

SESSION 4

TRANSFORMED IN MY PLANS

▶ ***The Point***

God is able to provide all I need.

▶ ***The Passage***

Matthew 6:25-34

▶ ***The Bible Meets Life***

Anxiety is a multi-billion dollar business in our country.¹ Even my dog is on anti-anxiety medication. Every time a storm rolls in, he completely panics until we can get his medicine down the hatch.

We are a people full of worry and fear. We fear a dreaded diagnosis or the loss of a job. We worry about our children's health, education, and the choices they make. Worry keeps us up at night and sometimes sends us to the doctor for a host of medical problems—all of which lead back to more worry.

I've found that telling a chronic worrier to stop worrying is like telling someone struggling with anorexia to simply start eating. The issue goes far deeper. Thankfully, transformation begins when we're exposed to the truth. Jesus gives us the truth, the solution, to our fears and worries. When we grow in our understanding of the nature of God, our faith will grow as well—and our worries will head for the door.

▶ ***The Setting***

Jesus gathered His disciples on a mountainside and taught them about the essentials for living as citizens of the kingdom of God. After teaching His disciples about the proper attitude toward wealth and possessions, He moved on to give them careful instructions about worry. Jesus urged them to turn their backs on fretting and to trust God completely to provide everything they would need.

What does the Bible say?

Cubit (v. 27)—Length from the tip of the middle finger to the elbow, equivalent to about eighteen inches. In this passage, the term could also suggest the idea of lengthening our lives.

Matthew 6:25-34

25 “This is why I tell you: Don’t worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Isn’t life more than food and the body more than clothing?”

26 Look at the birds of the sky: They don’t sow or reap or gather into barns, yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Aren’t you worth more than they?

27 Can any of you add a single cubit to his height by worrying?

28 And why do you worry about clothes? Learn how the wildflowers of the field grow: they don’t labor or spin thread.

29 Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was adorned like one of these!

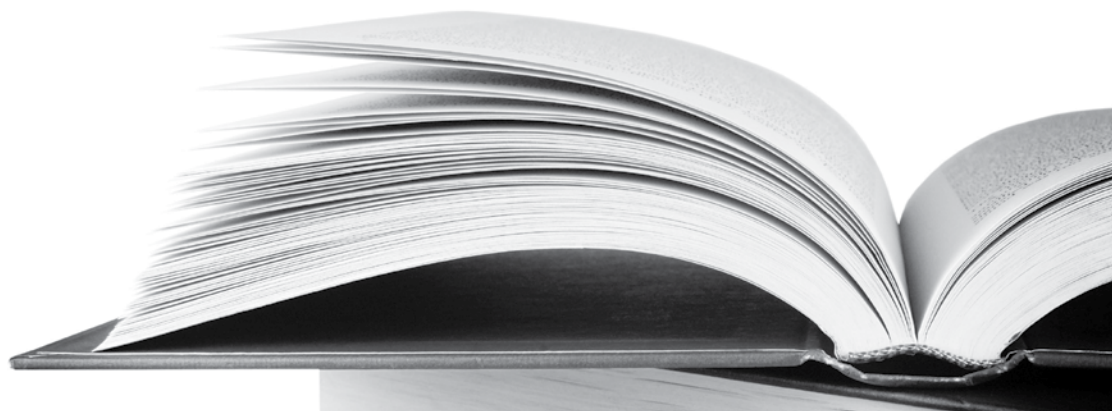
30 If that’s how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and thrown into the furnace tomorrow, won’t He do much more for you—you of little faith?

31 So don’t worry, saying, ‘What will we eat?’ or ‘What will we drink?’ or ‘What will we wear?’

32 For the idolaters eagerly seek all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them.

33 But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be provided for you.

34 Therefore don’t worry about tomorrow, because tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.



GET INTO THE STUDY



10 minutes

Notes



DISCUSS: Question #1 on page 37 of the PSG: **“What were some of your biggest worries growing up?”**

ACTIVITY (OPTIONAL): As a complement to Question #1, above, provide group members with paper and crayons or colored pencils. Encourage everyone to sketch or draw an image that represents one or more of the biggest worries they struggled with while growing up. After 3-5 minutes, encourage

volunteers to share their picture and explain what it represents.

