

Reasons Not to Worry

a sermon in the series
Sermon on the Mount

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at Oak Grove Baptist Church, Paducah, Ky.
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Matthew 6:25-34

Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing? 26 Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? 27 Which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature? 28 So why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; 29 and yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. 30 Now if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will He not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? 31 Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' 32 For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. 33 But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. 34 Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.

The command is remarkable—"Don't worry"! This is one of those few Bible commands that seems almost ridiculous. It seems impossible to obey. Who can obey this—not worry? We all worry about something. We all have times of anxiety. We all feel stress. We all have problems of one nature or another. So how are you supposed to keep this command?

For the real worry warts among us, you have something else to worry about—worrying about not worrying! Some of you will be stressed about this message trying not to worry. But isn't that human nature? There is a natural tendency to anxiety, some more than others, but no one is exempt.

If we all have moments of anxiousness, then how are we to obey Jesus and cease to worry? If our Lord is describing the difference between those who are truly in His kingdom from those who are not by making worry or not worrying the criteria, how could any of us be in the kingdom?

It is at this point in the message that Christ speaks to His followers personally and deals with a subject that all His followers must confess is problematic. He has done this before in this sermon. In Matthew 5:12 He tells the disciples to "Rejoice and be exceedingly glad" when they are persecuted for His sake. He continues in a few verses and tells them, "You are salt of the earth" and

“You are the light of the world.” He then commands in verse 16, “Let your light so shine before men.” In other words, “Do what you are.”

Here in our text today, Jesus is addressing His subjects and an area of their lives knowing there will be challenges. Christians are not immune to worry. Being a believer brings concerns all of its own, that the sinner will not have. There are lost loved ones we desire to see, and we can easily become worrisome about their salvation. There are concerns about our progress in faith or the lack of it. But concern can easily cross the line of worry.

The question is: how does our Lord expect us to overcome the temptation of worry? He does so by giving us truth. Are you so surprised? Isn't that the way God deals with us? “You shall know the truth, and the truth shall set you free.” He gives us nine reasons, nine statements of truth for us to apply so we should not worry.

I. God Sustains Us

The first reason why you should not worry is God sustains our life. And if God sustains your life, He will provide what is necessary for your life. In verse 25 says, “Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, or about your body, what you will put on, is life not more than food and the body more than clothing?” This is a typical argument of logic—an argument from the greater to the lesser. Here's the argument—if you've put your faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, then He's purchased you and you're redeemed. You've been bought with a price, you don't belong to yourself. And if Christ has redeemed your life, which is the greater, then will He not take care of the things that sustain your life physically, the lesser?

Well, of course He will! It's an argument that has no refutation, it's a certainty. If God has gone to the great lengths to buy you, not just your soul, but your body, won't He clothe and feed that body? Think for a moment, are you a Christian, do you know you have been bought with the Lamb of God? If yes, then you have no reason to worry—if God would give the blood of His Son to purchase you lock, stock, and barrel, then He will take care of what you need to sustain that life. Even when death comes He will sustain you in that hour so that you're not overcome by the chilling waters of death.

God formed you. He's the one who is going to take you when the time of your death comes. So from the cradle to the grave it's only logical, to think God will take care of everything in between. In fact, it is to be noted that He has sustained you thus far. You're here today because God has sustained you physically, as well as, spiritually. It's not you or me that sustain ourselves. That's the cold reality which splashes in our face like ice water. We often think we sustain ourselves, we think we're the providers of our own needs, that we've worked and labored and gotten this far. We've struggled and here we are; we've made it this far because of our wit and ingenuity. Do you hear what you're thinking and the madness of your reasoning? Your wit, strength, and abilities have been given to you by God. They are the supply of a divine hand, not a human hand. You woke up this morning, you climbed out of your bed today, and you dressed, nourished, prepared, and

brought yourself here all because God determined it to be so. Had He not we would have heard your life was over this side of heaven. The fact is your life from beginning to end is sustained by God. Why then do you worry?

2. God Feeds Lesser Creatures

The second reason for not worrying is that God feeds lesser creatures than you. Look at verse 26, "Look at the birds of the air for they neither sow, nor reap, or gather into barns, yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?" As you enter Oak Grove Baptist Church from the front entrance you might look up and realize there is a martins' nest in the pillars high above. Within the nest are four small martins. I watched them this morning, and noticed from last week how they had matured. Last week they were small chicks totally dependent upon parents to feed them, but this morning they were quite grown, almost full grown. I watched them flutter about the nest, I thought one was about to fall, he began to flutter his wings and grab hold to the nest. Another one did the same thing, and then suddenly one took flight. Before long, all four had left the nest and then returned. God has presented an object lesson in front of you as you walked in this morning. I wonder how many of you took notice of what Jesus was saying to you. Look at those four martins, look at the birds of the air, does He not feed them, does He not keep them? I was quite worried when that first one began to teeter and totter on the edge, I thought, "Oh no, it's a sudden stop at the pavement." But no, God took care of them.

