
LIFE BIBLE STUDY

SESSION OBJECTIVE: MATTHEW 6:19-34

To understand the reality of worry and why God's people have no need for it.

The Age of Anxiety

Throughout my childhood I was exposed to so many different genres of music. As a musician, I always found each genre interesting for their own unique reasons. It wasn't until I joined the marching band in high school that I was exposed to the works of a man named Leonard Bernstein. His, "Symphony No. 2: The Age of



Anxiety," was one I will never forget. Written for the orchestra as well as solo piano, it was composed between 1948 and 1949, and inspired by the English poem by W.H. Auden of the same name. Auden's poem was a Pulitzer Prize winning work, and Bernstein described the feeling of being, "breathless," when he first read it.

We are living in an ever increasing age of anxiety it seems. Barnes and Noble reported in August of 2018 that their sales in books related to anxiety saw a 25% percent increase since June of 2017. WHO (World Health Organization) says that roughly 300 million people suffer from some form of an anxiety disorder globally. It is more talked about than ever before, it seems.

"There is nothing new under the sun' (Ecc. 1:9). Anxiety and worry have been around for a very long time."

However, “there is nothing new under the sun” (Ecclesiastes 1:9). Anxiety and worry have been around for a very long time, and in our passage Jesus has some things to say about it that were not only applicable then, but are for our time as well.

Make It a Pair!

Worry is an age old problem, and one that is not without warrant. There are legitimate times when it seems like destitution is not too far off. “How will I make it another day without ____? What if I am not able to get anymore ____ for my family?” These are real and legitimate questions. However, Jesus’ contention is that, as the most treasured part of God’s creation, we are in good hands. God will provide, as He always has, for His people. Jesus takes us through a progression to get to the root of the problem, and then exposes why the problem is a problem.

Verses 19 through 24 can be broken down into three sections, and each section presents the reader with a choice between two options. These are not three random pairs that Jesus spells out. They are connected to one another, and reveal a great truth regarding what we are committed to.

THE TWO TREASURES (VS. 19-21)

The first section is the section of treasures, and Jesus makes a shocking statement regarding our heart. The treasure we spend the most time collecting not only tells us something about what we treasure, but also something about our hearts.

Earthly Treasure

The earthly treasure is exemplified by two characteristics that suggest Jesus had two very common types of riches in mind. The wealthy would have had fine linens that were traditionally kept locked up for fear of moths eating holes through them. The second type of treasure would have been precious metals, which were often protected for fear of corrosion. Both of these items were also subject to theft if not properly cared for.

Heavenly Treasure

The riches here are heavenly treasures, or in other words, treasures that cannot be attained here on this side of eternity.

THE TWO EYES (VS. 22-23)

The second section is regarding the eyes, and it’s an interested next topic that flows out of the first one. The implication is that, the clear eye will not be on earthly treasures but heavenly ones. If believers address their hearts, their eyes will be a good indicator of such work.

Clear Eye

The clear eye is unobstructed. It has nothing in its way to cloud it from seeing clearly. As a result of clarity, light can shine in through the eyes, the windows of the body, to bring light into the body. This is of course, a metaphor, but Jesus point is clear and concise. What we focus our eyes on has either positive or negative effects on our life.

Dark Eye

The dark eye is fixed on the worldly treasure, and it poisons the body because it does not allow light to penetrate it.

THE TWO MASTERS (V. 24)

The final section is regarding the serving of either one or another master. Jesus draws out the reality that one person cannot serve two masters, because they will naturally favor one over the other, and with favor of one comes resentment for the other. This completes the progression that Jesus is creating in His teaching.

God

The fullness of Jesus' illustration comes to fruition. Jesus makes the connection that by fixing your eyes on the heavenly treasures and allowing light to light up the body, it reveals your master is God Himself.

Wealth

However, if you are more concerned with wealth, it clouds your vision and judgment, leaves your life in darkness, and reveals your master you serve is actually not God at all, but money and riches.

What Does Worry Tell Us?

The culmination of Jesus' point becomes clear in this final portion of the passage. What is it that causes a person to hoard and store up earthly treasures, and fear the thief and the moth? "Worry!" What is that worry based on? Worry that, "If I don't store these things up, I might run out of them, and then what would I do?" Jesus counters this faulty thinking by drawing attention to the birds and flowers. As seemingly unimportant as they are, God takes great care of them, therefore worry for our own wellbeing is a futile thing because we are made in His image and He cares for us more than any other aspect of creation (Gen. 1:26-27).

It is, however, not the case that Jesus is downplaying the need to work for our food or clothing. James, the half-brother of Jesus, condemns this kind of thinking (Ja. 4:13-17). On the contrary, the birds work tirelessly for their food on a day to day basis. The point is that through their work, God takes care of them, and such is the case for us. This is simple trust that God will provide, an echo of the prayer He prayed in this same chapter, just a few verses prior: "Give us this our daily bread" (Matt. 6:11).

Study Questions

Day One

1. Read Matthew 6:19-21. Right down in your own words what this verse says. What are some words that stood out to you, and why?
2. We've already unpacked the two common earthly treasures that Jesus likely had in mind, but what are some examples of heavenly treasures? Use Scripture to support your answers where possible.

Day Two

1. Read Matthew 6:22-23. What are some other passages that deal with the eyes, and the role they play in a believer's life? Write them down and then decide whether or not there is a theme throughout all of them.
2. Why do you suppose keeping your eyes on earthly treasures would keep the light out? What is the connection between what we desire and the vitality of our spiritual life?

Day Three

1. Read Matthew 6:24. Why is it that by loving one master you will hate the other? Do you agree with this statement? Be honest.
2. What is the connection between the master that we serve and the desires that we have? Can you serve God and have your eyes on earthly treasure?

Day Four

1. Read Matthew 6:25-34. What are the two examples that Jesus uses to illustrate why worrying is useless? Read 1 Kings 10:14-29. How ornate are Solomon's riches and wealth? What does Jesus say about his riches in comparison the beauty of God's creation? What does He mean by this?
2. What does worry say about our trust in God?

Week 10 Discussion: Don't Be a Worrier

Jesus teaches us that there is a direction connection between what we value and who we serve, and that if we value the wrong things we will be wrapped in worry over them. The freedom found in serving God comes in a lot of different shapes, and one of the is the release from worrying over whether or not we will have what we need tomorrow, "for tomorrow will care for itself" (Matt. 6:34). Discuss as a group your tendency to worry, and talk about why you do and what you can do to begin trusting God for His provision.

1. Icebreaker: What's the thing you worry about more than anything else? Why do you suppose that is?
2. Do you find it challenging to find the balance between working hard and trust God? It seems when we focus on working hard, we can become self-dependent. When we trust God, we can become complacent. How do you find the balance between the two?
3. R. Mounce once said, "Worry is just practical atheism." Why do you suppose he said that? Do you agree? Why or why not?
4. Read Proverbs 27:1. Rather than worrying about tomorrow, if we become too self-dependent, we can fall into the trap of "boasting" in tomorrow as well, and tomorrow is not guaranteed. How important is it for Christians to think in terms of the present? Why or why not?
5. Read Proverbs 15:22. Is ALL planning ahead and looking to tomorrow wrong? What is unique about this proverb? What is the connection between worry and community (see Galatians 6:2)? How much more difficult is it to worry and also be in good community?

Takeaways:

1. The things we desire to store up and treasure reveal something about the nature of our heart and the master that we serve (either God or money).
2. Worry is a useless endeavor and an abandonment of our trust in God to provide for us.

PRAYER REQUESTS: