What, Me Worry?
Sitting at the Feet of Yeshua

In this post, we will conclude our study of Matthew 6. In my last post, Yeshua was discussing material possessions. I closed that teaching by asking, “where is your wealth? Have you put your faith and trust in your material possessions? Or, have you laid up your wealth in heaven? Do you sow your seeds in fertile ground that will lead to a harvest of souls? Or, have you squandered what God has given you for your own pleasures? We will not go wrong; if we use our possessions to see how much happiness we can bring to others.”

In this post, Yeshua continues to teach on material possessions, but His emphasis is no longer on where our wealth is; He now tells us not to worry about where our material possessions will come from.

How many of you remember Alfred E. Newman and MAD Magazine? I used to love to read that as a teen. In honor of Alfred E., I’ve entitled my message this post, “What, Me Worry?”

"Therefore, I tell you, don’t worry about your life – what you will eat or drink; or about your body – what you will wear. Isn’t life more than food and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds flying about! They neither plant nor harvest, nor do they gather food into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Aren’t you worth more than they are? Can any of you by worrying add a single hour to his life? And why be anxious about clothing? Think about the fields of wild irises, and how they grow. They neither work nor spin thread, yet I tell you that not even Shlomo in all his glory was clothed as beautifully as one of these. If this is how God clothes grass in the field – which is here today and gone tomorrow, thrown in an oven – won’t he much more clothe you? What little trust you have! So don’t be anxious, asking, ‘What will we eat?’ ‘What will we drink?’ or ‘How will we be clothed?’ For it is the pagans who set their hearts on all these things. Your heavenly Father knows you need them all. But seek first His Kingdom and His righteousness and all these things will be given to you as well. Don’t worry about tomorrow – tomorrow will worry about itself! Today has enough tsuris I already!’ ~ Matthew 6:25-34

"Therefore, I tell you, don’t worry about your life." What, me worry? I don't worry; I just think a lot! I don't worry; I plan. I don't worry; I just lay awake at night trying to outsmart my competition. Sound familiar?

What is worry? I was amazed when I looked up the definition of worry in Merriam-Webster’s Online Dictionary. Choke, strangle, torment, trouble, fret, harass, tease and annoy were all words used in describing ‘worry.’ Essentially, the dictionary defined worry as: to subject to persistent or nagging attention or effort; to afflict with mental distress or agitation; to make anxious; to move, proceed, or progress by unceasing or difficult effort; and, to feel or experience concern or anxiety.

Here are some additional thoughts I ran across on this topic of ‘worry:’

- Worry doesn't do any good, I know; most of the things I worried about don't happen.
- Worry is fear-thought, not fore-thought. It is cured by prayer-thought.
- When we worry, we believe more in our problems than in God's promises.
- (One of my favorites.) If we fill our hours with regrets of yesterday and with worries of tomorrow, we have no today in which to be thankful.

1 Tsuris is a Yiddish expression for trouble.
• Worry doesn't empty tomorrow of its sorrow; it empties today of its strength.
• (Another good one.) Worry is wasting today's time to clutter up tomorrow's opportunities with yesterday's troubles.
• A day of worry is more exhausting than a week of work.
• Worry is the interest paid on trouble before it is due.
• At night, turn all your worries over to God; he's going to be up all night anyway.
• Why worry when you can pray?
• Prayer is an acknowledgment of faith; worry is a denial of faith.
• Worrying is praying to the wrong God.
• (How about this addition to the Beatitudes?) Happy is the man who is too busy to worry by day, and too sleepy to worry at night.
• (And finally,) There is a difference between worry and concern. A worried person sees the problem; the concerned person solves the problem.

Yeshua said that worry is sinful. We may dignify worry by calling it by some other name - concern, burden, a cross to bear - but the results are still the same. According to Matthew 6:27, instead of helping us live longer, anxiety only makes life shorter. Worry pulls us apart. Yeshua isn't suggesting that we do nothing to meet our physical needs, but that we keep our needs in the proper perspective and trust God rather than worrying about them.

Jewish people are very familiar with this attitude to life. It was the teaching of the great Rabbis that a man ought to meet life with a combination of caution and calmness. They insisted, for instance, that every man must teach his son a trade; for to not teach him a trade was to teach him to steal. They believed in taking all the necessary steps for a prudent life. Yeshua is here teaching a lesson, which his listeners new well - the lesson of caution, foresight, calmness and trust combined.

Until man interferes, everything in nature works together, because all of nature trusts God. Man, however, is pulled apart because he tries to live his own life by depending on material wealth. If God feeds the birds and clothes the wild irises; He will also feed and clothe us. It is our "little faith" that hinders Him from working as He would. He has great blessings for us if only we will yield to Him and live for the riches that last forever.

To worry about material things is to live like the pagan! God is aware of our needs. He wants us to trust Him and put Him first in our lives, rather than worrying about how we'll provide for our fleshly needs. When the flesh rules over us, it's a tyrant. It causes us to live in a constant state of lust and frustration. Even if we stuff our flesh, it always demands more. If we put God's will and God's righteousness first in our lives, He will take care of everything else. What a testimony it is to the world when a Believer dares to practice Matthew 6:33! What a tragedy it is when so many of us fail to practice it.

