

The Overlooked Commands of Jesus

Worry Not

Matthew 6:25-34

When Jesus showed up in world, He announced that He was establishing a new relationship between God and man. He called it the New Covenant. He said he was going to start something new, and He launched the church.

He gave the early believers a new command, He said ***“love one another as I have loved you.”*** He taught, did miracles, and raised the dead; you know the story; and then He died. And as far as His followers were concerned it was game over. When Jesus died it seemed like everything died with Him. **But then He rose from the dead and everything changed.**

Karen Armstrong has written a book called, “Fields of Blood; Religion and the History of Violence.” When she gets to the part about the rise of Christianity, she agrees with what many historians believe and she says, **“Against all odds, by the third century, Christianity had become a force to be reckoned with. We still do not know how this really came about.”**

The reason historians can't figure this out is that they look for natural causes as to how things could be. But when it comes to Christianity there is no natural explanation. It's supernatural. And the people who were involved and around after Jesus rose from the dead tell us what happened. We see this movement as it began in the book of Acts.

We began a series last week called; “The Overlooked Commands of Jesus.” These commands are not suggestions but were things that Jesus told His followers **not** to do. **Before the resurrection these commands were unrealistic and unattainable; but when He rose from the dead, everything changed.**

Last week we began with Jesus' command to ***fear not.*** The early Christians understood, and we better understand; that when you come to the place where you stake your life on the fact that Jesus died for your sins, was buried, and then rose from the dead three days later, to offer us resurrection life; **you will begin to live a FEAR NOT LIFE.**

Today's overlooked command is: **DO NOT WORRY.**

Researchers at the University of Idaho say that worry is the act of continually repeating the same thought pattern over and over. When worry becomes embedded in your life, it can turn into an anxiety disorder.

Worrying can cause heart disease, cancer, migraines, and even diabetes. The Mayo Clinic estimates that more than 80% of their total caseload is directly related to worry on the parts of their patients. One medical doctor said that if people could learn to stop worrying, most diseases would be cured.

John Haggai tells of a woman who worried for 40 years that she was getting stomach cancer. Every cramp, every pain, every case of diarrhea or constipation had to be cancer, she thought. When she was 73, she died of pneumonia. She wasted 40 years worrying about the wrong disease!

STORY: During Desert Storm, there was a colonel by the name of William Post, who oversaw receiving all the incoming supplies for the United States Ground Forces. Among these supplies were tons of food.

One day, Colonel Post received a message from The Pentagon requesting that he account for 40 cases of missing grape jelly. The colonel sent a soldier to investigate, and he reported back that he couldn't find it. The colonel filed that in his report.

The Pentagon continued to press the colonel pointing out that they needed to close the books for the month, and they couldn't just let the jelly vanish. They ordered him to make an all-out- effort to find the grape jelly.

The colonial sent back this response, 'Sirs, you must decide. I can dispatch the entire army to find your missing jelly, or I can dispense the entire army to liberate Kuwait, but I can't do both!' He never got a reply, and he didn't worry any longer about the grape jelly.

- ◇ Corrie ten Boom said: 'Worry does not empty tomorrow of sorrow; but it empties today of strength.'

STORY: “I have a mountain of credit card debt”, one man told another. “I have lost my job. My car is being repossessed and our house is in foreclosure, but I am not worried about it, because I’ve hired a professional worrier. He does all my worrying for me, and that way I don’t have to think about it.”

“That’s fantastic!” His friend said, “How much does your professional worrier charge for his services?” “\$5,000 a month”, he replied. “\$5,000 a month? Where are you going to get that kind of money in your situation?” “I don’t know; that’s for him to worry about.”

In the greatest sermon ever preached, the longest section of that message deals with, guess what, **WORRY**. And what Jesus says about worry is so extraordinary that it might be worth becoming a Christian just for His advice.

Let’s look at Matthew 6, verses 25-34 to see all that Jesus tells us about worry:

25 “Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes? 26 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? 27 Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life?”

28 “And why do you worry about clothes? See how the flowers of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. 29 Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. 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—you of little faith? 31 So do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ 32 For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. 33 But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. 34 Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.” (NIV)

Let’s Pray

I want to show you three things concerning Jesus' command to "Not Worry": Worry is Stupid (Silly), Worry is Sinful, and There is a Substitute to Worry.

Okay? So, worry is stupid; worry is sinful; and Jesus talks about a better way.

I. The Stupidity of Worry.

Some of the things Jesus says here are just common sense. And the best example of common sense is verse 27: "***Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life?***" Obviously, this is a rhetorical question.

Now, it's interesting, because the Greek word that's translated "***worry***," when it's used in other contexts, can be translated "***concern***." As in, appropriate concern.

