

## Freed from Worry

Charmaine's life was not unlike anyone else's. It was crammed tight with work, family responsibilities, chores, and more. Her supervisor had spotted her silver car on the parking lot last week and said her tires were bald. But the single mother of three was hard pressed to come up with the money.

Later, Charmaine was at the women's conference early, doing her part in the preparations.

"What are you still doing driving around on bald tires?" asked her friend, Jada.

Charmaine said she had prayed for resources, but she had only managed to save half of the \$400 needed. She constantly worried she would have an accident before she saved enough to buy the tires.

After the conference, when the committee was cleaning up, Jada began to jokingly harass Charmaine about her bald tires. A woman from another church, whose name Charmaine did not know, spoke up.

"Do you need new tires?" she said. "My husband and I own an auto mechanic shop. We could get you new tires at cost."

Charmaine looked at her dumbfounded.

"My name is Tia," the woman said, walking over to Charmaine.

The two women talked, and Charmaine told Tia she had saved \$200.

"I'm going to talk to my husband, Deron," Tia said. "We're going to get you four new tires for \$100."

**1.** *Why is worry usually the first thing we do when our needs are not met?*

**2.** *Why is worry considered a time killer?*

**3.** *Instead of worrying, why should we seek God first and trust Him to meet our needs?*

## The Futility of Worry

*Matthew 6:25-27, KJV*

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?

*Matthew 6:25-27, NIV*

<sup>25</sup>“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? <sup>26</sup>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? <sup>27</sup>Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life?”

Worry, or anxiety, is characterized by such emotions as fear and distress. External circumstances or internal triggers can cause it to flare up. When left unchecked, a distressed heart can decrease our awareness of things, diminish our ability to cope with life’s traumas, and leave us feeling isolated.

Jesus told His followers not to “worry” (vs. 25) about maintaining their life by getting food, or about protecting their bodies by getting clothing. Furthermore, the Lord asked whether one’s existence was worth “more than food” and whether one’s “body” was more valuable than the clothes they wore, expecting the answer to be no. When people worry about food and clothing, they are focusing on temporal issues. Jesus wanted His followers to be concerned about what mattered from an eternal perspective.

Jesus may then have pointed to some ravens or gulls flying in the sky. These creatures, which the Lord told the Israelites not to eat because they were “unclean” (Lev.

11:13-19), did not plant or harvest crops, nor place grain in storehouses. And yet God supplied their need for food.

Some think verse 27 should be translated as it appears in the NIV, where the emphasis is on time. Others think the phrase “add a single hour to your life” should be rendered as in the KJV: “add one cubit unto his stature.” (A cubit was a unit of measure roughly equal to 18 inches.) In either case, Jesus’ point is essentially the same. Worrying is pointless, for it doesn’t change anything.

**4.** *What did Jesus point to as common areas of worry?*

**5.** *In terms of inherent worth, how did people compare to birds?*

## The Lesson from Nature

*Matthew 6:28-30, KJV*

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?

*Matthew 6:28-30, NIV*

<sup>28</sup>“And why do you worry about clothes? See how the flowers of the field grow. They do not labor or spin.

<sup>29</sup>Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. <sup>30</sup>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?”

Jesus asked His followers why they worried about having “clothes” (vs. 28) to wear. Those who were paranoid about where their garments, food, and shelter would come from never had any inner peace and rest.

The Savior pointed to some “lilies” (Matt. 6:28, KJV)

growing in the nearby fields as He asked His audience to consider how such delicate flowers grew. These plants did not “labor or spin” to obtain protective covering. Rather, God graciously supplied their glorious color and texture.

To a Jewish audience, Solomon would have been the foremost example of human glory. He was extremely wealthy and could afford to dress in the most magnificent clothing available. And yet, Jesus noted, the lilies around Him were more gloriously dressed than Solomon.

Jesus directed the attention of His followers to the field of “grass” surrounding them. The life span of such vegetation was short, and grass was of little value. Yet, God decorated these plants with beautiful flowers. Jesus asked whether the “Father” (vs. 26), would not provide them with garments to wear. The obvious answer was yes.

Next, Jesus noted the doubts that plagued His disciples. Here the Savior was raising a serious charge. His followers lacked “faith” (vs. 30). He knew that faith is the antidote to being consumed by possessions. Faith keeps us from serving money, affirms that God will provide our necessities, and agrees that we are more valuable than birds and lilies. Faith rises up as a wall against worry.

