

Sermon outline and notes:

© Dr. Stephen Felker, Pastor

[Swift Creek Baptist Church.com](http://SwiftCreekBaptistChurch.com), 18510 Branders Bridge Rd., Colonial Heights, VA 23834

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## Matthew 6:25-34 “The Cure for Worry”

Intro. On September 11, 2001 our country was attacked in a way that was totally unexpected. As thousands went to work at the World Trade Center and Pentagon, and as about 200 others boarded flights at the airport, 19 terrorists also boarded those flights to carry out suicide missions. They stormed the cockpits, took over the planes, and flew them into the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, and murdered almost 3,000 people. Little did those Americans know that when they said goodbye that morning, they would not return.

We live in an evil world, and really bad things can happen. Since then, many more have died in major hurricanes, tornadoes, and earthquakes. In addition to that, many have suffered in what is probably the worst economy since the Great Depression. Even in America, some were wondering where their next paycheck, or even their next meal will come from.

How should you respond to such a troubled world? Many respond with fear and worry. Conditions were not any better in the day that Christ lived, yet He taught us in this text of Scripture that we should not worry, especially about your physical needs.

Examine your own life today. Do you have a problem with worry? Even though the Lord says we are not to worry, the fact of the matter is most people do a lot of worrying. I heard about a fellow one time who worried so much that all the hair fell out ... of his wig! I heard about another fellow who said to a guy, “I want to hire you to do my worrying for me and I’m going to pay you \$100,000 a year.” The fellow said, “Where in the world are you going to get 100,000 to pay my salary?” He said, “That’s your first worry.”

You may feel that we have more to worry about today than the previous generation. But whether that’s true or not, you need to understand that worry will not help you, but will hurt you. So I want to share with you how you can win over worry. The first step is this:

### I. RECOGNIZE WORRY AS A SIN

You are not going to change a behavior as long as you regard it as acceptable behavior. You need to see worry as a sin that you must repent of. Three times in verses 25, 31, and 34, Jesus commands us not to worry or be anxious. The only difference in the commands is that v.25 literally means, “Stop worrying” and in v.31 it literally means, “Don’t start worrying.” So, if you are worrying, Christ commands you to quit; if you haven’t been worrying, don’t start. Likewise, the apostle Paul gives a command in Phil. 4:6 not to worry. Now if Jesus and the apostle Paul command us not to worry, then isn’t it a sin to worry? It may be a common sin that is hard to overcome, but we should seek God’s help in overcoming this sin & problem in our lives.

If we are going to obey this command we need to understand what worry is. Let’s start by clarifying what worry is *not*. The King James translation says, “Take no thought,” but that was an unfortunate translation. Jesus does not forbid ordinary, prudent foresight, such as preparing for a storm. In fact, right here in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus says in vv. 24-27 of chapter 7 that the wise man builds his house upon the rock, because he thinks ahead of the likelihood of a storm.

By the way, you knew hurricane Irene was coming. Did you just worry about it, or did you make proper preparation for the hurricane? There is a place for a healthy concern which causes us to take positive steps in dealing with the problems you face. But if your so-called concern deals with something you can do nothing about at the time, then that is worry.

What then is worry? We know it when we feel it. The word translated “worry” is based on the Greek word which means to be divided, or pulled into different directions. Your mind goes here and there. Also, the English word “worry” comes from an old German root which means “to choke” or “to strangle.” Someone has defined worry as a thin stream of fear that trickles through the mind. Don’t spend your time worrying about all the things that *might* come to pass.

There are two types of worry that Jesus warns about here:

A. Do Not Worry Concerning the Physical Necessities of Life – Jesus said in v.25, “Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, what you will put on....” Likewise, in v.31 He just about repeats the same statement. Don’t worry about having enough food to eat, clothes to wear, etc.

This command was especially relevant in Jesus’ day. Sometimes there would be droughts or plagues of locusts, and many would lack food and water.

But this still applies here in affluent America. More and more people are beginning to worry about having even the physical necessities of life. Are you worried about being able to feed your family?

B. Do Not Worry About Tomorrow – Jesus said in v.34, “Therefore do not worry about tomorrow....” This is the essence of worry, and it covers what we might worry about more broadly than what we will eat or drink or wear. Worry is focusing our concern upon the wrong day: tomorrow. The future is rarely as bad as some of us fear. As a result, many crucify themselves between two thieves. The regrets of yesterday and the worries of tomorrow.

