

LESSON 1

June 6, 2021

Unit I. Jesus Teaches about Faith

No Worries

DEVOTIONAL READING: Ezekiel 34:11-16

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: Matthew 6:19-34

PRINT PASSAGE: Matthew 6:25-34

KEY VERSES

Your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. (Matthew 6:32b-33, KJV)

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“Your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.” (Matthew 6:32b-33, NIV)

Lesson Aims

As a result of experiencing this lesson, you should be able to do these things:

- Contrast Jesus’ teachings about worry with your own anxieties.
- Appreciate God’s care for everything in nature.
- Embrace the opportunity to trust God in everyday life.

KEY TERMS

Arrayed (verse 29)—Greek: *enduo* (en-doo’-o): to have put on; clothed; decorated; “dressed” (NIV).

Knows (verse 32)—Greek: *eidó* (i’-do): is aware; beholds; considers; perceives; “knoweth” (KJV).

Life (verse 25)—Greek: *psuché* (psoo-khay’): the vital breath; breath of life; the human soul.

Observe (verse 28, NASB)—Greek: *katamanthanó* (kat-am-an-than’-o): to learn thoroughly; examine carefully; “consider” (KJV); “see” (NIV).

Sow (verse 26)—Greek: *speiró* (spi’-ro): seed; spread; scatter.

Worry (verse 25)—Greek: *merimnaó* (mer-im-nah’-o): to be anxious; to care for; “take . . . thought” (KJV).

PREPARING THE LESSON

- Refer to the *Townsend Press SS Commentary Teacher’s Edition* for an additional lesson plan—with word studies, insights on teaching adults, learner matrices, etc.
- Review last week’s student assignments (“Your Life” and Your World!).
- Thoroughly review your student book for your adult or young adult class.
- Please note that you have the option of using your subscription bundle supplements, i.e., Lesson Scenario, Student Activity Sheet, SSL-AAG.

WHY THIS LESSON MATTERS

Life's uncertainties can lead people to worry about how to obtain their basic needs. Whom can we trust to meet all our needs? The gospel of Matthew presents our sovereign God as the one who is completely able to supply our needs.

THE LESSON IN FOCUS

Sooner or later, most adults will experience a season of personal economic uncertainty. As a result of world economics, poor decision making, inevitable misfortune, or community supply and demand, most people will experience some kind of financial setback or inconvenience. Materialism is one of the hallmarks of modern living. Too often, people pursue money and possessions above the things that matter most. Rather than focus on spiritual development, healthy living, and meaningful relationships, many go to great lengths buying (or even stealing) things they cannot afford and do not need, simply so they can impress others. The pressure to “keep up with the Joneses” and be impressive only adds to the stress of modern living. This tendency to get caught up in the relentless pursuit of a superficial image can cause worry and insecurity regarding the practical necessities of life—such as food, clothing, and housing. Despite our notions of self-sufficiency, no one can build a family or livelihood without the assistance or help of others. Those who are not focused on the Lord as their true source can be overwhelmed by the busyness, hustle, and grinding. If you have lost sight of what is most important in life, now is the time to regain your focus.

THE LESSON IN CONTEXT

Jesus used His teachings to shift the ancient understanding of riches from strictly temporal to those that are eternal (verses 19-20). This deeper understanding would create a lasting change in the lifestyle of Jesus' followers for centuries to come. Since the eyes regulate the motion of the human body, Jesus challenged disciples to keep their eyes focused on kingdom issues. Keeping a steady focus on the greater calling of God would alleviate the desire to worry over the temporal things of this world. The word mammon (verse 24, KJV; translated “wealth” in NRSV) is a rabbinic term from the Talmud that denotes wealth. It represents more than the possession of money; it also includes the idea of sustainable wealth that would be regarded by others as an extension of one's success. Jesus presents four arguments emphasizing the futility of greed for material gain and highlights the power of divine providence: (1) how God provides for the birds (verse 26); (2) trusting God is more life-giving than worrying (verse 27); (3) trusting God for our daily needs (verses 28-31); and (4) a lack of trust in God is living as if we do not know God (verse 32). Jesus does not say “be like the birds” but, rather, “look at the birds.” The natural order provides a means to reflect upon God's providence without necessarily representing a role model for human behavior. Other Scripture passages highlight the human obligation to engage in productive work (see 2 Thessalonians 3:10).

