

SERMON DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

September 7, 2025

The Gospels

“Alternative to Worrying”

Matthew 6:25-34

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In his book, *Your Church is Too Safe*, Mark Buchanan writes: “My favorite YouTube video is a five-minute clip from an episode of *The Bob Newhart Show*. Bob, as you may know, is a psychologist in the show. In the scene, a woman comes for her first visit. Bob begins by explaining how he bills—\$5 for the first five minutes, and then nothing after that. The woman is thrilled. Bob assures her the session won't go over five minutes. He asks her to start. She explains that she fears being buried alive in a box. He asks her to say more. The fear, she tells him, extends to other things—being in tunnels, elevators, houses, cars, ‘anything boxy.’ Bob asks, ‘So basically you're saying you're claustrophobic?’ She answers, ‘Yes, that's what I'm saying.’ This exchange takes about two minutes. Bob takes another ten seconds or so to empathize with her—how awful it must be to live with this fear. ‘It's horrible,’ the woman says. ‘All right,’ Bob says, ‘I'm going to give you two words that I think will clear up everything. Just take these two words and integrate them into your daily life, and you should be fine.’ The woman is excited. She asks if she should write them down. Bob says, ‘Oh, you can if you like, but most people have no trouble remembering them.’ ‘Okay,’ she says, leaning forward. ‘You ready?’ he asks. ‘Yes,’ she says. Bob says, ‘Okay, here are the two words.’ Bob leans across his desk to put his face close to hers. ‘Stop it!’” Don't you wish the cure to stop worrying or being filled with so much anxiety is to pay a psychologist \$5 to hear the words, “Stop it” and you are cured? While Jesus does agree with Bob Newhart that we are to just stop it, Jesus offers us more counsel on what to do when worrying creeps up and tries to overtake us. Jesus brings these timeless words of wisdom to us in a series of teachings found in what we call Jesus' Sermon on the Mount.

Matthew 6:25-34

²⁵ “That is why I tell you not to worry about everyday life—whether you have enough food and drink, or enough clothes to wear. Isn't life more than food, and your body more than clothing? ²⁶ Look at the birds. They don't plant or harvest or store food in barns, for your heavenly Father feeds them. And aren't you far more valuable to him than they are? ²⁷ Can all your worries add a single moment to your life?

²⁸ “And why worry about your clothing? Look at the lilies of the field and how they grow. They don't work or make their clothing, ²⁹ yet Solomon in all his glory was

not dressed as beautifully as they are. ³⁰ And if God cares so wonderfully for wildflowers that are here today and thrown into the fire tomorrow, he will certainly care for you. Why do you have so little faith?

³¹ “So don’t worry about these things, saying, ‘What will we eat? What will we drink? What will we wear?’ ³² These things dominate the thoughts of unbelievers, but your heavenly Father already knows all your needs. ³³ Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and live righteously, and he will give you everything you need.

³⁴ “So don’t worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring its own worries. Today’s trouble is enough for today.

STOP WORRYING!

Jesus’ counsel to us when worrying begins to overcome us is first simply to **Stop Worrying!** Of all the things that Jesus could preach about in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus chooses the topic of worry. Why? Worrying is a problem for all people of all times and is difficult to stop doing. As Fred Smith said, “Trying to break away from my worries was like wrestling an octopus.” Three times in this passage Jesus repeats his prohibition, “*Do not worry*”. The Three areas where Jesus tells us to not worry are essential to our basic needs of life: food, drink and clothing. Jesus is not saying that these things are not important or that we are to not care about what we eat, drink and the clothes we wear. Jesus is basically saying don’t live to eat or live to drink or live your life clothes. Don’t you’re your life for these items, instead use them in their proper place as essential for your health. Jesus says that constantly worrying about these things are what unbelievers who do not believe they have a Heavenly Father to take care of them. They are running their lives in the ground pursuing the things of this world and as a result their lives are fully of worry, anxiety, and stress. Jesus invites His listeners to take a moment and reflect how ridiculous it is to worry. Worry solves nothing and cannot add more days to our lives. Instead, worry is more likely to shorten life than prolong it. As Corrie Ten Boom once said, “Worry does not empty tomorrow of its sorrow, it empties today of its strength.” Jesus is saying, don’t let worry rob you of the abundant life God has for you today.

