

Dealing with Worry (Part 3)

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[0 : 00] This lesson finishes our look at what Jesus teaches us about dealing with worry.

! For the last two times we've met, we've been working our way through Matthew 6, verses 25-34. We also have reminded ourselves of an important connection.

That connection is that Matthew 6, verses 25-34 is tied to the verses that came before them, and we know that because of the therefore that starts verse 25.

Because of what Jesus has been teaching in the Sermon on the Mount, He expects us to behave a certain way. And because of that connection to verse 24 and the verses before that, let's read Matthew 6, verses 24-35 again.

Jesus said, No one can serve two masters, for he will either hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money.

[1 : 06] Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing?

Look at the birds of the air. They neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns. And yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?

And which of you, by being anxious, can add a single hour to his span of life? And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow.

They neither toil nor spin. Yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith?

Therefore do not be anxious, saying, What shall we eat, or what shall we drink, or what shall we wear? For the Gentiles seek after these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all.

[2 : 12] But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself.

Sufficient for the day is its own trouble. The main idea for tonight's study is the same as the last two times. Christians who worry about earthly needs are committing a sin that reveals a lack of faith.

As we've been going through this text, Jesus is showing us why that main idea is true. Christians who worry about earthly needs are committing a sin that reveals a lack of faith.

Before we do a quick review of the text itself, remember the difference between worry and concern. With both worry and concern, our minds are thinking about someone or some things that matter to us.

With worry, though, we become so preoccupied with those thoughts that we take no constructive action. With concern, our consideration of the person or situation drives us to take action to do something about it.

[3 : 23] Said another way, the difference between worry and concern is directly related to how we view God during that particular struggle. If we shut out God as though everything depends on us, that naturally leads to worry.

When we realize that our lives are in the hands of a Heavenly Father that knows our needs and is willing and able to care for our needs, we can be concerned, but we have no need to slip into worry. We are breaking this passage into four sections. During the first two lessons, we covered the overlooked context, the obvious command, and the outstanding case. Let's look at each of those for some review.

The overlooked context shows us that what Jesus says in verses 25-34 is connected to what he said in verses 19-24. That, again, is why we've been reading verse 24 every time we read the text

for this passage.

The obvious command is repeated three times. In verses 25, 31, and 34, Jesus said, Do not be anxious.

[4 : 31] Jesus says that if we are worrying, we are to stop. If we aren't yet worrying, we are never to start. And he says that we are to worry neither about the past nor the future, and, of course, the present as well.

In verses 25-32, that's where Jesus made the outstanding case for why believers should never worry. He laid out three reasons why.

The first reason Jesus gave for believers to avoid worry was a logical reason based upon the connection between verse 24 and 25. We should never worry because we cannot serve God and our possessions.

We serve a master who demands and deserves our undivided service. The second reason never to worry came in verses 26-32, or actually through 30.

Jesus used several examples to show that God is both willing and able to care for those who trust him. Think about those examples again. Jesus pointed out how our Heavenly Father feeds the birds.

[5 : 35] Then he reminded us that we are more valuable than those birds. His second illustration reminded us that worrying can never add any time to our lifespan.

Then Jesus' third illustration came in verses 28-30. He pointed out how God clothes temporary flowers and grass so effectively and so beautifully. Then Jesus said the words of verse 30, Verses 31 and 32 brought the outstanding case to a close.

In those verses, Jesus told us not to worry because God knows what we need. Jesus said that when we doubt God's ability to provide what we need, we demonstrate a lack of faith and act like unbelievers.

So let's put those three reasons together. We have a master who demands and deserves our undivided service. That master is both willing and able to care for us, and that master knows what we need.

If our master was willing and able to care for us, but he had no clue what we needed, then we would have reason to worry. However, remember that our master is the omniscient, omnipotent creator of the universe who knows everything and can do anything.

[7 : 01] That's the master who is both willing and able to care for us. So the obvious question is, if we truly grasp that we have that kind of master, why would we ever worry? So, so far in this passage, we've seen the three things we just reviewed.

The final section demands us to take action based upon what we've learned. Rather than to worry, Jesus commands us to make the opposite choice.

So the opposite choice is what goes into your blanks there. Let's look at that opposite choice as we cover verses 33 and 34.

Jesus said there again, but seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. Therefore, do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself.

Sufficient for the day is its own trouble. Verse 33 flows out of the three reasons why we should never worry. Rather than worry, we can focus on what our sovereign master commands.

[8 : 09] We can do that because we know our master will take care of us. In other words, make it your business to seek God's interest and follow God's way, then see what happens with your physical needs.

