

Christians Stop Worrying!

Matthew 6:25-34

Introduction

The Lord Jesus has talked about giving (vv.1-4); praying (vv.5-15); fasting (vv.16-18); treasures (vv.19-24); and now trusting (vv.25-34). Jesus condemned those who treasure up goods to satisfy themselves. Now Jesus invites us to evaluate our attitudes about the bare necessities; food, clothing and shelter. He does this by giving us some much needed instruction; don't worry about food or clothing because your life is so much more (v.25). He then uses a winsome illustration and invites us to consider the birds (vv.26-27) and consider the lilies (vv.28-30). The information and illustration are followed by an invitation (vv.31-34). Put the Lord first—Give Him first place and he will meet your needs.

John MacArthur writes; “The rich are tempted to trust their riches, the poor are tempted to doubt God's provision. The rich are tempted to become self-satisfied in the false security of their riches, and the poor are tempted to worry and fear in the false insecurity of their poverty” (p. 418).

If you are rich or poor or somewhere in between—what you believe about possessions and the presence or the absence of possessions in your life—is one of best indicators of your spiritual condition. We are human. We need food, clothing and shelter. But we are Christians. Blood bought and born again. We are citizens of the Kingdom of God. Since we will one day dwell in Heaven with Christ forever—we would do well to consider our destiny. We are creatures of two worlds; and the tension between those two worlds is the proving ground of our character. This is the place where we grow or shrink—we become dull or sharp. We are useful or useless. We are in the world—but not of it (John 14:14). If Christians are really the slaves of God and He is our Master (see v.24); He has the responsibility to care for us. So why worry? **In the Sermon Jesus confronts the listener with the reoccurring question; “Why won't you trust God?”**

Jesus has warned about religious externals; materialism (mammon). Wealth can enslave the heart and soul and mind. Yet most people believe that money is the greatest answer to life's most pressing problems. How many times have you thought; “If I just had more money my problems would be solved?” Remember those who desire riches fall into a temptation and a snare (see 1 Tim.6:9). **Money has the ability to both create and solve problems.** Jesus has already warned us that money can give us a false sense of security or sufficiency. But poverty can cause us to doubt God's goodness. **Worry is sin.** All sin is dangerous. Worry is a thief that steals peace, joy and contentment, health, and robs years from your life. When we discover that worry is sin, we often want to substitute the word for something that sounds less harmless, like ‘concern’, or ‘burden’ or ‘cross to bear’.

Just for fun I looked up the word worry in my synonym finder: under worry I found; “fret, agonize, lose sleep, stew, writhe, stay awake nights”; also included were “sweat blood, feel uneasy, be afraid, lose heart, despair, brood over, borrow trouble, bother, shake, fluster.” How appropriate! Worry winds up being a description of what we are—when we don't trust God! What do you worry about? Your job? Your lack of a job? Your children? Your singleness? Your

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marriage? The nation? The house-payment? Your retirement? What other people think? What is worry? In the Bible the word translated ‘worry’ means “to be drawn in different directions” or pulled apart. Some have translated the word “strangled” or “choked”. All of these are descriptions of the *effect of worry*. If you’ve ever agonized over making a payment; the loss of a job, or the paralyzing fear that grips you when a child runs away—or decides to live with you forever—you have experienced the effects of worry. Worry tears us apart.

Worry Is Faithless (v.25)

Matthew 6:25 (NKJV)25 “Therefore I say to you, do not worry 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?”

