

Command #10: Don't worry about material needs but make God your highest priority.

Matthew 6:25-34 // Jerry Barber & Greg Singerle

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? 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.

Condensed Version

Read Matthew 6:25-34 and discuss these questions with your disciple(s):

1. What point does Jesus make in verse 26 with the birds and in verses 28-30 with flowers?
2. Jesus gets very practical with the disciples in this passage. What two practical considerations does he bring up in verses 27 and 34 that prove worry is a waste of time and energy?
3. In verses 31-33, we discover that the real issue may not be worry but the wrong kind of ambition. What is the connection between worrying and having the wrong ambition?
4. What promise does Jesus make to those seek first God's kingdom and righteousness?

Study (answers follow below)

1. What word in verse 25 informs us of the context of this passage?
2. Meditate on Matthew 6:25-34 and make several observations about the passage.
3. What is Jesus trying to accomplish by asking the rhetorical question in verse 25, “Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes?”
4. What point does Jesus make in verse 26 with the birds and in verses 28-30 with flowers?
5. Jesus gets very practical with the disciples in this passage. What two practical considerations does he bring up in verses 27 and 34 that prove worry is a waste of time and energy?
6. In verses 31-33, we discover that the real issue may not be worry but the wrong kind of ambition. What is the connection between worrying and having the wrong ambition?
7. What does it mean to seek first the kingdom of God?
8. What does it mean to seek God's righteousness?
9. What promise does Jesus make to those seek first God's kingdom and righteousness?

Answers:

1. “Therefore”—in light of the alternatives laid out in verses 19-24 and assuming that his followers will make the right choices, Jesus prohibits worry.
2. (many answers possible here)
3. Jesus is attempting to get us to realize that there are more important things to be concerned with than physical needs. By using a rhetorical question, he conveys the point that human beings are more than mere bodies to be fed, watered, clothed and housed. The issue here is value, importance: worrying about material things shows your preoccupation with things of lesser importance in the long run.
4. God provides their needs, and we are a lot more valuable to Him. If the Creator takes care of His creatures and creation, the Father surely will take care of His children.
5. In verse 27 he notes that worry will not do any good—it actually is a lot more likely to shorten your life than add to it. In verse 34, he states that there will always be something to “worry about” tomorrow, so we should not do it today.
6. “Seek” and “worry” are related. Jesus assumes that everyone is a seeker, everyone seeks something to live for, on which to set our hearts and minds, an ambition—such as goals, incentives, what you pursue and why. It takes energy both to worry and to seek God’s kingdom. The more energy we give to worrying, the less energy we have to seek God’s kingdom.
7. John Stott gives a good definition: “God’s kingdom is Jesus Christ ruling over his people in total blessing and total demand. To ‘seek first’ this kingdom is to desire as of first importance the spread of the reign of Jesus Christ”. Seeking God’s kingdom starts with ourselves, with total submission in every area, and continues with concern for others who need God’s rule in their lives (John Stott, *The Message of the Sermon on the Mount*, 170).
8. Seeking God’s righteousness is pursuing the righteous life that Jesus has been talking about in the Sermon on the Mount.
9. Verse 33, “and all these things will be given to you as well.” All of your material needs will be met (not necessarily all of your longings or that you will attain great material wealth, but God will meet all of your needs.)

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Worship

My (Greg) struggle is not necessarily trusting God in whether or not He will provide for me. But I'm going to be honest and tell you something that I struggle with which I feel is much more insulting to God. Maybe others struggle with it as well, possibly unknowingly. I struggle with whether or not I will be satisfied with His provision. We live in the most prosperous country in the most prosperous age the world has ever known and, whether we will admit it or not, it shapes our thinking. Can I really give all this up and find a greater satisfaction in only Christ? Further, as a father, what will my wife and children think of me when, quite possibly, we have less material things? I admit, these are all questions I am battling as we are preparing for full-time missions. But Jesus calls us to a radical faith in Him whereby I am to put *nothing* before Him, not even my most basic human needs, let alone comforts. But I know that God withholds no good thing and that He is the Creator of all things and that He created you and me to experience complete joy, which is found only in Christ and not in this world.

