

School Stinks!

The school bus is always filled with smoke. This morning was worse than usual. I hate riding the dumb school bus.

In Drafting, the teacher looked like he had just got out of bed. He wasn't prepared. When I'm not prepared, I get a zero for the day. And he's rude. If I talked like him, I'd get sent to the assistant principal.

When I walked down the hall, I felt like kids were staring at me. What? Do I look weird, or something? I thought these clothes were cool ...

In Gym, I played basketball like a third-grader today. Then when I went to the library during English, I had to admit that I didn't even know how to use the computer.

In the cafeteria, I sat on ketchup. What kind of slob would spill ketchup on a seat and not wipe it up? I hate this place!

In Psychology, my teacher gave me a C- on a paper that deserved at least a B. What a rip-off! I wish I could just drop out of school.

After school, the lock on my locker was jammed. I had to find a janitor to break it open. The girl I like walked by, and I'm sure she laughed inside. She probably thinks I'm a jerk. School really stinks!

God's Plan for You in School

There can be a lot more to school for you than just going to boring classes and lugging home your books! As a Christian teen, change your focus from the negative — to what God might have in store for you. Consider your opportunities!

- Be a light for Christ to your friends! What you say and do, and how “real” you are, either points your friends to Christ or away from Him. Become God's representative to your school. Pick out someone and ask, “Lord, how can I share Your love with this person today?” Perhaps through You, a friend will see his need to accept Jesus Christ as Savior!
- Maintain a Christlike attitude on your sports team, in your club, or with your peers. Dare to be different from those who don't know Christ. Stand up for what you believe. Like Daniel in the Bible, are you willing to stand alone for God?
- Be a testimony to your teachers! Your study habits, attitude, and conduct all tell volumes about your character. Would your teachers be likely to observe that you're a Christian? Or, do you blend in with all the other guys and girls? Whether you're outgoing, shy, or somewhere in between, you can be a witness to your teachers by simply not following the ungodly crowd!

Pathway

PERSONAL CHRISTIAN GROWTH SERIES

Set aside a special time each day to go through a *Pathway* study. Even if you miss a day or two, don't skip those studies. Begin again where you left off! Each daily study is designed to take only 10-12 minutes, or longer ... it's up to you! Be honest with yourself. This is a private time just between you and God.

Introduction — Worry

Today there may be many situations leading you down the path of worry. It might be a broken relationship, crime in your neighborhood, an illness, family problems, or school work. In this *Pathway* study, you'll analyze those things which cause you to worry. You'll see that God promises you peace! He'll help you conquer your worries and frustrations!

DAY ONE — Worry

Today's Prayer: Talk to God about things that make you worry. Ask Him to help you get rid of worry in your life. Then thank God for His promise of peace.

Today's Verse: *Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time: casting all your care upon Him; for He careth for you (1 Peter 5:6-7).*

The Big “What If?”

“I just know I bombed my fifth-hour test,” Tracy moaned as she slammed her locker shut. “And we won’t get our grades back until Monday. It’s driving me crazy. If I don’t pass this test, I could flunk the whole semester. And then I’d have to take the class again ...”

“I know ...” her friend, Janna, answered. “You know that college ACT test we’re supposed to take? Well, my sister took it last year, and she said it was really hard. If I don’t get a good score, I might not get to go to college.”

Down the hall, Rob twirled the combination on his locker and grabbed his gym bag. He had heard the girls talking. *At least Janna seems to know what she wants after graduation, he thought. With so many choices, how can anyone decide? What if I don’t make the right choice and come up with a job I hate?*

Tom was in the gym, waiting for basketball practice to start. He, too, had concerns on his mind. Tom knew that tomorrow’s game was the biggest game of the season. The coach was counting on every player to do his best. The team had to win this one! *But what if I’m not good enough? Tom worried. Or worse yet, what if I goof up an important play, and we end up losing?*

What would happen if ... Chances are, you’ve asked yourself this same question many times. What if I can’t keep my grades up? What if I can’t think of the right thing to say? What if my family moves, and I have to change schools?

Take a minute to think. Write several things which make you worry.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Today there may be many situations leading you down the path of worry. It might be a broken relationship, illness, family problems, or crime in your neighborhood. You think of what might happen, and then fear the worst.

