

"THE PILGRIMAGE" MATTHEW 6:25-34

This Week's Core Competency

Peace – I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, others, and me. Philippians 4:6, 7, *Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. 7 And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*

Jesus said, "Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life" (Mt 6:27). In other words, all the worrying in the world won't make things any better, so why bother; in fact, it'll make things worse. "Waddifs" and "Howells," that's our problem. Waddif I lose my job? Howell I pay my bills? So many people in America are troubled by Waddifs and Howells that the National Institute of Mental Health has labeled their malady. It's called GAD, general anxiety disorder.

"I always thought I was just a worrier. I'd feel keyed up and unable to relax. At times it would come and go, and at times it would be constant. It could go on for days. I'd worry about what I was going to fix for a dinner party, or what would be a great present for somebody. I just couldn't let something go.

"I'd have terrible sleeping problems. There were times I'd wake up wired in the middle of the night. I had trouble concentrating, even reading the newspaper or a

"We are continually being crucified between two thieves—the regrets of yesterday and the worries about tomorrow"

-Warren Wiersbe

novel. Sometimes I'd feel a little lightheaded. My heart would race or pound. And that would make me worry more. I was always imagining things were worse than they really were: when I got a stomachache, I'd think it was an ulcer."

"People with generalized anxiety disorder (GAD) go through the day filled with exaggerated worry and tension, even though there is little or nothing to provoke it. They anticipate disaster and are overly concerned about health issues, money, family problems, or difficulties at work. Sometimes just the thought of getting through the day produces anxiety.

"GAD is diagnosed when a person worries excessively about a variety of everyday problems for at least 6 months. People with GAD can't seem to get rid of their concerns, even though they usually realize that their anxiety is more intense than the situation warrants. They can't relax, startle easily, and have difficulty concentrating. Often they have trouble falling asleep or staying asleep. Physical symptoms that often accompany the anxiety include fatigue, headaches, muscle tension, muscle aches, difficulty swallowing, trembling, twitching, irritability, sweating, nausea, lightheadedness, having to go to the bathroom frequently, feeling out of breath, and hot flashes.

"GAD affects about 6.8 million adult Americans and about twice as many women as men. It is diagnosed when someone spends at least 6 months worrying excessively about a number of everyday problems" (<http://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/publications/anxiety-disorders/generalized-anxiety-disorder-gad.shtml>)

Jesus offers a remedy for GAD.

Situation for Discussion

A woman in your neighborhood is fighting a significant bout with worry. Her children have all caused her a measure of grief, but they are basically good kids. Her husband is a hard-working man, but he's not a very good businessman. Neither is she for that matter. They've faced significant financial problems for quite a while, but today's economy has pushed them over the edge. Now they're considering bankruptcy. Sylvia is a Christian, but worry has consumed her. She rarely sleeps through the night, talks incessantly about the bleak outlook for the economy and their future, and is now developing high blood pressure and heart problems. She knows she shouldn't worry which ironically has made matters worse. Now she worries about being so worried. Nothing anyone says to her seems to make things any better. She needs to let loose of her regrets about yesterday and relinquish her worries about tomorrow, but how?

day 1 ENCOUNTER – read God's word to put yourself in touch with him.

Matthew 6:25-34

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 important than food, and the body more important than clothes? 26Look 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? 27Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life?

28"And why do you worry about clothes? See how the lilies of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. 29Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. 30If 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, O you of little faith? 31So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' 32For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. 33But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. 34Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

List any questions you have about this passage:

EXAMINE – what the passage says before you decide what it means.

- * Box "therefore" indicating *result* in vv. 25, 34.
- * Underline "I tell you" in vv. 25, 29.
- * Highlight "eat," "drink," "wear" in vv. 25, 31.
- * Circle the repeated word "worry" in vv. 25, 27, 28, 31, 34 [2x].
- * Bracket the rhetorical questions in vv. 25, 26, 27, 28, 30, 31.
- * Box "so" indicating *result* in v. 31.
- * Box "for" indicating *reason* in v. 32.
- * Box "but" indicating *contrast* in v. 33.

day 2

EXPLORE – the answer to these questions to better understand what the passage means.

Consult the explanation of the message and the notes to follow if you need help.

1. Verse 25 begins with "therefore." What is "therefore" there for?
2. Turn the rhetorical question in verse 25 into a declarative sentence that conveys the same meaning.
3. Explain how Jesus argues from "greater" to "lesser" in verse 26.
4. Put the point of verse 27 in your own words.
5. Explain how Jesus argues from "greater" to "lesser" in verses 28-30.
6. To what kind of person does "O you of little faith" refer?
7. Jesus gives two reasons why disciples should not worry. What are they?
8. Explain the *contrast* introduced in verse 33.
9. "Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness." What do you think that means?
10. Read verse 33. To what extent do you live the other way around?
11. Verse 34 begins with "therefore." What is "therefore" there for?
12. **Discussion:** What can you do to avoid worry based on this passage?

