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L I F E C H A N G E S E R I E S

# HOW GOD WORKS

**When We Are Worried & Weary**

(Lessons on Restoring Rest to a Troubled Soul)

Narry F. Santos

LIFECHANGE  
Publishing, Inc.

# **How God Works**

## **When We Are Worried & Weary**

(Lessons on Restoring Rest to a Troubled Soul)

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Narry F. Santos, Ph D

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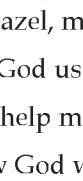
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To Hazel, my wife,  
whom God uses greatly  
to help me see  
how God works.



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## PREFACE



**T**his small book begins a short series on the big topic, **How God Works**. This topic fascinates me because I'd like to watch and learn how God works in us and among us.

Given the finiteness of my mind, I realize that I can't capture all the ways in which God works. In fact, the little that I can see may not even accurately describe it.

I also realize that I cannot put God and his ways in a box. For just as he is infinitely wise and creative, so he has countless ways of dealing with us and of making us discover him.

The way God dealt with us before may not be the same way he will choose to deal with us tomorrow. It is entirely up to him. Yet, I know his ways are always good, because he is always good.

I would like to keep track of his goodness. Though my way of understanding his good ways is limited, as a pastor and bible teacher for ten years now, I've seen the hand of God at work many times.

Some of those times include the days when we feel worried and weary. When we feel emotionally down and spiritually discouraged, God works. When we see that nothing much is working in us and for us, God works. When we think all things around us are out of control and miserably confusing, God works.

It's true. God also works, when we come to the highest moments in our life. He works, when we feel emotionally up or spiritually encouraged. He works, when we see many things work in us and for us. He works, when we think all things around

us are under control and masterfully clear. In fact, it requires another volume in this series for us to catalogue how God works along these lines.

However, there's something undeniably life-changing for us, when we see and sense God work at those times when life is hard and when nothing seems to work out for us. So to give us a glimpse of how he works this way, I offer to you the first in our **"How God Works"** series: **"HOW GOD WORKS When We Are Worried and Weary"** (*Lessons on Restoring Rest for a Troubled Soul*).

This first offering in the **"How God Works"** series comes from a cluster of Wednesday sermons that I preached at the Greenhills Christian Fellowship South Metro during our midweek praise and prayer services and fellowships.

Particularly, I have gained valuable insights on how we can handle worry from Matthew 6:25-34 and Philippians 4:6-9. I have also learned a lot on how we can face weariness from Matthew 11:28-30.

*How God Works When We Are Worried & Weary*

As we explore these short biblical passages, may we readily see how God works, when we worry and are weary.







*How does God work?*

*This is a daunting question.*

*Is it really possible to determine?*



# INTRODUCTION



When we come to think about it, we can never really exhaust all the ways that God works. Nor can we accurately catalogue or analyze it. For God has so many choices to show how he works – choices that are far more numerous than the stars in the universe or the people on earth.

But in light of what he has revealed about himself in the Bible, there are some clear ways by which we can see and sense how he works. We learn that his purpose in doing so seems always related to who he is. He works to make us know him help us and to assist us to grow in him and his ways.



In one of my personal journal entries, I asked God, “How do you really work?”

“Is it by orchestrating events and circumstances to make us know you and make us mature in you?”

Is it in intervening in our affairs so we may learn that you are in control and in charge of our life?

Is it by causing things to happen the way you say it, so that we can see that you keep your Word and that you are able to fulfill what you promise?

Is it by bringing different kinds of people to us, so that we can learn how to love them the way you do?

Is it by taking away some people from us, so that we can feel your comfort in our times of loss and grief?

Is it by giving us success and prosperity to make us sense that you bless those who bless you?

Is it by handing over to us failure and poverty to make us trust you and not what you bless us with?

Is it by delivering to us the ups and downs of life, so that we can know that you remain the same and that we can always be secure in you?

Is it by fulfilling our dreams and ambitions, so we can find joy and satisfaction in what you give?

Is it by frustrating our dreams and ambitions, so we discover that our real joy and satisfaction are to be found in you alone?

Is it by doing anything to make us learn that we need to love you first and our neighbors as ourselves?

Is it by speaking through the voice of nature and your created world to make us give thanks to you, our awesome and creative Creator?

Is it by saving us in Christ, so that we can understand that we cannot save ourselves or others, but that you alone can save us?

Is it by gifting us with our bodies, minds, abilities, and talents to make us know that you are the giver of good gifts?

Is it by bestowing us with handicaps, inabilities, and sicknesses to make us sense that you are still good, even when bad things happen to us?


