

Overcoming Worry **Matt. 6:25-34, Luke 18:9-14**

Introduction:

Please turn in your bible to Matt. 6:25-34.

You might think that I am crazy, but I have always enjoyed jogging. I don't know why exactly, but it is something that has helped me through the years to feel better physically, to relieve stress, and even to serve as a hobby in my life. I love the feeling of endurance that running gives and the idea of conquering certain distances and how it clears my mind. Unfortunately, while I like jogging, in recent years I have not been very consistent with it. Some of that has been due to physical restrictions such as shin splints and knee issues that I have had, but some it has to do with, as my wife has pointed out to me, habits that I have built into my running routine. You see, it used to be when I was younger and much more consistent in my running, that I would just throw on some running clothes and go and enjoy. But now there are certain conditions that must be met before I feel right about even going running or once I have begun to continue running. For instance, I must have my blue shorts because they have the best pockets to put my iPhone in. I have to have one of my running shirts. The ones that breathe not cotton! And I must have my iPhone and earphones ready to listen to music as I run. The problem with these new necessities is that many times they deter me from actually running. If all the clothing and electronic stars do not line up when I get the urge to run then there will be times I will just not go or if I start running and my radio or earphones get messed up, I will stop my run to try and fix them, get frustrated and again sometimes even cut my run short. And the sad thing about this is that all of these new requirements are not really necessary for me to run but I have allowed these tertiary routines and habits to choke out the joy and purpose of running in my life.

And I believe this same type of scenario is being played out every day in the life of believers in Christ. Paul says in Romans 14:17 that the Kingdom of God is characterized by righteousness, peace, and joy but for many of us these characteristic are being choked out of our life because we have allowed worries and anxieties of this world to strangle out the purposeful, fulfilling task of living out God's mission for our life. And here's the sad part, all these worries and anxieties that we exert energy and time in feeding ultimately amount to absolutely nothing from a God's Kingdom Perspective. They are nothing more than peripheral garbage that encumbers us, drags us down, and keeps us from realizing the fullness of serving God in righteousness, peace, and joy and fulfilling His mission and plan for our life for His Kingdom.

Transition:

So what characterizes your life? Do you feel like you're on task or are you being bogged down by worry and anxiety? This morning we are going to tackle the topic of worry and if you find yourself caught in a web of anxiety, then I believe God has word for you this morning because Jesus addresses the subject of worry directly in Matt. 6 starting in vs. 25. Read with me.

Background:

SO What's The Big Deal About Worry?

So what's the big deal about worry? Because starting in Matt. 6:25, Jesus gives a clear command to his audience, "Do Not Worry About Your Life!" As a matter of fact, Jesus is so emphatic about this command that he gives this command three times in this passage-in verse 25, 31, and 34. As I was studying this passage the question that came to my mind was, "Why is Jesus so emphatic about worry?" I mean isn't worry just a normal part of life that shows that we are responsible people. Let's face it, if it wasn't for the motivation of a little anxiety, we

would never catch a plane, pass an exam or meet a deadline. But as I meditated on this passage, I realized that Jesus' command is not about responsibility but about life! Going back to verse 25, Jesus says, "Therefore, do not worry about your life"! The word life, in this command, is a comprehensive term meaning a person's full being, his physical, emotional, and spiritual being. Jesus is referring to life in its fullest possible sense. Furthermore, the word for worry has the idea of choking or strangling. In other words, worry has the capability of suffocating our life. Have you ever been there? Has there ever been a time in your life that worry and anxiety seemed to take over to the extent that it negatively affected your daily living?

This is why worry is such a big deal to Jesus because worry has the capacity to choke out the fullness of life that Jesus intended for his followers particularly as it relates to serving in his Kingdom. So Jesus essentially says, Stop it! A life consumed with worry should not be the norm for a follower of Christ. So let's look in this passage to the reasons Jesus gives as to why we should stop it.

1. Worry focuses too much on finding fulfillment from this world (6:25, 28, 31-32a)

Cool Aide Example: You know there are some things that will never serve as a substitute to the real thing. My wife and I have been trying to cut back on the amount that we are spending at the grocery store and so we have been try to figure ways to cut cost on certain items that we are buying. For some reason, I felt like switching from cool aide to a generic brand was going to make a significant dent in our overall bill. Needless to say, I made the switch and after I made my first batch colored water I was relenting over the fact I should have paid the extra .20 cent to get cool aide. Because what I tasted was nothing near to the flavor of a cherry. You just can't substitute the real thing and think that you're going to be happy with it!

The same is true in our life. No matter how much we think that we can convince ourselves that the world has something better to offer, the simple fact is that there is no substitution for God in our life!