A Look in the Book: Times were tough for believers in the early church. It wasn’t always easy for them to take a stand for Christ. They had plenty to cause them to worry. But look at what Paul told them. **Read *Philippians 4:6-7*.** *Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.*

When Paul told the Philippians to *be careful for nothing*, he was telling them not to worry. Paul wrote these words while under house arrest in Rome. Verse six can also be translated: “Be anxious for nothing.” Wow! That sounds like a pretty high standard!

Paul was saying to not worry about anything. Pray instead, and believe His Word. Then, God promises to give you peace.

Look at verse six again. It should be easy for you to find two aspects of prayer that are important to conquering worry. Write them here.

1. _____

2. _____

Prayer is a key to peace and your solution to worry. You can, and should, trust God and talk to Him about every situation that comes your way. When you’re worried about something, time spent in prayer is time well spent!



DAY TWO — Worry

Today's Prayer: Ask God to give you the strength to trust Him. Then thank Him for His faithfulness!

Today's Verse: *I will love Thee, O Lord, my strength. The Lord is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower (Psalm 18:1-2).*

Trust or Consequences?

This is awful, Kevin thought. He folded his arms and stared at the floor. He was a freshman. Just when he thought he had started fitting into his school, his dad accepted a job transfer. Now he had to start making friends at this new school in this boring town.

Kevin shifted in his seat and looked at his Science teacher. His parents had sounded so excited about this school district. They kept talking about all its unique opportunities. If only they knew what the kids were really like. He glanced around the room at the unfamiliar faces. It just seemed like all the kids already had all the friends they needed. He felt so out-of-place.

Things weren't the same here. Back home, kids were more friendly. Here, everyone talked strangely too. *They must think I have a weird accent*, Kevin worried.

Kevin didn't understand the things these teens did for fun. Everything sounded boring, compared to what he did "back home." Kevin didn't think he would ever fit in, not in this school.

It's easy to catch yourself worrying. Without even realizing it, you can find yourself looking at the circumstances that seem so awful, and then you expect the worst.

A Look in the Book: David, in the Bible, also faced difficult circumstances — like the time he fought the giant, Goliath. Everybody thought David was just a kid. They thought he didn't have any business fighting Goliath.

And Goliath, well, he was the Philistine's prize soldier. What chance did David, a shepherd boy, have against him? But David did not react in worry or fear! **Read 1 Samuel 17:32.** *And David said to Saul, "Let no man's heart fail because of him; thy servant will go and fight with this Philistine."* **How did he respond? Write in your own words what David said.**

That took guts. David could have just packed up and run for home. But instead, he went out to meet Goliath. David believed God would give him the victory!

Let's look further at this story. **Read 1 Samuel 17:45-46.** *Then said David to the Philistine, "Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield: but I come to thee in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied. This day will the Lord deliver thee into mine hand; and I will smite thee, and take thine head from thee; and I will give the carcasses of the host of the Philistines this day unto the fowls of the air, and to the wild beasts of the earth; that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel."*

Where did David get his courage? _____

David fought a battle against worry much of his life. It probably seemed to David that his enemies were always attacking him. Yet, he knew the answer to worry was trusting God. **Read what David says in Psalm 37:3-5.** *Trust in the Lord, and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed. Delight thyself also in the Lord; and He shall give thee the desires of thine heart. Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in Him; and He shall bring it to pass.* **What truths did David realize that helped him face seemingly impossible circumstances?**

What can these verses do for you personally? How can they help you? Write your thoughts here.

Write one situation you are presently facing which causes you to worry.

Now write how you know God wants you to respond.

DAY THREE — Worry

Today's Prayer: Talk to God about your needs. Thank Him for His promise of caring and providing for you.

Today's Verse: *But my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus (Phil. 4:19).*

If You Really Care ...

“Well, of course I’m going to worry about him,” Becky said. She sat on the church pew and slid over beside her friend. The organ music had already started. It wouldn’t be long before the worship service began.

Becky lowered her voice to a whisper and repeated, “Of course, I’m going to worry. I mean, he’s my friend, isn’t he?”

Cathy shook her head. “I don’t know, Becky. I say we should just trust God to take care of Don!”

“Come on, Cath! I bet if one of your best friends were in the hospital, you’d worry. You’d care, wouldn’t you?”

Have you ever noticed that some people seem to be proud of worrying? It’s as if worrying proves that they really care.

What is the difference between caring (or being concerned) and worrying? Think about it for a few minutes. Then write the differences.

God doesn’t say we shouldn’t care about people. But He does tell us that we should not become upset or over-anxious.