So don’t worry about having the physical necessities of life. Don’t worry about tomorrow. Regard worry as sin then you must overcome. That is easier said than done! So if you’re going to win over worry, the second thing you must do is this:

## II. UNDERSTAND THE REASONS WHY YOU SHOULD NOT WORRY

Our Lord skillfully gives solid argument to back up His command. Most of us agree that we shouldn’t worry, but I want to strengthen your resolve not to worry by giving some solid reasons. First of all:

A. Worry adds Trouble to Your Life Today - Jesus explains in the last of v.34 why we should not worry about tomorrow. “Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.” The KJV uses the word “evil,” but the word is used in an Old Testament sense, namely, adversity and trouble.<sup>1</sup> Notice that God does not promise that our days will be free of trouble. But when you worry about tomorrow, you are just adding to your troubles today. Why should you bring tomorrow’s troubles into your life today, & try to carry *that* load as well?

Even though God does not promise a trouble free life, He does promise to help you with the troubles of life. He told the apostle Paul in 2 Cor. 12:9, “My grace is sufficient for you....” Yet this promise of divine aid is only given each day as we need it. Lam. 3:23a says that His

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<sup>1</sup> Yet the word’s roots point to the origin of these things in sin.

mercies “are new every morning.” Deut. 33:25 says, “As your days, so shall your strength be.” He is saying whatever that day’s need is, God will give you the strength to meet it. But He didn’t promise tomorrow’s grace today. When tomorrow arrives, there will be new troubles, but also renewed strength.

And what good is it to worry? It does not empty tomorrow of its sorrows; but, ah! it empties today of its strength. It adds new trouble to your life today. It does not enable you to escape the evil, it makes you more unfit to cope with it when it comes. When you worry about the future now, you double your pain without have a double portion of the Lord’s grace to deal with it. So Jesus is saying, “Do not add to today’s troubles by worrying about tomorrow’s troubles.”

There is an old fable about a clock that stood in the corner of a room, busily ticking away the hours. The clock, beginning to think and worry, said to itself: “I tick once every second. There are sixty seconds in a minute and sixty minutes in an hour. That means I have to tick 3,600 times every hour and 86,400 times every day. Then there’s tomorrow, days that turn into weeks and months. In a year I will have to tick over 31 million times! (31,536,000). The clock became discouraged, and as it added the burden of tomorrow to the burden of the present moment, it began to tire, and run more and more slowly until it almost came to a stop. Then the clock had an encouraging thought. “It’s only a tick at a time.” With that flash of insight, the clock gathered strength and carried on with its allotted task—measuring the passing moments a tick at a time.

So we should not worry about tomorrow. It would just had trouble to your life today. Let tomorrow alone until it comes. Live your life one day at a time. God will help you with any trouble you face today.

So we should not worry because it saps us of our strength today. Secondly, we should not worry because:

**B. Worry Indicates Misplaced Priorities –** Jesus says in the last of v.25, “Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing?” Our Lord recognizes that man tends to devote his whole life to caring for the externals—his food, his house, his clothes, and so on. But when we worry about such things, what does that say about us? In v.32 Jesus pointed out that to worry about material things of life placed such Jews on a spiritual level of pagan Gentiles. They only live for the present, physical world. They are totally consumed with material gratification.

We in America tend to be very materialistic. But isn’t life more than that? Believers in Christ must be distinctive and not sink down to the level of unbelievers. Ask yourself the question, “Do I face life like a Christian or a non-Christian?” Let me ask another question. Do you worry about the earthly affairs of life, or is your greatest concern the things of God? We should understand that life is more than the body, more than food, more than clothes. So the focus of our attention and worry should not be on such things.

**C. Worry Indicates a Lack of Faith -** Notice that after speaking of their worries concerning their clothing in vv.28-30, Jesus says in the last of v.30, “Will He not much more clothe you, O you of little faith?”

That phrase is used 4 other times in the gospels (Luke 12:28; Mt. 14:31; 16:8). In Mt. 8:24-26 it is used in reference to the disciples worrying that they were going to drown, even though Jesus was with them! When Jesus was on the boat with the disciples and the storm came up on the sea, they rushed to Jesus and said, “Lord, save us! We are perishing!” (8:25). Then Jesus said to them, “Why are you fearful, O you of little faith?” (8:26). He was saying that they

should apply their faith to a situation like this. Yet when we worry, we are showing an absence of faith and an unwillingness to apply our faith to the daily problems and needs and necessities of life.

