

# Sermon Notes

Practical Lessons for Understanding the Word of God



## Dealing With Anxiety

KEY PASSAGE: Matthew 6:25-34 | SUPPORTING SCRIPTURE: Psalm 37:7-8 | Romans 8:32; 10:13  
Philippians 4:4-7 | 1 Peter 5:7

### SUMMARY

#### We live in an age of anxiety.

Whether it's personal concerns, family matters, financial needs, health issues, governmental policies, or global conditions, we all have reasons to worry and fret. Sometimes critical situations strike immediate fear in our hearts, and that is only natural. However, much of our anxiety is associated with everyday problems. We take our worries to bed with us, wake up with them, and carry them around with us all day. This is not how God wants us to live. He can settle our hearts in such a way that we can live with the stresses of life yet still experience His peace and joy.

### SERMON POINTS

#### Anxiety is not just a contemporary problem.

It was also an issue for those who lived in Old Testament times. Psalm 37:7-8 says, "Rest in the LORD and wait patiently for Him; do not fret." By the time the Roman Empire ruled the world, there were plenty of reasons for anxiety. When Jesus came on the scene, He addressed the issue of worry in His sermon in Matthew 6:25-34. His solutions sound so simple, yet we still struggle to apply them.

Anxiety is a condition in which the mind is being pulled in two directions. This results in an emotional state of distress that dominates our thoughts and disrupts our sleep. It could be fueled by present circumstances or fear of what could happen in the future. It's basically a reaction to our circumstances, but it's also a choice. Instead of giving in to worry, we can cast all our anxiety on the Lord because He cares for us (1 Pet. 5:7).

#### The Causes of Anxiety

In Jesus' sermon in Matthew 6, He points out why we so often give in to worry and what we can do to change our response.

- **Feelings of inadequacy.** Problems can so overwhelm us that we feel insignificant and incapable of doing anything about them. But Jesus advises us to "look at the birds" (v. 26). They seem so small and inconsequential, yet God takes upon Himself the responsibility to feed them. We never see birds planting seeds or harvesting crops. They are totally inadequate for that task and can't even hold a hoe or shovel. If God cares so much for them, we can be certain that He will be faithful to meet our needs as well.
- **Our attempt to change things we cannot control.** Jesus reminds us that many situations are beyond our ability to alter. "And who of you by being worried can add a single hour to his life?" (v. 27). Whenever we encounter circumstances that we cannot change, the only wise option is to turn them over to the only one who can handle them—God. When we try to control them, we are demonstrating unbelief and multiplying the intensity of our pain and frustration.
- **Our failure to trust God to provide our needs.** After explaining how the Lord clothes the lilies of the field with more glory than even Solomon, Jesus exhorts us not to worry about clothing because He will provide whatever we need (vv. 28-30). When we worry that our needs won't be met, we demonstrate a lack of faith in God. Part of our problem is that we don't know what our needs truly are. Sometimes the situation may look like the Lord has let us down, but in reality, He's supplying a need that we may not even know we have. When the apostle Paul

suffered so much mistreatment and hardship, Scripture never records him complaining about his circumstances. Shipwrecks and beatings were not happy times for Paul, but he endured them with inner peace and confidence because he knew and trusted the Lord.

- **Misplaced priorities.** Instead of focusing on obtaining the necessities of life, Jesus tells us to “seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you” (vv. 32-33). God’s kingdom is His rule and authority over our lives, and His righteousness is Christ’s character worked out in us in such a way that we reflect Him. When we make it our top priority to acknowledge Him as our Lord and Savior, seeking to walk obediently in His ways, God promises to supply whatever else we need. He knows exactly what is best for us, as well as how and when to provide it.
- **Trying to live tomorrow today.** Planning ahead is good, but sometimes our overloaded calendars lead to an overwhelming sense of time pressure. Jesus tells us, “Do not worry about tomorrow; for tomorrow will take care of itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own” (v. 34). Instead of becoming anxious about our responsibilities and commitments, we should turn our schedules over to God. If we’ll wake up each morning with our thoughts on the Lord, committing ourselves to do whatever He says, we’ll be able to go through the day with peace and joy as we watch Him work out everything.

### **To overcome worry, we ought to adopt an attitude of joy and thankfulness.**

Paul wrote his letter to the Philippians from a cold, damp Roman prison cell, yet he continually spoke about rejoicing. Instead of being anxious, he advised the Philippians to pray about everything with thanksgiving (4:6-7). There are so many things for which we can thank God—that He walks with us through hard times, He protects and provides, and He always keeps His promises. When we focus on

these things, God’s peace guards our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus no matter how difficult our circumstances may be.

### **The call of God never takes us where the grace of God cannot sustain us.**

He has promised to meet all our needs and to guard us with His peace and joy. The choice is ours. We can either live with mistrust and anxiety, or trust the Lord to provide and watch over us. He has all the power to meet our needs and the omniscience to know what’s best. It may not be what we’d like, but His ways are always right, and His motive is always love.

## RESPONSE

- What kinds of situations or issues cause you to worry or feel anxious? Do you tend to worry more about what’s happening now, or what could happen in the future?
- Review the five causes of anxiety that are found in Jesus’ sermon in Matthew 6:25-34. Which of them do you struggle with the most? How can you apply Jesus’ recommendations for overcoming habitual worry?
- What are the physical, emotional, and spiritual consequences of continually carrying a load of anxiety? How is worry an act of unbelief or distrust of God?
- What changes do you need to make in your thought patterns, activities, and prayers in order to be free from worry?

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