



the gift exchange

The New International Version is used for all questions.

1. Do you believe that God is in control of everything that happens in your life? When do you have the hardest time believing he is in control? The easiest? How can trusting that God is in control keep us from worrying?
2. How did Pastor Rick define worry? Read Matthew 6:25-34. What idea was Jesus teaching by talking about birds and flowers? Why should this idea keep us from worrying? What are you worried about right now that you have no control over? What can you do to trust God more in that area?
3. In this Matthew 6 passage, Pastor Rick said that Jesus gave us four reasons not to worry. What were they and for each why is it true? Which one of these resonates with you? Why?
4. What relationship exists between the amount of worry we have and the amount of faith we have in God? How does praying help us not to worry, what does it do? What do you think Pastor Rick meant when he said that the way you view prayer is the way you view God?
5. Pastor Rick said that worry is practical atheism, what do you think he meant? Do you agree? Why or why not?
6. Read 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18. How would expressing gratitude to God in every circumstance be an expression of faith? How would our thinking have to change in order to be thankful for even the bad things that happen to us? Read Romans 8: 28. Would the truth of what this verse says help us to change our thinking? Do you think this would reduce the amount of stress and worry that you have? Why?
7. Read Philippians 4:8. In essence, what is verse eight telling us to do? Would you consider yourself a glass-half-full type of person or half-empty? Which type do you think would have a harder time with worry? Why? What is one thing you can do this week to think more positively in regard to something you are worried about?

1. *Knowing God is in control causes us to realize that whatever happens in our lives first must come across his desk and he must allow it, there are no surprises to God. If he allows it, he has a purpose for the circumstance to happen in our lives. Even when we are the cause of a bad circumstance in our lives, God is going to use it for his glory and our growth.*
2. *He defined worry as, "Allowing my mind to focus on potentially negative outcomes beyond my control". Jesus was teaching that God provides and meets the needs of everything in his creation and this should prevent us from worrying because we are so much more valuable to him than animals that if he always provides for them, he will obviously provide for us. The main thing we can do to trust God is to believe what he says is true, he cares more about us than birds and flowers.*
3. *The four reasons not to worry are: a. Worry is unreasonable because it exaggerates or magnifies the problem 6:25; b. Worry is unnatural because I wasn't born to worry— I learned it. 6:26; c. Worry is unhelpful because it makes me miserable. 6:27; and d. Worry is unnecessary because it doesn't change the past or the future 6:30.*
4. *The relationship is that the more faith you have, the less worry you have and vice-versa. Praying makes us consciously focus on the person who has the solution to what is worrying us, and that alone reduces worry. It causes us to trust in God and not ourselves. If you think you have a God who can take care of all of your circumstances, you pray a lot. If your God is impotent, you pray little.*
5. *Practical atheism is when we act like God does not exist. When we worry, we are acting like God is not in control and he can do nothing about the situation.*
6. *Expressing thankfulness to God is expressing that we have confidence in God that he will take care of the situation we are thanking him for. Our thinking about what happens in our lives must become that there are no accidents, that God is going to use everything in our lives to accomplish his will in our lives; that is the definition of what is "best for us". I can thank God for even the bad things because Romans 8:28 says that if I love God, he promises to turn even the bad things to accomplish good in our lives.*
7. *This verse is telling us to think good thoughts, to think positively. Obviously those who are in the habit of thinking negatively (it is a habit and like any habit, can be broken) will have more difficulty thinking positively about the negative circumstances in their lives. Some things that we can do to begin to change the way we think is pray as soon as we start to worry, reading the scriptures that reinforce that God is in control, memorize verses that reinforce the way we need to think. The key is to break into our "worry" thoughts with truthful thoughts as soon as we begin to worry.*