This is another logical argument, the lesser to the greater. If God will take care of those little martins out there, why won't He take care of you? If God made the animals to serve and help us, why do you worry God will not provide for you? It doesn't make sense. If He nourishes them to serve you, why would He not nourish you? God cares for lesser creatures. The Psalmist says the young lion is fed by God. Think of that great, ferocious beast of the forest and jungle. It is one of the strongest animals on all of God's earth, yet the Bible says if it was not for God, even the mighty lion could not survive or feed himself.

3. Worrying Does Not Change Uncontrollable Circumstances

Reason number three: worrying does not change uncontrollable circumstances. Verse 27, "Which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature." Have you ever noticed that we never worry about things we definitely can control? Take food for example, when you've plenty of food, do you think and worry about food? Not at all. Have you been in a situation when you had no food and it was getting desperate? You were very concerned. The same is true about money; we don't worry about money if we have it, and if you have it and still worry you've got some serious anxiety problems.

I don't worry about something I know I can manipulate, control, or fix. Why worry? Just go do it. A child falls and scrapes his or her knee; as a mom, are you terribly worried about the scraped knees? Of course not, you know what to do, you pick the child up, you hug them, wipe their tears, put a little salve on the knee, put on a band-aid, kiss it, and they go off laughing and playing again.

You don't worry about scraped knees, but if that same child is lying in a hospital bed and the doctors don't know why, you worry. You don't worry about the controllable event, you worry about the one you cannot control.

Jesus is saying, however, that your worry will not exercise the least control or care. He says, "which of you can add one cubit"? You can't because you have no control over your height. There is a debate among scholars whether He is talking about height or life because the word *stature* can mean either. I don't know of anyone who worries about adding eighteen inches (cubit is about 18 inches) to their height, maybe there might be a few, but we do worry if we can take one step further in the journey of life. We want our lives to be full and long and prosperous, so I agree with the theologians who believe this is referring to life. How many of you can add one cubit to your life's journey, who can add one step to your life?

God has numbered the days of your life. There's nothing you can do to truthfully extend those days beyond what God has ordained, so why worry about it? Why do you worry about things you cannot control?

Worry, in fact, will shorten your life. Anxiety has a way of suppressing the immune system. It contributes to digestive disorders, muscle tension, high blood pressure. These things can be caused by worry. Anxiety can create memory loss. Worry is also a cause of premature coronary heart disease, and heart attack. In severe cases, excessive worry and anxiety can lead to depression, even suicidal thoughts. Worry doesn't add to our lives, it shortens them. It's simply ludicrous to worry about things you have no control over. You end up inviting problems into your life that may otherwise never happen. We'll talk more about that in just a few moments.

4. God Dresses the Fields With Beauty

The fourth reason not to worry is God dresses the fields with beauty. Once again, the argument is from the lesser to the greater. As you go out this day and look at the fields, you see flowers, or you look at your patio and see the flowers you've planted, remember you are not to worry because God dresses the fields with flowers. Look at what He says in verses 28 through 30, "So why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; and yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Now if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will He not much more clothe you, O you of little faith?"

The majority in this room never worry about clothing or food. The only anxiety we have about clothing is that it's probably not the latest fashion and we'd like to have a more money so we can buy new clothes. But truthfully we have no reason to worry about clothes or food. For that reason, we usually skip over this thinking we have it taken care of. *I don't worry about either food or clothing, so I'm not a worry wart.* Far from it!

Food and clothing were very serious items in the day of Jesus and it was His audience's biggest concern. A man worked the whole day to feed his family for that day. If he didn't work, he and his family didn't eat. So it is no wonder why food was a major issue they were all concerned about. What to wear was a potential anxiety as well.

Because we don't worry about these things, I want you to think, not about food and clothing, but the things you do worry about. How many of you worry about your health? How many of you are worried about your finances? One of the reasons we worry about them is because we overextend our finances, we spend more than we take in and we create our own worries in this area. How many of you are worried about spiritual things? Whatever you are worried about, let this be the application: Jesus cares about grass. Flowers are not there for their own beauty, they are there to clothe the grass of the fields. Green is pretty, but a lot of green gets boring. So our creative and artistic Lord decorates it with color and, my, the colors that God has created! They're awesome!

I love flowers, call me a wimp if you want to, but I love them. I love roses especially. There is nothing more beautiful than the bud of the rose unfolding and the fragrance thereof, it's a worshipful experience. The colors, saturations and values of those colors are amazing; God did all that to provide enjoyment for you and me and clothe the grass to make it not so boring.