So when you worry, you are lacking faith. Worry is a sin because unbelief is a serious sin. You are saying, “God, I know You mean well by what You say, but I’m just not sure You can pull it off.” When you worry, you are not exhibiting a confident faith in your loving Heavenly Father.

Finally, we should not worry because:

D. Worry Is Useless – It doesn’t do any good to worry. Vance Havner said, “Worry is like a rocking chair; it will give you something to do, but it won’t get you anywhere.” Notice what Jesus says in v.27. He says that worry will not add one cubit unto our stature. Some folks wouldn’t mind having a foot and a half added to their stature. But even though “cubit...stature” is the more literal rendering of the Greek, the metaphorical meaning would properly be “hour... life” (cf. John 9:21 where it is translated “age”). Most people worry more over their length of life than over their physical height. They worry about dying in a car wreck, or plane crash. They worry about another terrorist attack. They worry about catching some deadly virus. There’s a movie about that called *Contagion* that came out this weekend that gives people something else to worry about! While taking prudent action to protect oneself from danger can be beneficial, simply worrying about the dangers of life will not help at all. In fact, worry will shorten your life! A man may indeed “worry himself to death.” After all, worry adds stress to your life, which leads to coronary thrombosis and heart attacks. Worry affects the glands and the whole nervous system. It leads to loss of sleep. Worry can cause ulcers. When you get an ulcer, normally, it’s not what you are eating, it’s what’s eating you.

So far we have discussed the fact that we shouldn’t worry, and I have given some good reasons for you not to do so. But you are not going to stop worrying just because you know you shouldn’t. So if you are going to win over worry, the final thing you must do is this:

### III. APPLY THE CURE FOR WORRY

How can you stop worrying? How can you win the war over worry? First of all:

A. Trust in the Provision & Protection of God - We have seen that worry is an indication of a lack of faith. So to win over worry we must exercise faith in God. And in order to trust God, we must know God. You see, the size of your faith is in proportion to the character & ability of the object of your faith. The more you know God, the greater your faith will be. That’s one reason why the Bible says that faith comes by hearing the Word of God (Rom. 10:17), which tells us about God. What do we know about God? In the last of v.32 Jesus says, “Your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things.” He knows our need. He knows all things. Furthermore, He has the power & resources to provide what you need, and Jesus illustrates this truth from nature.

Notice what He says in v.26, “Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?” “Behold” is a stronger form of the verb “look”. It means to fix one’s gaze upon, to consider intently. One scholar has suggested that this area of Galilee was a crossroad in bird migration. It is likely that when Jesus said “behold the fowls of the air”, He was pointing to birds

that all could see. Haven't you noticed that birds always seem to have enough to eat. Who has ever seen a skinny bird? I realize they have skinny legs, but not skinny bodies! They have enough to eat. Jesus says, "Your heavenly Father feeds them." This is in spite of the fact that birds "neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns." All they do is work diligently for their food. This illustrates the fact that God will provide for us, but we have to do our part.

He argues from the lesser to the greater. We have an advantage over the birds. Jesus says in the last of v.26, "Are you not of more value than they?" Yes, they are God's creatures, but we are God's children! And unlike the birds, we *can* sow seed, reap a crop, and gather into barns. Since God feeds the birds, can't you trust Him to provide for you?

Then Christ gives another illustration of God's provision. Christ says in vv.28-29, "Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; and yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these." As Jesus was teaching on the hillside, he most likely could point to the wild flowers that were growing there. They do not toil to grow cotton or raise sheep for wool. They do not spin fibers into the thread and fabric. And yet God clothes them with beauty even greater than the garments of King Solomon. No garment loomed to the finest and softest texture is anything but rough sackcloth when placed by the side of the drapery with which He clothes the lily.

Then Christ drives home the point of His illustration in v.30, "Now if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will He not much more clothe you, O you of little faith?" Again Christ argues from the lesser to greater. If he adorns the lowly & short-lived grass of the field with beauty, can't you trust Him to provide clothing for you, His child? And by way of implication, he will likely even provide beautiful or attractive clothes for you to wear. Why dress like a bum when God clothes plants with such beauty?