Jesus commands us not to worry. It is faithless; Godless; pointless; useless. The command in the Greek language is emphatic; stop it—and never do it again. The word ‘life’ is inclusive—it means your whole life—mental, physical, spiritual. The implication is that worry is sin. In another place Jesus tells us life is more than the abundance of our possessions. The person who dies with the most toys or treasure still dies. We live in an age of unprecedented materialism, consumption and self-indulgence. Greed and selfish ambition are viewed as virtues instead of vices. **If you don’t believe me just listen to the radio or television—even Christian radio or television—and their invitation to get rich quick schemes. There are five words that still deceive people; “you can have it all”. The truth—you can’t have it all.**

Jesus commands us not to worry—even about the essentials. The command to “not worry” is repeated three times (vv.25; 31; 34). Jesus points out the reasons not to worry; it is faithless, Godless; pointless; useless. It is faithless because it denies our true trust in our risen Master, it is Godless because it denies the reality of who God is; it is pointless because of our faith; and it is useless because of our future destiny in Christ. George Mallaory—an explorer and one of the first to make it to the top of Mount Everest wrote: We do not live to eat and make money. We eat and make money to enjoy life.” We might say—we eat and make money to glorify God and enjoy Him forever.

When we fall into the trap of worry—we inflate the problem—and deflate the solution. According to the National Bureau of Standards a dense fog covering seven city blocks to a depth of 100 feet is composed of something less than one glass of water! All the fog could be contained in one cup! This can be compared to the things we worry about. If we could see into the future and if we could see our problems in their true light—with the mind of Christ and the eyes of God; we place problems where they belong. If all things most people worry about—could be reduced to their size; it will easily fit in Christ’s communion cup. What we worry about is never as great in substance as the emotional energy spent to maintain our level of distrust. The mental and emotional strangulation is far worse than the presence or absence of whatever it is that we long for. Someone has said that worry is the exact opposite of contentment.

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One of my favorite stories from antiquity involve the philosopher Diogenes. He was a seeker of truth. Alexander the Great—was the undisputed Emperor of Western Civilization. Diogenes was sunning himself and Alexander the Great (who admired Diogenes) said, “Ask any favor you wish from me.” Diogenes respond, “Please move out of the sunlight.” To which Alexander said, “If I could not be Alexander, I would be Diogenes.” What a great example of contentment. Can you imagine if Bill Gates or Warren Buffet made the same offer to you! Ask me to give you whatever you want! **The first secret in overcoming worry is exercising contentment. “But godliness with contentment is great gain” (1 Tim. 6:6). Godliness and contentment and faith are all linked to our dependence upon Christ.**

Worry Is Godless (vv.26-30)

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

27 Which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature?

28 “So why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin;

29 and yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.

30 Now if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will He not much more clothe you, O you of little faith?

The root of worry is the sin of unbelief. Jesus gives three illustrations. One about eating; another about life and still another about clothing. Jesus refers to the God of Heaven as “your heavenly Father”. Don’t you know who your Dad is? God is your Father! Worry causes us to dismiss our Heavenly Father from our lives. We are not to worry about food; how long or how short our stay on earth or concern ourselves with clothing.

Perhaps Jesus was watching a flock of birds fly past. Birds do not have advanced degrees in agricultural or economy (there is nothing wrong in getting degrees in these areas). Birds do not publish cook books or have seed sales. Like all living creatures they rely on the Lord God for support. Jesus is not suggesting that birds do nothing to feed themselves. Anyone who has ever observed animals in the wild know how diligent and persistent they are in their search for food. But they do not worry. They are not treated for ulcers or stay glued to the TV watching fruit futures. They gather food, until they have enough, and when they need more—they get more. Certain species store up food for the winter—but they are not motivated by worry, fear or greed.

I read an interesting article about food and food shortages. The world produces enough food to adequately feed every man woman and child on planet earth. If the world’s food surpluses were divided over the last eighteen years each person would have received more than the minimum requirement of calories. Since 1960 the world’s food supply has never gone below 103% of the minimum requirement.

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The second illustration (v.27) comes from worrying about length of life! Again we are obsessed with life expectancy. We are living longer than ever before (if you exclude the opening chapters of Genesis). I saw a bumper sticker that said; “Eat right: Exercise and you still die”. There is nothing wrong with sensible eating and healthy life-style habits. Yet God is in control of life. He has determined the borders of when you will be born, how long you will live and when you will die. I am sure Jesus is saying this almost tongue in cheek. Worrying doesn’t make life longer—if anything it makes life shorter! You can worry yourself into an early grave. Health officials tells us that worry has negative effects on circulation, the heart, the glands and the whole nervous system. There was a time when we thought most diseases were linked to germs but some health professionals also include nutrition and stress to premature death.