PAUSE AND REFLECT ON GOD’S CARE FOR CREATION

Instead, Jesus offers us a way to alleviate our worries. First, Jesus says that we are to **Pause and Reflect on God’s Care for Creation**. Jesus says when we are tempted to worry instead take a time out from all our busy rushing, hustle and bustle of life. Pause and take a few moments to look around, listen and soak in the complexity and beauty of God’s creation. For example, Jesus directs us to notice something as simple as birds. We’ve all noticed that birds are covered with feathers. David Allen Sibley in his book entitled, “*What it’s Like to Be a Bird*” says that almost every feather on an individual bird is different, specialized in length, shape and structure to match whatever function is needed at that position. Feathers around the head are all quite specialized, with tiny feathers around the eyes, feathers modified into bristles at the base of the bill and

longer feathers on the throat. Among the most specialized are the feathers that cover the ear opening. These must allow sound to pass through but also protect against debris and create a streamlined surface over the ear for air to flow across as smoothly and quietly as possible. Small songbirds generally have about two thousand feathers, fewer in summer and more in winter. Larger birds like crows mostly have larger feathers, not more. *Think of it, 2,000 feathers on a bird and nearly every feather is designed by God with a purpose in mind. With such a display of purpose in a single bird feather, we learn that God has taken care of even the birds, what they eat, drink, and their clothes. The birds do work to get their food and drink, but they do not fret about it.* Jesus continues with a similar example of how God has even clothed the lilies of the fields with amazing beauty.

Then Jesus says, if God has taken care of all these often-overlooked aspects of creation, how much more does God do for us human beings who are God's most loved part of creation? When the Psalmist took time to pause and reflect on God, nature and humanity he wrote in *Psalm 8:3-8*, "³ When I look at the night sky and see the work of your fingers—the moon and the stars you set in place—⁴ what are mere mortals that you should think about them, human beings that you should care for them? ⁵ Yet you made them only a little lower than God and crowned them with glory and honor. ⁶ You gave them charge of everything you made, putting all things under their authority—⁷ the flocks and the herds and all the wild animals, ⁸ the birds in the sky, the fish in the sea, and everything that swims the ocean currents." God created this vast universe with unbelievable power, creativity, and design. There are countless marvels in all of creation and yet we, human beings, are God's most precious part of creation. As D. Martyn Lloyd Jones said, "Though you are one of the teeming millions in this world, and though the world would have you believe that you do not count and that you are but a speck in the mass, God says, 'I know you.'" Not only does God know us but we are so important to God, so loved by God, that God actually came to this world through His Son and died on the cross for us so that we could have a relationship with God. Now, God is with us every step of our lives watching over us, protecting us, providing for us, and so much more.

SEEK GOD FIRST

The next step Jesus gives us to overcome worrying is to **Seek God First**. Before we seek to take care of even our most basic needs, let us seek God first, then all the other important things of life will fall into their proper place. Here Jesus is saying that we need to have a single-minded commitment to God and seek his reign and rule in our lives. In seeking God's and His kingdom first we are saying to God that we want to align our lives with His will, His truth, His purpose for our lives. This is what it means to pray that part of the Lord's Prayer that says, "*May Your kingdom come, may Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.*" When we pray that portion of the Lord's Prayer we are submitting our lives to God's will. Next time try praying, "*May Your kingdom come, may Your will be done [in my life] as it is in heaven.*"

In this sermon series that we have begun today, and will continue until the end of November, we are walking through all 4 Gospels in the Bible, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. We have invited all of us to do this together by reading every day, for 89 days, only one chapter of the Gospels each day starting on September 1st. It will only take a few minutes of our day to read just one chapter. In addition to this there is an online devotional that we can read or listen to every day that will walk with us one chapter at a time. If you have not started yet, it is not too late to join us. You can go to the link in our app and sign up for the daily devotionals that will come in your email. If you are already doing the Wake-Up Call devotional, you will have already read or heard J.D. Walt lead us every morning in a very simple, but powerful prayer at the beginning of the devotional that says, ***“Jesus, I belong to you. I lift up my heart to you. I set my mind on you. I fix my eyes on you. I offer my body to you as a living sacrifice. Jesus, we belong to you.”*** That is a prayer that begins every day turning our lives over to Jesus, seeking Jesus first and foremost. When we pray this prayer or the Lord’s Prayer, we are inviting God to line up our lives with His will and then inviting Jesus to lead every part of that day, to handle all the issues that we are or will be facing that day and to lead our entire lives. Join us these next remaining 82 days and pray that prayer every morning. It is a great, practical way to seek first God and His kingdom in our lives. That is essential to our entire well-being as children of God and to overcoming the power of worry in our lives.

