session 3 study guide

the stress of worry

starter

WORRY-O-METER: Make copies of the Worry-O-Meter found on the following page and give one to each person in your group. Instruct them to write a number next to each of the potential stressful situations below on a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 meaning they worry about it all of the time and a 1 meaning they worry little about it.

message

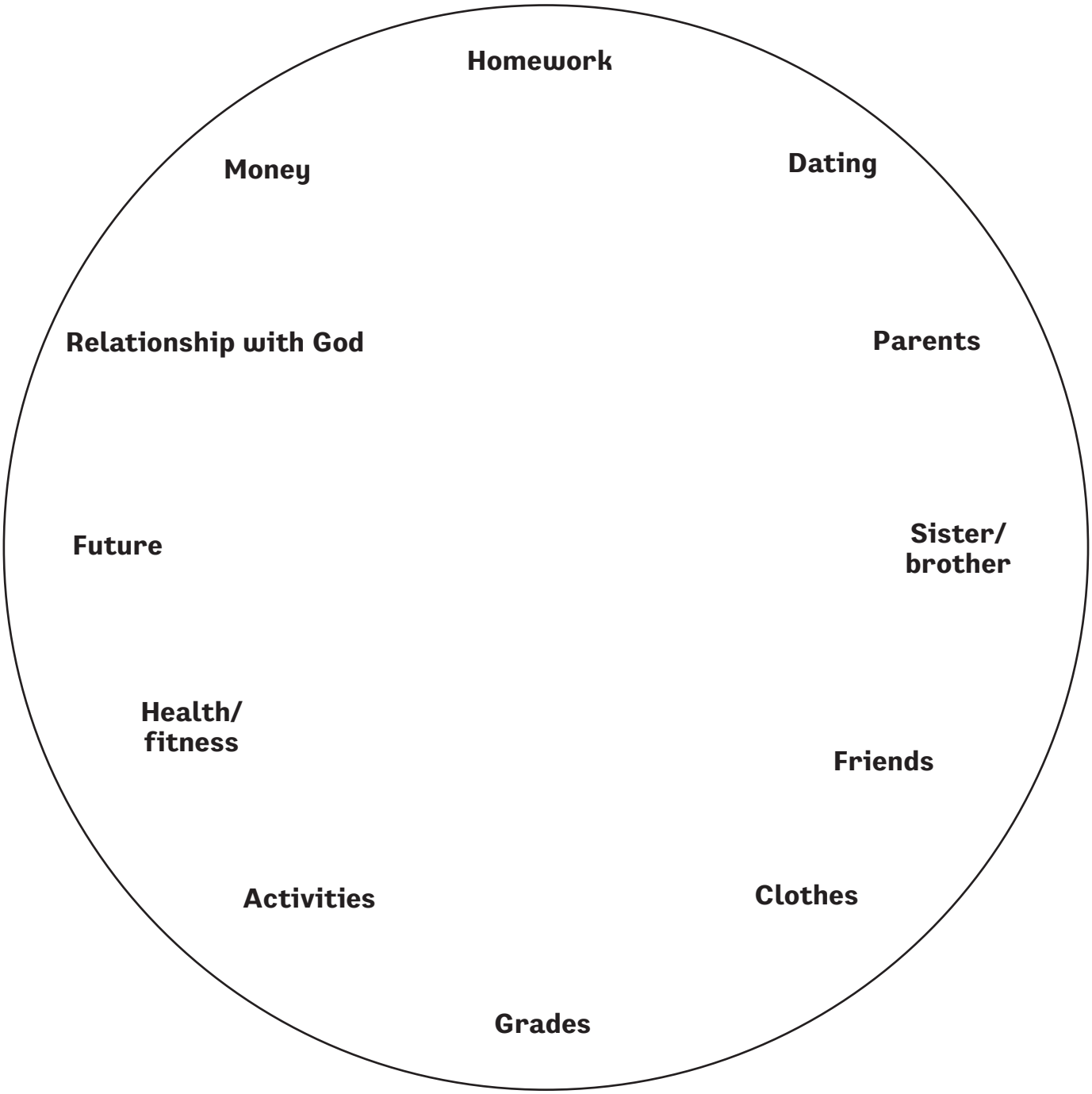
Some people seem to worry about everything—even things that are unlikely to ever happen to them. Others worry about very real and pressing situations that they are experiencing in their lives. What does God say about worry?

don't be anxious about anything

In fact, in the Bible God tells us that He doesn't want us to worry about *anything*. In Philippians 4:6-7, Paul writes:

> *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.*

WORRY-O-METER



1. In this passage, Paul tells us *not* to be anxious. He also tells us *to do* something. What are we to do instead of being anxious?