He also did it for one more reason, to teach you and I a lesson. Here is the lesson—if God would be concerned about grass being undecorated, how much more will He decorate your life with good things? Some of you are worried that your life is boring, you are anxious that you're not accomplishing things, you seem to be spinning your wheels and you're at a loss for finding any contribution to the kingdom of God. My dear friend, you are worried about things that are unnecessary. God will clothe your life with the beauty that adorns holiness if you will seek Him with your whole heart. You want to be effectual for the kingdom of God? Mind the priorities of the kingdom of God. God clothed our first parents after they had fallen, will He not clothe you and I and keep us after we have repented?

5. Worry Demonstrates a Lack of Faith

Reason number five: worry demonstrates a lack of faith. Verse 30, "Now if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will He not much more clothe you, O you of little faith?" To not believe God is to attack His integrity and goodness. From the grass to the flowers to the birds, God is saying *I will take care of you, why are you slow to believe?* Here is the reason we struggle—we don't really think God knows best about your life.

We often don't trust God because we don't often think His will is the best. We think our way is better, therefore we struggle. And when you don't believe God's best is best, you've insulted the very integrity of God. You've said that God is not good, that He will not deal with you in kindness and goodness. Little faith has more serious ramifications than not believing prayers to be answered. The most serious ramification is you reproach the name of God. You bring insult to

the One who is good and kind. If you want your faith to grow, then believe that God is good. Do not worry.

6. Unbelievers Worry

The sixth reason you should not worry is the fact that unbelievers worry. Look at verse 31 and 32, “Therefore do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For after all these things the Gentiles seek.” Jesus wasn’t trying to slam sinners, but He was trying to make a point to His followers. *Are you going to act like an unbeliever, or are you going to act like I’m good and promised to care for you?* This is what Gentiles, sinners, do, they live by the rule of self-control and because there are certain things in their lives they cannot control, they worry. When problems come too big for them to handle, they have no one to turn to. They cannot turn to Jesus. They don’t have Him as a resource because they have no faith in Him whatsoever. They stand on their own, and so some become beggars, some manipulators, some turn to money or this or that, because they know they, themselves, are without the ability to solve the problem.

But we’ve got Jesus; we don’t need to act like that. We’re not to live like Christ is under our control; our lives are under God’s control, therefore—live like it. The sinner does not see God in control; he lives as if all depends upon himself, and, dear Christian brother, that’s exactly what you do when you worry. That’s why you worry, because you believe it all depends upon you. “Oh, ye of little faith!”

7. The God Who Loves You Knows Exactly What You Need

Number seven, the God who loves you knows exactly what you need, that’s why you ought not to worry. Verse 32, “For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things.” Jesus does not chastise them and say, *you’re worried about things you shouldn’t, you are just materialistic*. Instead, He acknowledges we need these things, and the Father knows our needs and knows how to supply it. Our problem is not that we don’t think God knows our needs; we don’t like what our God knows is best. We cannot always say and mean “Nevertheless not my will but Thy will be done.” We say it but we often don’t mean it, thinking God is fooled when we say it, as if He doesn’t know our hearts. No, the problem is sometimes we really don’t like God’s best.

How could I convince any of you to believe that God’s best is really best? All I need to do is harken your memory back to your will being exercised over God’s will. Remember the consequence, the outcome; all you have to do is remember how you made a mess of things. The way I say it to most folks is when you ram your head into an immovable brick wall you will eventually stop. You learn by ramming your head into the brick wall time and time again the wall is not going anywhere. But where is this aching pain in your head coming from? It is the consequence of trying to ram your will over the will of the wall. When we refuse to do God’s will, we always invite pain, disaster, hurt, and failure. And should you resist His will enough, you sooner than later, wise up and say *God, you do have my best in mind*. God knows exactly what you need. If you don’t have

it today, you don't need it today. You may never need it, for your Father truly does know best.

8. Worry is a Distraction to Our Main Priority

The eighth reason to not worry is worry is a distraction to our main priority. If you are at home late at night and can't go to sleep because the mind can't shut off due to worry, well then, Jesus is saying that is a distraction to your usefulness in His kingdom. Look at verse 33, "But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you." If you focus on doing His will, He will take care of the rest. It's His business to take care of you. Get out of His business and stick to yours, which is to pursue Christ.