Are you a worrywart, someone who's inclined to worry unduly? By the way, the term was coined in 1956 by J. R. Williams, a cartoonist, in his comic called "Out Our Way." According to those familiar with the strip, Worry Wart was the name of a character who, ironically, caused others to worry unduly—just the opposite of our current use of the term. Or are you a worrywart, someone who's incessant worrying causes others to worry? In either case, Jesus wants to have a word with you.

To all his worrywart disciples Jesus says, "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear" (Mt. 6:25). Then he goes on to explain why, arguing repeatedly from *greater* to *lesser* (cf. Mt 7:11). First, he reminds his disciples that life is *greater* than food, and the body is *greater* than clothes. By implication, God, who has given us life and a body, *greater* things, will also undoubtedly give us food and clothing, *lesser* things. Then he illustrates his point. You are worth more to your heavenly Father than the wild birds, yet he feeds them. And they don't even sow or reap or store away in barns like you do (v. 26). What's more, you are worth more than the wild grass, yet he clothes it with the lilies of the field. They don't labor or spin, nevertheless not even Solomon was dressed as splendidly as one of them (vv. 28-30). On top of it all, why bother worrying since it accomplishes nothing. All the worrying in the world won't extend you life by a single hour (v. 27). Finally, he reminds them that fretting over daily needs is the preoccupation of pagans. They "run after these things," he says. "Such people cannot claim to be members of the heavenly family,

and it is not surprising, accordingly, that they should be anxious and ask questions like these [see v. 31]. As they see it, they must seek the supply of these necessities by their own efforts and out of their own resources. Anxiety is natural for them" (Leon Morris, *The Gospel according to Matthew*, 161). Not only that, worry went hand-in-hand with paganism. "Anxiety characterized pagan religions, which were dominated by fears of a capricious and despotic deity who constantly had to be appeased" (Craig L. Blomberg, *Matthew*, NAC, 126). Not so with God's people. His providence is focused on them like on Joseph of old.

Instead of putting our daily needs and wants, *lesser* things, first and letting God's kingdom and his righteousness, *greater* things, take care of themselves, Jesus tells us to put first things first, *à la* Stephen Covey who advises, "The main thing is to keep the main thing the main thing" (*First Things First*, 75-193). According to Jesus, God's kingdom and his righteousness is the main thing and disciples keep it that way. They ought to put *greater* needs, their partnership with God in what he's doing in the world and their obedience to him in his will for their lives, first. Those who take care of these *greater* needs will not have to worry about their *lesser* needs for God, himself, will see to those. "In this context ["seek"] means that his disciples are to make the kingdom of heaven the center of their continual, daily priorities . . . and to pursue the increasing perfection of the Father through their practice of 'acts of righteousness'" (Michael J. Wilkins, *The NIV Application Commentary: Matthew*, 299).

The Message of the Passage

Stop fretting over your daily needs; instead, focus on his kingdom and his righteousness, and God will providentially provide for you.

day **4** **EMBRACE** – how God spoke to you through his word.

Our desire is to not be merely hearers of the word, but doers of the word as James suggests in James 1:22. Try some of the challenges below to apply what you have learned this week.

- **Give Yourself Some Good Advice Based on the Message of this Passage**

- **Pick a verse or verses from the passage to memorize or think about this week.**

- **Relate the message of this passage to any of the following:**
 - o **Belonging**
 - o **Becoming**
 - o *going Beyond*

- **Home Group Discussion** (for those involved in the deeper connections of a home group)

Understanding what Jesus said in Matthew 6:25-34 is one thing; believing it is another indeed. Talk about what you find difficult to understand and what you find difficult to believe. Then discuss how you can help each other understand and believe.

- **Street Lights Challenge** (for those living as LIGHTS on their STREET)

Here's something simple you can do with a neighbor-go for a walk. The next time you go for a walk in the neighborhood stop in and invite your neighbor to go along. Here's something not so simple. Got kids in your neighborhood? Get together with your neighbors and have an "unbirthday" party for the kids. You can find the unbirthday scene from "Alice in Wonderland" on youtube.com.