In his commentary on the Sermon on the Mount, John Stott typically uses proper sounding, very polite English. And that's one reason why this quote about verse 33 stands out.

John Stott said, To become preoccupied with material things in such a way that they engross our attention, absorb our energy, and burden us with anxiety is incompatible with both Christian faith and common sense.

It is distrustful of our Heavenly Father, and it is frankly stupid. That is what pagans do, but it is an utterly unsuitable and unworthy ambition for Christians. So just as Jesus has already called us in the Sermon to a greater righteousness, a broader love, and a deeper piety, he now calls us to a higher ambition.

Remember, that was a direct quote from John Stott, so I wasn't the one who called you stupid. That actually came from John Stott himself. Yeah, but you put it in there. That is true.

[9 : 21] I put it in there. I couldn't resist including that one. Let's dig deeper into verse 33 to see what our higher ambition should be. Jesus tells us to seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness.

The word translated seek there carries the meaning of seeking earnestly, seeking intensely, and actually living for doing that. Jesus even enforces the command by adding another word.

He says seek first. And so that means generally, principally, and above everything else, we are to give the kingdom of God and his righteousness priority. As we've seen in the discussion of the model prayer in verse 610 of this sermon, kingdom refers to a dominion or rule.

God's kingdom is God's sovereign rule. To seek first his kingdom is to seek first his rule, his will, and his authority. Does your mind, like mine, tend to jump to things like evangelism and missions when you think about seeking first God's kingdom?

Well, evangelism and missions are part of seeking God's kingdom, and we'll get to that shortly.

However, seeking first God's kingdom starts with each of us putting God first in every aspect of our lives.

[10 : 40] Here's another John Stott quote, and this time he won't call us stupid. He says, To seek first this kingdom is to desire of first importance the spread of the reign of Jesus Christ.

Such a desire will start with ourselves until every single department of our life, home, marriage and family, personal morality, professional life, and business ethics, bank balance, tax returns, lifestyle, citizenship, is joyfully and freely submissive to Christ.

It will continue in our immediate environment with the acceptance of evangelistic responsibility toward our relatives, colleagues, neighbors, and friends. And it will also reach out in global concern for the missionary witness of the church.

So we must get our own lives in order before we reach out and encourage others to become part of God's kingdom. That makes sense when we think about what Jesus has taught us so far in chapter 6.

Remember that the overall theme of chapter 6 is to avoid hypocrisy. Jesus started the section as we know of chapter 6 by warning us against hypocritical giving, fasting, and praying.

[11 : 51] He taught us to lay up treasures in heaven rather than being preoccupied with treasures on earth. If we say we're focused on God but concentrate on building earthly wealth, that's another form of hypocrisy because our actions fail to match our words.

Even this section on worry actually warns against hypocrisy. Jesus told us in verse 32 that when we worry we act like unbelievers. Similarly then, we cannot truly seek first the kingdom of God if we fail to put God first in our private lives.

John MacArthur listed a few ways that believers can seek God's kingdom. He said, seeking God's kingdom is losing ourselves in obedience to the Lord.

To seek first God's kingdom is to pour out our lives in the eternal work of our Heavenly Father. To seek God's kingdom is to seek to win people into that kingdom that they might be saved and that God might be glorified.

It is to have our Heavenly Father's own truth, love, and righteousness manifest in our lives and to have peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. We also seek God's kingdom when we yearn for the return of the King in His millennial glory to establish His kingdom on earth and to usher in His eternal kingdom.

[13 : 15] When MacArthur says that seeking God's kingdom is losing ourselves in obedience to the Lord, that is another way of saying that we must give God priority in our own lives.

Once we've done that, then we reach out to seek God's kingdom in our broader sphere of influence. So far, we've discussed only part of Jesus' command.

He says that we are to seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness. We know that righteousness is a characteristic of God's kingdom. That should have us asking why Jesus specifically called out righteousness when He made this sermon.

To answer that question, let's think about the other times we've heard Jesus mention righteousness in the Sermon on the Mount. Remember Matthew 5.6.

In the Beatitudes, He said, Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied. Later on in the Beatitudes, He said this in Matthew 5.10.

[14:16] Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Then in Matthew 5.20, He said, For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.

Chapter 6 started with these words. Jesus said, Beware of practicing your righteousness before other people in order to be seen by them, for then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven.

Striving after righteousness obviously has been a key theme in this sermon. It surfaces again here in verse 33 when Jesus says to seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness.

Jesus' reference to righteousness here may relate to the influence that Christians should seek on society. God's righteousness, then, is arguably, at least, a wider concept than God's kingdom. It includes the individual and social righteousness to which a reference has been made earlier in the sermon. God, because He Himself is a righteous God, desires righteousness in every human community, not just in every Christian community.