It's interesting; this word *worry* can literally be translated *distraction*. Remember the story of Mary and Martha? Martha is in the kitchen busily preparing the meal and where is Mary? At the feet of Jesus, and the Bible says "Martha was distracted with much serving." She was *distracted*. Martha was worried with much serving. She approached Him and said, "Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Therefore tell her to help me." And Jesus said, "Martha, Martha, you are worried." Here He does not say distracted but worried. The conclusion is that distracted and worry is the same thing. "Martha, you are distracted and troubled about many things but one thing is needed, and Mary has chosen that good part which will not be taken away from her." What was the one thing needed? Worship and focus upon Christ. That doesn't mean preparing a meal for Jesus was wrong, it meant that right then at that moment it was a distraction. That's exactly what worry will do to you. You will be consumed with the things you are worried over, anxiety will take over your life and it will shut you down when it comes to the spiritual realm. The physical will outweigh the spiritual.

9. Worry Borrows From the Future What May or May Not Occur.

The final reason Jesus gives for not worrying is worry borrows from the future what may or may not occur. Look at verse 34, "Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble." Tomorrow will have its own issues, its own problems, its own distractions. As Jesus says, "Sufficient for the day is its own trouble," meaning each day has its own problems. The argument is simple, you've got problems today, why do you have to go over into tomorrow and bring problems from it into today? There is sufficient amount of issues for this day and you shouldn't be worried about those. But that's not enough; some of us have to borrow. We always like to make sure we have plenty. God forbid we run out of something to worry about, so we make up things. I've watched this with my life and others, many of the things we think are potential possibilities never happen.

How many of you start having an ache or a pain in a certain location and automatically you think the worst thing. Maybe it's a tumor, maybe it's your heart; you have a little headache, you think, *oh my, I have tumor*—you automatically think the worst. And how many times has the worse come to pass? Sometimes yes, but very seldom. The laws of percentage say it's a waste of time to worry because it probably won't even happen.

Besides this, you may not live to see them, so why worry about tomorrow's problems today? You're worried about your health, your grandchildren, but God will be the same tomorrow as He is today. Each day has its own issues and challenges but the God of today will be the God tomorrow. He'll have provision for tomorrow as He's had provision for today. Did you get through yesterday? Sure you did, here you are. God was there and He will be there tomorrow.

These are the nine reasons Jesus gives us to not worry. Now the question I pose for you, not for anxieties sake but for your soul's sake—what will you do with these nine reasons? Will you turn them into something else to worry about or will you simply rest in your Savior who issued these statements and commands you to obey with simple childlike obedience and confidence?

Now if you're not a Christian it's obvious these nine reasons are going to be impossible to you because of your pride and self-confidence. Yet some of the challenges you face are bigger than you, and you will worry. You have no one to turn to except yourself. Perhaps you have a family member who can get you out of a scrape from time to time, but there will be a day when the challenge will be bigger than you. Let me give you one example—the day when your sins become clear to you. Not just your sins, but your lost state. What will you do then? Some of you have no idea what I'm talking about, *oh yes, I'm a sinner, the Bible says we're all sinners, I'm guilty, I've violated the law of God from time to time, but haven't we all?*

I'm not talking about that. I'm talking about the day when you come face to face with your sins and your sinfulness, and a weight comes upon you like no other weight. An anxiety comes upon you like no other anxiety and now for the first time you not only know you have sinned but you know you are a sinner in jeopardy. Are you sufficient to take care of that issue, an issue which none can compare? Are you sufficient to deal with all of your sins? Listen to me clearly before you take upon yourself this task. The challenge was so large that the only way in which God almighty could deal with it was to send His Son to die cruelly and vilely upon a cross. Are you sure you're able to handle your sinfulness?

I have one confidence I can share with you—you need not worry about your sins because the Savior did die. If you will run to Him this very moment and in confidence and assurance give Him your life and trust in Him, I'm telling you the load of sin will be gone as yesterday is gone and cannot be revisited. As gone as the east is from the west and the two will never meet. God can do this for your sins and forgive you.

One more problem faces all men—it's called the Day of Judgment. Even the saint will face judgment before his God. This is not a year-end report card or a midterm grade. We're talking about standing before God whose very facial beauty is enough to melt you physically and destroy you. One look upon His face can annihilate the entire human race. How do you propose to handle that challenge? I tell you how I'm going to handle it, when I stand before God on that day, I'm going to look to He who stands at my right hand and I'm going to plead His name and say to God on His throne, here is my reason. Here is my justification, here is my answer. I have someone

bigger than my sin, someone more sufficient than me to shield me in that great and terrible day. But my good news does not stop at that. This same Christ stands with me not just on the Day of Judgment, He's here with me now aiding me, helping me, sustaining my life, feeding, clothing, and taking care of all that I need so that I can say with great confidence to you—He is a good provider. If He will give me aid on that great day when I face God, surely He will help me now as I struggle to make my way to God. Would you try Him, would you surrender to Him, would you believe in Him? May you do so, I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.