TRUST GOD ONE DAY AT A TIME

When we pause to reflect on God’s care of all of creation and ourselves and then seek Jesus and His Kingdom first, we then are able to do the final step of Jesus’ instruction on how to handle worry and that is to ***Trust God One Day at a Time***. At the end of verse 30 Jesus points out the reason that we are so easily overcome with worry when He asks His audience the question, *“Why do you have so little faith?”* Worry and faith are in direct correlation with each other. Jesus is not saying that we worry because we do not believe in God. Instead, Jesus is saying that we are worrying because we do not know God well enough to trust Him. Jesus is making the point that the main cause of worry and anxiety is not trusting God enough. George Muller put it this way, *“The beginning of anxiety is the end of faith, and the beginning of true faith is the end of anxiety.”*

How do we get this kind of faith and trust in God so that our lives will not be tossed about by worry and anxiety? We do so by learning to trust in God as we seek Him first in all we do. Our faith or trust in God is a spiritual muscle that will grow as it is tested and at times, pulled to almost a breaking point. If we continue to seek God and turn our lives and the details of our lives over to God, in time we will learn to trust God more and worry less. Then as we have a better understanding of who God is, how much God truly loves us, and is working on our behalf, we will then experience God’s peace instead of the crippling power of worry. Instead of worrying God wants us to daily turn to Him and do what *Philippians 4:6-7* says, *“⁶ Don’t worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done. ⁷ Then you will experience God’s peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will*

guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus.” John Guest wisely stated, “When Scripture encourages us to pray without ceasing, and to cast all our care upon him, it is literally saying redirect those restless, energetic minds into a positive stream of communication with God. Turn it all into prayer! Instead of nursing our wounds of self-pity, pray for the grace to forgive. Instead of worrying about those for whom we are responsible, ask God to intervene and lift the burden from our shoulders. Instead of thinking creatively about how to bring someone else down, pray creatively about how to build them up. When I lived in England, my landlady had a little wall plaque that read, ‘Why pray when you can worry?’ I always saw the humor of it--and the reverse psychology was good for me. It always drove me to really say, ‘Why worry when you can pray?’”

Jesus tells us to remember that this trusting God is not something we do one day but daily. We are only called to trust God one day at a time. God promises to give us enough grace to trust Him for today. We will face tomorrow’s burdens with God when tomorrow comes. We are not equipped to handle more than one day’s burdens. The 17th-century French Bishop, Francois Fenelon, once said, “Don’t worry about the future--worry quenches the work of grace within you. The future belongs to God. He is in charge of all things. Never second-guess him.”

The only true antidote to worry is to pause and reflect on God’s love and care for us, seek God’s will first in our lives, and then to daily trust in our “Heavenly Father who knows exactly what we need” and promises to take care of us.

SUGGESTED RESOURCES: (Books marked with * are available to be checked-out in the Asbury Discipleship Resource Center)

- *The Holy Bible* (Several FREE copies are available in the DRC)
- *Spiritual Depression: Its Causes and Cure*, D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones
- *Trusting God: Even When Life Hurts*, Jerry Bridges
- *Your Church is Too Safe*, Mark Buchanan

Icebreaker I – What’s something small in nature (like a bird feather or flower) that has amazed you and reminded you of God’s care?

Icebreaker II – If worry were an animal (like Fred Smith’s “octopus”), what would it be for you—and why?

1. Jesus tells us three times in this passage, “*Do not worry.*” Why do you think worry is such a common struggle across all generations?
2. How does reflecting on creation (birds, lilies, the stars) help put our worries in perspective?
3. What does it practically look like in your life to “*seek first the kingdom of God*” before dealing with daily needs?
4. George Müller said, “*The beginning of anxiety is the end of faith, and the beginning of true faith is the end of anxiety.*” How have you experienced this tension between faith and worry?
5. Philippians 4:6–7 says that prayer leads to peace beyond understanding. What are some specific ways you can redirect your worry into prayer this week?
6. What impacted you most from the sermon? How might you apply this week’s sermon to your life?
7. How might this group pray for you this week?