

Worrying About Tomorrow (Matt. 6:25-34)

A Small Group Outline



1. Praise *(Purpose: To worship God)*

- What are you thankful for this week? *(let the group's secretary write these down in an A4 hardcover or some notebook)*
- Song Service
 - Sing a few songs of praise to God

2. Pray *(Purpose: To carry each others' burdens and to seek the Lord)*

- What challenges did you have this week? *(write these down in an A4 hardcover or some notebook)*
- Go into a season of prayer

3. Review *(Purpose: To learn accountability)*

- Tell us how it went with what you promised to do in last week's meeting? *(e.g. Who did your share your faith with this past week? Who did you minister to? How did actioning your I WILL STATEMENT go?)*
- *Where people have failed to fulfil what they said they would, do not be harsh with them but gently encourage them to try again in the coming week. Give them more support by phoning or joining them in the week.*

4. Give *(Purpose: To be good stewards of our monies)*

- This is the time to return tithes and offerings. If done electronically, kindly ensure that you get the bank account details of your local church from your treasurer. Don't forget to complete an envelope and to send the breakdown to him/her.

5. Discover *(Purpose: To learn to listen to God, and be obedient to His Word)*

• **Notes for the facilitator**

- Read *Thoughts from the Mount of Blessings (MB)*, pp. 95-101
- Vs 25: Therefore: If one makes the right choices (Matt.6:19-24), there is ("therefore") no reason that one should be anxious.
- Vs 25: The King James Version says 'take no thought for your life'. Several English versions before the KJV have translated this as: 'be not careful for your life', with 'careful' meaning, full of care. God is here not condemning prudent foresight, but worry.
- In Luke 10:41, 42, for example, we see that Martha was full of care, too full to even spend time with Jesus
- Vs 26: **Look at** the birds: This implies meditating one, carefully considering the deeper meaning of things.
- The United States public health service once issued a statement in connection with the prevalence of nervous diseases and the tendency of worry to weaken and shorten life: "So far as is known, no bird ever tried to build more nests than its neighbor. No fox ever fretted because he had only one hole in which to hide. No squirrel ever died of anxiety lest he should not lay by enough for two winters instead of one, and no dog ever lost any sleep over the fact that he had not enough bones laid aside for his declining years."
- Vs 26: Your heavenly Father: This conjures up images of love, care, concern, protection, and wisdom.
- "All that was needed for existence would have been yours without the flowers and birds, but God was not content to provide what would suffice for mere existence. He has filled earth and air and sky with glimpses of beauty to tell you of His loving thought for you...If He has lavished such infinite skill upon the things of nature, for your happiness and joy, can you doubt that He will give you every needed blessing?" (MB 96).

- God expects people to work (Gen. 3:19; 2 Thess. 3:10), but not become workaholics, filled with worry and care about the material side of life.
- Vs 29: Although Solomon's magnificence was well known (cf. 1 Kings 10:4-7), it paled into insignificance compared to flowers.
- Vs 30: Dried grass and wild flowers were used in ancient Palestine as fuel to heat ovens. The flowers had a short period of life before tossed into the oven. The point is: If God gives such beauty to short-lived flowers, how much more will He care for His children, the crown of His creation?
- Vs 30: Little faith – People with little faith may have *saving faith* (that Jesus has saved them from sin) but their faith does not extend into all the aspects of daily life, especially when the storms of life come (cf. Matt. 8:24-26)
- Vs 30: Therefore (or 'so'): This concludes vs. 25-30. In other words, if we have really thought of the wonders and beauty of nature, how God cares for birds and flowers, we will have no reason to worry about food, drink and clothing. Thus little faith can be transformed into big faith.
- Vs 32: God knows that we need food, drink and clothing. Thus we are *never* in a position that is outside of God's knowledge and care.
- Arguments against worry (*George Knight, Walking with Jesus on the Mount of Blessing*):
 - **If God has provided us with the greater - life itself - surely He will also provide us with the lesser – material goods** (see vs 26). We can therefore depend on Him to provide us with the most essential things such as food, clothing and shelter.
 - **Worry is useless** (No one can add a single 'cubit' (KJB) or 'hour' (NIV) to his/her life by worrying – Matt. 6:27). It only depletes our energies and immobilises us.
 - **Worry is paganistic, if not atheistic** (Matt. 6:32). If we really know God, we will not worry. 'Pagans' or heathen worry about houses, clothes, cars, food, etc.
- Strategies for overcoming worry (*Ibid*):
 - **Seek God's kingdom first** (vs 34): that is, 'worry' about your relationship with God instead, put His cause and interests at the centre of your life (cf. 1 Kings 3:13-14). Notice this statement:
 - "If you give yourself to God's service, He who has all power in heaven and earth will provide for your needs" (MB 99).
 - "Jesus does not release us from the necessity of effort, but He teaches that we are to make Him first and last and best in everything. We are to engage in no business, follow no pursuit, seek no pleasure, that would hinder the outworking of His righteousness in our character and life" (MB 99).
 - "If you have given yourself to God, to do His work, you have no need to be anxious for tomorrow. He whose servant you are, knows the end from the beginning. The events of tomorrow, which are hidden from your view, are open to the eyes of Him who is omnipotent" (MB 100).
 - **Live one day at a time.** The manna lesson (Ex. 16) reminds us not to worry about tomorrow. We need to trust God day by day. Note the following:
 - "Our main business is not to see what lies dimly at a distance, but to do what lies clearly at hand" (Thomas Carlyle)
 - "Christ has given us no promise of help in bearing today the burdens of tomorrow.... One day alone is ours, and during this day we are to live for God. For this one day we are to place in the hand of Christ, in solemn service, all our purposes and plans, casting all our care upon Him, for He careth for us" (MB 101).