Note: The exercise of drawing will likely be appealing and refreshing for the visual learners in your group.

GUIDE: Direct group members to “The Bible Meets Life” on page 38 of the PSG. Continue with the themes of worry and anxiety by reading or summarizing the text—or by encouraging group members to read on their own.

GUIDE: Call attention to “The Point” at the top of page 38 of the PSG: **“God is able to provide all I need.”**

LEADER PACK: Use Pack Item 3, “That’s Enough,” to add a visual element to your group’s discussion of this session.

PRAY: Transition into the study by acknowledging that children aren’t the only ones who worry in this life. Ask God for a deeper level of trust in His provision as you and the other members of your group engage the Scriptures together.

TIP: Additional ideas for your group are available at biblestudiesforlife.com.



STUDY THE BIBLE

Notes

Matthew 6:25-30

25 “This is why I tell you: Don’t worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Isn’t life more than food and the body more than clothing? 26 Look at the birds of the sky: They don’t sow or reap or gather into barns, yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Aren’t you worth more than they? 27 Can any of you add a single cubit to his height by worrying? 28 And why do you worry about clothes? Learn how the wildflowers of the field grow: they don’t labor or spin thread. 29 Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was adorned like one of these! 30 If that’s how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and thrown into the furnace tomorrow, won’t He do much more for you—you of little faith?”

READ: Matthew 6:25-30 on page 39 of the PSG. Read the text out loud or ask a volunteer to do so.

DISCUSS: Question #2 on page 40 of the PSG: **“What’s your initial reaction to these verses?”**

GUIDE: Encourage group members to read or skim the first four paragraphs on page 40 of the PSG in order to further unpack Jesus’ teachings about worry.

RECAP: Read aloud the final paragraph on page 40 of the PSG:

Jesus closed verse 30 by calling those who worry “you of little faith.” When we remain focused on the person or problem instead of focusing on the One who provides, we step away from faith and into worry. This means worry is more than a bad habit; it’s a barometer of your faith. A steady diet of truth will increase your faith, which will allow you to win the battle against worry.

DISCUSS: Question #3 on page 40 of the PSG: **“How do we know when we’ve crossed the line from reasonable concern to harmful worry?”**

TRANSITION: As we move to verses 31-32, we’ll find a helpful summary and re-statement of Jesus’ teachings in verses 25-30.

ALTERNATE QUESTION:
What are some consequences of being enslaved to worry?

Matthew 6:25-30

[Verse 25] In Jesus' day, as in much of the world today, the bare essentials of food and clothing were a daily worry for His listeners. Even so, Jesus told each person not to worry about their **life** nor their **body**. In doing so, He helped His disciples take hold of a bedrock truth: their heavenly Father had given them bodies and had breathed life into them. Because He created them, they could trust Him to care about them. Therefore, they could depend on Him to provide what they needed.

[Verse 26] Jesus' disciples could also gain a healthy perspective on His care for them simply by looking at the **birds of the sky**. Obviously, birds stay busy. They don't sit carelessly idle and expect God to deliver food to their nests. However, they didn't plant crops or store away food for the future. Yet they appeared to be constantly fed. Each day provided them with something to eat. By pointing to these birds, Jesus encouraged believers to embrace God's care. God provides birds with food because He cares for them. And if God cares for the birds, we can rest assured He cares for us, too. After all, He created us in His image (see Gen. 1:26-27). We alone have the singular privilege to be called His children. Therefore, we can trust Him to provide us with what we need.

[Verse 27] Jesus underscored the reality that worrying won't do anything to enrich our lives. With His statement about **a single cubit**, Jesus may have been referring to a person's height or lifespan. The word translated **height** can refer to either. A person doesn't get taller because he or she frets. Worrying won't make any of us live one minute longer. We waste our time when we worry. Being anxious cannot change anything. On the other hand, trusting God can make a difference in everything.

[Verses 28-29] Jesus illustrated the waste of worry by pointing to **wildflowers**. Wildflowers don't lift a finger to work in the field in which they grow. Neither do they spin thread and turn it into bolts of cloth that they can make clothes out of it. But look at them in the field! God provides what they need to sprout and blossom. They display the extravagant results of His care. **Solomon**, one of the richest kings in Israel's history, pales in comparison to a field God adorns with wildflowers. Their rich color gushes from the ground in which God grows them.

