

# Do Not Worry

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Preacher: Alex Newenham

[ 0 : 0 0 ] Interest repayments, the future of the euro. Individually, we are even more careful with our finances, because we don't know when we are going to be asked to give more help to the government or to the banks.

We work even harder, if we have work, just to keep us afloat. Or we worry about not having work, and how we will pay the bills. Or we worry about just coping with the financial demands on us. Sound familiar? Maybe we don't really think about money at all. But maybe we do worry about relationships. We see more and more celebrity relationships break down, not to mention the relationships of those around us.

Divorce seems to be a very acceptable option these days. I remember being young. What are those giggles for? And just wanting to be noticed by a certain girl.

And so my mind would be totally fixated on that girl and getting her attention. We worry about opinions and what people will think of us.

[ 1 : 1 2 ] And so we act in a certain way or say something different. We say something or live differently to them. We become paralysed by people's opinion and trying to get their approval.

We worry or spend time about thinking about so much that we forget to smell the coffee or the flowers.

We worry about our appearance, deadlines, school or college results, job interviews, fuel prices, the grass growing or not growing, potato blight and spraying it at just the right time.

The garden or the garden or the house looking perfect for the guests coming over this afternoon. Even though we know the kids will have it looking like a bomb hit us in about two minutes within entering it.

We're careful of political correctness. And maybe the more paranoid of us worry about identity theft or about catching a contagious disease.

[ 2 : 1 6 ] But guess what? We are still alive. And our bills have been paid so far. Unless I get home and meet the bailiff at my door. I don't think that will happen. So it's no wonder that Atlas is struggling and bent over double under the weight of the world on his shoulders.

It's a heavy load to carry. Are we, are you, like him? Are you so consumed with all the things in your life that you're doubled over with the weight of the enormity of what you have to cope with?

Sometimes, and even recently, I get overwhelmed. I have two jobs where one would be busy enough. On top of that, I have responsibilities to my family.

Both immediate and wider. I have responsibilities to the church family. Sometimes it gets too much. And my body and mind go into shutdown.

And I crash in bed for a few days. I become burnt out. Because I've been relying on my ability to manage and juggle my life. And I fail.

[ 3 : 2 8 ] Does that sound familiar? Thankfully, God isn't silent. He speaks to us through his word, the Bible, about worry. About setting our priorities right.

About resetting our GPS or our compass. So that we go in the right direction. Four times in this passage, he tells us not to worry or to be anxious.

Let's look at the passage, please. Matthew chapter 6, verses 25 to 34. Therefore, I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink, or about your body, what you will wear.

Don't worry about your life, food, drink, body or clothes. Jesus is telling us not to worry about the basics, basically. Verse 27.

Worry won't extend your life, or add to it in any way. Verse 31, like 25. Don't worry about food, drink or clothes.

[ 4 : 36 ] And verse 34. Don't worry about tomorrow. Live in the present, not in the future. So now we have a problem. We worry, and Jesus tells us not to.

So why do we worry? Well, the passage again tells us this, in verse 30. 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?

O you of little faith. Jesus says that the root of anxiety is lack of faith in our Heavenly Father. As unbelief gets the upper hand in our lives, one of the results is anxiety and worry.

O you of little faith. It feels like we can't win. But he doesn't say it as a rebuke, but as an encouragement to help us to set our priorities right.

These worries we have actually have a negative effect on us. They're bad for us. Earlier we looked at many of the things we worry about. And if we look at a few of them again, we can see how disruptive they can be to us.

[ 5 : 55 ] Anxiety about finances. They can give rise to jealousy or coveting, greed, hoarding and stealing. Bad things.

Anxiety about succeeding or success can make us irritable, abrupt and grumpy. Anxiety about relationships can make us withdrawn or indifferent and uncaring about other people.

Anxiety about people's opinions of us can make us cover over the truth and lie about things. So if anxiety can be conquered, a lot of sins would be overcome.

The phrase O you of little faith actually appears six times in the book of Matthew. So let's take a look at two of them. If you skip ahead in your Bibles to Matthew chapter 14.

We're going to be looking around verse 31. It's on page 981. Matthew chapter 14. Let me set the scene.

[ 7 : 05 ] Peter and the disciples are in a boat crossing the Sea of Galilee. And Jesus is walking on water near them. When Peter sees them, he calls out.

Verse 28. Lord, if it's you, tell me to come to you on the water. Come, Jesus said. Then Peter got out of the boat, walked on the water and came to Jesus.