[15:32] The Hebrew prophets denounced injustice not only in Israel and Judah, but in the surrounding heathen nations as well. Amos, for example, warned that God's judgment would fall on Syria, Philistia, Tyre, Edom, Ammon, and Moab because of their cruelty and warfare and other atrocities in addition to falling on God's people.

One of God's purposes for believers is for them to make His righteousness attractive in personal, family, business, national, and international life. By doing that, we commend that righteousness to all men.

Then people outside of God's kingdom will see it and desire it and the righteousness of God's kingdom will spill over into the non-Christian world. The deep righteousness of the heart which Jesus emphasizes in the Sermon on the Mount is impossible to any but someone who is regenerate.

However, some degree of righteousness is possible in unregenerate society, in personal life, in family standards, and in public decency. Christians want to go much further than this and actually see people brought into God's kingdom through faith in Jesus, but at the same time, we should want to maintain outside the circle of the kingdom righteousness itself because righteousness is more pleasing to God than unrighteousness.

Justice is more pleasing than injustice. Freedom is more pleasing than oppression. Love is more pleasing than war and hate. And peace, of course, is also more pleasing than war.

[17:08] This interpretation of righteousness is consistent with what we've seen elsewhere in the Sermon. Think about Matthew 5, verses 13-17.

We won't read those verses, but in those verses, Jesus challenged believers to be salt and light to the world. Also, think about righteousness from this angle.

If we seek God's righteousness, we are seeking to become more and more like Him. And as we become more and more like God, our priorities change. That means we're going to be less likely to worry about earthly things.

As we've talked about the first part of verse 33, have you noticed how consistent Jesus' teaching here is with what He taught us in the model prayer? Think about the order of what we commonly know as the Lord's Prayer or the model prayer.

In Matthew 6, verses 9 and 10, Jesus said, Pray then like this, Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come, Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

[18:18] Only after we pray for God's kingdom to come did Jesus tell us to pray for our daily needs when we covered the model prayer. Going back to tonight's text, verse 33 ends with a promise.

It says, If you seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, all these things will be added to you. Well, the obvious question is, what are all these things?

Well, all these things are all the things that unbelievers worry about, our physical needs. And this points us back to the three reasons why believers should never worry. When we give our Master our undivided attention He deserves, God shows that He is willing and able to care for us because God knows what we need.

Look now at verse 34. Take into account everything Jesus has already said in this section. After He says all of that, He now says, Therefore, do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself.

Sufficient for the day is its own trouble. We already have covered the command to do not be anxious, so we'll focus on the second half of the verse where Jesus says, Tomorrow will be anxious for itself.

[19 : 37] Sufficient for the day is its own trouble. Some of you may be wondering how this part of the verse fits with the command to avoid worry. Jesus has spent all this time talking about why we should never worry, but then He says that tomorrow will have trouble.

What Jesus is telling us here is that when troubles come tomorrow, we are to practice what He's taught us in the previous verses. Here's how John MacArthur put it. He said, That each day has enough trouble of its own is not a call to worry about that trouble, but to concentrate on meeting the temptations, trials, opportunities, and struggles we have today, relying on our Father to protect and provide as we have need.

In other words, because we have a Master who deserves our undivided service, and because that Master is willing and able to provide for us, and because that Master knows what we need, we should stay focused on living today how that Master commands us to live.

We can do that because our Master is both the God of today and the God of tomorrow. God already knows what's going to happen tomorrow, so even if tomorrow brings trouble, we have no need to worry.

God will be there to take care of us and to see us through that trouble. God promises His grace for tomorrow and for every day thereafter and throughout eternity, but He does not give us grace for tomorrow now.

[21 : 06] He only gives us His grace a day at a time as we need it. Martin Lloyd-Jones says, We learn in our wisdom to take our days one by one as they come, forgetting yesterday and tomorrow, so we must learn this vital importance of walking with God day by day, of relying upon Him day by day, and applying to Him for the particular needs of each day.

The fatal temptation to which we are all prone is that of trying to store grace against the future. That means lack of faith in God. Leave it with Him, leave it entirely with Him, confident and assured that He will always be going before you.

Turn to Him and you will find that He is there and that He knows all about it and that He knows all about you. I like that last line. Turn to Him and you will find that He is there and He knows all about it and He knows all about you.

We need to take a couple of things from verse 34. First, we can and should prepare for the future. However, we should never become preoccupied with worrying about the future.

Here's another Martin Lloyd-Jones quote. He said, We are never to take so much thought about future things or to be so concerned about them as to allow them to dominate our life or limit our usefulness in the present.