[Verse 30] If God takes excellent care of wildflowers and **grass of the field**, we can certainly count on Him to meet our needs. We're around much longer than wild grass, so we can rest assured He will take even greater care of us. Worry doesn't come from God's lack of care. It comes solely from our lack of faith in Him.



STUDY THE BIBLE

Notes

Dotted lines for taking notes.

Matthew 6:31-32

31 So don't worry, saying, 'What will we eat?' or 'What will we drink?' or 'What will we wear?' **32** For the idolaters eagerly seek all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them.

READ: Matthew 6:31-32 on page 39 of the PSG.

DISCUSS: Question #4 on page 41 of the PSG: **"What tends to keep you up at night?"**

Note: This is a chance for group members to share openly and honestly about the sources of their anxiety. So, don't shy away from asking this question or allowing time for group members to think of appropriate responses. At the same time, be aware of the sensitive nature of this question; don't force anyone to answer or participate.

SUMMARIZE: Help group members walk through the main points from page 41 of the PSG:

1. "God knows what you need. What an amazing concept that the Creator of the universe knows everything about you!"
2. "Notice what Jesus said in verse 32: 'The idolaters eagerly seek all these things.' What does idolatry have to do with worry? The answer is that idolatry means placing anything above Christ."
3. "It's worth repeating: knowing and resting in the nature of our God is the key to living a transformed life."
4. "All of us have a choice when it comes to worry. We can choose to run after the things of this world, or we can take the approach of having faith and trusting God."

TRANSITION: So far in this Scripture passage, we've seen Jesus focus on the problem: worry. As we conclude with verses 33-34, we'll find the ultimate solution to that problem.

Matthew 6:31-32

[Verse 31] Jesus issued a serious challenge: **don't worry**. In truth, we have no better choice than to give up on worry. Being disciplined enough to turn our backs on worry requires us to take one step of discipleship after another. One of the first steps toward putting worry behind us involves changing what we allow to occupy our minds. When we worry, we focus only on what we need. When we don't have it or see it coming into view, we become anxious about whether it will ever come our way.

Jesus reminded His disciples of the kinds of questions they tended to ask when consumed by worry. Their questions also showed lack of faith in God. When they asked what they would **eat** or **drink**, they lost sight of God's care. Likewise, when they fretted about what they would **wear**, they revealed they didn't trust Him. They doubted He would provide them with clothes. Jesus directed His disciples to take a critical step away from worry. It's a step He expects us to take, as well. Growing believers must choose not to fret over what we need. Instead, we must make up our minds to trust the Lord.

[Verse 32] Jesus asserted that those who allowed worry to get the best of them actually behaved more like idol worshipers than devoted disciples. Idol worshipers gave themselves to pagan deities, but not out of love or the assurance of divine care. They worshiped idols out of fear of punishment if they didn't show reverence. The fear left them terrorized. Thus, **idolaters** chased after material possessions at every opportunity. That endless quest always had them worried about their future.

Spiritually maturing Christians maintain a completely different view about our God. We don't worry about what we need because we live in the assurance that He loves us and cares about us. We know we don't have to prove anything to Him or earn His approval. In our walk with Him, terror never enters our hearts. We live in the certainty that He approves of us simply because we have received His gift of salvation. We are His children not because we earned the right, but because He has given us the privilege through Christ.

Therefore, we don't have to remind God of our needs. He isn't an absent-minded or unreliable. Neither is He remote, cold-hearted, or mean. Therefore, we love and trust Him to have a firm grasp of where we are and what we need. He's totally engaged in our lives.

Don't overlook Jesus' reference to our **heavenly Father**. That's an excellent title for God. He's the perfect father figure, attentive to us and willing to help us because He cares for us. He knows what we need even before we ask (see Matt. 6:8). We can trust Him completely because we know He knows.



STUDY THE BIBLE

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Matthew 6:33-34

33 But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be provided for you. **34** Therefore don't worry about tomorrow, because tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

READ: Matthew 6:33-34 on page 39 of the PSG.

GUIDE: Encourage group members to read the numbered list on page 42 of the PSG in order to find practical suggestions for seeking God's kingdom first each day.