But when he saw the wind, he was afraid. And beginning to sink, cried out, Lord, save me. Immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught him.

You of little faith, he said. Why did you doubt? When Peter took his eyes off Jesus, he began to falter and fall.

But when he cried out to him and depended on him, he was safe. When we worry, are we looking at ourselves and our abilities?

[ 8 : 08 ] Or are we looking at God and what he can do? Skipping ahead to Matthew 16, verse 5. When they went across the lake, the disciples forgot to take bread.

Be careful, Jesus said to them. Be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees. They discussed this amongst themselves and said, It is because we didn't bring any bread.

Aware of their discussion, Jesus asked, You of little faith, why are you talking amongst yourselves about having no bread? Do you still not understand? Don't you remember the five loaves for the five thousand?

And how many basketfuls you gathered? Or the seven loaves for the four thousand? And how many basketfuls you gathered? How is it you don't understand that I was not talking to you about bread?

Jesus doesn't want us to be distracted by the basics in life. He will look after them. He will give us bread. Again, back to the text.

[ 9 : 20 ] In chapter 6. 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? How much must he love the birds?

He gives them all they need. He loves the birds enough to supply them with food and materials to build a nest. But yet they are still only birds.

They weren't created to love God, to have a relationship with him. So how much more must he love us? When God created the birds of the air, this is from Genesis, he saw that it was good.

But only after he created man did he say that it was very good. He loves us exponentially more. That's a lot more, if you don't know what exponentially means.

[ 10 : 25 ] And so how much more will he give us? Are you not much more valuable than they? If your heavenly father feeds them, will he not feed you?

Especially because he considers you more valuable than the birds. Therefore, worrying about future meals and their provision is an affront to God.

We are saying that we cannot trust his providence. What about the lilies of the field? In the original, this is a general term for wildflowers, which complements nicely with the birds of the air, which we've just been looking at.

Watching a field of flowers grow is lovely. Each individual flower growing on its own. Beautiful in its own right. But with a field of other wildflowers, the beauty is something else.

Even the splendor of Solomon's clothing pales into insignificance. It's interesting. I think we've got Solomon up there.

[ 11 : 36 ] Yeah, I think I prefer to be looking at the fields. It's interesting to know that at the time, there was little wood available for heat at night for cooking.

So grass was often used as a heat source. Even the most beautiful wildflower meadow would often be harvested and dried and burnt for fuel. So God clothes the grass with spectacular arrays of color and beauty.

So will he not also be concerned with us and clothe us, his children, who he loves far more? We know God loves us.

We see it all the time in creation. The beauty he surrounds us with. The sending of his son Jesus to die so that we could live. So then surely he will look after our needs, seeing as he loves us so much more.

His generosity knows no limits. He promises that he will give us all that we need. I need to stress at this time that the passage is meant to release us from worry and not from work.

[ 12 : 50 ] You saw in a previous photo that the birds are provided with food, but they have to go and search for it. They have to work for it. They are provided with a home, but they have to go out and build it.

They are not provided with central heating, but are given enough to survive. Just as we will be provided with our daily bread, not our shopping list of demands and desires and wants.

Very often, especially in this country, we are given abundantly more than we need. However, all this causes a problem. Sometimes birds die.

Sometimes people don't have all their basic needs met. Johnny was praying for East Africa earlier. We can't avoid Somalia these days in the news.

As I was preparing this during the week, at that stage there was three million people who were on the brink of starvation due to famine.

[ 13 : 54 ] Do none of them have faith? I'm sure many of them do. But this passage isn't explicit about them. It's only a general summation of how God loves us and provides for us.

It's hard to watch the images on the news and just write them off as a casualty of sin, entering the world and the inequality we have developed in the world because of greed.

But we know that God's promises are his promises. They are not restricted to geographical location. God provides for his own in verse 33.

And thankfully for us, that is for now and in the future. But sadly for many in Somalia, it may only be for the future.

This doesn't leave us off the hook. We have a responsibility to share what we have both with God's own people and others too. One of the ways God works is through his people, the church.

[ 14 : 56 ] But we'll be looking at that a little bit more later on. Why do we worry? Because we suffer from unbelief. If we know that we have a problem, let's say with our car, we will be foolish not to get it fixed.

