

Conversation Control

By Stephen Rouse

If someone were to stop you in mid-sentence at any given point in the day, what would you most likely be taking about? What fills your conversation? What fills your mind? Is it sports? Academics? Relationships? Daily events? God?

While there is nothing wrong in those first 4 things by themselves, when our conversation is filled with things of this world, our minds will follow. And not only our minds, but the minds of those whom we come into contact with throughout our days. Paul exhorted Timothy to "avoid worldly and empty chatter, for it will lead to further ungodliness" (2 Timothy 2:16).

How much of our conversation is merely worldly and empty? However, *we can do better!* Each of us has complete control of our speech and of our general topics of conversa-

tion. It may seem awkward at first to begin a spiritual conversation, and I think that Satan uses that to our demise every day. It can be a simple question that starts up a spiritual conversation: *How has God blessed you today? How are you doing spiritually? Do you need prayers for anything right now?*

We can help one another in this to become more spiritually minded. The skill of conversation steering must be one that we concern ourselves with, both with fellow Christians and with the lost souls we encounter. Start now—greet the next person you see with something spiritual. It's not as difficult as it seems, and with consistency, this habit will help us and those we encounter to draw closer to our awesome Father each and every day.



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Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven. (Matthew 5:16)



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Thoughts To Ponder

A day of worry is more exhausting than a day of work.

Worry admitted as a guest quickly turn to be a master.

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Don't Worry

By Donnie V. Rader

In writing to the Christians at Philippi, Paul urged them to "Be careful for nothing" (Phil. 4:6, KJV). Other versions render that phrase as follows: "In nothing be anxious" (American Standard Version); "Have no anxiety about anything" (Revised Standard Version). Today's English Version translates it, "Don't worry about anything"; and Phillips Modern Version, "Don't worry about anything whatever." The New International Version says, "Do not be anxious about anything."

The word translated "be careful" (Merimania) means "to be anxious; to be troubled with cares . . ." (Thayer p. 400). It is also translated "take thought" in Matt. 6:25-34. So Paul is talking about worrying, not forethought, but anxious thought.

The apostle here is not forbidding a thought-out life. Rather, in other passages he emphasized this (Gal. 6:7-9; 2 Cor. 6:2). Neither is Paul urging us to be a happy-go-lucky people. He was far from being one that made a joke of life. The seriousness with which he looked on life is seen in his statement to Timothy, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith" (2 Tim. 4:7). Furthermore, we are not being told to be unconcerned about ourselves and others. Paul told the Ephesians that they would naturally be concerned about themselves (Eph. 5:28-29). Also, Jesus set forth the principle of being concerned for others in the story of the good Samaritan (Luke 10:30-37; cf. Phil. 2:4). And nei-

ther are these words of inspiration prohibiting one being upset at times. Christ Himself wept when He beheld the city of Jerusalem (Luke 19:41). Paul also said, "Be ye angry, and sin not . . ." (Eph. 4:26).

But what is Paul saying? He is warning Christians against a fretful and feverish attitude toward life. Do not engage in anxious thought; do not worry is simply what the apostle is saying.

Jesus also taught on this important subject in Matt. 6:25-34. Here He emphasized that we ought to "Take no thought for your life." Other versions (which are not always acceptable translations on many other texts) say, "be not anxious for your life" (ASV), and "do not worry about your life" (NIV). One example of the things we should not worry about is food (vs. 25-26). It is pointed out that fowls, which neither sow, or reap, nor gather, are fed by the heavenly Father. So why should we constantly worry about our eatables since we are obviously better than the fowls? Yet another example that Jesus gives is our raiment (vs. 28-30). We are urged to consider the lilies of the field, which neither toil nor spin, yet even Solomon in all of his glory was not arrayed like one of these. So why should we be anxious and worry about our clothing since we are much better than the grass of the field?

The Need For This

An exhortation of this nature is needed by all. Worry is so common to man. The young and old, the rich and poor, the learned and

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unlearned, the saints and sinners, and the faithful and unfaithful all have worries. And it seems that we worry about everything beneath the shining stars of heaven. We worry about our money, how we are going to get it, keep it, and spend it. We worry about other's troubles as well as our own. The thought of some calamity is constantly plaguing our mind, with 75% to 90% of these calamities never taking place. It makes us wonder if some are not setting up at night to plan out their worries for the next day.

The Folly Of Worrying

(1) It is useless. This is the very point that Jesus was making in **Matt. 6:27**, "Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature?" Jesus is saying that if a man does not like his height, his worrying about it will not help. Worrying is not going to make him grow. Then in the parallel account Jesus said, "If ye then be not able to do that thing which is least, why take ye thought for the rest?" (**Luke 12:26**). So if our worrying will not accomplish an increase in our stature, why should we think our worrying will do any good elsewhere? Worrying never lifted a single burden; it never dried a single tear; it never solved a single problem. There are two classes of things we should never worry about: the things we can help, and the things we cannot help.

If there is a problem or situation that we can do something about, let us do what we can and quit worrying. For example, if one were to wake up at night just freezing to death, it would be silly just to lay there and worry about it. The only sensible thing to do would be to do something about it -- get more cover. And so it is with many of life's problems. Worry does not help but action does.

