

Unit I: Our Holy God and the Holy Scriptures

Letting Go of Worry

DEVOTIONAL READING: Ephesians 1:3-10

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURES: Exodus 34:4-7; Psalm 103:1-5, 10-14;

Isaiah 40:27-31; Matthew 6:24-34; John 3:3-6; 4:20-24;

8:40-47; Romans 2:2-11; 8:14-17; 1 John 4:7-16

PRINT PASSAGE: Matthew 6:24-34

KEY VERSE

Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof. (Matthew 6:34, KJV)

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“Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.” (Matthew 6:34, NIV)

Lesson Aims

As a result of experiencing this lesson, you should be able to do the following:

- Survey the totality of God’s provision for the needs of humankind.
- Trust God to such an extent that you are released from your worries.
- Give thanks for God’s provision and help those in the community who do not have their basic needs met.

*Key Terms

Added (verse 33)—Greek: *prostithémi* (pros-tith’- ay-mee): increased; continued; “given” (NIV).

Anxious (verse 27)—Greek: *merimnaó* (merim-nah’-o): worried; concerned; “taking thought” (KJV); “worrying” (NIV).

Birds (verse 26)—Greek: *peteionon* (pet-i-non’): winged creatures; “fowls” (KJV).

Life (verse 25)—Greek: *psuché* (psoo-khay’): the soul; vital breath.

Mammon (verse 24)—Greek: *mamónas* (mammo-nas’): wealth, personified; avarice; riches; “money” (NIV).



The Biblical Context

Matthew 6 is the second of three chapters in Matthew's gospel that records Jesus' Sermon on the Mount. This chapter is particularly remarkable because it consists entirely of Jesus' words, offering a direct window into His heart and teachings. The overarching theme centers on the importance of performing good deeds with the right motivation—devotion to God rather than a desire for human approval. Jesus provides a blueprint for living a life free from materialism and the daily anxieties it produces: a life marked by authentic worship, trust in God's power to provide, and a relentless pursuit of righteousness. The chapter unfolds through five key subthemes, each highlighting God's deep concern for the heart's motives over external actions:

- Giving to the needy (verses 1–4): Acts of generosity done quietly, seeking God's approval, not humanity's.
- Prayer (verses 5–15): A model for sincere, intimate communication with God, focused on His will rather than self-promotion.
- Fasting (verses 16–18): Spiritual discipline practiced for God's glory, not public recognition.
- The temporary nature of worldly wealth (verses 19–24): A call to store treasures in heaven and maintain an undivided loyalty to God.
- Freedom from worry (verses 25–34): Trusting in God's provision, focusing on His kingdom, and living free from the distractions of material concerns.

Ultimately, Matthew 6 challenges believers to examine the motivations behind their actions and embrace a life of authentic faith that reflects complete trust in God's provision and prioritizes His kingdom above all else.

Observe (verse 28)—Greek: *katamanthanó* (katam-an-than'-o): to learn thoroughly; understand; “consider” (KJV) carefully; “see” (NIV).

Serve (verse 24)—Greek: *douleuó* (dool-yoo'-o): to be a slave; to obey; to be devoted.

***(Word Study Supplement—Refer to page 2)**

Introduction

Some define *worry* as the habit of thinking negatively about what might go wrong in the future. It's the brain's way of trying to prepare for things that may never even happen. A little worry is normal—it helps people get ready for challenges. But when worry gets out of control, it can seriously mess with personal health. It can lead to anxiety, depression, high stress, and even a weakening of the immune system. Beyond the physical effects, constant worry can take away peace and interfere with enjoyment in life.

Why do people worry so much? Experts say it often comes from fear of the unknown, trying to prepare for future problems (whether real or imagined), perfectionism, or even health issues that affect the hormones. There's no one-size-fits-all answer, but the bottom line is this: if it isn't managed properly, worry can take over.

Even Christians aren't immune. Faith does not block out emotions like worry; believers feel it just like anyone else. For Christians, worry can bring extra pressure because the Bible teaches believers not to worry. That can lead to guilt or shame, like one is somehow

failing spiritually. Feeling worry does not mean that one is losing his or her salvation or disappointing God—it means that he or she needs to reset and refocus his or her trust in God. In

Matthew 6, Jesus spoke directly to this in the Sermon on the Mount. His advice? Put God first. Give top priority to having a spiritual relationship with God. Do not seek after material things or let the world's pressure create overwhelming stress. Trust that God will take care of those who make His business a priority—that's the secret to breaking free from the cycle of worry.

ANALYSIS OF THE BIBLICAL TEXT

The Cost of Materialism (Matthew 6:24-30)

KJV

24 No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.

25 Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?

26 Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?

27 Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature?

28 And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin:

29 And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.

30 Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?

NIV

24 "No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money.

25 "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes?

26 "Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they?

27 "Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life?

28 "And why do you worry about clothes? See how the flowers of the field grow. They do not labor or spin.

29 "Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these.

30 "If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith?"

