



Church Newsletter

First Baptist Church of
Niles

Volume 1/Issue 8

WHAT WE ARE DOING? AND WHAT WE SHOULD DO?

IN THIS ISSUE

WELCOME

This week's reading is Psalm 71 (ESV).
Titled, Forsake Me Not When My
Strength Is Spent

In you, O LORD, do I take refuge;
let me never be put to shame!² In your
righteousness deliver me and rescue
me; incline your ear to me, and save
me!³ Be to me a rock of refuge, to which
I may continually come; you have given
the command to save me, for you are my
rock and my fortress.⁴ Rescue me, O my
God, from the hand of the wicked, from
the grasp of the unjust and cruel
man.⁵ For you, O Lord, are my hope,
my trust, O LORD, from my youth. ⁶ Upon
you I have leaned from before my
birth; you are he who took me from my
mother's womb. My praise is continually
of you.⁷ I have been as a portent to
many, but you are my strong refuge.⁸ My
mouth is filled with your praise, and with
your glory all the day.⁹ Do not cast me off
in the time of old age; forsake me not
when my strength is spent.¹⁰ For my
enemies speak concerning me;
those who watch for my life consult
together¹¹ and say, "God has forsaken
him; pursue and seize him,
for there is none to deliver him."

¹²O God, be not far from me; O my God,
make haste to help me!¹³ May my
accusers be put to shame and
consumed; with scorn and disgrace may
they be covered who seek my hurt.¹⁴ But
I will hope continually
and will praise you yet more and
more.¹⁵ My mouth will tell of your
righteous acts, of your deeds of salvation
all the day, for their number is past my
knowledge.

¹⁶With the mighty deeds of the Lord God
I will come; I will remind them of your
righteousness, yours alone.¹⁷ O God,
from my youth you have taught me, and
I still proclaim your wondrous deeds.¹⁸ So
even to old age and gray hairs, O God, do
not forsake me, until I proclaim your
might to another generation, your power
to all those to come.¹⁹ Your
righteousness, O God, reaches the high
heavens. You who have done great
things, O God, who is like you?

²⁰You who have made me see many
troubles and calamities will revive me
again; from the depths of the earth you
will bring me up again.

²¹You will increase my greatness
and comfort me again.²² I will also praise
you with the harp for your faithfulness,
O my God; I will sing praises to you with
the lyre, O Holy One of Israel.²³ My lips
will shout for joy, when I sing praises to
you;

my soul also, which you have
redeemed.²⁴ And my tongue will talk of
your righteous help all the day long, for
they have been put to shame and
disappointed who sought to do me hurt.

Psalm 71 is a psalm of lament which is
fitting for the faithful Christian in danger
from enemies who would cause distress



The Watchman's Notes
Offering biblical messages, perspectives
and views on
Biblical & moral issues and current
events.

A Ministry of Chuck Vitel, Pastor – Bible
Teacher

*"For thus the Lord said to me: Go, set a
watchman; let him announce what he
sees." Isaiah 21:6 [ESV]*

April 29, 2020

Dear friends:

*Just a note of introduction: Over 20
years ago in 1999, Sociologist Barry
Glassner wrote his best seller, *The
Culture of Fear*. Glassner stated in his
book, "That too often Americans are
afraid when there's no real need to
be. We become terribly anxious about
false scares. He warned that we need
to realize "the media" hypes fear all the
time as a way to get people to pay
attention (and increase their
ratings)." As an example, Glassner
contends that as a nation we are better
able to control diseases than any
civilization in the history of the
world. We are, in fact, healthier than
almost every other nation in the
world. His point was that we are
bombarded constantly with news
reports and media hypes about how
millions of people suffer from heart
disease, migraines, osteoporosis,
obesity, cancer, diabetes, etc. This kind
of media hype creates tremendous fear
and anxiety among the populace. Fear
also wins elections for politicians who
heighten concerns about crime, drug
usage, terrorism, social security, and
viruses.*

Think about this - this was written in
1999! How relevant is this to the news
of today?

Start being conscious of how much fear
is played up by the media and
politicians today. You might be
surprised, even shocked.

The intention behind my article today:
*is how does one cope in a setting where
there's a multitude of paralyzing
"What-ifs" to face? Blessings to you.*

"What are you worried about today?"

Matthew 6:25-34 & 1 Peter 5:7

For several weeks we've been
challenged to stand strong and face the
fear that grips our souls – Coronavirus or
COVID-19 Pandemic. You probably have
heard "a few messages or
commentaries" on the topic and on
dealing with your fears. I want to
address another related topic that is so
relevant for us: "What are you worried
about today?" Experts tell us that at
least 20% of Americans (1 out of 5)
struggle with depression and anxiety.