[22 : 33] That is the point at which we cross the line from reasonable thought and care to anxious care and worry. Our Lord is condemning not the man who plows the earth and sows the seeds but the man who having done that sits down and begins to be worried about it and has his mind always centered on it.

The man who is obsessed by the problem of life and living and by fear of the future. That is the one thing Jesus condemns. Not only is that man limiting his usefulness in the present, not only is he crippling the present with fears for the future but above all he is allowing these cares to dominate his life.

The second thing we should take from this verse is that problems will come. The Bible warns us in the Sermon on the Mount and elsewhere that trials will come.

Listen to what Jesus said in John 15 verses 18 through 21. In John 15 verses 18 through 21 Jesus said If the world hates you know that it has hated me before it hated you.

If you were of the world the world would love you as its own but because you are not of the world but I chose you out of the world therefore the world hates you. Remember the word that I said to you a servant is not greater than his master.

[23 : 59] If they persecuted me they will also persecute you. If they kept my word they will also keep yours. But all these things they will do to you on account of my name because they do not know him who sent me.

Just a few verses later listen to what Jesus said in John chapter 16 and we'll read verse 1 through the first half of verse 4. Starting in John 16 Jesus said I have said all these things to you to keep

you from falling away.

They will put you out of the synagogues. Indeed the hour is coming when whoever kills you will think he is offering service to God. And they will do these things because they have not known the Father nor me.

But I have said these things to you that when their hour comes you may remember that I told them to you. So you can see that we'll face some trouble because we are Christians.

But we also will face some trouble just because we live in a fallen sin-cursed world. For us in the U.S. at least for now the daily problems resulting from a sin-cursed world are more common than the problems caused by persecution for our faith.

[25 : 15] Here's another Lloyd-Jones quote. He said every man in this life as the result of sin in the fall has his problems. Problems are inevitable existence in itself is a problem.

I shall therefore have to meet and face problems but I am not to allow myself to be dominated and crushed by that thought. Nobody looks forward to facing problems but aren't you glad the Bible is honest about the fact that we will face problems?

Some of you have suggested that we should quote the song Don't Worry, Be Happy as we've gone through this study. We can actually quote a better song than that.

Some of you may be familiar with the gospel song Through. Listen to the lyrics for the song Through. It says When I saw what lay before me Lord I cried what will you do?

I thought he would just remove it but he gently led me through. Without fire there's no refining without pain no release without flood there's no rescue without testing no belief Through the fire through the flood through the water through the blood through the dry and barren places through life's dense and maddening mazes through the pain and through the glory we will always tell the story of the God whose power and mercy will not fail to take us through.

[26 : 48] That brings us back to the main idea for this section remember that is that Christians who worry about earthly needs are committing a sin that reveals a lack of faith.

Martin Lloyd-Jones said God's children in this world are meant to live the life of faith they are meant to live in the light of that faith which they profess. I suggest therefore that there are certain questions with which we should always be putting to ourselves and here are some of them.

So listen to some of the questions he suggested we ask. Do I face the things that happen to me in this world as the unbelievers do? The next question is when I see these things happen to me when there seem to be difficulties about food or drink or clothing or difficulties in some relationship how do I face those difficulties?

how do I react? Is my reaction just like that of the heathen and of people who do not pretend to be Christian? How do I react during a war?

How do I react to illness or pestilence or loss? Then he digs a little deeper if that's not deep enough. He says let us go further.

[28 : 09] Does my Christian faith affect my view of life and control it in all matters? I claim to be Christian and hold to the Christian faith. The question I now ask myself is does that Christian faith of mine affect my whole detailed view of life?

Is it always determining my reaction and my response to the particular things that happen? Or we can put it like this is it clear and obvious to myself and to everybody else that my whole approach to life my essential view of life in general and in particular is altogether different from that of a non-Christian?

That is a tough question to think about isn't it? Then he goes on to say it should be meaning that we should be altogether different than what the unbelievers think.

The Sermon on the Mount begins with the Beatitudes. These Beatitudes describe people who are altogether different from others as different as light is from darkness as different as salt is from putrefaction.

So he continues then if then we are essentially different we must be different in our view of and in our reaction to everything. I know of no better question than a man can ask himself in every circumstance in life than that.

[29 : 32] When something happens to upset you do you ask is my reaction essentially different than what it would be if I were not a Christian? That's another tough question to think about.

Then he says let us remind ourselves of the teaching that we've already considered at the end of the fifth chapter of this gospel. You remember that our Lord put it like this and if you greet only your

brothers what more are you doing than others do not even the Gentiles do the same.