Jesus tells us not to worry about our life, what we will eat, or drink, or our body what we will wear. And at first glance, that looks a little unfair because food, drink, and clothing are the basic necessities of life. It would be hard not to be concerned about these things. But the key word is worry. We are not to worry about it. He goes on to say that life, (there goes that word again), is more important than food, and the body more important than clothes. You see Jesus knows us well. He knows that we as mankind have a natural inclination to be obsessed with gratifying ourselves and our bodies. The point that Jesus is making here is whether we are rich or poor, have lots of things or have nothing, we are not to become too preoccupied with ourselves and our bodies to the point that all we do is worry about seeking satisfaction from earthly things that in the long run will amount to nothing related to life! The truth is that our bodies do not give us life, but are given life by God, who is the source of all life-spiritual, emotional, and physical.

Example: Gary Taylor sent an email from Brazil that touched my heart and in which I believe illustrates this point well, listens to what he says about a man named Charlie:

I want to share with you about my friend who is a 34-year-old young man, whose name is Charlie. He has been working with us for over 15 years. Charlie's nickname is 24/7. Whatever you need, Charlie is there, willing and able to serve. He came from a broken home. He lived in the streets of Belo Horizonte Brazil without a home as a street kid from the age of six until he was 10 years old. When he was finally put into a home for boys, he ran away

twice. He has no formal training. He learned to speak English by listening to music. Today, he lives with some of his family and he washes cars for \$2.50 per car to earn money to feed his mother. Charlie gets excited over the simplicities of life. Two years ago we flew him from Belo to Porto Seguro by plane. When he arrived he told us every detail about the flight. He was so excited. Just to eat a meal, he will grin and say, "Praise God". When we talk about things for which there appears to be no answer, Charlie always says, "God knows." God has used Charlie to show me how far I have moved toward the American dream and moved away from the dream of God. God has used Charlie to show me that I am guilty. I am guilty of looking at a person and being proud I am not that person. I am guilty of trying to appear important to others more than I really am. I am guilty of wanting people to praise me for what I do. I am guilty of not asking God to bless those who have wronged me. I am guilty of not praying for my enemies. I am guilty of not inviting those who are poor, blind, and lame to eat dinner with me. I am guilty of wanting to live a comfortable life. I am guilty of living the American dream and thinking that bigger is better. I am guilty of being selfish and using and wanting more than I need. I am guilty of doing more for myself than I do for others. I am guilty of not giving up everything to follow Christ. I am guilty of promoting myself more than God. I am guilty of depending on my own power more than God. . I am guilty of allowing money to become my security and safety net. The Lord has used a 34-year-old, dirt poor young man to show me the power of the risen Savior.

I believe when we get to Heaven many of us so called "good, accomplished" Christians will be sitting on the back row, trying to get a glimpse of God, and the Charlie's of the world will have a front row seat. Part of me wants to buy him a ticket and bring him back to the US and give him a new American life, but that would only ruin Charlie. No, God wants Charlie to stay right here, being the salt and light of the world. I need to become more like Charlie rather than Charlie becoming more like me.

When I read that email, I felt like Gary was speaking directly to me because I share the guilt he talks about. How about you? What are you preoccupied with? What are you worried about? Is it a house, a job, a relationship, physical appearance, money, popularity, recognition, social status, you fill in the blank. Please know this, none of these things will give you fulfillment because there is no substitute that you will ever find that will fill your need for God.

2. Worry is a waste of God's Gift of Life! (Matt. 6:27, 34)

Have you ever heard the statistics story? Many people who have wrote or spoke about worry have used this story. It's comes from an anonymous woman who realized that fear was ruining her life and so she began keeping track of what she was worrying about and this is what she found...

- **40% of the things we worry about are about things that will never happen.**
- **30% of the things we worry about were about things that have already happened, water under the bridge.**
- **12% of the things we worry about are about others' opinions and criticisms which many times are unjust and made by jealous or insecure people**
- **10% of the things we worry about are needless health worries, which makes our health worse by worrying.**
- **8% of the things we worry about may be "legitimate," since life has some real problems to meet.**

And while I don't know how valid these statistics really are, I do believe the principle behind the statistics speaks a reality. Worry is futility! Jesus says, "Who of you by worrying can add a

single hour to his life?" In other words, we are not in control of life! No matter how much we try to extend or lengthen our life by worry, the reality is that God has bounded the life of every person. Life is not in our hands. God is the author of life and each day we live is a gift from Him to be used for his purposes. And here is what I believe, there are some of us that are so caught up and committed to worry that we are missing out on the blessings, opportunities, gifts of the life that God has given us today! When was that last time that you looked up from your worry and realized the gifts and opportunities before you? When was last time you realized the gifts and opportunities you have to serve God's Kingdom in your family, in your friends, in your job, with your health, or around your home. If we could just take a moment to see the forest beyond the trees, we would understand that God setting before us each day a gift of life, don't miss it!

Example: Hospital Visitation

Jesus says in verse 34, "Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own." The point is that each day brings with it an opportunity to live, don't waste it on worry!