Is it by making breakthroughs and milestones occur in our lives, so that we discover how to mark our times and days based on what you do?

Is it by bringing calamities and tragedies to us so that we learn that setbacks come our way, not to bring us down, but to build us up through your help?"


After this series of questions, I continued writing in my journal:

“Father, you work the way you do to help us learn that everything in life is not about us, but that it’s really all about you. That we discover who we really are if we discover who you really are.

That we are able to do what we need to do, if we learn to draw our strength from you. That we can face life – with its ups and downs, successes and failures, wins and losses, joys and sorrows – if we have you with us.



*Father, you work the way you do to help us learn that everything in life is not about us, but that it’s really all about you. That we discover who we really are if we discover who you really are.*



That our life can be full and meaningful, because you’re the one who makes it overflow with meaning. That we can be ourselves, because you know us and accept who we are. That we can live for you, because you give us life and the abundance of it.

○ Father, when will we realize that it’s all about you, that’s it’s really not about us? For only

when we take to heart that our life on earth is really about you can we be ready to see how you work in us and around us. Only then can we be ready to seek how you work in others and in the world. Only then can we be ready to sense that all that you give and take away truly reflect how you graciously work for our good.”

I guess learning how God works is an ongoing search to know God and his goodness. To kick off our search together, we present the first volume of the **How God Works** series.

In this volume, we will gain insights on how he works when we are preoccupied with worry and when we are weary.

Part 1, **How God Works When We Worry**, has four short chapters that cover our reflections on Matthew 6:25-34 and Philippians 4:6-9. The first two chapters are taken from Matthew 6, while the next two chapters from Philippians 4.

Part 2, **How God Works When We Are Weary**, contains three brief chapters that share our thoughts on Matthew 11:28-30. Each of the three chapters takes one verse each from the Matthew 11 passage.

All the seven chapters of this volume are designed to help us make practical steps for application. The intent of these applications is to help us respond to God when he chooses to work in us at our times of worry and weariness.

Let's now turn to Part 1, Chapter 1, "Why We Worry" (Matthew 6:25-30).



*“Worry  
is a twin of  
faithlessness.”*

*- N.M. Sosmeña*



Part 1

---

# HOW GOD WORKS

When We Worry



*<sup>25</sup>“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 clothes? <sup>26</sup>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? <sup>27</sup>Who of you by worrying can add a single hour into his life?”*

*<sup>28</sup>“And why do you worry about clothes? See how the lilies of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. <sup>29</sup>Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. <sup>30</sup>If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown in the fire, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith?”*

-Matthew 6:25-30

## CHAPTER 1

# Why We Worry

(Matthew 6:25-30)



**T**hree words describe the lifestyle of our modern day city life: (1) **hurry**; (2) **worry**; and (3) **bury**. We seem to be in a hurry to worry. As a result, it brings us closer to being buried.

There always seems to be something that we can worry about. Our work situation – it makes us insecure. The war within our backyard – it looks so imminent. The worldliness around us – it's on an increase. The wickedness in society – it's too influential.

There always seems to be someone whom we worry about. Our spouse or lover – will he or she be faithful to us? Our children – will they turn out

okay? Our relatives – will they be nice to us? Our work mates or business partners – will they do their jobs well? Our classmates or friends – will they like us? Our church mates – will they gossip about us?

If our lifestyle now is marked with worry, let's reevaluate our life. Persistent worrying does not lead us anywhere. You see, it is like a rocking chair: It gives us something to do, but it does not get us anywhere.

But why do we worry? According to Matthew 6:25-30, there are two reasons why we do. First, we worry because we forget that our Father remains faithful. We forget that he never fails (6:25-27). Second, we worry because we flood our faith with fear (6:28-30).

## Forgetting that Our Father Fails Not

We are a forgetful people. We forget more, not simply because of our age, but because we remember God less.

In Matthew 6:25-34, three times, Jesus says that we must not worry. Listen to what he says, “Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life” (6:25a). He again commands, “So do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’” (6:31). Then he concludes with the same injunction, “Therefore, do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own” (6:34).

We can appreciate better Jesus’ command not to worry when we check the context in Matthew 6:19-24. The context is quite affirming. Since we can store up treasures for ourselves in heaven (6:19-21), we need not worry. Since we can saturate our eyes and our whole being with what is good (6:22-23), we need not worry. Since we can live a life that serves God and not money (6:24), we need not worry.

These truths are enough to convince us not to worry. But the sad truth is we still do. We need to

stop making a habit out of it. Take a close look at what the command, “Do not worry;” means and does not mean?