Neither should we worry with the things which we can do nothing about. What good would our worrying do? We cannot do anything about growing older, the weather, death, and many other things which must simply take their course. Our worrying about our age will not make us younger. Neither will worrying change the weather, nor keep us from dying. Therefore, seeing that we cannot do anything to help and that our worrying will not relieve any burden, we ought to forget such matters and not worry about them.

Many times we find ourselves worrying about close friends, relatives or neighbors as they travel from place to place. But again this is silly. Can we do anything to help in the matter to make their travels safer? If so let us do it and quit worrying. However if we cannot assist or do anything to better their safety, what will our worrying do? Obviously nothing, so it is just plain useless whatever the occasion may be.

(2) It is hurtful. Though this is not generally recognized by Christians, anxiety is hurtful in many ways. There is no disease that worry does not aggravate. Dr. Charles Mayo, of the famed Mayo Clinic, once said, "Worry affects the circulation -- the heart, the glands, the whole nervous system. I have never known a man who died from overwork, but many who died from doubt." Worry wears one out mentally and physically. Worry is the grime and grit that once inside the "wheel bearings" of our minds puts our steering out of control and sends us off at the next curve.

It is not only hurtful to ourselves but to others about us. Worry makes one hard to live with because they have always got a worry to share with you. Thinking of only the worst that could happen, the worry-wart will nag one half crazy.

(3) It is faithless. Worry indicates a weakness in our faith. Jesus describes one that worries by saying, "O ye of little faith" (**Matt. 6:30**). Do we not have faith that God will be with us and those whom we worry about? We need not become of doubtful mind and worry about what may happen, for whatever did happen it may be for our good. The apostle Paul said, "All things work together for good to them that love God" (**Rom. 8:28**). Could it be, brethren, that we really do not have true faith in God?

The Cure

Anxiety is not cured by laughing it off, drinking away our problems, or finding some ideal situation. However Paul suggested in the same context the answer.

The apostle commanded that we should (1) pray. "But in everything by prayer...let your request be made known unto God" (**Phil. 4:6**). If we are worried about ourselves or someone else, we should pray for God's help in the situation. Another command given is that we should (2) redirect our thinking. We might illustrate this with a house that has only two windows. One window has an unbelievably beautiful view of a lawn with flowers and trees. The other has the most awful sight of garbage and trash you have ever seen. Now which window would you look out of the most? Obviously, the one with the beautiful view. So it should be in the house of life. We should spend our time thinking on things that are true, honest, just, pure, lovely and of good report (**Phil. 4:8**). We also should (3) put our faith in God. We ought to trust him, that he will be with us. The apostle Peter tells us to put our cares upon God (**1 Peter 5:7**).

Conclusion

The results of our prayers, redirection of thought, and faith in God will be obvious. The peace of God will keep our hearts (**Phil. 4:7**). We will be better both mentally and physically, being better able to get along with others. Let us not be a Martha in **Luke 10:40-41** who was troubled with cares. But we need to strive to be as Mary who chose Jesus.



The Behind-the-Back Pass

By Steve Klein

Basketball fans know about the behind-the-back pass. A player comes dribbling the ball down the court, with a defender guarding him closely. The player with the ball moves one direction as a teammate moves to get open near the goal. Then it happens. Without looking, the player with the ball whips the ball behind his back in the direction of his teammate, who catches it, and hopefully finds himself in the open for an easy basket. The amazing thing about the behind-the-back pass is that, while he is passing, the passer usually sees neither his teammate nor the ball. He's blind to both (and usually, so is the defender).

We just don't see what we throw behind our backs.

The Scriptures use this metaphor in a couple of interesting ways. In **1 Kings 14:9** the Lord told wicked King Jeroboam, "but you have done more evil than all who were before you, for you have gone and made for yourself other gods and molded images to provoke Me to anger, and have cast Me behind your back." The Lord issues a similar condemnation to the inhabitants of Jerusalem in **Ezekiel 23:35**: "Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: 'Because you have forgotten Me and cast Me behind your back, Therefore you shall bear the penalty of your lewdness and your harlotry.'" In both of these cases, individuals became so focused on their own worldly ambi-

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tions and pleasures that they threw God behind their backs. When they did so, they lost sight of Him. And when He was out of their sight, He was out of their minds and their lives.

How often do modern men and women do the same? We become so focused on our day to day wants and desires that we forget about God! Covetousness, which is idolatry

(**Colossians 3:5**), prevents us from seeing and serving the God who lives!

The second way this "behind-the-back" metaphor is used in Scripture is found in **Isaiah 38:17**. Here, good King Hezekiah recalls how God had recently restored his health and blessed his life. He says, "Indeed it was for my own peace that I had great bitterness; but You have lovingly delivered my soul from the pit of corruption, for You have cast all my sins behind Your back." When God throws our sins behind His back, they are out of His sight. They are forgiven!

Not long before she died in 1988, in a moment of candor during a television interview, Marghanita Laski, a well known atheist and secular humanist, said, "What I envy most about you Christians is your forgiveness; I have nobody to forgive me."

We are so blessed to have a God who throws our sins behind His back -- putting them out of His mind, and if we will accept it, out of ours as well.