OPENING INQUIRY (Choose from the questions below.)

1. Share a time when you were worried about paying your bills.
2. Do you or have you ever had an overwhelming work schedule? Share.
3. How do you manage your time to balance life's worries?

INSIGHTS

Christian discipleship includes the fundamental process of growing in our faith. Spiritual growth is a transformational process that allows believers to gain greater trust in God's promises and witness them coming to fruition. While we trust God and believe in His amazing nature, we continue to marvel at His creative work in the world and are thus inspired to trust that God will take care of our needs as well. Those who claim to trust God must not allow wealth to become the object of their affections or their highest goal, lest it supersede our ability to love God. Anything that replaces or blocks our ability to see God clearly and worship God freely must be set aside. This includes our worrying about temporal things of this world like material possessions and daily needs that God has promised to supply.

EXPLORATION

As Christians, we have learned that distrust of God's providence is counterproductive to our faith and work for God. Fear and worry are equivalent to doubt. Although God commands us to be diligent in our work, we must understand that living by faith requires us to abandon doubt, fear, and worry. The more we trust God to supply our needs, seeking His will and direction, the deeper we grow in our understanding of His provision for us. We are blessed when we order our lives according to divine priorities, seeking God first and trusting Him to supply all our needs. Worry decreases as we focus on God and the things that pertain to His kingdom.

ADDITIONAL EXPOSITORY INSIGHTS FOR THE TEACHER

Commentary on Matthew 6:25-27

KJV

25 Therefore I say unto you, *Take no thought* for your *life*, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?

26 Behold the fowls of the air: for they *sow* not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?

27 Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature?

NIV

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?"

Jesus intentionally addressed believers' tendency to live in anxiety. His message was to those in every income category who are prone to faithless worry. Many of those in Jesus' original audience were devoted to labor-intensive work to meet their basic family needs. Jesus begins His discourse with a strong call to abandon worry. To "take no thought" is not a criticism of wise planning or thoughtful foresight (see 1 Timothy 5:8; Proverbs 6:6-8; 30:25), but of anxiety over daily needs and stressful thinking. Since God is the provider of human life, shall we not trust Him

to provide the things which are necessary for living? Given that God provides substance for birds that have no ability to sow, reap, and store, consider how much more humans (who have been provided with these abilities) can trust in their heavenly Father. Food is a necessity of life; yet, even here, God controls. As a child grows to maturity, depending on parents for support and substances, so must we, as children of God, depend on the heavenly Father to provide for us. A cubit is a measure of about 18 inches from a man's elbow to his fingertips. While the use of the word stature could refer to height or weight, it could also apply to one's length of life. Anxiety only hinders, rather than helps, our growth. Thus, Jesus teaches that believers must set aside their focus on basic desires and cravings to seek the bigger purpose and plan of God.

DISCUSSION STARTERS

(Please review the appropriate student book's related biblical exposition section.)

- **Adult Question:** What are the things that tend to distract us from seeking Christ and His kingdom?
- **Young Adult Question:** If people truly trust in God to provide for their needs, then is there really any reason to worry? Explain your answer.

Commentary on Matthew 6:28-30

KJV

28 And why take ye thought for raiment? *Consider* the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin:

29 And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not *arrayed* like one of these.

30 Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?

NIV

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?"

Jesus asked about clothes, in that they often represent one's desire to look good. Jesus used the flowers, specifically field lilies, as a descriptive comparison to illustrate that looking good does not require stress and anxiety. The same God who adorns the flowers can certainly meet the needs of His human creation. The lily is a beautiful flower, and Jesus noted that even King Solomon (noted for his great wealth and his splendor in dress) was not arrayed more beautifully than the lilies. No other could surpass his possessions and adornments (see 2 Chronicles 9:13-28). The lilies denote the short-lived existence of beauty and yet, additionally, display the continual need and purpose of all things temporal. They are for beauty one day and for fuel (verse 30) the next day (cross-reference James 1:11). "O ye of little faith" is an expression used four times in Matthew and once in Luke as an encouragement to grow in the faith; it is also a subtle rebuke to seek to do better. Jesus stressed key thoughts through His illustrations concerning our existence and relationship with our Father God in the kingdom of God. Only God has supreme control over all

things, great and small. His special love and care for humanity should propel us to not worry but worship, knowing that our God satisfies. We can trust Him to give us what we need.

