



Release and Receive

July 2-8, 2023

MAIN POINT

The antidote to anxiety and worry is a faith in God's love for His people and His sovereignty over their lives.

INTRODUCTION

What are some things you worry most about?

Who do you tend to turn to for a listening ear when you are anxious?

The presence or absence of worry is often a reflection of our faith in God. As believers, we aspire to a single focus on God and loyalty toward Him. In this passage, Jesus taught that worry is unproductive. Not only is it unproductive, it's the opposite of faith in God.

UNDERSTANDING

Do you consider worry a sin? Explain your answer.

What does the fact that so many of us struggle with worry say about our culture? What does it say about our faith? Instead of beating ourselves up over this struggle, how should we respond?

READ [LUKE 12:22-26](#).

According to these verses, what are the specific reasons and examples Jesus gives us for not worrying about the basic needs of life?

What's required for us to take seriously Jesus' instruction not to worry about the necessities of life?

In verse 23, Jesus states, "For life is more than food and the body more than clothing." Is the only source for fulfillment and meaning to our lives what we eat and what we wear? Of course not. Jesus is establishing the fact that worry is illogical for the child of God. If God is the Creator of the world, including us, then will He not also provide for our needs?

When we worry, what are we saying about our view of God and our relationship with Him?

How has worry hindered your faith and negatively impacted your relationship with God? What eventually helped you overcome that worry?

READ [LUKE 12:27-30](#).

What additional reasons for not worrying do you take away from these verses?

What is the main problem with worry in the life of a Christian?

Faith calls for trust in a loving and personal God at work in the world. Worry shows a lack

of faith. Jesus' teaching by no means ignores the reality of poverty and hunger among the people of the earth. However, Jesus' clear teaching for believers is to trust God above all. If the Lord faithfully provides for the needs of mere creatures and even plants, how much more will He provide for us—His children?

**Is it practical to depend on God for vital necessities like food and clothing?
Why do you think He expects us to?**

**Trusting God with everything is easier said than done.
What spiritual disciplines—such as prayer, worship, study, fasting, and so forth—
have you found helpful for fighting worry?**

Why do praising God and giving thanks to Him undermine worry?

READ [LUKE 12:31-34](#).

Practically speaking, what does it mean to “seek His kingdom”?

How have you seen Jesus' statement in verse 31 proven true in your life?

In what practical ways does overcoming our fears allow us to exhibit our faith?

Jesus encourages us to rest in our positions in God's kingdom ([vv. 29-34](#)) instead of being consumed by worry and fear. First, remember that God loves as a Father loves. We should not think of God as far away and unapproachable or even as a king who is not accessible. As our Father, God loves and cares for us. Second, God is personal; we have a personal relationship with Him. Finally, as both God and Father, He knows that we need the basics of life. Christians never have to worry about whether God knows or cares about their needs. Instead of worrying, believers can seek the kingdom of God and trust Him. We can focus on living out His mission. If His will is our priority, we will be less concerned about material matters and more committed to eternal relationships.

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

How would your life be different if you lived the way Jesus sets forth in this passage?

What are some examples of actions that show a person is seeking first God's kingdom?

What are some ways to keep the work of Christ central to your thinking as you try to seek His kingdom first?

PRAYER

Pray that the work of Christ would overwhelm all lesser concerns, and that joy and abundant life would define the lives of those in the church.

COMMENTARY

LUKE 12:22-34

12:22-23. Worry occupies too much of our lives. Jesus told the disciples clearly: Do not worry about life's necessities, food and clothing. The central core of life is much more than eating and clothing. Now this is not intended to dismiss the pleas of someone deep in poverty. Such a person needs to trust in God, but he or she also needs to be able to trust in us as God's instruments to care for his needy people. The verse is directed at people like the man planning to build a new barn who have sufficient earthly goods and spend their time scheming and fretting how to get more. Let God take care of the essentials, Jesus declared. You be sure you are prepared to face God's final judgment. Certainly, if you are not going to worry about the basics, do not worry about the rest of it either. Worry is not a part of God's menu for living. Let the Holy Spirit lead in your decision-making process, and trust him to lead you to meaningful life. Trust eases worry out of your life.

12:24. Jesus illustrated his point from nature. Ravens cannot farm. A raven will never grow and harvest a crop or build a barn. This means they never know where today's food is coming from, much less tomorrow's. Still, they live a good life and seldom miss a meal. God provides for the ravens. Cannot you trust him to provide for you? After all, who is worth more to God—a raven in the skies or a person made in his image and entrusted with caring for his universe?

12:25. What do you accomplish by worrying? We are not certain precisely what Jesus meant by his example. The Greek word for "single hour" can mean either eighteen inches or one hour. Jesus may have been talking about adding to one's height or to one's time on earth—probably the latter. Whichever is meant, worrying accomplishes nothing. Rather, worrying slumps the shoulders and stresses the body so much that it may actually subtract hours or years from your life.

12:26. Jesus concluded almost comically. If you cannot do such a small thing as create an hour, why worry about anything else? You certainly cannot accomplish the rest. Worry is not worth the effort.

12:27-28. Need another example? Look at the wildflowers in the field. Not one of them ever picked up needle and thread to make beautiful clothes for themselves, Jesus pointed out. Yet who has clothing as beautiful as theirs? Not even the fabulously rich Solomon ([1 Kings 10:4-6, 23](#))! What is going to happen to these beautiful flowers? They will dry up and be burned for fuel in a day or two. If God does such an elaborate job for such fleeting flowers, what will he do for you? You are worth so much more than fragile flowers. Where is your faith? Trust God for what you need. Quit worrying!

12:29-30. The sum total of it all: Do not spend so much effort and worry on things God has promised to provide. Do not fret over what might happen. Do not let radical mood swings control your life. God will take care of you. Trust him.

12:31-32. Freed from worry and stewing over material things, what are you to do? Set up one goal and accomplish it. Be part of God's kingdom. Do the work he gives you to do. Concentrate on being God's instruments to establish his kingdom here on earth. As he provided for the mission of the Twelve and of the seventy-two, so he will provide for you. Surrender your fear. Do not let anxiety rule your life. Trust the Father. The delight of his life is to find ways to give not just daily needs but his whole kingdom to you. Kingdom heirs don't have to worry about the small stuff.

12:33. We must go one step further. Dedication to Jesus is more than becoming worry-free. It is loving and living like him. So do not depend on your money. Give what you own to the poor. Do not even be tempted by your moneybags or purses. These will just grow old, rot, and be ruined. You need purses that can never be ruined. Such are not earthly, but heavenly. Obey God, practice his word, follow with him to the cross. Trust him. You will store up your heavenly treasures. Treasures here bring fears of thieves and robbers. Such people do not exist in heaven. Nothing can destroy or rob you of your treasure there. Earthly treasures you will constantly worry about. Heavenly treasures give no cause for worry.

12:34. To summarize the matter: Choose where you want to store up treasure. Your heart, the center of emotions and mental activities, will concentrate on where you have your treasures. Your identity is determined by where your heart is. Ignore God, and spend all your physical, emotional, and psychic energy on the world's goods and earthly success. Or trust God, and spend all your efforts on kingdom matters. To worry or not to worry—that is your question!