A Look in the Book: Almost everyone has trouble with worry in his or her life. Even the disciples, those people who walked and talked face-to-face with Jesus, had problems with worry. **Read Matthew 6:31-32 to see what Jesus said to them in His Sermon on the Mount.** *“Therefore take no thought, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or, ‘What shall we drink?’ or, ‘Wherewithal shall we be clothed?’ (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) For your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.”*

Jesus had just given the disciples a lesson on their heavenly Father’s care. He told them to look at the birds and the lilies. He wanted to help them realize how much God cares for even the animals and all the flowers!

How does knowing God gives special care to the birds and lilies teach you a lesson about how foolish it is to worry? (Remember, God’s children are much more important to Him!)

Read verse 32 again. Jesus gives the disciples (and us) two more reasons not to worry. First, their position as disciples demands that they trust God. Gentiles (people who don’t know Christ) worry. Not disciples! Why? Because they have a caring heavenly Father whom nonbelievers do not know.

Then, Jesus goes on to tell them that not only does their heavenly Father care, but He also knows their needs! There isn’t a chance in the world that He won’t take care of them. You do what you can, and then trust God to provide the rest!

What are some of your present needs (emotional, physical, or spiritual)? Take time to think, then write your needs here.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

God knows all about your needs. He promises to meet them. He might not answer when and where you expect. He might be trying to teach you something through your problems. But God will never fail you. He’s always with you! Remembering His faithfulness can help you trust Him instead of worrying.



DAY FOUR — Worry

Today's Prayer: Share with Him how you feel about your future. Ask God to help you trust Him and always remember His goodness. Trust Him for patience and His timing!

Today's Verse: *Being confident of this very thing, that He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ (Phil. 1:6).*

Following God

Wouldn't it be great if God would sit down with you and tell you exactly what He wants you to do with your life? Do you ever wish you could know for sure what His will is for you?

"Sure," says 16-year-old Tony. "I want to follow God's will. But what if I can't figure out what it is?"

"Or what if God wants me to be a teacher, and I'm not any good at teaching?" Jenny asks.

"And what if God wants me to be a missionary and leave everyone I know?" Jennifer wonders. "What if I have to live in a jungle?"

Have you ever asked yourself questions like these?

Take a minute to think about what concerns you the most in following God's will for you. Then write your thoughts.

During your teen years, you may make decisions that affect the whole course of your life. Sometimes, it can be frightening.

Maybe you worry that you won't like doing what God wants you to do. Perhaps you think it won't be any fun. Or, you might worry about not being capable of doing what God wants of you. You may be tempted to say, "God, You tell me what Your will is, then I'll decide. If it sounds like fun, I'll do it."

A Look in the Book: *Read Proverbs 3:5-6. Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths.*

What do these verses advise you to do so that you can expect God to direct your life?

God promises you His direction. He promises to show you where He wants you to go. Yesterday you learned that He is a caring Father. He has your best interest in mind! **Read the comforting words found in Jeremiah 29:11:** *For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil ...*

If you really believe that God has your best interest in mind, how will that affect your life?

Let's carry this thought a little further by looking at Romans 8:31-32. God doesn't just impersonally decide to do something "for your own good." He's on your side! ... *if God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?*

Sometimes God's will may not seem like great fun. Yet you have His PROMISE that it will always be what's best for you.

Does following God's will seem too difficult for you? **What did Paul learn that you can apply to following God's direction.** *I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me. (Phil. 4:13)?*

God has laid out a loving plan for your life - both now and for the days to come. He wants to show you His will! Sometimes He only leads you one step at a time. But discovering what God wants of you does not need to be like a game of hide-and-seek. You can trust God to show you His plan and to give you the strength to carry it out.

DAY FIVE — Worry

Hiding It in My Heart: It's important to remember that God is your strength. You can trust Him! Psalm 91:2 talks about God's greatness. **Memorize this Bible verse today.** *I will say of the Lord, He is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in Him will I trust.*

Today's Prayer: Ask God to help you keep your eyes on Him. He will always help you trust Him more!

Today's Verse: *But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself ... (Matt. 6:33-34).*

Those Little Daily Concerns

Andy rolled over in bed and shut off his alarm clock. He jumped out of bed and hurried through his morning routine. When he sat down to eat a bowl of cereal, he remembered what Gary, his youth director, had challenged him to do. At the time, Andy had thought it'd be easy to pray and read a short Scripture passage every morning.

Well, it would have to wait until later. There was that Science test today, and he needed to review the material. Then there was football practice after school. And tonight he was supposed to meet with the youth group to practice a puppet show for the younger Awana Clubs. This was their only practice, so he'd better look over his part again ...

