

# Week One

**IT IS POSSIBLE TO STOP  
WORRYING!**

I want you to be free from anxieties.

—1 Corinthians 7:32

# Day 1

## MEETING DAY

Congratulations! You have made an important decision. The study guide that you now hold indicates your desire to break free from worry and to surrender your life to Jesus. Let me tell you from personal experience: this decision will bring you peace beyond anything you could ever imagine. And while it's true that you will have to do some work, Jesus will actually be doing the heavy lifting.

### OPENING PRAYER

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Heavenly Father, thank you for creating me and bringing me to this moment in time. Because you are God and lack nothing, you didn't need to create me in order to be happy. You did it solely out of love so that I can share in your joy for all eternity.

Even though I know I'll encounter problems and suffering in this life, your words in the Bible indicate that it is possible to break free from worry and experience peace. This supernatural peace comes from you and is not dependent on external circumstances.

Please send us a new outpouring of your Holy Spirit and guide us as we study your Word. Through the working of your Spirit, we pray that our hearts

will be opened and that our thoughts will be inspired. Please transform us into the image of your Son, Jesus, who always trusted you and never worried. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

## **MEETING DAY REFLECTION**

For today's reflection, turn to the introduction and read through the end of the "Key Themes" section. Then discuss the following questions (or if you're doing this on your own, write down your answers in a notebook, a prayer journal or the journal pages at the end of this book):

1. Why have I decided to do this book study? Do I consider myself a big time "worrier," or is there one particular area of my life that I struggle to give over to God?
2. Do you have a favorite Bible verse (or other saying) about worry? (Don't worry if you don't have one yet—by the time you finish this study, you will!)
3. If you could describe your relationship with God right now in three words (or one sentence), what would they be? What would you like those words to be?
4. What are you hoping to get out of this study? Of the key themes listed in the introduction, which stands out as something you would most like to learn about?
5. Talk about someone in your life, or someone you've read about, who you think has (or had) strong faith.

How does it show? Is there anything about this person you'd like to emulate?

## **TRUTHS TO KEEP IN YOUR HEART THIS WEEK**

1. Jesus tells us to stop worrying; therefore, it must be possible.
2. While it's virtually impossible to stop yourself from being afraid, it is always possible to turn your thoughts to God.
3. When you invite Jesus Christ to enter your life and help you with your problems, he will not refuse.
4. Giving up worry is a daily process. We do it one day, one hour, or even one minute at a time.
5. No matter how I feel, I can choose to surrender my problems (and my life) to Jesus.

## **CLOSING PRAYER**

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Dear Jesus—I honestly want to stop worrying, and I realize I can't do it on my own. Please grant me the grace to trust you more and move forward. If I fall and begin to worry in the next several weeks, help me to remember that even you fell three times during your Way of the Cross. Help me to focus on the present moment and not dwell on the past or the future.

Knowing that you are present with us, we now present to you our needs and intentions . . . (Respond with “Lord, hear our prayer.”)

Thank you for hearing our prayers, Lord. We trust that you will respond to them in the best possible way. We ask these things through the intercession of our Blessed Mother, Mary. Amen.

## **NOTES FOR THE WEEK**

Each day this week, there is a scripture verse and a brief reflection for you to read and ponder. If one verse is particularly meaningful, jot it down on a notecard and put it where you can see it throughout the week. On the seventh day (the day before your next meeting), take a few moments to answer the questions on what you’ve read to prepare for the discussion. As time permits, you might also want to take a peek at the Meeting Day reflection. Don’t forget to pray for the others in the group this week as the Spirit brings them to your mind.

# Day 2

## THE TIME TO BEGIN IS TODAY

The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent, and believe in the gospel.

—Mark 1:15

These are the first recorded words of Jesus in Mark's gospel. They remind us that, ready or not, it's time to make a decision. There are four important messages contained in this sentence. Let's look at each of them.