3. Worry undermines the character of our Heavenly Father (Matt. 6:26-30)

Example: Wrapped Around Their Finger:

My wife has told me a number of times that my two daughters have got me wrapped around their finger. And it's true, there have been times that I have caught myself doing things for my daughters that are not necessary but I do them because they know that I will do it. They know that daddy has a soft spot and as a result, they take advantage of that soft spot when opportunity presents itself. And while I am not a complete push over with my girls, they know this fact, they know I care for them. Fathers naturally care for their children. Fathers want to give and provide for their children because they are important to them, they love them, they bear his image.

And while we will never be able and shouldn't try to wrap God around our fingers, there is one thing we ought to know and that is our Heavenly father cares for us. We are important to him because those who put their trust and faith in Jesus are his children. John 1:12 says, "Yet to all who receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God." and anyone knows that a father loves his children.

The point that Jesus is making in these verses is that there is no need for worrying about our life because we have a Heavenly father who is the provider of everything. And if he provides food for the bird of the air and he clothes the lilies of the fields which are here today and gone tomorrow, then how much more will he care for you, child of God? It is almost as if Jesus is asking, "Have you forgotten who your father is, O you of little faith?"

You see that is really what worry is, ultimately worry is a lack of faith and trust in God as our provider. I love the way John MacArthur puts it, **"We believe that God can redeem us, save us from our sin, break the shackles of Satan, take us to heaven where he has prepared a place for us, and keep us for all eternity and yet we do not trust Him to supply us our daily needs. We freely put our eternal destiny in His hands, but at times refuse to believe He will provide what we need to eat, drink, and wear.** Mr. MacArthur goes on to say, **"Worry is not a trivial sin, because it strikes a blow at both God's Love and at God's integrity. Worry declares our heavenly Father to be untrustworthy in His Word and His Promises...Worry is therefore not only debilitating and destructive but maligns and impugns God."**

This is why I believe Jesus gives a slight rebuke to not worry in verse 31 because it gives a false testimony of God. Unbelievers are the ones who worry and fret over earthly things because they have no hope to do otherwise, but believers should know better. We have a heavenly father who loves us and cares for us and in which we know will provide for us. That's the testimony of God the world wants to see. There is someone in this sanctuary today that is looking for that type of testimony, thousands of people in Jackson are looking for it, people all of the world are looking for something different than what they are caught up in. And the only place they are going to find it is within believers who live for a God they trust. What kind of testimony do we give if we are consumed with worry? We must trust Him for who he is so that we communicate to the world we have something they need.

Application:

So what do we do if we find ourselves worrying about life? How do we make a change in order to align ourselves with God's purpose for our life and regain a sense of fulfilment and joy instead of drain? Well, Jesus gives us the answer. Look at verse 33. Jesus says,

"But seek first His Kingdom and His righteousness,
and all these things will be given to you as well."

We must do two things to fix our worry problem:

1. We must submit our life to God.

God's kingdom represents God's dominion and sovereign rule. So to seek God's kingdom means to submit first to His rule, will, and authority for our life. In order to quit worrying, there must come a time that we are willing to lose ourselves to the Lord. Jesus says in **Matt. 16:24**, "**If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will find it.**" That's why Jesus says, don't worry about your life because it not yours to worry about anyway. Our life belongs to God! So instead of messing it up with worry, give it up and allow God to take control.

2. We must realize our need for Jesus.

To seek God's righteousness means that we are to hunger and thirst for perfect holiness in our life rather than worldliness. But here's the problem, the last time I checked, I am still not perfect. In fact, perfect holiness is impossible for sinful man without the blood of Jesus. In other words, we need Jesus to make us right. And how do we show we need Jesus, well I think one of the best pictures of how we can show we need Jesus is found in a parable Jesus tells in **Luke 18:9-13** turn with me there. The scripture says,

- **⁹To some who were confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everybody else, Jesus told this parable: ¹⁰"Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. ¹¹The Pharisee stood up and prayed about^[a] himself: 'God, I thank you that I am not like other men—robbers, evildoers, adulterers—or even like this tax collector. ¹²I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.' ¹³"But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, 'God, have mercy on me, a sinner.'**

That's it. We show we need Jesus when we finally come to a place, like this tax collector, when admit that we cannot live a right life without Him. We must seek his mercy for our life and depend on his grace to save us and make us right. When is the last time that you quit riddling

yourself with worry about your life and admitted to Jesus that you need him to make your life right? When is the last time you sought out God's mercy for your life? When is the last time you humbled yourself before God and admitted that you can't do this life thing on your own? If we are going to get rid of worry then we must quit trying to compare ourselves with other, we must quit trying to do thing ourselves and we need to get on our knees before Jesus and beg for mercy to make us right. That's the remedy to worry. We must Make submission and dependency to God priority in our life.