So, what's the difference between appropriate concern and worry? I think it's this: worry is when the concern starts to control you. Dr. Michelle Newman directs the Laboratory for Anxiety and Depression Research at Penn State. And she said, "**Just having a thought about some potential bad thing that might happen...everyone has those. But if you have difficulty stopping the worry once it starts, that's one of the ways we define what's called pathological worry.**"

Jesus is basically saying, "Worrying won't make your teenager drive any safer; it won't make your big test go any better; it won't keep you from losing your job; worry won't add a single hour to your life!"

Paul Harvey once told of an old man he knew, who worried about looking too old, so he put braces on his false teeth so he would look younger!

In fact, if you worry a lot, you are taking hours off your life. Because it increases your blood pressure; it raises your heart rate; it over-activates your immune system; it causes insomnia; it creates intestinal problems; it raises your chance of cardiovascular disease. Worry messes you up.

In other words, worrying is stupid (silly). Now, let's get a little more spiritual, let's talk about...

II. The Sin of Worry.

At its core, worry is a spiritual issue. It says a lot about our view of God and our relationship with God when we choose to worry.

Right at the end of verse 30, Jesus says to his disciples, "***you of little faith.***" Have you heard Jesus say that before?

At first, it seems like an insult, right? Like a rebuke. But you shouldn't look at it like that. Every time Jesus says those words, He's speaking to His followers. He's not saying they have *no* faith; He's saying their faith is too small. Like, **'Come on, you guys should know better! Don't you realize who I am and how much I love and care for you?'**

Now, in this group of people that Jesus was talking to, some of their biggest worries were: "Where am I going to get my next meal?" and, "Am I going to have enough clothes to wear?" These were basically poor people, so Jesus tried to increase their faith by using a few examples.

A. Birds. Look at the birds! They don't plant crops; they don't reap a harvest; they don't store all their food in barns, but every day they seem to find something to eat. And Jesus says the reason is: your heavenly Father feeds them. So, does that mean birds just sit in their nest and open their mouths, and God drops a worm in? Of course not!

Birds go out and look for food. They do their part. So, Jesus is not talking about laziness. He's talking about faith. He's saying to the people: Go out and do your part, be diligent; but leave the results to your Father. Don't lie awake at night, running Excel spreadsheets in your brain, imagining financial disaster. God takes care of birds, and you are so much more valuable than they are.

Jesus is not saying live irresponsibly, He's saying you have an extraordinary advantage over all of nature; you can sow, and you can reap; you have the potential to anticipate the future. You have the potential to plan for tomorrow. You have the advantage to be able to think ahead.

But because we have the capacity to anticipate the future; we are also tempted to worry; the two go hand in hand.

Jesus is saying, "look, because you can prepare for the future, compared to the birds of the air and the rest of nature that has no concept of tomorrow, why would you worry. And then Jesus gets to the heart of worry; **Are you not much more valuable than they?** And that's the question we must ask ourselves. And then He gives another example...

B. Flowers. Consider the lilies of the field. They're not all stressed out, trying to make clothes for themselves...hoping the Belk's' coupon you peel off will say 30% so they can stock up on jeans and sweaters.

But look at the lilies of the field: they're stunning. Not even King Solomon himself was dressed that well. And then here's that same comparison: if God takes care of plants, don't you realize how much more he's going to take care of you? So... stop focusing on clothes!

C. Secular People. 31*So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?'* **32***For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them."* (NIV)

Living conditions were difficult in Jesus' day. Most of them were incredibly poor. They lived on less than a dollar a day. Now, over the last 2,000 years, living conditions have gotten a lot better. We are better educated, healthier, better resourced, cleaner, and free. **But we still worry, don't we?**

It's mostly because we confuse wants and needs. And the more items we move from the "wants" column to the "needs" column, the more time we're going spend worrying and running after those things, and the more frustrated we're going to be that we don't have those things.

That word "pagans," in some translations uses the word "Gentiles." And it means people who don't have a relationship with God. Jesus just meant everybody else; quit acting like everybody else. In other words, He's talking about people who have no concept that God is our heavenly Father.

Psalm 23:1 says, ***The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want.*** The old-fashioned language is deceiving, because it's not saying we won't want anything; it's saying we won't lack anything we need...because the Lord is our Shepherd.

Jesus was clearly talking about needs. Your heavenly Father knows what you need. And since he provides the needs of birds and flowers, and he values you infinitely more than birds and flowers, stop having such tiny faith! Trust God.

Now let me ask you a question because this is so important. What if you absolutely knew with complete certainty that your Heavenly Father KNOWS.