DISCUSSION STARTERS

(Please review the appropriate student book's related biblical exposition section.)

- **Adult Question:** How can we shift our worry to worship?
- **Young Adult Question:** Our well-being in life is not going to change by worrying about it. Why do you think we still do it?

Commentary on Matthew 6:31-34

KJV

31 Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed?

32 (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father *knoweth* that ye have need of all these things.

33 But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.

34 Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.

NIV

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."

Verse 31 repeats the thoughts of verse 25— as Jesus stresses the blessing of worry-free living. Jesus speaks to the crowd, raising questions for thought (He was not seeking an answer) related to obtaining food, water, and clothing. The reference to the Gentiles' preoccupation with material things is a direct reference that Jesus' listeners would understand as the direct result of not knowing God as a heavenly Father. In other words, only unbelievers (those who don't know God) worry about such things. Believers know that God is the source of all our daily needs. Christ's hearers, who had already given allegiance to God, must continue seeking the kingdom of God by concentrating on spiritual values as opposed to material, earthly ones and resting their full confidence in God. Our heavenly Father, who knows our earthly needs, will supply what is necessary. Jesus is not saying that we should not work to support our needs (see 2 Thessalonians 3:10). Instead, Jesus is saying that we should seek the kingdom of God first by continually obeying God's purpose for all of humanity. This purpose is expressed in creation to do useful work in the world, giving honor and glory to God (see 2 Thessalonians 3:12). Jesus' message is that believers

must not spend today worrying about tomorrow—because tomorrow will have enough worries of its own. Instead of worrying, trust God to take care of you.

DISCUSSION STARTERS

(Please review the appropriate student book's related biblical exposition section.)

- **Adult Question:** With all the pressures of the world, how can we submit to God to fulfill our purpose in God?
- **Young Adult Question:** Think about how many times you have worried for no reason over things that God had already resolved. How will this lesson help you let go of worry and place your trust in God?

LIFE APPLICATION

Refer to Adult Book (See student lesson's "Your Life" section.)

—This week, list the things you are worried about. Make a prayer journal and begin to pray and proclaim God's deliverance and supplying power in those areas. Begin to scratch through them as the weight of worry falls off as you pray and study God's Word on each matter. (See student lesson's "Your World!" section.)

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—This week, share the list you created with a prayer partner. Ask the person to go into prayer and Scripture searching with you for each concern you have. Encourage him or her to do the same and share with you.

Refer to Young Adult Book (See student lesson's "Your Life" section.)

—What kinds of things have you been worrying about? What do you need to commit to God's care? While life will produce situations to cause us to worry almost daily, Jesus reminds us that those who are believers should be confident that God will take care of whatever we need. So, stop stressing. (See student lesson's "Your World!" section.)

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—Many people are not convinced that God can take care of their needs. When people confide in you about their anxieties about what they do not have, do not pacify their anxieties, but share with them that those who are connected.

NEXT WEEK'S LESSON

The lesson topic for Sunday, June 13, 2021, is "Calming the Storm." The Devotional Reading is Psalm 107:23-32, the Background Scriptures are Matthew 8:23-27; Mark 4:35-41; Luke 8:22-25, and the Printed Text is Matthew 8:23-27.

CLOSING PRAYER

Lord, help us to set aside our worry and exchange it for worship. Guide us by Your Spirit along each step of our journey and in every moment of our day. Teach us to trust You always in all things. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

HOME DAILY BIBLE READINGS

Why Are You Afraid? (June 7-13, 2021)

MONDAY, June 7	"Do Not Fear the Storm"	(Mark 4:35-41)
TUESDAY, June 8	"Do Not Fear Persecution"	(Matthew 24:9-14)
WEDNESDAY, June 9	"No Separation from God's Love"	(Romans 8:31-39)
THURSDAY, June 10	"I Have Overcome the World"	(John 16:25-33)
FRIDAY, June 11	"Choose to Follow Me Now!"	(Matthew 8:18-22)
SATURDAY, June 12	"Jesus Delivers the Demon-possessed"	(Matthew 8:28-34)