“The Pilgrimage”

(Use the space below for Sunday's message notes)

notes STUDY – the commentaries to answer the questions.

v. 25 **therefore** If disciples are to serve God and not money (vv. 19-24), what about that their material needs? "If the disciples are not to be preoccupied with treasures on earth, if they are not to compromise the singlemindedness of their commitment, it would seem worth asking how their basic needs are to be met. Jesus teaches them not to be anxious about their daily needs but to trust their heavenly Father" (Donald A. Hagner, *Word Biblical Commentary*, vol. 33a, *Matthew 1-13*, 161).

v. 25 **worry** "'Worry' is the key word of this entire section, since it occurs six times (vv. 25, 27-28, 31, 34 [2x])" (Blomberg, 125). "'Do not be anxious' is emphatic in this context. [*merimnan*] here means 'to be anxious' in the sense of being fearful. The cognate noun [*merimna*] occurs in 1Macc 6:10 and Sir 42:9, where it is associated with sleeplessness [cf. "So he called all his friends and said to them, 'Sleep departs from my eyes and I am downhearted with worry'"] . . . In the present passage, the meaning is defined by the vitally important items in view. To be anxious for such things as our passage enumerates is to be anxious about *survival itself*. This is thus a paralyzing anxiety that can only enervate discipleship" (Hagner, 163 italics added).

v. 25 **life . . . body** Luke expresses the meaning of the rhetorical question in a declarative sentence, "Life is more than food, and the body more than clothes" (12:23). Jesus argues from the *greater* to the *lesser* in v. 25 (see also vv. 26, 30). God who has given Jesus' disciples life and a body will most certainly give them food and clothing (297). "This attitude removes people from preoccupation with their own worldly success; it discourages the wealthy and the comfortable from concentrating on their own success and the poor and uncomfortable from concentration on their own misery" (Morris, 157).

v. 27 **hour . . . life** Cf. "add one cubit to his stature?" (NKJV; cf. NIV margin); "add one single cubit to your span of life" (NJB; cf. RSV). Jesus seems to mix his metaphors here but his point is plain enough-worry is futile, so why engage in it. "The NIV marginal note 'single cubit to his height' is a somewhat more natural translation of the Greek than 'single hour to his life,' but it does not fit as well into the context. Adding a foot and one half to one's height is not the trifling amount Jesus' flow of thought seems to demand, and stature does not fit the context of provisions of food and clothing nearly as well as longevity" (Blomberg, 125; cf. Morris, 158, 59). "The Hebraic use of a spatial measure for a portion of time can be seen in Ps 39:5 ('thou hast made my days a few handbreadths')" (Hagner, 264).

v. 28 **labor . . . spin** "Labor" (toiling in the field) and spinning (sewing clothing at home) probably refer, respectively, to the characteristic occupations of men and women in ancient rural culture" (Blomberg, 125).

v. 30 **fire** "Grass was then, as even today in the Middle East, common fuel for ovens. The conclusion to be drawn is readily apparent: since God so wonderfully 'clothes' what is so transitory and worthless, how much more true it must be that God will provide clothing for the disciples, quite apart from any anxiety on their part" (Hagner, 165).

v. 30 **little faith** "Little faith" (*oligopistos*) is a favorite expression of Jesus, found mainly in this Gospel. It is only directed to Jesus' disciples, indicating that 'little faith' is not *absence* of faith but *deficiency* of faith" (Wilkins, 298).

v. 32 **pagans** Or "Gentiles" (NASB, NRSV, NJB); "nations" (NKJV); "unconverted" (the NET Bible; cf. "unbelievers [TEV]). The term refers to "those outside the family of faith, i.e., the pagans (cf. v 7 for the same use of the word). The pagans are taken up with the pursuit of these mundane needs. But the disciples can be free of such concerns because their 'heavenly Father' knows that all these things are legitimate needs that must be met. This same point is made in very similar language earlier in the sermon (6:8; cf. 7:11)" (Hagner, 165).

v. 33 **will be given** The passive voice implies divine action, i.e., "and God will give you all these things" (cf. Php 4:6). Some might protest, "It is not true to say that all birds are adequately fed and that all lilies reach their fullest beauty. Droughts and other catastrophes cut short the lives of both birds and flowers as well as of humans who trust in God. It simply is not the case that those who seek first the kingdom of God find invariably that all things necessary for life are added to them. And how unwise it is to counsel 'Do not be concerned about tomorrow' (Matt. 6:34). Careful planning can avoid the worst effect of drought and plague. Compare Prov. 6:6" (Douglas R. A. Hare, *Matthew*, Interpretation, 74). One commentator suggests a way to address this problem "is to reserve all guarantee for the age to come" or to interpret it "in light of Luke 12:33 and Mark 10:30a, which presuppose the sharing of goods within the Christian community. When God's people corporately seek first his priorities, they will be definition take care of the needy in their fellowships" (Blomberg, 126). Another writes, "The passage does not mean, however, that food, drink, clothing, and other such necessities will come to the disciple automatically without work or foresight. It addresses only the problem of anxiety about these things" (Hagner, 166, 67).