We're talking about those, "What-ifs" of
life which relate to our worry and
fretting over many things we cannot
control.

- What if my car breaks down?
- What if my mate is cheating on me?
- What if I don't get a job?"
- What if I catch the Coronavirus?
- What if there is no toilet paper in the stores?
- Whatever you do - Don't go down the rabbit hole of the "What-ifs."

Reminds me of a joke or two: A man went to his psychiatrist and he said, "Sometimes I think I'm a Tepee and sometimes I think I'm a Wigwam." The psychiatrist said, "Your problem is you are "Too Tents." (laugh now) The reality is that we worry & fret too much over the "What ifs of life," and we become tense. I would contend that we worry far too much about things that haven't happened and may or may not ever happen.

A frustrated husband asked his wife one day, "why are you always worrying when it doesn't do any good?" She quickly answered him back, "Oh yes it does! 90% of the things I worry about never happen." Amen!

The fact is we all worry about something. Worry - is a mental exercise that all of us engage in, though some more than others. *It doesn't produce anything. It uses up valuable time and resources, and it doesn't give us any joy or peace of mind.* If you ask almost anyone whether they worry or not, they will certainly say "yes". *But what do they mean by worrying, and what do they worry about?*

Most of us realize that worry is *counterproductive and a real waste of time and energy*, and yet, we do it anyway. People in general, even those who look to the Bible & God for guidance and instruction, tend to be worriers, fretting and stewing about many things.

The late Earl Nightingale, a well-known radio commentator with a great radio voice and motivational speaker wrote many years ago, "*Worry is like a dense fog that can cloud our vision, knock our perspective out of kilter, and slow us down.*"

Nightingale categorized the things people worry about this way:

- 40% of what we worry about are things that never happen.
 - 30% of our worries involve things in the past, that can't be changed.
 - 12% is needless worry about our health.
 - 10 % pertains to petty, miscellaneous worries.
- 92%

Now, you might categorize it a little differently, but he made a very good point, and that is this: "*92% of worries are pure fog with no substance at all.*" That leaves about 8% for real, legitimate concerns that are worth concerning yourself about!

I grew up in a household where my mother and her sisters [my Aunts] seemed to worry about everything. I often heard my mother say something like, "That's another thing I have to worry about!" Usually those words came after receiving a telephone call or a visit from someone. "You have to worry?" She always "had to" worry about

something! Some people have practiced it so long it becomes a way of life.

The top major worries of most Americans are things such as: Health, Finances, Relationships, Parenting/Children, Jobs/Careers, the Economy and political concerns - and you can add Terrorism/Crime and the Coronavirus (COVID-19). As one gets older, health issues, crime and money issues become more of a worry or concern. Now all of these things are issues that will be with us as long as we live. These are pretty much universal concerns.

The top “Symptoms” of worry are: *sleepless nights, lost confidence, reduced appetite, arguments with one’s partner, poor performance at work, avoiding social events, increased alcohol consumption, nausea, and becoming a bit paranoid.* Have you ever wondered how much time you spend worrying? It’s probably more than you think. Here’s what surveys revealed:

- Each week, we spend 14.31 hours worrying.
- That equals 744 hours of worry each year.
- Which turns into 45,243 hours of worry over a lifetime. [if we worry for 60 years]
- That equals 1885 days in a lifetime spent doing nothing but worrying.
- Which means that we spend 5.2 years of life captured by worry!

No wonder we have trouble sleeping, or we feel under so much pressure or we find it hard to concentrate.

And Who worries more – Men or Women? In general, the conclusions are these:

- Men and women handle stress differently, which should come as no great surprise.
- But women are more stressed out than men – especially single mothers.

- Women have a strong inclination or predisposition to worry more than men.
- More women [27%] than men [20%] worry about the health of a spouse or child.
- More women [28%] than men [19%] worry about money.

To be sure, not every woman is a worry wart – but women *are twice as likely as men to be diagnosed with anxiety disorders* – according to the National Institute of Mental Health.

What is Worry? Webster’s Dictionary defines “worry” as “*mental distress or agitation resulting from concern, usually for something impending or anticipated.*” It seems that anticipation of problems, real or imagined, is the source of anxiety and troubled minds for most folks. “Worry” - *can be defined as a conscious choice people make to deal with problems in an ineffective way that implies the absence of a loving God.* We usually lump *fear, worry, and anxiety* together as synonyms, for they all express troubled states of mind. To fear is to be anxious. To be anxious is to worry, to worry is to be anxious or fearful, and so on.