In the third illustration Jesus uses flowers! Most people listening to Jesus had little clothing. Many people will say “clothing makes the man or woman” but Jesus says our real value does not consist in what we wear. Flowers do not decorate themselves. Was Jesus suggesting we walk around naked? No. We simply spend too much time “worrying, fretting, concerned over what we will wear” (I plead guilty). Whether you wear Payless shoes; Nike or Converse—how much time—effort—energy—resources go into clothes? Lusting after costly, expensive clothes is sinful and wasteful. Some people have made fashion a god. If you insist on having only the finest money can buy—it may be that you are clothing your pride. Again does this mean you can’t buy or wear fine clothes? Does this mean that personal appearance doesn’t matter?

Your mind may have wandered. You might think; “worry is such a little thing” or silly sin. Why not concentrate on the big leagues like murder, lying, stealing, adultery? If a cop pulls you over for speeding you might think—don’t you have bigger fish to fry? Yet worry is no little sin. Worry is an assault on the love of God! It questions His love and doubts His goodness; His affection and integrity! Worry is another way of saying; ‘I don’t trust God, I am not counting on His promises and I don’t believe God’s Word.’ It’s kind of like talking out of both side of your mouth. Worry means being controlled by circumstances; mastered by fear; dominated by doubt. Worry is accepting the perspective of the moment and rejecting the eternal perspective. This is why life in the Lord Jesus Christ includes daily prayer; daily Bible study—to give us fresh perspective; a consistent wholesome outlook on God and His provision. The absence of those disciples gives Satan the opportunity to fill the void—fill the vacuum of our thinking with doubt—discontentment and then despair. **Worry has the sinister capability of kicking God out of our thinking!**

Look at verse 30. Pay close attention to the phrase; “O you of little faith”. The source of anxiety, the root of worry is unbelief. The absence of faith. Thus it is Godless. Lisa Owens was facing knee surgery. She was a bit nervous about it, so she asked her boss, the veterinarian in the clinic where she worked if he had any advice for her. He was very comforting and without hesitation told her; “Turn your worries into prayers, get plenty of rest and don’t lick your incision” (Reader’s Digest).

Worry Is Pointless (vv.31-33)

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31 *“Therefore do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’*

32 *For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things.*

33 *But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.*

When we worry about material things we are in effect living like people who have no real relationship with the living Lord of the Bible. We are living like the heathen or pagan. People who do not know God preoccupy themselves with what they do know! **They know that eating and drinking and dressing give them pleasure!** When you have nothing to live for except the present—except pleasure—except some specific purpose—indulgence and this moment become all important. **We don’t blame the unbeliever for acting out in their unbelief. The problem lies with the Christian who pretends that God isn’t real and doesn’t matter.** People who do have God to take care of the physical things in life—need to take care of themselves.

Materialism and Selfism are perfectly consistent with the self-absorbed. For Christians—**worry is pointless. Worry is unreasonable.** The Christian claims a God who supplies needs. In ancient times people believed gods supplied their needs. Helios was the sun god who provided light; Demeter or Ceres provided grain. Diana or Aphrodite supplied fertility for children; increased cattle supplies etc. These man made gods were part imagination—part demonic—energized by Satan for deception. The gods demanded much, promised little, and were constantly feared. People would steal moments of pleasure or satisfaction here or there. But have things really changed all that much? People still live today—in the gods they have fabricated—earth as god—materialism as god—scientism—as god—sexual expression as god; reason as god. The pantheon in modern society—drugs and alcohol (Pan); the goddess of sex—government—war.

