

The Unhurried, Unworried Life
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May 25, 2008
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Several years ago a book came out called *The Hurried Child*, a cautionary tale about the schedules, pressures, worries and expectations put on young children—by parents, schools and our culture—presumably for their own good.

Like many books that have impacted my life, I never read it. I just read about it. But that was enough to make me worry about how I was raising my own kids.

But it's not just kids who are hurried and worried, is it? It's us! So today, in the middle of this holiday weekend, in what I hope is a precious though maybe rare moment of calm in your life, I'd like you to consider Jesus' call to the unhurried, unworried life.

Let's do a little worry inventory, with a show of hands.

Maybe we'll start with our global worries

Who is worried that the world is warming faster than our ability to deal with it?

Who is worried that the war in Iraq shows no sign of ending?

Who is worried that the government of Myanmar is never going to do what the survivors of Cyclone Nargis need done?

Who is worried about the outcome of the US presidential election?

So far, we have a decent amount of worrying going on.

On the more personal issues, I'll ask in a different way.

Who here is *not* worried about money?

Who is not worried about your job or lack of it?

Who is not worried about your family, or your kids or your parents, or your relationships?

Who is not worried about your health? About getting sick. About dying.

Who is not worried about time? Having enough time to do what you want to do and what you need to do?

I recently came across another book I didn't read: It's called *1001 Books You Must Read Before You Die*. That book seemed to play perfectly to two of my recent worries: my ignorance and my mortality.

Most of us don't need a book like that to make us worry. We've got plenty of things to worry about.

There's the price of oil. We in the city think we don't need to worry about that, since we don't drive, or don't drive much. But guess again—the price of oil impacts the price of everything else, from food to milk to bottled water to electricity to clothes. So now you can worry about the price of oil, too.

Given our current environmental crisis, we even worry about the birds of the air and the lilies of the field! Not to mention the shad in the Hudson River and the polar bears in Alaska.

I think there's part of us that needs to worry. I even think there's a part of us that likes to worry. And that's true even though we know that worrying leads to stress, illness and a lower life expectancy.

How can Jesus ask us not to worry?

Jesus, how can you be so naïve as to command us not to worry?

The truth is, Jesus is very practical about his commandment not to worry. He asks us a good question, "Can any one of you add a single hour to your life by worrying?"

And, he doesn't say, Don't worry at all. He gives us worry limits. And if we stop and consider those worry limits, I think it will help us get through the day, and who knows? It might just add another hour to your life.

Worry limits. Here they are. They come in three forms. The first I'll call identity limits; the second, material limits; and the third, chronological limits. They sound technical, but I'll explain them.

Identity Limits. Who's not supposed to worry?

Jesus is speaking here to his followers and to those who want to follow him. He is addressing concerns that come from his teaching about radical discipleship. He is addressing concerns that come from his radically different way of thinking and teaching.

Jesus starts off this passage by reminding his followers that you can't serve two masters, God and mammon—mammon is a Semitic word that means wealth or material things. And if you don't identify as a follower of the way of Jesus, you can worry about whatever you want. Identity limits.

Material Limits. What are we supposed to not worry about?

Jesus tells us, don't worry about the following three things.

Food. Drink. Clothes. These three stand for the material things we tend to collect, some of which we need, some of which we want.

Jesus is urging us to live a simpler, and more natural life. Like the birds. Like the wildflowers. A life more in tune with the cycles of life.

I was riding my bike through the park the other day. Suddenly, right in front of me swooped a hawk, pursuing a pigeon. The hawk barely noticed me. He did seem to me to be completely without worry. The pigeon, not so much.

But here's what Jesus wants us to know. Not worrying about material things helps you realize that you are not in control of your life. God is. That's a lesson most of us need to re-learn.

Finally, there are the **Chronological Limits:** When are we supposed to not worry?

Here's what Jesus says, and it's worth repeating, and maybe committing to memory if you haven't already.

"Do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring worries of its own." I'll say that again. "Do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring worries of its own. Today's trouble is enough for today."

Live by that, why don't we. That will lighten the worry load right away.

I have a friend from the mountains of Georgia whose grandfather used to quote that to her daily, sitting on the porch, in the inimitable cadence of the King James Bible: "Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof."

What I'd like to propose to you today, on this holiday weekend, is that you take a worry holiday. Don't stop worrying altogether. Take a holiday from worrying. Give it up, for a day. Heck, go wild. Give it up for two days. The worries will still be there when you get back to them. But maybe you'll see them in a different perspective.

And when you get back to worrying, Tuesday morning, use those worry limits.

Don't worry, if you want to follow the way of Jesus.

Don't worry about those material things we get so wound up about.

And tomorrow? let tomorrow worry about itself.

May you work, with God, to make an unhurried, unworried life.