Now, “Anxiety” can have a positive aspect to it. Positive anxiety can help a musician, actor, athlete, a businessman or a preacher to perform better. You have an edge to you when you are somewhat anxious. (Whenever I preach or teach or speak in public – I tend to be anxious or nervous (not worried) until I start talking).

However, worry concerns itself with the unknown future and is non-productive and even destructive by nature. You can worry yourself to death but you cannot worry yourself to a longer life. All such worry is useless – we cannot know the future – yet we worry anyway. Worry distracts, worry is illogical; leads to indecisiveness, and helps no one. It just causes grief. When the worry or fear becomes *exaggerated* or *habitual* – it becomes a “Phobia.” *Phobias are irrational* – but they’re real to the person suffering from them.

To worry is to “*give way to anxiety or unease; allow one’s mind to dwell on difficulty or troubles.*” Worry is “excessive concern over the affairs of life.” Worry is trying to control the uncontrollable – so Worry is essentially a control issue.

The word itself [worry] comes from the Old English word, “*Wyrgan,*” which means to strangle, to choke, or to seize by the throat. To torment/plague with cares, anxieties, etc.; trouble. *That’s a helpful image because we’ve all felt the pressure squeezing us.* It’s an all-consuming feeling of uncertainty and fear. It chokes the joy out of your life. And it’s a sin!

Excessive worry is a sin for two reasons: *First, it displaces God in your life.* You are living as though God does not exist – and you alone can solve your problems and be in control. *Second, because worry distracts you from the things that really matter in life.* As long as you are worrying, you can’t do anything else. You are strangled by worry.

By the way, the Greek word in the Bible for “worry” literally means “*a divided mind.*” It’s the tug of war going on in your mind.

Here’s what Jesus says about worry in (Matthew 6:25-34) (NIV):

- Worry is Unreasonable – (Vs. 6:25) - Jesus says, “Therefore, I tell you, do not be anxious [or worry] about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear or put on.”

Jesus is saying that worry is irrational and unreasonable. In the first place, we often worry about the wrong things. It doesn’t make sense. It’s useless. Worrying about what you’re going to drink, or eat, or what you’re going to wear - these are small, trivial things, and not very meaningful. Jesus tells us not to worry about the basic provisions of life but to trust God to provide. Jesus says, if you’re going to worry about something – make it matter, make it important.

Don't worry about the External – worry more about the Eternal!

- b. Worry is Unnatural – (Vs. 6:26)
- *“Look at the birds of the air.”*
God says you are more valuable than the birds. So, if we look at the birds [God feeds them] and we look at the flowers [they do not labor or spin, God gives careful attention to flowers – He designs them] – *Aren't you more valuable than they are?* (vs. 28-29)

Here's the point: animals and birds don't worry, flowers don't worry. There's only one thing is all of God's creation that worries – human beings. We are the only thing that God has created that doesn't fully trust God – we worry. And God says this is unnatural.

(Psalm 145:16) says, *“God satisfies the desires of every living thing.”*

Worry is not natural. You are not a born worrier. Worry is a learned response. You learn to worry from your parents, grandparents, from your peers, from your brothers and sisters. You pick it up. *You may have a natural inclination to worry, but you are not a born worrier.* In fact, you have to learn it and practice it to get good at it. And because worry is not natural – it is unhealthy!

- c. Worry is Unhelpful – (Vs. 6:27) –
“Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life.”

Jesus says, why are you worrying? It doesn't work. It doesn't change anything. It's useless. Worrying cannot make you taller or shorter or thinner. It can't make you smarter – worry can't make you live longer – it cannot even add one hour to your life! In fact, it does the opposite. *Worry shortens your life!* Studies have shown that people who are chronic worriers actually live a shorter life or fewer years than those who don't worry. People who have peace of mind tend to live longer. I like what one person said about worry: *“It's like sitting in a rocking chair. There's a lot of*

activity, a lot of energy, a lot of motion, but no progress!”

Worry doesn't change the past – no matter how much you worry about. Worry cannot control the future – no matter how much you worry about it. So, if worry doesn't change the past and it doesn't control the future – *what does it do? It messes up today, the present.* That's all it does. Every time you worry – all you're doing is robbing yourself of happiness right now.

(Proverbs 12:25) says – *“An anxious heart [Worry] weighs us down.”* It tears us down and wears us out. (Proverbs 14:30) says, *“A heart at peace gives life to the body.”*

- d. Worry is Unnecessary – (Vs. 6:30) –
“...O you of little faith?”

If you know God in Christ, you don't need to worry. Why? Because God promised to take care of your needs if you just trust Him. He's your Father in Heaven. That's His job as the Heavenly Father. If you come to Christ and say, *“Jesus, I believe in you. I want you to be # 1 in my life. I want to live for you. I want to follow your plan”* – then God assumes responsibility for all the needs in your life.

