

Escaping the Snare of Worry
Matthew 6:25-30; Philippians 4:6
October 10, 2021
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How do we avoid falling into the snare and sin of worry? In our text, Jesus doesn't go after mere symptoms in confronting worry (like ulcers, heart disease, insomnia, lack of concentration, or depression). He goes after the root cause—a lack of trust in God.

Usually worry is generated by our fears over what we cannot control. We worry about our safety, our health, our freedom, our job, our country, our church, our marriage, or our children because we fear that we will lose these blessings, and we can do nothing to prevent it. We worry because our fear is at that point in time greater than our Almighty Father. We fall into the trap of worry because we are not trusting in the Lord who created us, who redeemed us, and provides for us every day.

Let us consider what Jesus has to say about overcoming our sinful worry in the following main points: (1) The Prohibition against Worry (Matthew 6:25); (2) The Reasons Why Worry Is Prohibited (Matthew 6:26-30).

I. The Prohibition against Worry (Matthew 6:25).

A. What is the connection between worry in the present section and money in the section Jesus has just addressed? There is a clear connection (“Therefore” or “Because of this” in Matthew 6:25). The “therefore” is drawing a conclusion from what has just been stated, “Ye cannot serve God and mammon” (Matthew 6:24).

1. When you are serving God as your Lord and Master, you will not be consumed with worry over the material needs of this life that money can buy; for you know that God owns it all, is in control, and will provide for all your needs. However, when you are serving money as your lord and master, you will be ensnared by worry fearing you will not have enough money now or later to provide for your needs.

2. Though we can worry about many other things in life, Jesus gives us one example of worry (about our material needs) as a paradigm in overcoming worry in all other areas of our lives.

3. Most people at the time of Christ lived from harvest to harvest or even from day to day. Most did not have a storehouse of resources that they could fall back upon if times got hard and difficult. So let us understand that those to whom Jesus preaches here had far less than we have and depended upon what God provided by way of rain, sunshine, health, and restraint of insects throughout the year. There was no safety net. Most did not have bank accounts or luxuries, but were looking to meet simply the necessities of life: food, water, and clothing. So Jesus is not promising to provide us with the comforts and luxuries of life, but with the necessities of life. We spend more time worrying about how much we should eat, what we will prepare for our meal, or where we will eat than whether we will be able to eat at all.

B. Look at what Jesus prohibits (Matthew 6:25).

1. Note that Jesus reveals His supreme authority over that of men who might justify their worry because of who or what they worry about when He says, “Therefore I SAY UNTO YOU”. Worry is perhaps the most socially acceptable sin among Christians, because we all do it and because we view that about which we worry as being very important. Therefore, we justify worry, condone it, and accept it. But Jesus, as sovereign Lord, has a different view of worry: “Therefore I SAY UNTO YOU”. Jesus demands that we hear Him on this most important matter.

2. “Take no thought” (“Be not anxious”). Because this prohibition is in the Greek present tense, Jesus assumes we all worry, but commands that we stop worrying—not a suggestion: “Stop worrying”.

3. I think we all struggle with knowing where lawful concern about someone or something

crosses the line into sinful worry.

a. The Scripture teaches that we can be concerned about a person or a situation without falling into sinful worry about that person or situation. Interestingly, the same Greek word that is used by Jesus for worry in Matthew 6:25 is also used for lawful concern (1 Corinthians 12:25-26; 2 Corinthians 11:28; Philippians 2:20; 1 Peter 5:7). We know it is true concern (rather than sinful worry) because it drives us to our almighty, loving Father and the promises in His Word to cast all our concerns upon Him in prayer.

b. However, sinful worry does not send us to our Father and His promises to cast all our care upon Him in prayer. Worry sends us away from Christ to tackle that fear by ourselves and with our own resources. That is why Jesus forbids us to worry (Matthew 6:25,31,34; Luke 10:41; Philippians 4:6). It is care (concern) for others that we are to have as Christians. We are not to be “careful) (i.e. full of care or worry) for ourselves or others. When you are driven by fear where it’s simply you facing the giant (not the Lord going before you), you have moved beyond lawful concern to sinful worry. Jesus forbids our worry, but not our lawful concern in our text today.

4. Jesus begins with the general (“Take no thought FOR YOUR LIFE”) and then gets specific in the rest of Matthew 6:25. So it is not just food, drink, and clothing about which you are not to worry, but about “your life” in general (health, job, marriage, vaccine mandates etc.). Concern, yes. Worry, no! Life consists of things more important than these material needs” (Luke 12:15; Philippians 1:21). When life consists only of what we see, we will worry that we will lose it. When Jesus is our life, we can learn contentment because we will never lose Him.