Life can be filled with many "good" things that keep you busy. Do you ever catch yourself being so caught up in worrying about daily activities that you don't have time to think about God?

A Look in the Book: Even in Jesus' day, people faced this same problem. **Read Luke 10:38-42.** *Now it came to pass, as they went, that He entered into a certain village: and a certain woman named Martha received Him into her house. And she had a sister called Mary, which also sat at Jesus' feet, and heard His word. But Martha was cumbered about much serving, and came to Him, and said, "Lord, dost Thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? Bid her therefore that she help me." And Jesus answered and said unto her, "Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things: But one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her." Martha probably thought she was doing the right thing. After all, she was preparing a meal for Jesus. **Look at verses 41 and 42. What did Jesus tell Martha about her priorities?***

Notice that it was her priorities that concerned Jesus, not her actions.

Look again at verses 39 and 42. What did Mary do that Jesus approved?

To continue this thought, **read 2 Timothy 2:3-5.** *Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier. And if a man also strive for masteries, yet is he not crowned, except he strive lawfully. **Focus on verse 4. Stop for a minute and think about how this verse applies to your own life. Write your thoughts.***

It's possible to have victory over little daily worries. You can be in any situation, or under any pressure, and still trust God. You'll see a wonderful change in your life when you take time to spend with Him. *Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for He hath said, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee" (Heb. 13:5).*

On My Own: You're not alone if you have trouble with worry. Sometime, in the next few days, **talk with a Christian adult whom you respect. Ask if he or she can remember a time when it was difficult to trust the Lord for everything. Then ask what he or she did to overcome worry. Write what you learn.**

DAY SIX — Worry

Hiding It in My Heart: Remember that God is always with you. He'll help you to trust Him and not to worry. **Memorize this verse today.** *Have not I commanded thee? Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest (Joshua 1:9).*

Today's Prayer: Share with God your goal about combating worry which you wrote today. Then tell Him about your desire to live a life free from worry.

Letting God Control My Thoughts

Do you know a Christian who always seems calm? Nothing ever seems to bug him or her. It seems like trusting God just comes naturally to this person.

Jackie is like that. No matter what happens, she always seems to keep her cool. Her life doesn't appear to be characterized by worry. But deep inside, where no one but God sees, it's not that simple. Jackie must continually keep turning to the Lord, asking Him to help her trust Him more.

Jackie's grandma (who lives with Jackie's family) has cancer. Everyday Jackie sees her 65-year-old grandmother suffering. Each week, she seems to get worse. Grandma never goes out anymore. She just lies in bed, or sits by a window.

One Sunday Jackie stayed after class and talked with her Sunday School teacher, Annette. Jackie told Annette that she wished she could learn to quit worrying about her grandma.

"I try to trust God," Jackie said. "But I just can't stop thinking about Grandma. I hate to see her in pain. I know I shouldn't worry, and I keep praying about it. But what can I do?"

"I understand what you're saying," Annette told her. "But God understands even more! He understands how much you care about your grandma. God knows that you don't like to see her hurting. Over and over, you just need to keep committing her to the Lord. He loves her even more than you do, Jackie! God can give you the strength to keep from worrying. Instead of worrying, take time to talk with your grandma and care for her.

"I think what Paul said in Philippians would help you," Annette continued.

A Look in the Book: When Paul wrote to the Philippians, he gave them several pointers on defeating worry. **Read through Philippians 4:4-9.** *Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice. Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand. Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. Those*

things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you. What do you find in this passage to help you to not worry? Be specific and list several things.

Paul knew about hard times. His life was filled with uncertainty. But he learned to rejoice, trust God, thank God, and ask God for help. He learned to let God control his thoughts!

Living a life of trust can be exciting. You can't even imagine everything that God has planned for you. **Look at Isaiah 64:4.** *... men have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, neither hath the eye seen, O God, beside Thee, what He hath prepared for him that waiteth for Him.*

As you walk with God, trusting Him becomes a way of life as it did for Jackie. You have God's promise. **Do you really desire a life without worry?**

Yes No Not sure

Look back at what you wrote about worry on Day One. How can you deal with one area of worry in your life? **Think of some specific things you can do to combat worry in this area.**

For example, maybe you worry about what other people think of you. You might write, "I will ask God to help me develop a positive self-image. I will ask Him to help me control my thoughts and worries."

Area of worry: _____

How to combat it: _____