(Philippians 4:19) says, *“God will meet all your needs according to His glorious riches in Christ Jesus.”* It says **“ALL YOUR NEEDS”** – not some, not a few, not the ones He wants to pick out, not just the spiritual needs – it says ALL your needs.

Some people will say, *“I trusted Jesus Christ for my salvation, but I still worry.”* Think how illogical that is! You are saying you can trust God enough to keep you from going to Hell and getting you into Heaven – but you can't trust God enough to take care of your bills and your jobs, and your cares. When God saved you – He solved your biggest problem. Everything else is *small potatoes*, compared to that one. You were forgiven, washed clean of your sin, promised a future in heaven, and given a purpose for living. So, what else are you worried about?

How do I stop worrying so much? What is the antidote to worry or being so anxious?

(1 Peter 5:7) says, *“Cast all your anxiety on him, because He cares for you.”* - *“Give all your worries and cares to God, for He cares about what happens to you.”* [New Living Translation]. In essence, God says to us: *Take your worries... Take your cares . . . Take your burdens . . . Take your anxieties . . . your problems ...* And give them to Me.

The word “cast” means to throw off with vigor. It's the picture of a hiker at the end of a long day of walking unhooking his backpack and tossing it down. That's what you are to do with your anxieties. By an act of the will, you are to unload all your worries on the Lord.

In the Old Testament, we read the same thoughts: (Psalm 55:22), *“Cast your cares on the Lord, and He will sustain you; He will never let the righteous fall.”* (Psalm 56:3). *“When I am afraid, I put my trust in You.”* (Psalm 37:5). *“Commit your way to the Lord; trust in Him, and He will act”*

There's plenty in the world to be worried about. Just read the newspaper or watch the internet/TV news. But if you know God – you don't have to worry about all these things. You see, Christians are different – at least they are supposed to be different. We have a Heavenly Father who has promised to care of us. We are God's anointed ones – His little children. We are not orphans. As God's children we get special privileges. Why worry when you have God as your Father?

Worry is really a practical form of atheism. Every time you worry, you're acting like an unbeliever. You are acting like there is no God. You are acting like it all depends on you and you alone.

- e. Refocus your priorities. – (vs. 31-34) –
“But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.”

In (Matthew 6:31-33) > Notice the phrase, *“Your heavenly Father knows perfectly well what you need.”*

In (John 14:1) – Jesus says, *“Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God, trust also in Me.”*

God is well aware of all the bills you have to pay each month. God is well aware of your health or lack thereof and your struggles. Your heavenly Father knows what you need. The condition is that we must put God first in every area of our life. And anytime we let something else replace God as first place in our life – we are going to worry. We were made by God. We were made for God. We were made for a purpose. We were made to have God at the center of our life.

“Live one day at a time” - (Matthew 6:34)
> In other words, Jesus is saying, *“don’t open your umbrella until it starts to rain.” There’s two days you should never worry about – yesterday and tomorrow.* And remember, today is the tomorrow you worried about yesterday! The prayer of Jesus for His disciples was, *“Give us today our daily bread.”* God, give me the strength, the grace, the power, I need for today - I don’t need tomorrow’s strength or grace because I’m not in tomorrow yet.

St. Paul says in (Philippians 4:6-7), *“Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God, and the peace of God which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”* What’s got you worried today? What are your real concerns today? Whatever it is – give it to God – right now, today!

Let me conclude with an important clarification: Freedom from worry does not mean we are free from taking action! Yes, God provides for the birds of the air, *but they must still gather food, build nests, and care for their young.* The same is true for us: God’s *providence* is not an invitation to laziness! *We are not robots.* God has created this earth to be able to support all of its inhabitants, but

to ensure that everyone’s needs are met, we must be hardworking and responsible stewards of God’s abundant gifts! *And in the midst of a pandemic virus (like COVID-19) – we too are to make wise decisions and take proper precautions and let God be God!*

Forgive us, O Lord, for wasting so much time and energy in worry.

Do you think people back in Jesus’ time on earth ever worried as much as we do today about the paralyzing what-ifs in life? Were unnamed fears a problem to the people of the Roman empire? Or was living under Roman rule relatively worry free? You know the answer, don’t you? The truth is yes, the people worried about the *“what-ifs”* and they had lots of unnamed fears. Jesus, The Son of God, wouldn’t have addressed this issue of worry if nobody had problems in this area. How do we control our *What-ifs*/and worrying? A simplistic answer might be: *“Trust the Lord!”* But how can we do that? Let’s take a look at what Jesus had to say about worry and trusting God, in His famous Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 6:25-34).