II. The Reasons Why Worry Is Prohibited (Matthew 6:26-30).

A. Now Jesus gives us three reasons why our worry is prohibited—why our worry is sin (for which we must repent). It is sin because worry tells us God will not provide for us or take care of us. Worry strikes at the goodness, faithfulness, love, and power of God. Worry says/implies that God is not trustworthy when He says He will provide all that we need (Psalm 34:10; Philippians 4:19). Worry is a species of idolatry, for it replaces the sovereign God with whatever it is that we fear. What we worry about becomes the almighty at that point in our life. Instead of seeing the Lord Jesus with us in the boat, all we can see is the storm.

1. **First Reason.** If God provides food for even birds (and all the other creatures He has made), He will certainly provide for you, His beloved children (Matthew 6:26). This is an argument from the lesser (birds) to the greater (you, His beloved children).

a. “Behold (“Look at”) the birds flying all around us.” Your beloved Father takes care of them and provides what they need. They don’t even sow seed, harvest it, or gather it up into barns to store it for the future, and yet your Father provides the food they need to survive and to feed their little ones in the nest (Psalm 147:9).

b. This is God’s providential care of His creation. God does not directly and immediately feed the birds by bringing them food and placing it in their nests, but He providentially (through second causes) gives them the ability to gather food and places the food around them where they can go get it (worms, insects, plants, and flesh, etc.). So likewise God does not promise to directly and immediately put food into our fridge (as He did with the widow in filling her pot with meal and oil), but promises that He will supply all our needs by giving us the strength to work, the intelligence to work, the gifts to work, and the opportunity to work. Jesus doesn’t promise to provide for our needs in our laziness and refusal to work (2 Thessalonians 3:10). He promises to meet our needs through the means of diligence in work.

c. Are you (His beloved adopted children, His heirs, whom He has redeemed by the blood of His only begotten Son) not more important than birds? If your Father provides food for them, how much more He will provide food for you. That’s walking by faith, not by sight.

2. **Second Reason.** Jesus prohibits worry because it does not change anything—except to

make you sick with worry (Matthew 6:27).

a. Jesus uses a little humor here when He illustrates the foolishness of worrying. Can any of you who want to be taller (perhaps like Zacchaeus) add a cubit (18 inches) to your height by sitting around and worrying every day that you are so short and need to grow? We all know by experience where worry has gotten us? Nowhere forward, but many steps backward into fear, discouragement, and depression.

b. A Michel de Montaigne was quoted some 500 years ago as saying: "My life has been filled with terrible misfortune; most of which never happened." Researchers at the University of Cincinnati actually found that 85% of what we worry about never happens. They had participants write out all their worries for 2 weeks. 85% of their worries had positive outcomes.

c. The Lord has corrected me many times when I am overwhelmed with worry (not lawful concern) about families in the church or controversies facing the church. He has to remind me that it is not my church; it is His Church, and He will take care of it and provide for it. All my worry is not only sinful, but fruitless and most times does not turn out as I feared. My duty is to be faithful to Him and trust Him. He will provide all that we need as a church.

3. **Third Reason.** Jesus prohibits worry because our glorious and great Father provides the most beautiful clothing for wildflowers in the field that live for such a short time. Will He not provide for you (His beloved children) the clothing that you need (Matthew 6:28-30)? What you need, not what you want (a winter coat, work clothes, shoes, not the latest fashion). How often are we more concerned with what we clothe our bodies than with what we adorn our souls (1 Peter 3:3-4).

a. Jesus says in effect (Matthew 6:28), "Why are you worried about what you need in clothing? Consider the lilies (the beautiful wild flowers that adorn the fields in all of their beauty." Perhaps Jesus was even calling the attention of His audience to consider what they could even then see on the slopes and in the fields which surrounded them.

b. Jesus points to Solomon (Matthew 6:29), the richest man alive at the time that He lived, who could afford the most glorious garments money could buy, and yet Jesus says that the simple wild flowers that graced and adorned the fields will hold our attention and wonder for a much longer period of time due to their beauty. God has created these lilies and as His creatures. He provides all that they need so that each year they come forth in all of their brilliance and beauty.

c. If that is how God provides for wildflowers which are soon cut down and used to start a fire, will your loving Father not provide the clothing/shoes you and your family need who have eternal souls? And when we buy clothing, shoes, or groceries, or when we open our fridge to take out food, or when take a sip of clean water, do we do so without thought as to who has provided all this for us? Do we not see that God's daily provision for us by providence is no less a reason to praise him than if He caused food and clothing to miraculously fall out of heaven into our laps?

B. Jesus nails the cause of worry: "O ye of little faith." It's not that we have no faith in the Lord when we fall into the snare of worry. It is that we are not applying the faith that Jesus has given to us when we were born again. We are not looking at the birds of the air and the lilies of the field to build our faith. We are not looking to God's promises. We don't need more faith. We simply need to use the faith that God has given to us to behold our all sufficient Savior and Lord who owns it all, and to cast all of our cares upon Him, and to remember that we are only worrying because our eye is upon the storm rather than upon Jesus who is in the boat with us and has promised us that we will pass over to the other side. If our Father has given to us the greatest, His dear Son, shall He not give to us the least (our earthly needs)?

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