

## The Worry Addiction

### Winning Over Worry

My "worry demon" still rears its head on occasion, but with decreased frequency as I continue to practice biblical principles. Several years ago, when my husband and I were building a house, a carpenter fell two stories and was injured. When I first heard the news he was suing us, I saw us losing everything. But God intervened in my thoughts: *Does losing everything matter eternally?* Once I realized my attitude and reaction, not my loss, would make an eternal difference, God's indescribable peace flooded me. In the end, we had to pay the worker \$35,000. We're still recovering from that financial hit, yet I'm OK. That's what kicking the worry habit can do.

During difficult times, I look back over all the other times God's faithfully brought me through worrisome circumstances. If he worked on my behalf then, he'll surely do so again. Just ask my dad—he's living proof.

*Ginger Kolbaba is Editor of [TodaysChristianWoman.com](http://TodaysChristianWoman.com). This article was first published in the May/June 2008 issue TODAY'S CHRISTIAN WOMAN.*

## Reflect

- *Similar to Jesus' teaching in Matthew 5–7, **Luke 12:22–32** records Jesus' caution against worry. Read this passage in which Jesus emphasizes the pointlessness of worry (vs. 25–26). Worry doesn't produce anything good, but it can produce something bad: more problems! As Ginger describes in her article, "Studies show worrying can lead to tension headaches, hypertension, muscle tension, diarrhea, vomiting, sweating, irritability, poor memory, insomnia, and even obsessive-compulsive behavior." When has worry brought stress, health problems, or other difficulties into your life? Describe your experience.*
- *Read **1 Peter 5:7**. In this passage, God invites us to give our worries, concerns, and anxieties to him. He is big and strong enough to handle them! For many of us, this giving over of worries may need to happen repeatedly each and every day. How can a person actually do this? What steps can one take to grow in this practice?*
- *In her article, Ginger refers to **Psalm 46:10**; read it in context by looking at all of **Psalm 46**. This psalm uses poetic language to describe horrible things happening—yet in the midst of them, one can find courage to trust in God and not worry. What truths or ideas in this psalm inspire you? How can a focus on God's power and goodness buoy you through difficulties or fears you may be dealing with right now?*
- *In light of all you've read and discussed in this download, what do you most want to say to God about worry? Explain.*



# Additional Resources

Books, articles, and Bible studies to help you further

## Books

**The Anxiety Cure** by Archibald Hart (Thomas Nelson, 2001; 304 pages). Panic Anxiety is the number one mental health problem for women and second only to drug abuse among men. Synthetic tranquilizers can alleviate the symptoms of anxiety illnesses. However, in order to achieve lasting emotional tranquility, a significant lifestyle change must be made. *The Anxiety Cure* provides proven, natural strategies for overcoming panic disorder and finding an emotional balance in today's fast-paced world.

**Fearless: Imagine your Life Without Fear** by Max Lucado (Thomas Nelson, 2009; 224 pages). Fear is like an invisible prison. It holds you captive, influencing your choices and perceptions about life, God, and other people. Can you imagine what your life would be like without fear? With so much going wrong in the world, it can seem hard to picture. In *Fearless*, Max Lucado shows you how life can be lived with confidence and joy, when you replace your fear with faith.

## The Worry Addiction

### Additional Resources

**Overcoming Anxiety, Worry, and Fear: Practical Ways to Find Peace** by Gregory L. Jantz and Ann McMurray (Revell, 2011; 240 pages). Fretting over your family's health and safety? Weighed down by the daily news? Combining common sense, biblical wisdom, and therapeutic advice, Jantz will help you identify the causes of your anxiety, assess the severity of your symptoms, and guide you down avenues for positive change. Experience emotional, relational, physical, and spiritual healing.

**Ready to Win Over Worry and Anxiety** by Thelma Wells (Harvest House, 2010; 176 pages). Family problems. Monthly bills. Unexpected sickness. These are familiar "frets" that everybody faces. In this book, Wells explores what worry is; why it's so pervasive; and how it affects our physical, emotional, and spiritual health. Use faith in the battle against anxiety—and learn to live in peace.

**Respectable Sins: Confronting the Sins We Tolerate** by Jerry Bridges (NavPress, 2007; 192 pages). As Christians, we believe that all sins are considered equal in God's eyes. Yet while evangelicals continue to decry the Big Ones—such as abortion, adultery, and violence—we often overlook more deceptive sins. It seems we've created a sliding scale where worry, gossip, jealousy, and selfishness comfortably exist within the church. In short, some sins have simply become acceptable. Drawing from scriptural truth, Bridges sheds light on subtle behaviors that can derail our spiritual growth and encourages a victory over personal sin through the gospel's transforming power.

## The Worry Addiction

### Additional Resources

#### **Scared Silly: Taking on Your Fears, Worries, and What-ifs**

by Marcy Bryan (Standard Publishing, 2007; 256 pages). If you struggle with anxiety, feelings of hopelessness, or the constant craving for a chocolate IV, author Marcy Bryan can help. In *Scared Silly*, she goes after these nasties with useful tips and tricks, pithy sayings, and most importantly, Spirit-given insight and godly wisdom—all punctuated with humor.

### Articles and Online Resources

**“The Big Taboo”**—a TODAY'S CHRISTIAN WOMAN download containing articles and Bible study questions, exploring the difficult topics of depression, anxiety disorders, and bipolar disorder.

**“Exposing the Myth That Christians Should Not Have Emotional Problems”** by Dwight L. Carlson, from [ChristianityToday.com](http://ChristianityToday.com)

**“Rx: Relax”** by Andrea Bianchi, from [TodaysChristianWoman.com](http://TodaysChristianWoman.com)

**“When You’re Scared Senseless”** by JoHannah Reardon, from [TodaysChristianWoman.com](http://TodaysChristianWoman.com)

**“Worried About Worrying”** by Patty Kirk, from [TodaysChristianWoman.com](http://TodaysChristianWoman.com)

### Bible Studies

**“Fear’s Close Associates”**—a single-session study from [ChristianBibleStudies.com](http://ChristianBibleStudies.com) examining fear, worry, discouragement, and panic from a biblical perspective.



## The Worry Addiction

### Additional Resources

**“Fear Factors in Parenting”**—a free TODAY'S CHRISTIAN WOMAN Bible study aimed at helping parents deal with their fears about their children.

**“Hope in a Climate of Fear”**—a single-session study from [ChristianBibleStudies.com](http://ChristianBibleStudies.com) examining Jesus' teaching that we need not worry.

**“Making Stress Work for You”**—a TODAY'S CHRISTIAN WOMAN Bible study providing ideas for turning stress into a catalyst for spiritual growth.

*Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations in this download are from the Holy Bible, New Living Translation, Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Wheaton, Illinois 60189. All rights reserved.*

today's  
christian  
woman

LOVE GOD. LIVE FEARLESSLY.

Christ-centered,  
uniquely feminine



Discover your unique calling and influence within your family, church, community, and culture. Subscribe today and get weekly, compact digital issues on topics that impact you daily. Access premium articles and nearly 20 years of archives at [TodaysChristianWoman.com](http://TodaysChristianWoman.com).

Subscribe at:  
[OrderTCW.com/now](http://OrderTCW.com/now) ▶

Get more **TCW Bible studies and resources**  
at [TodaysChristianWomanStore.com](http://TodaysChristianWomanStore.com) ▶

a ministry of  
CHRISTIANITY  **TODAY**