Worrying about tomorrow does not help either tomorrow or today. If anything, it robs us of our effectiveness today - which means we will be even less effective tomorrow. Someone has said that the average person is crucifying himself between two thieves: the regrets of yesterday and the worries about tomorrow. It is scriptural to plan for the future and even to save for the future (2 Corinthians 12:14; 1 Timothy 5:8). But it is a sin to worry about the future and permit tomorrow to rob today of its blessings.

In these ten verses, Yeshua sets out seven different arguments and defenses against worry.

1. He begins by pointing out that God gave us life. (Matthew 6:25) If He gave us life, surely we can trust Him for the lesser things. If God gave us life, surely we can trust him to give us food to sustain that life. If God gave us bodies, surely we can trust him for material to clothe these bodies. So, the first argument is that if God gave us life, we can trust him for the things that are necessary to support life.

2. Yeshua goes on to speak about the birds. (Matthew 6:26) There is no worry in their lives, no attempt to pile up goods for an unforeseen and unforeseeable future; and yet their lives go on. One Jewish
Rabbi is quoted as saying, "In my life I have never seen a deer as a dryer of figs, or a lion as a porter, or a fox as a merchant, yet they are all nourished without worry. If they, who are created to serve me, are nourished without worry, how much more ought I, who am created to serve my Maker, to be nourished without worry." The point that Yeshua is making is not that the birds do not work; it has been said that no one works harder than the average sparrow to make a living; the point that He is making is that they do work, but they don't worry.

3. In Matthew 6:27, Yeshua goes on to prove that worry is in any event useless. Can any of us really add a single hour to our lives by worrying? Obviously, if we are worrywarts, we will die that much sooner. It is Yeshua's argument that worry is pointless.

4. Yeshua goes on to speak about the flowers (Matthew 6:28-30), and he speaks about them as one who loved them. The wild irises bloomed one day on the hillsides of Israel; and yet in their brief life they were clothed with a beauty that surpassed the beauty of the robes of kings. However, when they died they were used for nothing better than for burning. In Israel, the ovens were made of clay, which sat on top of the firebox. When it was desired to raise the temperature of the oven quickly, some handfuls of dried grasses and wild flowers were placed inside the oven and set afire. The flowers had but one day of life; and then they were set afire to help the mother heat her oven quickly when she was baking; and yet God clothes them with a beauty which is beyond our power to imitate. If God gives such beauty to a short-lived flower, how much more will he care for us?

5. Yeshua goes on to advance a very fundamental argument against worry. Worry, He says, is characteristic of the pagan. (Matthew 6:32) Worry is essentially distrust of God. Such distrust may be understandable in a pagan who believes in a jealous, capricious, unpredictable god; but it is beyond comprehension in one who has learned to call God by the name of Father. The Believer cannot worry because he believes in the love of God.

6. Yeshua advances two ways in which to defeat worry. The first is to seek first, to concentrate upon, the Kingdom of God. We have learned that to be in the Kingdom and to do the will of God is one and the same thing (Matthew 6:10). To concentrate on the doing of, and the acceptance of, God's will is the way to defeat worry. We know how in our own lives great love can drive out every other concern. Such a love can inspire a man's work, intensify his study, purify his life, and dominate his whole being. It was Yeshua's conviction that worry is banished when God becomes the dominating power of our lives.

7. Lastly, Yeshua says that worry can be defeated when we acquire the art of living one day at a time (Matthew 6:34). The Jews had a saying: "Do not worry over tomorrow's evils, for you know not what today will bring forth. Perhaps tomorrow you will not be alive, and you will have worried for a world which will not be yours." If each day is lived as it comes, if each task is done as it appears, then the sum of all the days is bound to be good. It is Yeshua's advice that we should handle the demands of each day as it comes, without worrying about the unknown future and the things, which may never happen.

Worry is needless, useless and even injurious. Worry cannot affect the past, for the past is past. It is not that we can or ought to dissociate ourselves from our past; but we ought to use our past as a lesson for better action in the future.

The lesson of life is that somehow we have been enabled to bear the unbearable and to do the undoable and to pass the breaking point and not to break. The lesson of life is that worry is unnecessary.

Three words in this passage point the way to victory over worry: (1) trust (Matthew 6:30), trusting God to meet our needs; (2) Father (Matthew 6:32), knowing He cares for His children; and (3) first (Matthew 6:33),
putting God’s will first in our lives so that He might be glorified. If we have faith in our Father and put Him first, He will meet our needs.

Yeshua teaches us to live one day at a time without worrying about tomorrow. People in the world are controlled by the flesh and are always seeking to satisfy its demands. When we’re born again, we give the Ruach the priority in our lives and put our flesh and emotions under His. There are three ways we establish our priorities by:

1. Deciding what is most important to us. For the Believer, the primary concern should be our relationship with God.

2. Reordering our time, energies, and thoughts around what is most important to us. We need to examine our lives to see where we’re wasting time that could be spent developing our relationship with God. Our thoughts and energies are so often concentrated on the material and physical concerns of life.

3. We can see where our hearts really are when we carefully consider where we have been spending our time and energies. We need to recognize our need of God’s power and righteousness to help us organize our lives around spiritual things. The result of properly adjusted priorities is that God will take care of all our physical needs.

Isaiah said it long ago: 

"A person whose desire rests on you, you preserve in perfect peace, because he trusts in you." (Isaiah 26:3).

"Therefore, I tell you, don’t worry about your life" that is the commandment of Yeshua, and it is the way, not only to peace, but also to power. What, me worry?

In my next post, we will take a break from our study of Matthew to observe the Jewish observance of Purim.