First, it does not mean that we are to be careless. Rather, that we are to be free from needless care.

Second, it does not mean that we are to be indifferent about our concerns. Rather, it means that we must be different in handling our concerns.

Third, it does not mean that we are to be thoughtless. Rather, it means that our thoughts must be full of God’s thoughts, so that we will be thoughtful of others and not simply be thinking of ourselves.

Let me differentiate the person who worries from the one who does not:

1. The person who worries focuses on the

limits, while the person who does not worry focuses on the God who masters both the limits and beyond.

2. The person who worries centers his or her entire existence on the material and the natural, while the person who does not centers his or her entire existence on God who masters the realm of the material and immaterial, the natural and supernatural.

3. The person who worries seeks to control things and people around him or her, while the person who does not seeks to be under the control of God who controls all things and all people.

What are some of the common things that people worry about? A seasoned chaplain, after hearing the worries of people under his care, came up with a “worry table” — a list of the five common worries, along with the percentages of their frequency:

|    |   |       |
|----|---|-------|
| 1. | Worries about things that never happened    | (40%) |
| 2. | Worries about past, unchangeable decisions  | (28%) |
| 3. | Worries about illnesses that never happened | (12%) |
| 4. | Worries about adult children and friends    | (10%) |
| 5. | Worries about real problems                 | (8%)  |

If we look closely at the percentages of these sources of worry, 92% are about things beyond our control. On an average, we spend 92% of our time and energy on items that do not belong to our realm or responsibility. That's a lot of energy drained from us, a lot of time lost and wasted.

These "worry" investments of time and energy quickly gain compounded interests. As E. Stanley Jones said, "Worry is the interest we pay on tomorrow's troubles."

Why do we tend to worry about tomorrow's troubles today? According to Matthew 6:25-27, the reason is that we forget three things.

First, we forget who God is. We forget that he is Our “heavenly Father” (6:26). As a father, he cares for our basic needs of food, drink, and clothing (6:31). Jesus comments, “For the pagans run after these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them” (6:32).

*As E. Stanley Jones said,  
“Worry is the interest  
we pay on tomorrow’s  
troubles.”*

God knows all our needs. And since he knows them, he is ready and willing to meet them. He is always powerfully present to provide for us and to protect us.

My father died when I was only six years old and my mother did not remarry since then. So in my growing up years, I did not experience the presence of an earthly father who provided for me and protected me.

But now, I have a heavenly Father who is always present with me, who is very powerful to provide for all my physical and spiritual needs,



and who is very persistent to protect me from any danger to my body and soul.

What is your earthly father like? What was your experience growing up with him? Was he always there for you? Did he readily protect you and provide for you? Whatever is your experience with your father – be it positive or negative, be it close or distant – you can now enjoy the presence, power, provision, and protection of our heavenly Father.

Aside from forgetting who God is (i.e., as our Father), we tend to forget what he does. We forget his faithful deeds toward us. But just as he is faithful to give food to the birds of the air that do not sow or reap or store away in barns (6:26), he is faithful to provide for us. Just as he is faithful to dress the lilies of the field that do not labor or spin (6:28), he is faithful to take care of us.

In response to our faithful Father, we must be thankful –

*even if we think we have less than others;  
even if we know we have a lot less than what we had  
in the past;  
even if we feel we have more troubles and  
tribulations now than before;  
even if we see less fruit in the labor of our hands.*

Why must we be thankful? Because our Father remains faithful even though we are thankless.

We show our thankfulness to God when we do not entertain thoughts like “God failed me” or “God forgot me.” These thoughts forget that God never fails us, rather, it’s us who fail God. It’s us who forget that God does not forget.

We can also be thankful to him when we do not begin our statements with “God did not do this for me” or “God does not do that for me” or “God will not do this or that for me.” These thoughts miss out the point why God did not do something for us, or why he continues not to give it to us.

These statements forget that our disappointments are not denials of God's goodness. They doubt that God is good. They blame him for not working the way we want. They deny that God knows what's best for us, that he is in control, and that he always acts for his good pleasure and for our utmost good.

There's a third thing we forget when we worry: who we are in him. We forget our favored status before God. We forget that we are privileged, not because of what we did or earned, but simply due to his choosing us. His promises are real to us only because we are favored by him.

Twice, Jesus mentions the terms "more important" in Matthew 6:25. These terms lead to his rhetorical question, "Are you not much more valuable than they?" (6:26). The rhetorical question expects the positive answer, "Of course, definitely, we are much more valuable than the birds of the air and the lilies of the field."

