

Text:

Matthew 6.25-34

Big Picture:

Jesus continues his discourse on the way disciples should live. In today's section, he specifically points out the ways worry interferes with our ability to truly say we have put the kingdom first in our lives.

Preparing for the Lesson:

The section we are looking at today—Matthew 6.25-34—falls immediately on the heels of a three-part section relating to acts of piety and a warning about serving both God and money. Matthew begins with the words “Therefore...” in the NIV. The old adage of “When you see ‘therefore’ you have to determine what it is there for” certainly holds true. In fact, the word in Greek might be better translated “On account of this...”

So, we look back at Jesus' comments in the previous section (6.19-24) and discover that our concerns and desire for money—storing up earthly treasures, Jesus says—causes us to have a conflicted focus. We cannot, he says, be fully committed to God and also fully committed to our things. Jesus contrasts a “bad” eye, which was often seen as an evil eye full of greed, with an eye that is good and generous. It is impossible to be stingy when we are generous.

Supporting these presuppositions is the understanding that God provides those things we need, so our devotion to him need not be sacrificed for a concern to collect those things that are our basic needs. That is the “therefore” of our section: when we spend our time highly anxious about clothes and food—that is, our basic needs—we cannot be focused on the sustenance of God.

Possible Lesson Outline:

You might begin by asking your group to name the number one worry people have. After people have given their choices, read to them the following list (or a portion of it, the top ten perhaps) and get their opinion of the accuracy of the list.

1. Stomach/ being overweight
2. Getting old
3. Lack of savings/ financial future
4. Overall fitness
5. Overdrafts and loans
6. Low energy levels
7. Credit card debt
8. Paying rent/mortgage
9. Job security
10. Diet
11. Keeping the house clean
12. Finding a new job
13. Sex life

14. Generally unhappy
15. Wrinkles or ageing appearance
16. Whether or not I am attractive
17. Physique
18. Meeting work targets or goals
19. Does my partner still loves me
20. Whether I'll find or / are am with the right partner
21. Whether I'm in the right career
22. Friend or family issues
23. Parenting skills
24. Unhealthy reliance or addiction
25. Driving
26. Pet's health
27. Child's health
28. Dress sense
29. Worrying I'm ill but yet to be tested/ seek help
30. Partner is cheating/may cheat

Ask discussion questions.

Consider using the “This Week” section for the upcoming week.

Close with a time of prayer.

For the Kids:

Children tend to have complete trust in others to provide for them. It is not until they begin to grow older that questions of trust (or distrust) begin to creep into their minds.** Because this is the case, rather than ask the children of your group about ways they worry, you might find it better to ask them about why they feel secure and the reasons they do not worry. Questions like:

- Who takes care of you?
- Who gives you the clothes that you wear?
- Who makes sure you have something to eat everyday?
- How do you know these things are going to happen?

**NOTE: I recognize this in not *always* the case, so use your discretion if you are discussing trust in a situation where children may not always have trust as their first response.

Discussion Questions:

1. Why is it so easy for people to worry? What causes worry in people?
2. What do you worry about the most, that is, what are those things that wake you up in the middle of the night? Jesus specifically mentions food (eating and drinking) and clothing (what you wear). Why do you think these things topped Jesus’ list?
3. What does Jesus say is the “solution” for worry? In other words, what is the reason we have no reason to worry?
4. Why does Jesus use birds and flowers as examples of not worrying? What is the point he is making?

5. Describe a person who completely trusts God to provide for his or her needs? How does this person act? What do they talk about? How do they spend their time? Do people who do not know that their trust in God is the source of their peace? How do they know this?
6. If you were going to tell a brand new Christian: Here is what it means to “seek his kingdom and his righteousness,” what would you tell them? What sort of actions, attitudes, or behaviors makes this list? What ones do not make it?
7. How do the problems of today—versus the problems of tomorrow—affect our worrying and dependence on God?

This Week:

Jesus tells us that we worry when we do not trust that God provides for our needs, much as he does the flowers and birds, who by comparison, are not as important to God. To help us move away from a worrying spirit, spend some time listing things that God has done for you or blessings he has given you. Place them somewhere you can see it often, perhaps in locations you are prone to spend time worrying (the nightstand, the bathroom mirror, the refrigerator, and the like). As you begin to worry, remember these things and praise God for what he has done.

Prayer Ideas:

One possible way to pray for those things for which you worry is to simply begin your prayer with the simple phrase: God, we worry about... and then let people fill in the blank with their own thoughts. Conclude the prayer with a request that God would continue to make us aware of the many ways he blesses us and provides those things we need as we go through life.

What's Next:

Next week's section is Matthew 8.1-10.42. One Group will be looking at 9.1-17.