DISCUSS: Question #5 on page 42 of the PSG: "**What steps can we take to increase our trust in God?**"

Note: Encourage group members to think of our ability to trust as a muscle. What steps can we take to exercise that muscle each day?

ALTERNATE QUESTION:
What are some ways we can seek God's kingdom first?

DO: Direct group members to complete the activity "Choosing Priorities" on page 43 of the PSG. If time permits, encourage volunteers to share their responses.



Making priorities is like filling a bucket with rocks, pebbles, and sand. The rocks must go in first, followed by the pebbles, and finally the sand. If you put the sand or pebbles in the bucket first, there will be no room for the rocks. Using that illustration, record your priorities for the coming week in the following three categories:

Rocks (most important):

Pebbles (less important):

Sand (least important):

What priorities or interests sometimes hinder you from seeking God's kingdom first?

GUIDE: Refer back to "The Point" for this session: "**God is able to provide all I need.**" If you have time, encourage volunteers to share any final thoughts or ask any final questions.

Matthew 6:33-34

[Verse 33] Jesus taught that instead of chasing after possessions, believers should **seek first the kingdom of God**. Our highest priority must be to grow as citizens of God's kingdom. Disciples give themselves to knowing the Lord, yielding daily to His control, and learning how to live according to His ways. We also trust Him to strengthen us with His power and to provide us with the resources needed to serve Him well.

Followers of Jesus also seek God's **righteousness**. By seeking righteousness, Jesus implied that growing disciples nourish an eagerness to reflect God's character traits. Jesus didn't intend for us to believe we have to earn righteousness on our own. Instead, the more we grow in Him, the more we think and behave like Him—and the more we reflect His righteousness in our relationships with others.

The resources God gives us come in different shapes and sizes. They may take the shape of possessions and wealth. They may also take the form of wisdom to live without resources we usually consider essential. In such times, God's wisdom to live within our means may become our greatest need. Like other resources, we can trust God to provide His wisdom when we ask for it (see Jas. 1:5).

[Verse 34] Jesus closed with a simple but compelling challenge: trust God to supply what is needed. Believers have no reason to worry. Instead of fretting about what they need, they should devote themselves fully to knowing Him better and following Him in complete trust.

Our determination to grow as kingdom citizens will be tested each day. We may be tempted to peek around the corner and **worry about tomorrow**. Jesus stressed the need to resist such temptation. Nobody knows what tomorrow may bring. Granted, we do well to plan for tomorrow the best way we can. However, we're not promised tomorrow. We only have today. Therefore, we make our lives count for Him right now and trust Him with any tomorrows that come our way.

Jesus made an assertion about tomorrow that mature Christians can appreciate. Today's challenges keep us busy. Tomorrow will bring troubles of its own to our doorstep.

The Greek word for **trouble** brings to mind evil things that will happen. Indeed, tomorrow's troubles will greet us, and the Lord will be there to help us through them. But today, we trust Him to give us what we need so we can endure the difficulties and rejoice in the victories it brings our way.

LIVE IT OUT

GUIDE: Direct group members to page 44 of the PSG. Encourage them to consider the following suggestions for rejecting the pull of worry in the days to come:



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- ▶ **Take a walk.** Step outside and observe the natural world. As you do, consider how God provides for His creation. Reflect on how valuable you are to God. Believe He will take care of you.

- ▶ **Look back.** Make a list of different times in the past when God has provided what you need. Be specific about the situations and circumstances of that provision, and spend some time in prayer to thank God for His care.

- ▶ **Seek first.** Take a practical step to “seek first” God’s kingdom by waking up 30 minutes earlier than usual. Use the extra time to read God’s Word, pray, and seek His direction for the day to come.

Wrap It Up

TRANSITION: Read or restate the Conclusion from page 44 of the PSG:

It’s natural to feel anxious about the many dangers and complications in the world today. It’s normal to feel worried about the troubles in our own lives. Yet our response to those feelings is critical. Choose to turn aside from worry and anxiety when they come, because God can provide all you need.

PRAY: Conclude by proclaiming your belief that God can, and will, provide for your needs, as well as the needs of your group members. Ask for strength to rely on His provision in the days and weeks to come.

1. “Statistical Brief #303,” http://meps.ahrq.gov/mepsweb/data_files/publications/st303/stat303.pdf.