Yeah? We'd be foolish not to get it fixed. Like, for example, if our brakes needed replacing, we will be very foolish not to get them replaced. First, we've seen in this passage that we have a problem. Well, I'm assuming that most of you are like me, and you worry from time to time. So, we have a problem. And a quick flick ahead to the parable of the sower in Matthew 13, 22, shows us...

You don't really need to look at it if you don't want to. The parable shows us that the consequence of letting the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth chokes us, making us unfruitful.

So, this is a serious problem, and one that can be deadly to our faith. So, we need to know how to fix it. What is more difficult is not knowing how to fix a problem.

[16:13] But this passage takes the guesswork away and shows us the solution. We have seen so far that worry is lack of faith. And so that, if that is true, then seeking first his kingdom and his righteousness is how we battle unbelief.

Let me say that again. If worry is lack of faith, seeking first his kingdom and his righteousness is how we battle unbelief. How do we seek his kingdom?

What is his kingdom? Well, there's a note in my Bible at home which says that through Jesus' preaching in the Gospels, he describes his kingdom as the establishment of God's rule in the hearts and lives of his people.

The overcoming of all the forces of evil, the removal from the world of all consequences of sin, including death, and all that diminishes life.

And the creation of a new order of righteousness and peace. In other words, living under God's rule. Our first priority should be to live in a way that glorifies and honors him and brings all creation back to him.

[17:32] Much of Matthew is concerned with the kingdom of heaven or the kingdom of God, and especially chapters 5 through to 7, which are in turn concerned with the kingdom which is entering into life.

Life in all its fullness. If we were to scan our eyes over those chapters, a few things might jump out. At least they did for me.

And they help in understanding what it is to seek his kingdom. This is a very general and quick summation, I know. But in chapter 5, 3 through to 12, we need to show humility.

We need to bring the flavor of Jesus into everyday situations. In 5, 13 through 16, we need to take sin seriously. We need to love our enemies.

The next one is one we already briefly looked at. We need to give to the needy. Chapter 6, 1 to 4. The kingdom of God is about giving, not getting.

[18:37] And if we love our neighbor, as the previous verses, in the end of chapter 5, encourage us to do, we are close to playing our part in establishing his kingdom and grasping his righteousness.

But we also need to pray. Talk to God, asking that his kingdom would be established in the hearts and minds of all people.

Worry replaced by prayer will establish trust. Just as the pagans do in verse 32 of Matthew 6, we worry about day-to-day things like food, drink, clothes.

As believers in Jesus Christ, we need to be different from the pagans, those who don't trust in Jesus as their Lord and their Savior. We need to respond to life's bumps differently and not worry as they do.

At the end of chapter 5, Jesus insists that we love our enemies because even pagans can love their friends. Our lifestyle should be distinctive.

[19:51] If we claim to believe in and have put our trust in Christ, then our actions must back us up. God knows our needs, but our conduct often says that we don't trust him.

When we are short of money, even for the basics, do we complain with the same tone, words, attitudes as those around us? when they get the promotion that we deserve, do we grumble like they?

When we get cut off in traffic, do we rage like everyone else? When we don't get the results and exams that we had hoped for, do we become indignant and assume the marker made a mistake? We should be living and reacting distinctively with characteristics that are so unpagan-like that if we were to be turned upside down and our foot was to be red, it would read made in the kingdom of God.

Worry contradicts the sense of dependence God desires us to have and this is beautifully illustrated if we were to cross the street in New York, away from the statue of Atlas and we were to go into St. Patrick's Cathedral.

[21:10] Behind the altar, there's a small little shrine and the shrine is a statue of a little eight or nine year old baby or boy Jesus.

With no effort at all, in one hand, he is holding the world. This leaves us in closing with a choice. We can carry the world on our shoulders or we can jump into his hands and let him carry us and give him our world. Jesus doesn't just hold the world, he entered the world.

Romans 8, 31 to 32 says, if God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? Have you given him your world? Are you still holding on to your worries? Let them go. Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness.

[ 22 : 34 ] Let's make it our priority today. Let's pray. Loving Heavenly Father, thank you that you entered the world for us, to release us from slavery to sin.

Forgive us when we continue to sin, to rebel, to do things our way and worry about life. Help our unbelief. draw us to your word where we can be encouraged that you are with us in every situation. Draw us to our knees so that we can offload our cares into the hands of him that cares. Lift our eyes up to your son Jesus who gives us all that we need and abundantly more and lift our hands up to you in thanks for the fullness of life that you have for us.

In Jesus' name. Amen. Amen.