

Sermon on the Mount, Part 7: Stop Worrying

For parts 1 through 6 of this series, see “Sermon on the Mount, Part 1: The Beatitudes”; “Sermon on the Mount, Part 2: Salt and Light”; “Sermon on the Mount Part 3: Dealing with Anger”; “Sermon on the Mount, Part 4: Love Your Enemies”; “Sermon on the Mount, Part 5: Quit Being a Showoff!”; and “Sermon on the Mount, Part 6: “Store Your Treasures in Heaven” on the Bible Studies page at www.ChooseJesusToday.com.

In Part 6 of this series, we concluded as Jesus taught against being materialistic and obsessed with money. In this lesson, Jesus continues this thought and turns his attention to a characteristic that results from materialism: worry and anxiety. Jesus explained:

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

And why do you worry about clothes? See how the flowers of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. 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? So do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own. Matthew 6:25-34 (NIV).

Worry and anxiety are not Fruits of the Spirit. They are not Godly characteristics that Jesus wants us to cultivate. Jesus taught that people who put all their energy and strength into the pursuit of money think that riches will solve all their

problems. That is false. In fact, riches usually will create more problems! Look at all the lottery winners whose lives were ruined by their new-found wealth. The wrong attitude about money and material possessions can give someone a false sense of security and dependence on wealth, which can disappear in the blink of an eye. A natural disaster, a financial market downturn, or a tragic health diagnosis can all cause money to disappear before you even realize what has happened. That is why it is so undependable. However, God never fails! He is right there with us through natural disasters, financial problems, and health crises. Jesus used the birds and lilies as an example. They do not fret and worry, yet they have God's wealth in ways that man cannot duplicate. God provides for their every need. All of nature depends on God, and God never fails. And guess what? God loves us, His dear children, even more than He loves the birds and lilies, and He will feed and clothe us. It is our "little faith" that hinders God from providing for us as He does the birds and the lilies. Oh how blessed we would be if we unplug from worry and plug into the Lord. Unlike material possessions, God's blessings and riches last forever.

Jesus said that worry and anxiety only make life shorter (Matt. 6:27). It is well documented that worry, anxiety, and emotional stress can cause a host of health problems – from muscle aches to digestive problems to heart attack and even to suicide. (For more information on the health effects of worry, see: <http://www.webmd.com/balance/guide/how-worrying-affects-your-body>) Worry tears our mind and body apart. In his "Wiersbe Bible Commentary", Dr. Wiersbe explains, "Until man interferes, everything in nature works together, because all of nature trusts God. Man, however, is pulled apart because He tries to live his own life by depending on material wealth."

For a Christian to worry and fret about material things is to live like someone who does not know the Lord. We are to seek first the Kingdom of God. That means we are to put God first in our lives and live in complete obedience to His Word, as God wants us to live. Dr. Wiersbe further explains, "If we put God's will and God's righteousness first in our lives, He will take care of everything else. What a testimony it is to the world when a Christian dares to practice Matthew 6:33!" When we, as Christians, fail to put God first and instead rely on material wealth for sustenance, we fail not only ourselves, we fail the Lord.

Holding on to regrets from yesterday and worry about tomorrow robs us of our ability to be effective for God. That does not mean that we should not plan for the future; it is right and honorable to have a career plan, to have an emergency fund in place, to have insurance to ensure our family is cared for, to save for our children's college, etc. but it is a sin to worry about the future and permit tomorrow to rob today of its blessings. Dr. Wiersbe points out, "Three words in this section point the way to victory over worry: (1) *faith* (Matt. 6:30), trusting God to meet our needs; (2) *Father* (Matt. 6:32), knowing He cares for His children; and (3) *first* (Matt. 6:33), putting God's will first in our lives so that He might be glorified."

We have to choose on what we will depend to meet our needs. The bottom line is that if we have faith in the Lord and put Him first, He will meet our needs. Choose to put the Lord first. Choose not to worry. Choose to depend on God. And most of all, choose Jesus today!

God bless!