- Worry often forgets the lessons of nature (how God provides for animals and flowers), and refuses to learn the lessons from history (how God has led in the past). Concerning the latter, note the following: “We have nothing to fear for the future, except as we shall forget the way the Lord has led us, and His teaching in our past history” (*Life Sketches, p. 196*)
- “When we really believe that God loves us and means to do us good we shall cease to worry about the future. We shall trust God as a child trusts a loving parent. Then our troubles and torments will disappear, for our will is swallowed up in the will of God” (MB 100).
- “If you will seek the **Lord and be converted every day**; if you will of your own spiritual choice be free and joyous in God; if with gladsome consent of heart to His gracious call you come wearing the yoke of Christ,—the yoke of obedience and service,—**all your murmurings will be stilled, all your difficulties will be removed, all the perplexing problems that now confront you will be solved**” (MB 101). *Note that the actual challenges in our lives don’t necessarily disappear, but our attitude toward them does – they no longer appear as problems because of our trust in God.*
- One antidote against worry is an attitude of thankfulness
- Some Bible promises about God’s provision: Ps. 34:10; Phil. 4:6, 7, 19
- *Read Matt. 6:25-34. Preferably let one person read it. Let everyone then put down their Bibles and get the group to reconstruct the passage in their own words. This teaches the group to be careful in quotation Scripture correctly and to use it as the basis of their discussions.*
- **Discussion Questions** (*use only a few*). *The notes in italics after some of the questions below are for the facilitator, and not to be read out to the group.*
 - If God is really in charge of the universe, why do we worry about so many things?
 - What is the difference between planning for the future and worrying about the future?
 - How does worry affect a person emotionally, physically and spiritually?
 - What lessons can we learn from birds? From lilies? (*ask one question at a time*)
 - What other things do people worry about today besides food, clothing and money?
 - Why do you think God is mentioned as a ‘heavenly Father’ twice in this passage (vss. 26 & 32)? Why this particular title?
 - What do you think Jesus means by the phrase: ‘O you of little faith’? How do ‘little faith’ Christians approach life? (*ask one question at a time*)
 - Based on Matt. 6:32 is there something like ‘paganistic Christians’? If so, kindly elaborate?
 - How does the statement by Thomas Carlyle: “Our main business is not to see what lies dimly at a distance, but to do what lies clearly at hand,” help us understand why we should not worry about the future?
 - What does it practically mean to ‘seek God’s kingdom first’?
- **Application Questions** (*select a few depending on your time. One has to be the I WILL STATEMENT*)
 - What are some things you generally worry about?
 - Do you have an experience in which God provided for you when you went through a challenging time? If so, kindly share. (*Note to facilitator: the purpose of this question is to prove that God is always faithful and we therefore do not need to worry about the future*)
 - How can you start entrusting your worries to God, and handing your challenges to His control? Be specific.
 - I WILL STATEMENT: Formulate an I will statement in response to what you have discovered in the Word. Let the group’s secretary also record these in an A4 notebook. Ensure that everyone gets a chance to give their I WILL STATEMENT. You have to be specific. E.g. “Whenever I experience challenges in the future, I will by

God's grace and strength, do the following: Pause, reflect on God's past leading, read some of the Bible promises at the back of my Bible, pray, and leave the situation at God's feet."

6. Share (*Purpose: To be witnesses of our faith*)

- Do you have anyone you could share today's lesson with this week? *Be specific.*

7. Closing prayer

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