

Living the Story

A Study through Scripture

Introduction:

I often get a chuckle when I think about all of us walking around telling one another not to worry, which seems like it would just increase all of our worrying. It is a lot like telling your child to try harder to go to sleep. All of that trying is just preventing the very thing you are trying to do in the first place.

What do you worry about? Some of us have a lengthy list. Some of us have worries that seem highly unusual to others. I worry about the weather. Due to a bad experience driving during a tornado-containing thunderstorm, I start looking at the weather a week prior to the time for a trip just to be sure everything is going to be fine. Yes, I realize there is nothing I can do about it, but isn't that the point about worry?

When Jesus talks about worry here in the gospel of Luke (a passage that is similar to Matthew 6.25-33), it is placed following an incident with a rich man. Jesus tells the story of a man who builds bigger barns in order to prepare for his "retirement." It is in this context that Jesus addresses worry.

Let's not miss this. Jesus says seeking the kingdom of God is more important than seeking money because ... it is God who provides for your needs. Understand Jesus is not condemning money, but the notion that we can provide for ourselves enough money to be able to be secure. I would venture to say that Jesus would also add anything else to that list that we use to comfort our anxious spirits into believing we have enough. God is enough. We need to start with his kingdom.

Summary of the Text:

As has already been stated, our passage today comes on the heels of the Parable of the Rich Fool. Be sure to point this out to your group if it is not mentioned.

The rest of the passage, I believe is fairly straightforward. (This goes into the file of: Things that are really easy to understand, but not so easy to actually do.)

Do notice the remedy for worry, according to Jesus: sell your stuff. Doing so runs counter to the very plan of action that hoarding stuff seeks to eliminate, but it is only through relinquishing that dependence on "our" stuff, that we can trust in God's provisions.

Preparing for the Group Time:

What do you worry about? More to the point, what do you try to control in order to address a lack of trust in the power and providence of God? Isn't this what worry really is, trying to do what we think God cannot?

What do you need to "sell" in order to trust God? Do it.

LESSON #25

Date: 3/10/2013

Text: Luke 12.22-34

The Story: Chapter 24

The Big Picture: What, me worry? Alfred E. Neuman aside, we all spend too much time, I would guess, worrying? Why is that? How does worrying move us away from God, rather than toward him? And what can we do about it?

Materials Needed: none

Living the Story

Lesson #25
Text: Luke 12.22-34

Lesson Outline:

Who do you know that is a worrier? How does their worry affect their lives and the lives around them? What do you worry about? Can you tell of a time when you worried and worried and worried, only to discover there was no need to worry at all?

Read Luke 12.22-34.

Go through the discussion questions with your group.

Close with a prayer asking that God would provide for us and we would know his power in our lives.

Discussion Questions:

Why do you think people worry? In what ways is worry beneficial?

Jesus describes a man who builds barns to store his harvest and provide for himself in the years to come (Luke 12.16-21). If we were to tell this story in a different context than scripture, what would we say about this man? Would he be a man we would seek to emulate? Why?

Jesus tells us to not worry about what we eat or what we will wear. Does he really mean this? In what ways do you think he does? In what ways do you worry about food and clothing?

What does it mean to seek after the kingdom of God? In what ways is it more than just trying to be good people?

How does Jesus' remedy to the hoarding of possessions in order to feel secure—sell your possessions—actually cause you to think differently about those possessions?

Think back to things you worry about. How can you turn those worries over to God in order to seek his kingdom and to be secure in his provisions?

For the Children:

Teaching our children not to worry can be one of the most challenging things we do as a parent. We want to reassure them that all will be well, all the while knowing that there really are “monsters” lurking out there. Those who have lived through a tornado cannot simply say: Oh, stormy weather, it is no big deal. It CAN be a big deal.

You might spend some time with your children asking them what they worry about, or perhaps what scares them. The truth, I think, that they need to know is that God loves them and cares about them. Reassure your children of God's love as you discuss the things that trouble them.

At the same time, instruct them to look to God for their comfort. Tell them to seek God first, which for a 5 year-old may seem very different than it would for you or me.

Living the Story:

To live the story this week, we need to seek first God's kingdom, crowding out the things we worry about. Based on how your group answered the questions about what does it mean to seek the kingdom of God, have your group commit to living that type of life out this week, always look for the kingdom.