1. *The time is fulfilled.* Ready or not, now is the time to begin your effort to give up worry. Yesterday is a memory, and tomorrow is not guaranteed to anyone; I have only today to do all those things I should be doing to grow spiritually. This verse gives me a sense of urgency about getting my spiritual life in order *today*.
2. *The kingdom of God is at hand.* With all of the craziness going on around us, it's easy to lose sight of the nearness of God. Our life doesn't have to be a total mess for us to become distracted. If we're not careful, ordinary chores and responsibilities can consume our attention and cause us to lose sight of God's presence. Jesus is reminding us that we don't have to travel to a secluded island or an elaborate cathedral

to encounter him. He is with us in the messiness of daily life.

3. *Repent.* This is an interesting word. Typically, we associate repentance with sin. While that can certainly be true, the Greek word (*metanoéō*) used by Mark in his original manuscript has a broader meaning. It literally means to “change one’s mind” or “think differently afterwards.” Faced with the knowledge that God’s kingdom is near, Jesus challenges us to a radical conversion. We are instructed to change not only our deeds (through acts of prayer and mercy) but also the way we think.
4. *Believe in the Gospel.* It’s way too easy to dismiss this command as a “no brainer,” but that would be a huge mistake. Once again, the original Greek manuscript gives us some powerful insight. The word rendered in English as “believe” actually means “have faith in, trust in, or have confidence in” in Greek. Are you willing to make this your goal?

Your desire to give up worrying, once and for all, is the first step in surrendering control of your life to the Lord. Instead of worrying about things that are out of your control, you’ll learn to cast your cares on him. In other words, you’ll do your part, and Jesus will do his part.

The time is now. The kingdom is near. Are you ready to allow your thoughts to be guided by the Holy Spirit so you can think differently? Do you desire to express confidence in Jesus and trust him with your life? If your answer is yes (and I have a feeling that it is), let’s get started!

**RESPOND**

In your own words, tell Jesus about your desire to stop worrying. Let him know that you are choosing to trust him. Don't let your feelings get in the way. You can't control how you feel, but you can control how you respond. Finally, sign and date it to make it "official."



# Day 3

## WHAT ARE YOU THINKING?

Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth.

—Colossians 3:2

Today is the third day of our journey, and it's time to look at the first step in eliminating worry from your life. The answer is as simple as what St. Paul tells the people of Colossae in the above verse. You need to think about God more than you think about your problems. If you constantly dwell on your earthly challenges and difficulties, you will never experience peace in your life. If, on the other hand, you keep your focus on the Lord and turn to him each day, you will be at peace.

This does not mean you should ignore the problems in your life. It means you should let God help you to handle them. Most of us who are anxious by nature like to be in control. When we face a situation that is beyond our control, we often begin to worry. How can we overcome this? We begin by recognizing that the Lord, who truly is in control, wants to be part of our lives and help us. He doesn't expect us to handle the challenges of life alone. Rather, he wants us to do what we can and ask for his assistance with the heavy lifting.

Over the course of the next several weeks, we are going to work on doing this—one day at a time. For now, let's focus on the fact that there is a bigger picture than just this life and its problems. This program provides us the opportunity to look upward and remember that we were created to live with God forever in heaven. Before we get there, however, there is suffering to contend with on earth. As Catholics, we believe that this suffering has value and can help us (and those around us) reach our final goal of eternal happiness.

While it's impossible to stop yourself from being afraid, it is possible to turn your thoughts to God. Your brain cannot process two thoughts at the same time. Every minute spent thinking about the Lord (or better yet, conversing with him) is one less minute spent thinking about your problems. There are only twenty-four hours in a day. Your ultimate goal should be more “God time” than “worrying time.” It will take work at first, but it will be worth it.

It may sound easy to spend time thinking about God instead of your problems, but it can be difficult without setting concrete goals. Today, read the words of Jesus in John 14:1–3, and spend ten minutes picturing what heaven will be like. Ask the Holy Spirit to guide your thoughts.

## **RESPOND**

After you have thought about heaven, share your thoughts with Jesus. Tell him what excites you and what concerns you about living forever in heaven. Are you anxious to leave this

world (and its problems), or are you hesitant? Don't hold back. Freely share your thoughts with him.