What about if when you go to bed tonight and you're concerned with everything you've got going on tomorrow, you hear God just whisper in your ear, "**I know.**" First, you'd freak out, but what if you had an abiding certainty that God does know everything you'll need tomorrow. Wouldn't that be 90% of the battle?

So not only is worry stupid; it's sin-because it's a refusal to trust in God.
Without faith it is impossible to please God.

There's one more thing we need to talk about and that is...

III. The Alternative to Worry.

If you read this passage, and you walk away and say, "Okay, I need to stop worrying because I have a loving Heavenly Father who promises to provide my needs," you would be right...but you would only be half right. It's not enough to stop worrying.

Jesus doesn't only invite us to start trusting Him. He invites us to take all the mental energy and all the time we spend worrying and **focus on something bigger.** So here are the A, B,C's of the Alternative to Worry.

A. Accept Jesus' invitation to seek Him.

Look at verse 33: *But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.*

Here is a life-defining question that all of us need to answer: **What am I seeking first?** In other words, what are the things that fill up my time and claim my energy and consume my thoughts?

Jesus said that secular people tend to seek first things like food, and clothing, and houses. Jesus says, "Don't you realize you were created for something bigger? In verse 25 He said, ***"is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes?"*** Don't you realize you were made for more than what the world lives for?

Jesus is inviting us to take all that energy and passion we're using to run after stuff, and reallocate it! Use it to seek God's kingdom and God's righteousness." What does that mean? It means to focus on the kinds of things Jesus focused on: people instead of possessions. The needs of others instead of your own needs. Loving people. Spending time with people and giving hope to people who feel hopeless. Pointing people to God.

[Now in the Greek language, ***run after*** and ***seek first*** are almost the same; you could interchange these sentences and they would mean the same thing.

God wants you to run after something entirely different than what the world runs after. Worry is about chasing after things, but seek after God instead.

The Solution to Worrying is Proper Focus. The operative word, in this entire passage is, ***"first."*** The solution to worry is simply putting first things first.

When your priorities are out of order you will be preoccupied by the wrong things, and the result is worry that is both unproductive and unnecessary.

A Proper Focus on the Right Priorities Promote Peace. When you are focused on the right things you won't be worried about the wrong things. Jesus says there are two things you ought to stay laser-focused on in your life every day - ***His kingdom and His righteousness.*** To put it another way, I am to focus on –

- a. God's rule over my life***
- b. God's righteousness in my life***

Let me tell you what I mean by focus. I am not talking about focusing with your eyes. I am talking about focusing with your heart. Focusing with your eyes involves seeing. Focusing with your heart involves surrender. **Surrender your worries and focus on His will.**

**Proper priorities promote peace.
Misplaced priorities multiply worry.**

Every day your priority should be His rule over your life and His righteousness in your life. When you focus on His will, He takes care of your worries.

Illustration: When you read pop psychology and self-help stuff, have you noticed that people love the concept of 'Zen' and meditation and things like that. The Buddhist philosophy says: the result of our stress and our worry is our desires.

We have all these cravings, and when those don't get fulfilled, we're frustrated and stressed out. So, the key is to extinguish our desires. Because if we can get rid of our desires, we'll stop wanting anything, and we'll finally be at peace.

Just so you know, the teachings of Jesus are radically different. Jesus says, "You don't need to extinguish your desires; you need higher desires! You need heavenly desires! You need a bigger dream.

Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. Are you running after things that are too small? God is inviting you to repent of that, and turn toward Him, and seek Him first.

[Accept Jesus' invitation to seek Him.](#)

B. Believe that YOUR Life is Important to God

Jesus goes right to the heart of what worry is all about. **Worry is about later. Worry is about the future;** what you will eat, what you will drink, what you will

wear. Jesus points out that what people worried about 2000 years ago, we still worry about today.

Jesus continues. ***Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes?***

Now here's what Jesus is saying, and this is so fantastic. **Isn't your life more important than what you worry about?**

Now here is what Jesus is getting at: If our Heavenly Father has done what He has done for nature, and if you are more valuable than they, and if we are made in the image of God, we can trust that God has our future in mind?

There is one thing that all of us in this room worry about, and that is, we worry about the future which is why Jesus concludes this message saying, ***'Therefore, do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.'*** (Matthew 6:34, ESV)

Jesus re-labels all of your worries by just calling it "tomorrow."

The problem with worrying about the future is simply this - you are acting like either there is no God, or if there is, He is powerless. What you are really saying is, "I don't really believe that God can do what He says He will do, and I don't really believe that God will be with me and take care of me."

If you are a child of God, if you are a follower of Christ, I can tell you something about your future, in fact I can guarantee it. Everything will always work out for your good. That's what Romans 8:28 says.