In verse 24, Jesus introduces a powerful teaching on the inherent dangers of serving wealth and the importance of trusting God rather than being consumed by material concerns. He contrasts God with “mammon” (wealth), clarifying that one cannot serve two masters simultaneously. When our allegiance is divided, we become entirely devoted to one while neglecting or despising the other. Therefore, the pursuit of wealth enslaves our will, ultimately making materialism the ruler of our lives instead of God. Jesus isn’t saying that Christians should not seek economic stability or should skip the pleasures of life that money can buy. Instead of obsessing over what we lack, Jesus commands us not to worry about our lives and livelihoods (verse 25). He reminds us that life is more than just food and clothing because God’s purpose for us transcends the temporary. Living in a constant state of worry about money and possessions, whether one is rich or poor, is essentially surrendering to materialism’s control rather than to God. To affirm this principle, Jesus points to nature. He highlights the birds (verse 26), which, without any elaborate planning, receive their daily food from God. Jesus reassures us that God will care for us by asking if we are more valuable than these birds.

In verse 27, Jesus clarifies that worrying won’t add a single hour to our lives. While anxiety over our needs is natural, engaging in it is ultimately useless and reveals a lack of faith. Once again, Jesus draws our attention to nature—this time to the lilies of the field (verses 28-29). These flowers, which do nothing to secure their beauty, are clothed by God in splendor that even Solomon’s wealth cannot match. Jesus finishes His teaching in verse 30 by stressing that if God takes such extraordinary care of the lilies, how much more will He provide for us? Thus, worrying needlessly about material things reflects a weak faith. In summary, Jesus does care about human needs. He seeks to free us from the relentless burden of worry and anxiety so that we may experience the perfect peace that comes from trusting in God more than material wealth.

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

How can Christians and the faith community reflect a lifestyle where serving God remains the primary goal amid society’s relentless pressures to achieve financial success or material abundance?

The Remedy for Materialism (*Matthew 6:31-34*)

KJV

31 Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed?

32 (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.

33 But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.

34 Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.

NIV

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

32 “For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them.

33 “But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

34 “Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.”

After illustrating the cost of a materialistic mindset—fruitless worry—in the earlier verses, Jesus provides the solution to worrying in verses 31-34. Instead of being anxious about daily needs (verse 31), Jesus assured His followers that God is willing and able to provide for them. He further instructed them to avoid the Gentiles’ obsessive pursuit of wealth, reminding them that, as God’s children, they had His assurance: He knew their needs and took responsibility for meeting them, and they did not have to live in constant fear of lacking what they need (verse 32).

So, Jesus offers the ultimate remedy for worry: prioritize seeking God’s kingdom and righteousness (verse 33). However, it’s essential to clarify what Jesus meant here, as this command is often taken out of context and misapplied. This instruction is not a “blank check” guaranteeing an endless supply of blessings from God. In this context, Jesus specifically refers to God’s supplying life’s basic needs, such as food and clothing. Additionally, understanding what it means to “seek first God’s kingdom and righteousness” is essential for proper application. Jesus is emphasizing the lifestyle that God expects of His children: aligning our lives with the values of God’s kingdom, intentionally pursuing lives that reflect His character, and obeying His standards. Jesus concludes His teaching by encouraging His listeners (and us) not to worry about future uncertainties. Each day brings its own challenges, and worrying about tomorrow only robs us of the peace that comes from trusting God today (verse 34). Believers have two choices: God (inner peace) or materialism (needless worry). Choosing God ensures that He will supply the daily grace needed to live one day at a time, confidently and victoriously.

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

How can the faith community, individually and collectively, apply Jesus’ command to “seek first the kingdom of God” daily?

A Closing Thought

Worry is a common mindset, even among professing Christians. One of the primary causes of worry is the desperate pursuit of economic stability and wealth. But chasing after “more”—more money, more stuff, more status—can leave people stressed out and anxious, even those who aren’t living large to begin with. In Matthew 6:24-34, Jesus talks about how worrying over basic needs comes at a high cost. He calls out the trap of materialism and reminds His followers, both then and now, not to get so caught up in chasing things that they may lose sight of the One who truly takes care of them: God the Father. Jesus doesn’t just point out the problem—He gives a clear solution. He tells us to seek God’s kingdom and live right, putting Him first in how we think, act, and live. When we do that, we can let go of the stress and trust that God will handle what we need. That’s where real peace starts.

Your Life

Jesus cautioned His followers to avoid needless worry about meeting their basic needs. He assured them that God the Father already knows what they need and is able and willing to provide for those who trust Him completely and prioritize His kingdom and righteousness. This week, evaluate your trust in God and examine your priorities. Are you spending more time striving to “get ahead” or investing time in God’s Word? Are you consumed with worries about tomorrow, or are you focused on serving God and advancing His kingdom today? Are you anxious about what you don’t have, or are you grateful for all God has provided? Remember that trusting God means believing that He will supply everything you need when you put Him first.

Your World!

Seeking God’s kingdom and righteousness first challenges us to align our lives with His purposes and commit to alleviating the suffering of those in need in our communities and beyond. Eliminating needless worry isn’t just about trusting God for our own needs; it’s also about being His hands and feet to help meet the needs of others. This week, brainstorm practical ways that your congregation can assist suffering neighbors. How can you provide essential resources such as food, clothing, personal hygiene products, shelter, medical and mental health care, and employment assistance? When we put God’s kingdom first, we trust Him to meet our needs and become instruments of His provision for others.

Closing Prayer

Gracious God, we acknowledge Your power to provide for our needs as we reflect on Your provision for all You created. Forgive us for giving in to needless worry over material things, and help us mature to the point that we are released from our worries and live in gratitude for the many blessings You constantly give us. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.

(Preparing for Next Week's Lesson)

Home Daily Bible Readings

Notes

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue or grey ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There is no handwriting or other markings on the paper.