Worry Is Useless (v.34)

34 *Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.*

What have we learned? Worry is faithless—Godless—pointless—and now useless. Worry doesn’t make sense, because of our future. Here Jesus gives us great insight on how to deal with worry.

Worry is pointless for the person who believes that the God of the Bible is God. Earlier God said that knew our secrets our thoughts, (your Father knows what you need before you ask). Here Jesus gives us great insight into how to deal with worry. Jesus is not saying—make no provision for tomorrow. It makes sense to buy milk and groceries for today and tomorrow. There is a difference between making a reasonable provision for tomorrow and worrying about tomorrow (Lamentations 3:22-23). “Through the Lord’s mercies we are not consumed, because His compassion’s fail not. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.”

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Some people are so committed to worry, if they can't find something to fret over today; they will tear themselves up about tomorrow.

We can concentrate on the trials, the problems, the opportunities and struggles we face today. Tomorrow will bring a new set of temptations. God promises wisdom for today; grace for today; strength for today; forgiveness for today; mercy for today. God's grace is good for tomorrow; but it must be embraced today. Like the manna that fell from Heaven it must be eaten the day it falls. Seek solutions for today's problems today. Isaiah 26:3-4; "You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind mind is stayed on You, because he trusts You. Trust in the Lord forever, for in Yah, the Lord is everlasting strength".

What You Can Do If You Worry—

1. Deal with your problems one day at a time. Problems are real. We are not commanded to ignore or pretend that real problems exist. An exercise I have found helpful is to write down three questions on a piece of paper. Leave plenty of room to answer the questions. (1) what is my problem? (2) What does God want me to do about it? (3) When, where and how shall I begin? From a very early age I was taught to define my problems in terms of my goals. To gather information and test the reliability of that information. What am I trying to accomplish? If the problem lies in my marriage I don't say—"my problem is my marriage". Rather "God's goal for marriage is unity. I do not have unity in my marriage. How can I have unity in my marriage? What are the ingredients of unity according to the Bible?"

2. Remember to deal with today's problems today! We are familiar with the expression; "today is the first day of the rest of your life." In her book *Celebrate Joy*; Velma Seawell Daniels gives a striking new meaning to this phrase. She tells of interviewing a man who made a trip to Alaska to visit people who live above the Arctic Circle. "Never ask an Eskimo how old he is" the man said. "If you do, he will say, "I don't know and I don't care." And he doesn't. One of them told me that, and I pressed him a bit further. When I asked him the second time, he said, "Almost—that's all." That still wasn't good enough for me so I asked him "Almost what?" and he said, "Almost one day." Mrs. Daniels asked him if he could figure out what the Eskimo meant. He answered that he did but only after talking to another man who had lived in the Arctic Circle for about twenty years. "He was a newspaperman who had written a book about Eskimos and their customs and beliefs. He said the Eskimos believe that when they go to sleep at night they die—and they are dead to the world. Then, when they wake up in the morning, they have been resurrected and are living a new life. Therefore, no Eskimo is more than one day old. So that is what the Eskimo meant when he said he was 'almost' a day old. The day wasn't over. "Life above the Arctic Circle is harsh and cruel, and mere survival becomes a major accomplishment," he explained. "But you never see an Eskimo who seems worried or anxious. They have learned to face one day at a time." Have you learned how to put worry and anxiety aside and live one day at a time?

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Conclusion

The believer has nothing to worry about. The same cannot be said of the unbeliever and the make believer. Does God in His common grace and sovereign grace make material provisions for all? God is under no obligation to those in rebellion—and yet here is love—(Rom.5:6-8) “For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”

The cure for worry: Contentment in Christ. And so my God impart to contentment;

Enough happiness to keep you sweet.

Enough trials to keep you strong.

Enough sorrow to keep you human.

Enough hope to keep you happy.

Enough failure to keep you humble.

Enough success to keep you eager.

Enough friends to give you comfort.

Enough wealth to meet your needs.

Enough enthusiasm to make you look forward to tomorrow.

Enough determination to make each day better than the day before.