Three times in this passage, verses 25, 31 and 34 Jesus repeats a phrase, ***"Therefore, do not be anxious."***

The Greek word for "anxious" or what we would call "worry" is a combination of two smaller words. One word means "to divide" and the other word means "the mind." In other words, to worry is to have a divided mind.

There are two things you should never worry about.

1. Never worry about things you can change. If you are worried about something you can change, instead of worrying, change it.

2. Never worry about things you can't change. If you can't change it don't worry about it? Pray about it.

The only reason that we would worry is because we either don't believe there is a God or even if we do, we don't believe He is really in control of our lives or, we don't believe He cares.

Worry is fear's extravagance. Worry is faith in the negative, trust in the unpleasant, assurance of disaster and belief in defeat...worry is wasting today's time to clutter up tomorrow's opportunities with yesterday's troubles.

A dense fog that covers a seven-city-block area one hundred feet deep is composed of less than one glass of water divided into sixty thousand million drops. Not much is there but it can cripple an entire city.

Jesus had to reassure the disciples repeatedly. In fact, it was during Jesus' last big talk with them before His arrest, trial, and crucifixion that Jesus says in John 14:1; ***“Do not let your hearts be troubled,*** [And then he goes right to the heart of what causes us to worry] you believe in God; believe (trust) also in me.” The issue of worry is faith. Do we trust God or not?

He goes on to say in verse 27; ***“Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.”***

Accept Jesus' invitation to seek Him. Believe that YOUR Life is Important to God

C. Cast Your Cares upon Him

When I read the New Testament, I see two other passages that directly address this same theme. And I want you to see if you can pick up a common theme in all these passages.

In Philippians 4:6-7, Paul wrote, ***“Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. 7And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.” (NIV)***

And then in 1 Peter 5:7, Peter wrote: ***“Cast all your anxiety on Him because he cares for you.” (NIV)***

So, we've looked at what Jesus said about worry, what Paul said about worry, and what Peter said about worry. Do you see the common theme? ***All of them teach that the only thing strong enough to overpower anxiety is a relationship with God.***

Jesus evaluates the reason why we worry. He then eliminates the cause of worry, so He can elevate us above worry.

Jesus said don't worry because your Heavenly Father knows what you need. Paul says don't worry because you can present your requests to God and he'll listen to you, and he'll give you peace. Peter says don't worry because God invites you to unload your stress on him-because he cares for you.

I love that Peter uses the term “cast.” Cast is a fishing term that Peter, the big fisherman, knows all too well. It means ***to transfer weight***.

Have you ever tried to pray about your anxiety, then, a few minutes in, you feel the anxiety increase? You think to yourself, this isn't working.

That's because in our prayers we often tell God about our anxieties but never get around to telling our anxieties about God. When our prayers are filled with thanksgiving, we are telling our anxieties what we are thankful for. Anxiety has a way of blinding us to God's blessings, but thanksgiving opens our eyes. It's a proactive way of attacking anxieties.

He doesn't just tell us to pray about it; he tells us how to pray. Prayer that casts weight of anxiety on God is prayer that is full of thanksgiving and supplication. When our prayers are filled with trust in God and His Word, we are telling our anxieties that God is on our side and can carry the weight.

David models this for us in his psalms. If you read through that book, you'll notice how there is often a shift in his prayers. He might begin by talking about the reasons he has to be anxious: his enemies are chasing him. His life is in danger. The guilt of his sin is too heavy.

But then there's a shift. It happens in virtually every psalm. David stops telling God about his anxieties and starts telling his anxieties about God: God can defeat my enemies. God can rescue me from danger. God can take away the guilt of my sin. So many psalms begin in despair and end in worship.

Don't just tell God about your anxieties; tell your anxieties about God. Some of you might be thinking, you don't understand, no one can carry my weight, or maybe you're thinking, it's not big enough to bother God with.

God doesn't weigh our prayers on a worry scale. The weight you carry isn't part of who God made you and formed you to be. You are his loved one whom he adores. He sees you in your struggle, your brokenness, and your worry.

He desires to take your weight from you. He desires you unhindered and free.

Worship is a powerful antidote to anxiety because worship and worry aren't compatible with each other. They can't coexist. When we worship, we humble ourselves before God, and are reminded of his greatness and power, and we naturally begin to cast the weight of our anxieties on him.

[Accept Jesus' invitation to seek Him. Believe that YOUR Life is Important to God. Cast your cares upon Him.](#)

Proper priorities promote peace. Misplaced priorities multiply worry. So, every day your priority should be His rule over your life and His righteousness in your life. When you focus on His will, He takes care of your worries.