In addition, Jesus asks another rhetorical question, “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?” (6:30). The expected answer to this rhetorical question is also positive, “Of course, definitely, he will clothe us much more than he clothes the short-lived grass of the field.”

For just as life is more important than food and just as the body is more important than clothes, so we are more valuable than any created thing on earth. May we never, ever forget this truth.

## Flooding our Faith with Fear

So far, we have seen that we worry because we forget that our heavenly Father remains faithful. We will now see the other reason why we worry: because we flood our faith with fear.

Jesus pinpoints the root of worry when he charges the people with the words, “O you of little faith” (6:30). Therefore, we now know that lack of faith fails to see the faithfulness of our heavenly Father; or our favorable position in his eyes. Lack of faith makes us fearful. No wonder, we are worried.

*“Faith is the refusal to panic. Faith is daring the soul to go beyond what the eye can see. Faith is not belief without proof, but trust without reservation.”*

What is faith? Take note of this definition:

“Faith is the refusal to panic. Faith is daring the soul to go beyond what the eye can see. Faith is not belief without proof, but trust without reservation.”

With this definition, we need to see that faith is not measured by our ability to believe or by the hugeness of our belief, but by our simple trust in the hugeness of our God. Faith has to do with believing more the Father’s faithfulness, than believing more our own ability to believe.

Thus, we can put our faith in God even when others do not have faith in him, even when others do not have faith in us, or even when we waiver in our own faith.

At the end of World War II, these inscriptions on a basement wall in Germany were discovered:

*"I believe in the sun – even when it shines not.  
I believe in love – even when I feel it not.  
I believe in God – even when he speaks not."*

In practical terms, how do we continue to believe in God even when he is silent? How do we show that we would rather become people of faith than people of fear?

The way to do this is to become people of prayer. For it demonstrates our belief in God and that our faith is at work.

So let me ask us now: how is our prayer life? Is it exciting or boring? Are we growing in the

quality and quantity of our prayers, or are we losing our appetite to pray?

If praying is a struggle for us, let's begin having a set time of prayer every day. We can begin with 15 minutes per day. When we grow in prayer, we can add another 15 minutes. We can do 15 minutes of prayer in the day time and another 15 minutes at night.

As we need more time for prayer, we can add another 15 minutes. We can do 15 minutes of prayer in the morning, another 15 minutes in the afternoon, and another 15 minutes in the evening. The more we take time to pray, the more we develop a taste for it.

Let's ask another set of questions: How do we respond to fear? Do we turn to God in prayer? Or do we freeze and put our mind to neutral? Do we seek to take charge and regain control for ourselves? Or do we ask God to take charge and let him regain the control of ourselves?

Praying need not simply be times for set schedules. Whenever we are afraid, we can shoot up a short prayer to God. Before we make decisions, we can bring our deliberations to God. When we are tempted or tested in any way, we can say a quick prayer to him. Thus, we can develop an attitude of prayerfulness and a spirit of spontaneity in talking with God.

Remember: "Sorrow looks back. Worry looks around. Faith looks up." Let's look up in prayer. That's the way we can move forward.

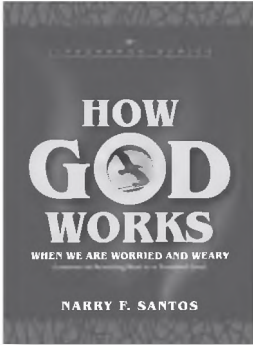




*<sup>31</sup>“So do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ <sup>32</sup>For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. <sup>33</sup>But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. <sup>34</sup>Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.”*

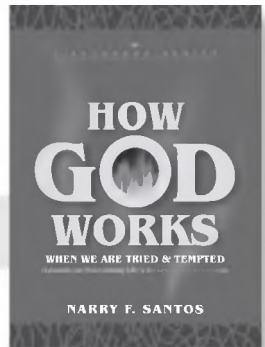
-Matthew 6:31-34

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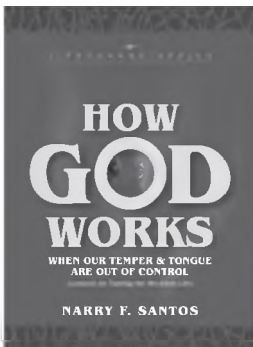
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PLEASE CONTACT US AT:



96-B Panay Avenue, Brgy. South Triangle  
Quezon City 1103, Philippines  
Telephone: (632) 374-5996 • Fax: (632) 374-5997  
E-mail: [lifecchange@i-manila.com.ph](mailto:lifecchange@i-manila.com.ph)