2. How would you define the following words?

Prayer

Petition

Thanksgiving

3. According to these verses, if we have an issue that is making us anxious we should:
   - ❒ Write a list of 120 ways we might be able to fix it
   - ❒ Present it to God
   - ❒ Block out the thoughts and try to forget the problem by playing our favorite computer game
   - ❒ Eat a carton of double-chocolate-fudge-brownie ice cream

4. According to Philippians 4:6-7, what will God provide when we give our worries to Him?

5. What kind of "peace" do you think Paul is talking about here?

do not worry about tomorrow

When you read the Bible, you will continually see terms such as "do not worry" or "do not be afraid." God knows that as human beings, it is in our nature to worry, and throughout His Word He reassures us that He has everything under control. Consider Jesus' words in Matthew 6:25-34:

> *Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes? Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life? And why do you worry about clothes? See how the lilies of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? So do not worry, saying, "What shall we eat?" or "What shall we drink?" or "What shall we wear?" For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.*

1. What are some of the things Jesus mentions in this passage about which we are not to worry?

2. How does Jesus say that God will respond to the needs we often worry about?

3. In one portion of this passage, Jesus refers to the lilies of the field and states "not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these." To a Jewish person Solomon's court represented the pinnacle of human glory, yet Jesus says not even he was dressed as well as the lilies of the field. What point was Jesus making here when he said "they do not labor or spin"?

4. What contrast does Jesus make between us and the "the grass of the field"? What does this say about how God values us?

5. What does Jesus tell us to do instead of focusing on problems?

dig

Because the tendency to worry is universal, it will take practice, trust in God and a determination to follow His advice to overcome worry. We can't always control our circumstances, but we can, with God's help, control how we respond to those circumstances and how we allow them to shape us.

1. In Philippians 4:7, Paul says that when you take your concerns to God, He will give you peace and guard your heart. In what ways has God given you peace in a stressful situation?

2. How has God protected and guarded you in the past? What does this tell you about whether or not you can trust Him in any situation?

3. The following phrases come from Matthew 6:25-34. What does it mean in your life to worry about each of these things?

   your life . . .

what you will eat or drink . . .

your body . . .

what you will wear . . .

4. How does Jesus portray God in this passage? What do we know about God's character from reading these verses?

5. What kind of person does God want to help you become? How does He help you accomplish this? (Note: If you want to know what it means to know God as a loving heavenly Father, talk to a Christian friend or pastor. Being part of the family has its perks!)

6. Instead of worrying, God asks you to seek His kingdom and His righteousness. What does this mean to you? How can you do this?

7. What does Jesus say will happen to a person who first seeks God's kingdom and His righteousness?

apply

1. The word "worry" has an interesting history. It comes from the Old English word *wyrgan,* which literally meant "to strangle." In the mid-1500s, people used the word to describe how dogs or wolves attacked a flock of sheep: "to harass by rough or severe treatment."[1] Given this definition, when you worry, what are you really doing to yourself?

2. Over time, how do you think treating yourself in this way will affect your body? Your mind? Your emotions?

3. How does worrying affect a person's ability to trust God?

4. In what way is trusting God and having faith in Him to provide for you the exact opposite of worry?

5. What do you tend to worry about the most? What are you focused on when you worry about these things?

6. Have you ever tried to stop worrying about something that was really bothering you? If you succeeded, how did you do it?

7. What helps you to focus on God when you have a troubling situation in your life?

8. In Philippians 3:13-14, Paul says, "Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal." Why is this attitude healthy?

9. Proverbs 23:7 states, "For as [a man] thinks in his heart, so is he" (*NKJV*). How does this proverb relate to the idea of overcoming worry in your life?

10. In 1 Thessalonians 5:18, Paul writes, "Give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus." Being thankful is one way we seek God's kingdom and His righteousness. It often starts as an action, but with time it can become an attitude. What do you think is the first step to becoming more thankful?

11. How can you learn to be thankful in "all circumstances"?

12. Proverbs 3:5-6 states, "Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight." What are some ways you can trust and acknowledge God in all things?

reflect

1. How do you think worry and stress can hinder you from getting your day-to-day tasks completed?

2. How can worry and stress affect your relationship with God?

3. Have you ever literally made yourself sick with worry? Explain.

4. In Psalm 37, David provides some good advice on the topic of fretting (or worrying). Fill in the blanks below:

   Do not _____ because of _____ _____ (verse 1).
   _____ in the Lord and do _____ (verse 3).
   _____ yourself in the Lord (verse 4).
   _____ your way to the Lord; _____ in him (verse 5).

5. What would be the results of following this advice?

6. What worries in your life today do you need to give to God?

7. First Peter 5:7 states, "Cast all your anxiety on [God] because he cares for you." So, right now write to God and ask Him to take all of your anxieties away from you. Ask Him for help in your situation, and write down anything He has taught you about worry as well.

8. What benefits of *not* worrying do you want to have in your life?

meditation

And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.
ROMANS 8:28

Note

1. The Online Etymology Dictionary, definition for "worry." http://www.etymonline.com.