That's it. The Christian is a man who does more than others. He's a man who is absolutely different and if in every detail of his life his Christianity of his does not come in he is a very poor Christian he is a man of little faith.

Two weeks ago I promised that when we wrapped up this section of the Sermon on the Mount we would look at ways to apply Jesus' teaching to our lives. The best way to do that is to know what the Bible says to know what the Bible promises.

So this is a little bit of a Bible drill here and let's look at some of those promises and I adapted these from Sam Storm's teaching on this section. So when you worry about what people might do to you think about Romans chapter 8 verses 31 through 37 Romans chapter 8 verses 31 through 37 say what then shall we say to these things if God is for us who can be against us he who did not spare his own son but gave him up for us all how will he not also with him graciously give us all things who shall bring any charge against God's elect it is God who justifies who is to condemn Christ Jesus is the one who died more than at the right hand of God who indeed is interceding for us who shall separate us from the love of Christ shall tribulation or distress or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword as it is written for your sake we are being killed all the day long we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered!

[31 : 53] No in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who continues in verse 38 and says for I am sure that neither death nor life nor angels nor rulers nor things present nor things to come nor powers nor height nor depth nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord so again when you worry about what people might do to you think not just about verses 31 through 37 39 when you worry about being too weak remember 2nd Corinthians 12 9 2nd Corinthians 12 9 is where Paul wrote but he said to me my grace is sufficient for you for my power is made perfect in weakness when you have future decisions to make and you are tempted to worry about them think about

Psalms 32 8 Psalms 32 8 says I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go I will counsel you with my eye upon you then if you start worrying about whether God is really going to fulfill his promises consider Hebrews 6 18 Hebrews 6 18 says so that by two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for God to lie we who have fled for refuge might have strong encouragement to hold fast to the hope set before us so because it's impossible for God to lie we know he's going to be faithful to the promises that he's made to us if you worry about getting old think about Isaiah chapter 46 verse 4 God says there even to your old age I am he and to gray hairs I will carry you I have made and I will bear I will carry and will save when you worry about failing and falling as a Christian think about Philippians 1 6 of course Philippians 1 6 is the verse that says and I am sure of this that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ whenever we're tempted to worry in general we also can think of other scriptures listen to what Jeremiah wrote in Lamentations 3 verses 21 through 24 he said but this I call the mind and therefore I have hope the steadfast love of the Lord never ceases his mercies never come to an end they are new every morning great is your faithfulness the Lord is my portion says my soul therefore I will hope in him and of course there's also Philippians chapter 4 verses 4 through 7 Paul wrote there rejoice rejoice in the Lord always again I will say rejoice let your reasonableness be known to everyone the

Lord is at hand do not be anxious about anything but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God and the peace of God which surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus and then finally remember these verses that we've looked at before 1st Peter 5 verses 6 and 7 So where there's the realization that God is for us that he's an all sufficient God a spirit of contentment and rest should flood our souls nothing but the love of God shed through our hearts by the Holy Spirit can cast out dark and dismal feelings where faith is being exercised and where there is constant communion with God anxiety will never be able to cast us down and that was a quote from A.W. Pink James Montgomery Boyce said this about how to deal with worry he said you need to get into the habit of turning to God whenever you feel worry approaching your reaction in trouble should be something like a reflex we all know what a normal reflex is if you're working in the kitchen and accidentally get your hand too close to the stove your body will jerk the hand back you do not need to think about the action it comes naturally a conditioned reflex is exactly the same except that it has to be learned a conditioned reflex can be illustrated by your reaction when stepping on the break if you see a red

light or perhaps rising to your feet when somebody plays the star spangled banner these reactions are almost automatic but they do not result from instinct they are the result from training or practice in the same way we need reflexes that will turn us to the

[37 : 11] Lord at the first sign of trouble so whenever you feel trouble coming on remember to turn first to the Lord and that's the best thing you can do to deal with worry we spent time looking at so many cross references to show that both the Old and New Testament give us several reasons why we should never worry remember that worry is a sin but Psalm 119 11 tells us how to fight the sin of worry or any other sin the psalmist wrote I have stored up your word in my heart that I might not sin against you we serve a master who knows what we need and who is both willing and able to care for us so remember the words of Jesus that started this section he said therefore I tell you do not be anxious about your life what you will eat or what you will drink nor about your body what you will put on is not life more than father we thank you for this passage on dealing with worry and whenever we are tempted to worry and we know that we will be help us remember first to turn to you and bring our cares to you only then will we be able to put those cares in the proper perspective that's perspective related to an eternity spent with you be with us as we go through this week and as we continue our lives help us be examples to others on why

Christians should never worry in Jesus name we pray amen