Connect the **FAMILY**.

Experience it!

Experience scripture through the activity-based learning exercise. Dinner is a perfect time to engage the family.

Ask the family to share stories about people they know who are experiencing troubles in life. Read Matthew 6:25-34. It's easy to spend all your time worrying about things. The difficulty is that worry never solved any of the problems. Actually, worry can make the problems seem bigger. Our faith should be in God since he promises to take care of us.



Pray it!

Pray God's will for your child by praying scriptures. Insert your child's name in the blanks as you pray.

Father, I pray _____ will not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present her requests to You. Php 4:6

Post it!

Post the kid-friendly Core Competency and the memory verse throughout the house. Lead your children to interact with them as they memorize.

Peace – I live without worry because things are good between God, myself and others

Memory verse – "But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well." Mt 6:33

Discuss it!

Discover biblical truth by discussing the scripture. Reflective questions are great with older kids.

- * How would birds benefit if they were to worry about their next meal?
- * What was the purpose of comparing Solomon and lilies?
- * Rather than worrying, what should be your approach to troubles (v.33)?
- * Describe what "seeking his kingdom and righteousness" look like in real life.

Live it!

Live out the Core Competency and build deeper relationships by doing this activity.

One of the ways you can help others to experience peace and not worry so much when things are difficult is to look for ways to help them. As a family, think of someone who has recently lost a job. Discuss ways you might be able to help. Help the kids to initiate one of their ideas.



Challenge

Kids preschool through sixth grade receive Kid Pix Tokens for each discipleship activity completed.

Family completes **Experience It** _____ Child memorizes kid-friendly **Core Competency** _____

Family participates in **Live It** _____ Child memorizes **Memory Verse** _____

Kids can earn extra tokens on Sunday morning by:

Bringing a friend to **The Kid Connection** _____ Completing **KIDZ Bulletin** _____

Child's name _____ Parent's signature _____

30 CORE COMPETENCIES

10 CORE BELIEFS

Trinity *2 Corinthians 13:14*

I believe the God of the Bible is the only true God - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Salvation By Grace *Ephesians 2:8-9*

I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.

Authority of the Bible *2 Timothy 3:16-17*

I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.

Personal God *Psalms 121:1-2*

I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.

Identity in Christ *John 1:12*

I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.

Church *Ephesians 4:15-16*

I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.

Humanity *John 3:16*

I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Compassion *Psalms 82:3-4*

I believe God calls all Christians to show compassion to those in need.

Eternity *John 14:1-4*

I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish His eternal kingdom.

Stewardship *1 Timothy 6:17-19*

I believe that everything I am or own belongs to God.

10 CORE PRACTICES

Worship *Psalms 95:1-7*

I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.

Prayer *Psalms 66:16-20*

I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.

Bible Study *Hebrews 4:12*

I read the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.

Single-mindedness *Matthew 6:33*

I focus on God and His priorities for my life.

Spiritual Gifts *Romans 12:4-6*

I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.

Biblical Community *Acts 2:44-47*

I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world.

Giving Away My Time *Colossians 3:17*

I give away my time to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Money

2 Corinthians 8:7

I give away my money to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Faith *Ephesians*

6:19-20

I give away my faith to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Life *Romans 12:1*

I give away my life to fulfill God's purposes.

10 CORE VIRTUES

Joy *John 15:11*

I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.

Peace *Philippians 4:6-7*

I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, myself, and others.

Faithfulness *Proverbs 3:3-4*

I have established a good name with God and with others based on my long-term loyalty to those relationships.

Self-Control *Titus 2:11-13*

I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.

Humility *Philippians 2:3, 4*

I choose to esteem others above myself.

Love *1 John 4:10-12*

I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.

Patience *Proverbs 14:29*

I take a long time to overheat and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.

Kindness/Goodness *1 Thess. 5:15*

I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others.

Gentleness *Philippians 4:5*

I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.

Hope *Hebrews 6:19-20*

I can cope with the hardships of life and with death because of the hope I have in Jesus Christ.

About the Authors

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The mission of THE SCROLLS is to help you develop the beliefs, practices, and virtues of a follower of Jesus Christ called The 30 Core Competencies through your own active reading of the Bible. Send any questions or comments you may have about this lesson to Tom Bulick. His e-mail address is tbulick@pantego.org.