So instead of worrying, you and I should trust God to provide for us, and protect us. George Muller once said, "The beginning of anxiety is the end of faith. The beginning of true faith is the end of anxiety."

Another requirement to win over worry is:

B. Pray - The apostle Paul wrote in Phil. 4:6, "Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God." Paul says, "Don't worry about it. Pray about it!" That's another step in winning over worry. Likewise, 1 Pet. 5:7 says, "casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you."

If you obey Phil. 4:6, then you experience Phil. 4:7, "and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." Isa. 26:3 says, "You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on You, because he trusts in You." Worry is just the opposite of peace. Worry tears us apart on the inside. When we experience peace, we are made whole.

So instead of worry about your needs, pray and trust in God to provide and protect you.

Finally, the last step in winning over worry is this:

C. Get Your Priorities Straight! – Jesus said in v.33, "But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness..." Jesus lays down a life principle that I learned a long time ago as a young person. We are to seek first the kingdom of God. Earlier in this chapter Jesus taught us to pray, "Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven" (v.10). First, we must acknowledge God as our King, or Lord. We should concern ourselves with the kingdom of God. That includes the expansion of the kingdom through evangelism. Notice Jesus adds, "and His

righteousness.” It stands to reason that when God is recognized as King, righteousness will prevail. And lastly, it means longing for the Second Coming of Christ to set up a kingdom of righteousness. And notice how we are to seek God’s kingdom & righteousness. “Seek” (*zeteo*) is a present imperative, “Be constantly seeking.” So instead of seeking gold; seek godliness. Instead of seeking riches; seek after righteousness. Christ wants us to set our affection not on things of the earth, but on things above (Col. 3:1).

Now notice the promise that Jesus gives if we seek first God’s Kingdom & His righteousness. He says in the last of v.33 that “all these things shall be added to you.” If you put God & His heavenly kingdom first, then God will take care of your earthly needs. In other words, if we first pray, “Thy kingdom come”, then we can pray with faith, “give us our daily bread.” While we concentrate our attention on the kingdom and God’s righteousness, our heavenly Father sees to it that we have food, drink, and clothing. He does not promise an abundance of earthly possessions, but He will certainly give us what we need.

Conclusion: Back in 1929 the stock market had crashed, and J.C. Penney was worrying about his business. He was worrying so much that he was developing physical problems including shingles. He was admitted to the hospital, and given medication. He had a particularly bad night as he continued to worry about his business. The next morning he could hear down the hall a chapel service where they were singing that great hymn, “God Will Take Care of You.” They sang that line, “What ‘ere be the test, God will take care of you.” That song spoke to his heart, he laid hold of that wonderful truth by faith, and he got well very soon. You know the rest of the story. God did indeed take care of J.C. Penney, and his business prospered as he put God first in His life, and placed his faith in Him. He donated large amounts of money to advance the kingdom of God.<sup>2</sup>

Sources: H. Leo Eddleman, *The Teachings of Jesus in Matthew 5-7* (Dallas: Books of Life Publishers, 1975); Charles R. Erdman, *The Gospel of Matthew* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1966); Oliver B. Greene, *The Gospel According to Matthew*, Vol. 2, (Greenville, SC: The Gospel Hour, Inc., 1972); William Hendriksen, *New Testament Commentary: Matthew* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1973); John MacArthur, Jr., *Overcoming Materialism: Matthew 6:19-34* (Panorama City, CA: Word of Grace Communications, 1983); Alexander Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture, Vol 6* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House); J. Vernon McGee, *Thru The Bible*, Vol. 4 (Pasadena, CA: Thru The Bible Radio, 1983); Larry Pierce, *Online Bible* [Ver. 4:10] (Ontario: onlinebible.net, 2011); John Phillips, *Exploring The Gospel of Matthew: An Expository Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1999); Alfred Plummer, *An Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to S. Matthew*, reprint, Christian Publishing Co.; Jerry Vines (notes from his sermon on this text dated 4/30/89); Warren W. Wiersbe, *Be Loyal: Matthew* (Wheaton: Victor Books, 1980). Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from *The New King James Version* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1982).

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<sup>2</sup> Paul Lee Tan, *Encyclopedia of 7700 Illustrations: #7569* (Rockville, Maryland: Assurance Publishers, 1979);