What does it look like when one trusts God completely? Jesus demonstrated this kind of "radical" faith and because of that He was accused of many things, such as being demon possessed. Even His earthly family questioned Him stating, "He is out of His mind!" (Mark 3:21). Jesus trusted in the Father's provision for all His needs, even the most basic human needs, as He gave priority to doing the Father's will. There are a number of times Jesus and His disciples went on long journeys without preparing for basic needs: the feeding of the 5,000; the feeding of the 4,000; crossing the Sea of Galilee (Matthew 16:5); and the event we will look at today, the journey to Samaria in John 4. Let's examine that Scripture to see how Jesus demonstrated seeking first the Kingdom of God.

John 4:27-43

Questions:

1. When Jesus went to the well, where did the disciples go and why?
2. What were the disciples concerned about?
3. What was Jesus concerned about?
4. How did Jesus describe doing the will of the Father?
5. What was the result of Jesus' putting the desire to do the Father's will above everything else?
6. What do you admire about Jesus from this event?

Answers:

1. Although it does not specifically state it, from the context we can conclude that they went to buy food. They left a wearied Jesus by the well. Another definition for the word translated "wearied" in the ESV is exhausted. Perhaps Jesus was so exhausted He could not go into town with them? This would explain the disciples' concern for Him upon their return.
2. It is clear upon the disciples return that they were concerned about Jesus physically. They urged Him to take some food.

3. Jesus was concerned about doing the Father's will above all else, even above His own physical needs.
4. Like eating food. If Jesus was speaking metaphorically, then He was stating that His desire to do God's will and satisfaction and benefit from doing the Father's will was far greater than His physical needs, even when in a weakened and physically needy state. While Jesus is not teaching us to never eat or do things needed for the body, God did sustain Moses for 40 days when he was on the mountain interceding for Israel's sins (Exodus 34:28). God is the giver and sustainer of all life. While He may provide for your needs through a job, through the charity of another, by multiplying an insufficient amount, or by raining down bread from Heaven, the point we must reach is being assured that God *will* provide. This is one of the first lessons Jesus taught His disciples when He sent them out as missionaries to the lost sheep of Israel with essentially only the clothes on their backs. He later asked them if they lacked anything during this time, to which their reply was "nothing" (Luke 22:35). Preparing and planning for ministry work is not wrong (after all, this is what Jesus tells the disciples in verse 36). However, you must make sure God's clear call to give up your life for Christ is not overridden by thinking "God must not want me to go because if He did He would have provided _____." If having to first understand *how* God is going to provide (possibly beyond a job, income, savings account or any imaginable means) is a prerequisite to losing your life for Christ versus going forth *trusting* He is going to provide (which is what He calls us to do), then few will fulfill the call (Matthew 9:37).
5. Many believed in Him, that He was the Savior of the world.
6. I admire that: Jesus let nothing stand in the way of doing the Father's will; Jesus is never too busy; Jesus has a "whatever it takes" mentality; Jesus comes and stays when invited; Jesus will tell me truths if I desire to hear them; Jesus makes His home with the impure and outcast; Jesus comes because He knows what others say about Him is insufficient – one must experience the presence of Christ personally; even though the disciples saw so much, they were constantly being amazed by Jesus!

Obey

The main idea of Matthew 6:25-34 is that worry can be overcome if we think, trust, and aim properly.

Write out how you need to think differently (based on the principles in this passage), trust God more, and set your ambition (aim) on God's kingdom and righteousness:

- Think
- Trust
- Aim

Train

How to help disciple others:

1. Study Matthew 6:25-34 yourself, ask your disciple(s) to study it, then discuss it and pray about it together.
2. Give testimony to them of how God has provided for your needs as you have sought his kingdom and righteousness first, about how God is growing you in this area. Your story is valuable!