Pastor Vitel’s message this week addresses a topic that is prevalent in society and among Christians today. *“What are you worried about today?”* Worry is the great destroyer of our faith or to put it another way, the single-most cause of our unbelief. Fear precedes worry. Fear is an emotional response induced by a perceived threat that causes a change in brain and organ function, as well as in behavior. Fear can lead us to hide, to run away, or to freeze in our shoes. Fear may arise from a confrontation or from avoiding a threat, or it may come in the form of a discovery.

People who have experienced intense fear will often remember the moment disaster struck and how time seemed to slow down. Their fight or flight response kicked in and they knew exactly what to do without consciously thinking about it.

There are numerous causes of fear. Some are more well-known than others, especially specific phobias. Social phobia, also known as social anxiety disorder, is one of the most common mental illnesses in the United States. It is characterized by being intensely afraid of being watched and judged by others in social situations. This causes me to wonder if that is what we are experiencing today. We are seeing the beginning of the mass protests against both local and federal governments concerning social distancing and the wearing of face coverings in public spaces along with the closings of businesses, churches, schools, and recreational areas. People are worrying that their rights are being taken away.

This fear can paralyze us and when that happens worry takes hold and our trust in God is shaken. I’m closing with two points by Michael Horton.

First, sanity requires that we live with the grain of reality and the sovereign God is more real than we are. In fact, he *is* life and *gives* life—creaturely life—to us and to everything he has made. Like the visible sun, God exists and sends forth his rays of goodness regardless of whether we acknowledge him. Even when the clouds of his inscrutable providence obscure his presence, he is there, drawing our eyes to him.

Second, the good fear of God dispels the bad fear of anyone or anything else. Downplaying the fear of God, we are not only failing to give God his due but are depriving ourselves and each other of the only antidote to the crippling fears that haunt us. Fearing God extinguishes paralyzing fear of anyone or anything else.

There are many Christians who are finding their ultimate comfort in life and in death in Christ our Savior, just as those in similar circumstances have done in the past. Asked in a letter how to respond during the Plague, Martin Luther replied,

I shall ask God mercifully to protect us. Then I shall fumigate, help purify the air, administer medicine and take it. I shall avoid places and persons where my presence is not needed in order not to become contaminated and thus perchance inflict and pollute others and so cause their death as a result of my negligence. If God should wish to take me, he will surely find me and I have done what he has expected of me and so I am not responsible for either my own death or the death of others. If my neighbor needs me, however, I shall not avoid place or person but will go freely as stated above. See this is such a God-fearing faith because it is neither brash nor foolhardy and does not tempt God. (Luther's Works 43:132)





PRAYER LIST

✓ Continuing Prayers for loss:

All the families that have lost loved ones this past year. Remember those who have recently lost loved ones due to COVID 19. The family of Mary Grace Reyes.

✓ Continuing Prayers for physical needs:

Maria Hatfield, Erwin and Elizabeth Lickman, Gloria-Lynn Fernandez, Betty Matson, Ronaldo Claveria, Anne Benliro's co-worker's husband—Oscar with Covid-19.

✓ Continuing Prayers for our Ministry Needs:

The Pastoral Search Committee, Pulpit Supply, Our Deacons, Financial support of the church during the Virus

✓ Continuing Prayers for our Sister Ministries:

BIEM Ministries, Orchard Church, Pastors Davis, Billow, Eddy Bartolome, Pastor and Sue Vitel

✓ Continuing Prayers for Spiritual Needs:

Leonard Hatfield, Carol Pelfrey's family, Daniel Ruehlman

✓ Continuing Prayers for:

The spread of the Gospel, Our Government, Our Nation, Our Community, Our Neighbors, Our Families, Erwin & Elizabeth Lickman living together at Bella Terra Nursing Home

Mylin Lardizabal - My husband, Errol, and I are both nurses and Errol did get assigned to work in ICU to take care of Covid patients, he will have to work on the unit for at least a month. We were told that we will be pulled to other areas as needed. Please pray for us that we will stay healthy to take care of others. Our biggest concern is not getting our girls and our friends sick and that includes our church family.

Liza Mitchell in her role as a health care worker at Vi Independent and Assisted Living Facility she has responsibility over those with Covid 19 .

Pray for our members that have lost employment and for those who still have jobs and need to interact with others on a daily basis. Pray for those still working that God will protect.

Lift up all our health professionals and their families who are on the front line of this pandemic.

If you have prayer requests or updates on your family we encourage to submit them to the Newsletter email address at the end of this newsletter.

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