

## The Heart of Worry (Matthew 6:25-34) - Sermon by Kelly Larsen

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*We are living in an age of anxiety. Our secular culture tends to address the problem as one relating primarily to problems with the body or brain, leading to solutions that are strictly biological and also leading to a kind of hopelessness for any real and lasting change. However, the problem of worry/anxiety is not a new one. Millennia ago, in the context of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus addressed the common human tendency to struggle with anxiety and worry, two intimately connected concepts. His teaching on this topic differs greatly from modern wisdom.*

### Read Matthew 6:25-34.

Two background questions must be answered to properly understand this passage:

1. Why does God command you?
  - Re-read verses 25, 31, & 34. What command of Christ is common to all three verses?
  
  - How does the analogy of a powerful sports car being filled with the wrong fuel; therefore, not functioning in the way it was intended, relate to the idea of God creating us and knowing what we were designed for? How does this relate to His command not to worry?
  
  - Read 2 Peter 1:2-3. How do the terms “peace” and “life” in this passage relate to the question of whether we, as followers of Christ, were designed to worry?
  
2. Are you responsible for your emotions?
  - Re-read verse 25. Is the term “worried” referring to how we feel, or to what we do (is God commanding us to “stop feeling” or “stop doing”)? If we weren’t designed to worry, why is worry a struggle for us?
  
  - Though we cannot perfectly control our emotions, we are responsible for our emotions and can learn to better control them:
    - How do your thoughts impact your emotions? Can you control your thoughts?
  
    - How does what you value in life affect how you feel? Can you control what you value?
  
    - If you are responsible for your thoughts and values, are you responsible for your emotions?
  
  - Read Psalm 94:19 & Psalm 119:52. How do these verses portray the Psalmist changing his thoughts or values in order to change his emotions? How does the phrase “preaching the gospel to yourself” relate this concept?
  
  - Read 1 Thessalonians 4:13. In what way does this passage show that our thoughts about the eternal fate of the dead can affect an emotion as deeply felt as grief?

1. What is worry?

a. What does it mean to worry?

*To worry is to nurse **your own** thoughts or imaginations about uncertainties that you perceive as threats to your well-being.*

- What types of uncertainties about the future can be seen in verses 25 & 34?
  
- Read Matthew 6:32. How does this verse show that independence is at the heart of worry? How would clinging to a sinful habit or relationship we know is wrong, worrying that we “need” it, show independence from God? How would we react if we truly trusted God to know our needs and meet our needs?
  
- Read Matthew 6:30. How does this verse show that faithlessness (lack of trust) is at the heart of worry?

b. How is worry different from concern or wise forethought?

- The same word for worry is translated as “care” or “concern” in other scriptures. This type of care or “worry” is good because it is subordinate to God’s will. God cares for others and we should too. This type of care is also good because it is dependent upon His power. We are unable to effect change in our own power.
  - Read 1 Corinthians 12:25 & Philippians 2:20. What type of “worrying” or caring is described here? How is this type of care subordinate to God’s will and dependent upon His power?
  
  - Read Proverbs 21:5 & Isaiah 32:8. What type of wise behavior is commended in these passages?
  
  - Read James 4:13-17. How does the phrase “make a profit” presume upon God’s blessing and fail to take into account that God’s will may be different? How does the phrase “if the Lord wills” show a humble dependence and trust that God is good and is in control of even our planning for the future?

## 2. What are the objects of worry?

### a. The necessities of your life.

- Objects of worry often include things which we need to survive. This is less so in our country, but is a daily concern for those in poorer countries.
  - Re-reading verse 25, what are some necessities mentioned? In what ways are you tempted to worry about necessities?

### b. The desires/pleasures of your life.

- Verse 25 warns us against worrying “... about your life ...”, which is more than just fearing for our health or safety. It includes worrying about the content of our lives. Eating and drinking are representative of the enjoyments and hopes and dreams of life. We worry about these things when we fret, thinking “what if?” (What if we don’t get that promotion? What if we can’t afford that house? What if we don’t get to take that vacation?).
  - Read Luke 17:27-28. How can we know that the people in Noah’s day and Lot’s day were concerning themselves with more than just survival; that they were partaking in that which is pleasurable and desirable in this world?
  - What are the desires, pleasures, dreams or aspirations that most tempt you to worry?

### c. The people of your life.

- Verse 25 also warns us against worrying about “what you will put on”.
  - Re-read verses 28-30. How do these verses show that worrying about clothing can be about more than worrying about dressing for survival? What type of “clothing concerns” do we most often struggle with?
  - Read James 2:3-4. What do these verses say about how we view clothing or attire or how we use these things to “judge” each other?
  - How can concern for what other people think of us (not just in the area of clothing, but in every area of life) cause us to worry? What kinds of thoughts come into your mind when you worry in this way?
- How can asking ourselves questions such as “do I care most what God thinks of me?” or “does His grace cover me?” help to negate this longing for the approval of people?

### d. The condition of your life.

- Verse 25 finally warns against worrying “about your life”. We are often tempted to worry about conditions of our life such as our health, the environment, and governmental or cultural changes. “Your life” could also be translated “your soul”, showing we can also be tempted to worry about the condition of our souls.

- Is it right for unbelievers to worry about the condition of their souls? Why or why not? (ref. Hebrews 2:15)
- Is it right for believers to worry about their eternal state? Why or why not? (ref. 1 John 4:17-18)

Personal Reflection:

Reading the Bible, have you ever felt as though God's commands are designed to ruin your fun or to make life more difficult? What are some character traits of God revealed in scripture that can help us be sure He knows what is good for us and what is bad for us?

What does it mean to say that there is a difference between caring about tomorrow and worrying about tomorrow? What might caring about tomorrow look like on a practical level? What about worrying about tomorrow?

What kind of "what ifs" are you struggling with now? If the worst case happened, your "what if" became reality, how would you "preach the gospel to yourself"?

Closing Point:

*As you embrace God's design and plan for your life and learn to entrust yourself to His care, you will increasingly experience your emotions as God intended!*