**6.** *How did Jesus argue against the compulsion to worry about what we wear?*

**7.** *What was the nature of the argument Jesus made in Matthew 6:30?*

## **The Divine Prescription for Anxiety**

*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

*Matthew 6:31-34, NIV*

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

<sup>32</sup>For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that

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.

you need them. <sup>33</sup>But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. <sup>34</sup>Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own."

Jesus urged His listeners not to "worry" (vs. 31) about where they would get their food and clothing. To be filled with panic over such matters was to behave in the same way as those who did not believe in God.

Next, Jesus told His followers to value God's "kingdom" and "righteousness" (vs. 33) above all else. The implication is that the Lord acts justly and fairly in all His decisions and actions (see Dan. 9:14). The Father declares as righteous those who acknowledge their sin and put their faith in Jesus for forgiveness and eternal life (Mark 2:17; Luke 18:14).

So, rather than assert their own goodness, the life goal of God's children should be to submit to His rule and to urge others to do the same. As believers do so, "all these things" (Matt. 6:33)—meaning food, clothing, and other items they needed—would be given to them as well.

In light of the above truths, Jesus urged His followers not to be filled with distress about what lay ahead. He explained that "tomorrow will worry about itself" (vs. 34). Each new day brings with it plenty of anxiety-producing situations, and undue worry about what might happen is futile. If God's children cannot control the present with its problems, what point is there in being preoccupied with the future? We cannot control our future; that is in God's hands.

**8. *What is the implication of Jesus pointing to the believers' relationship with God?***

**9. *What did Jesus say were the two foremost priorities for His disciples?***

## **Anonymously**

I grew up hearing testimonies in church about how God will provide for your needs. Yet, it wasn't until I became a mother of four children and living on the mission field that I truly understood God's provision for those who seek Him.

When I was 20 years old, God led me to serve Him on the mission field in West Africa. While there, I met and married my husband, and God blessed us with four children. As missionaries, we totally depended on God to provide for us through support from other Christians.

Day by day, God made sure we had enough to eat and clothes to wear. But the expense of enrolling our four children at the American International school in our city was immense. My family prayed for nine months for God to show us what to do. Our four children were only allowed to stay in the school because one month we would take the support we received for food and give it toward their fees. Then the next month, we would buy food in bulk and ration it to go for two months or more.

But right before our children were to start their second year at the school, we were told that someone paid all their school fees. The CEO of our mission had shared at a meeting our financial need for tuition. Someone at that meeting was led by the Holy Spirit to pay our children's school fees until they all finished high school. Our last child was entering first grade when he started paying their fees. This person paid their school tuition every year anonymously for 12 years. Indeed, God does provide our needs—beyond what we eat, drink, or wear.

**10.** *What is the difference between basic needs and wants?*

**11.** *How have you seen God meet your basic needs or that of others?*

**12.** *What role does prayer have in God meeting our needs?*

## SEEK Him

Throughout the next week, if you find yourself worrying about your needs, remember to seek God first and trust Him to meet all your needs. It takes a conscious effort not to worry about our needs.

► *Use the acrostic SEEK with the Scripture verses to help you when worry threatens to overcome you: S-pend time with God in His Word and prayer (Mark 1:35); E-agerly obey God's will for my life (Jer. 7:23); E-xpect God to lead me and provide for my needs (Phil. 4:19); K-eeep my focus on God and eternity (Matt. 6:33). Read the verses today and write here a prayer about staying focused on Him this week.*

### KEY VERSE

**[A]nd 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. —Matthew 6:32b-33, NIV**

**[F]or your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. —Matthew 6:32b-33, KJV**

### DAILY BIBLE READINGS FOR NEXT WEEK'S LESSONS

**Week of June 7 through June 13**

**(See *The Quiet Hour* and *Cross* devotionals on these passages.)**

**Mon.** Mark 4:35-41—Do Not Fear the Storm.

**Tues.** Matthew 24:9-14—Do Not Fear Persecution.

**Wed.** Romans 8:31-39—No Separation from God's Love.

**Thurs.** John 16:25-33—I Have Overcome the World.

**Fri.** Matthew 8:18-22—Choose to Follow Me Now!

**Sat.** Matthew 8:28-34—Jesus Delivers the Demon-Possessed.

**Sun.** Matthew 8:23-27—Jesus Stills the Stormy Sea.