

# Anxious?

I went to a Christian college to become a pastor. It was the first time that I had left home for any length of time. I had to work while I went to school so I worked for the American Board of Missions to the Jews as a custodian. It was good work. I had been there for at least one year when one of the pastors took me to breakfast and urged me to order pork chops and eggs. I will never forget how wonderful that meal was! I must have been hungry. He was concerned about me - apparently I looked like I needed some food even though I did not feel hungry. I thanked God and the pastor for breakfast. God has never left me hungry. Yet, there have been times in my life when I have had other needs and have been anxious about those needs. It is people like me and like you for whom Jesus has some advice.

For this reason I say to you, do not be anxious for your life, as to what you shall eat, or what you shall drink; nor for your body, as to what you shall put on. Is not life more than food, and the body than clothing? “Look at the birds of the air, that they do not sow, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not worth much more than they? . . . (NASB) Matthew 6:25-34

**ANXIETY.** In our last study, Jesus had just finished telling the crowd the world’s treasure is only emptiness - nothing. In our pursuit of satisfaction we end up serving the things of this world and end-up empty on the inside - always wanting and never satisfied. We miss God.

No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will hold to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon. (NASB) Matt. 6:24.

Jesus called us to be consumed with seeking God and not the things of this world. In our passage this time, Jesus goes even further and tells us that God is the reason to “. . . not be anxious for your life . . .” The Greek word Jesus uses for anxiety, *merimnao*, means to “care for someone or something” in the sense of “a worrying and tormenting care.” This is the first time that Jesus uses the word ANXIETY in the gospel of

Matthew. In fact, He uses it six times in verses 25-34. If we add the parallel passage in Luke 12, Jesus uses it 64 percent of the time it occurs in the New Testament. Jesus is about to give us a lesson on anxiety.

He wants us to not worry or torment ourselves about what we will eat, drink or wear. While most of us do not fear being hungry, we may be anxious about losing a job,

paying our financial debts, or collecting enough money to pay for an upcoming expense. Each of us has different things which tempt us to be anxious.

**LIFE SUSTAINING.** Jesus’ message has two parts: our life sustaining needs and our external needs. He speaks directly to our deep

need for food and drink in order to live. His illustrations are simple and wonderful.

In my backyard, my wife and I see many different kinds of birds every year: eagles, buzzards, owls, quail, hummingbirds, a red breasted bird, roadrunners, woodpeckers and

## *Sleep In Peace*

Victor Hugo said, “Have courage for the great sorrows of life and patience for the small ones. And when you have finished your daily task, go to sleep in peace. God is awake!”

doves. Most of them eat the seeds on the ground or whatever they can find in the trees. I am amazed every time I see them in my backyard or in the wilderness areas. I have never seen any of them planting seeds, fertilizing my grass, or my trees or even watering them. Yet, they come every morning and evening, almost every day of the year and eat.

The birds do no work, but yet God feeds them. Jesus is telling us that if God cares for these birds, He will take care of us too. Why? Because God considers us to be more important! This is Jesus' point! Yet, we worry about our lives. For those of us who worry, Jesus has a question,

*And which of you by being anxious can increase the length of your life's span? Matt. 6:27*

Jesus' point is simple. Anxiety will not keep you alive!

**EXTERNAL NEEDS.** In my front yard I have an ocotillo plant from the candlewood family. It is a tall, spiny desert plant with many thorny branches that are topped with a cluster of orange flowers. It looks like fingers reaching to the sky. It is beautifully green because it is covered with very small, fine green leaves. Yet, it never waters itself.

Jesus next illustration is not about ocotillos, but about lilies and the grass of the field. He uses plants with which his listeners are familiar.

*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? (NASB) Matt. 6:28-30*

He tells us that God cares about the plants even though they

are later used as fuel in the furnaces. God cares about grass! But God values us far more than the grass. When we doubt that God will provide our external needs, we are people of "little faith." Of all the Greek words Jesus could have used, He uses a word that implies our faith is very, very small and weak. Jesus wants us to know that we can trust Him.

**CONCLUSION.** Jesus wants us to know that God already knows our needs just like He knows the needs of the birds, lilies, grass of the field, and the Gentiles.

*For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. (NASB) Matt. 6:32*

Remember Jesus was talking to a crowd of Jews who rejected Gentiles. If God will take care of even the Gentiles, He will take care of them. But there is an exception to Jesus' statement. Have you ever wondered why God causes famines and allows some of us to go hungry? An Old Testament event gives us the answer.

*... the LORD ... will remember their iniquity and call their sins to account ... to make an end of them by the sword, famine ... " (NASB) Jeremiah 14:10-12*



Why did this happen to Judah? The normal reason is they did not turn away from their sin! There is one fact about God that we cannot escape. He is holy and we are not. So Jesus calls us to seek Him - to be holy!

*... seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. (NASB) Matt. 6:32-33*

Trusting Him and pursuing holiness is the cure for anxiety!

*O fear the LORD, you His saints; For to those who fear Him,*

there is no want. (NASB) Ps. 34:9