

Our Anxieties And God's Sovereignty

Matthew 6:25-32

Introduction:

- "Worry" is an anxiety caused by fearing what cannot be controlled
- "Worry" is a Divided Mind that second guesses trusting in God (Mt 6:25; Lk 10:40-41)
- "Worry" comes from the Anglo-Saxon root meaning "to strangle or give pain" (Lk 8:14)
- "Worry" is unnecessary stress caused by imagined dangers

I. Put Away The Distraction Of Worry: Evaluate & Eradicate (Mt 6:25-32)

A. Worrying Is Needless: Prioritize Our Concerns (25)

B. Worrying Is Senseless: Think Reasonably, Not Negatively (26; cf. Lk 12:6; Rom 8:32)

C. Worrying Is Useless: Choose Faith Over Fear (27)

D. Worrying Is Faithless: Trust His Sovereignty (28-32)

- Absolute Ascendancy: God Is Supreme Over Any Other Being Or Thing (Ps 135:5; cf. 1 Tim 6:15)
- Absolute Autonomy: God Is Absolutely Free To Do Whatever He Wishes (Ps 135:6a; 115:3; Isa 46:10)
- Absolute Authority: God Is In Total Control Of Every Aspect Of The Universe (Ps 135:6b; 103:19)

II. Pursue An Undistracted View Of God: Faith & Focus (33-34)

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- In Our Pursuit Of Righteousness, When Does A Genuine Concern Become A Sinful Worry?
 - When God Tells Us Not To Worry And We Still Persist (Phil 4:6)
 - When Worry Precludes Exercising Faith (Heb 11:6)
 - When Worry Erases Grace (2 Cor 12:8-9)

B. Resist Tomorrow's Fears, Manage Today's Problems (34)

Conclusion:

1. The Gospel cures our ultimate worries – death and sin (John 5:24)
2. Pray about your worries to the Lord – God gives peace of mind (Phil 4:6-7; Ps 37:1-2)
3. Overcome Worry By Disciplining An Undisciplined Mind (2 Tim 1:7)
4. Cast your burdens on the Lord – God is SOVEREIGN (1 Pet 5:7; Ps 55:22)

Discussion Questions:

- What are your most prominent worries in your life right now? How are these worries "choking" you spiritually and emotionally?
- How does the Gospel ultimately defuse our worries? (John 5:24; Isa 32:17)
- Read Matthew 6:27. If we know that worry isn't beneficial, why do we tend to persist in worry? What costs do we pay by worrying?
- Read Matthew 6:28-32. How can we be reminded of God's sovereignty while we struggle with worry? How does Nebuchadnezzar's tribute in Daniel 4:34-35 periscope our worry to His sovereignty?
- Read Matthew 6:33-34. How is seeking God's kingdom and righteousness a cure for our worries?

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Introduction:

- Ie/ The late, great preacher Henry Ward Beecher told this story of a young man who was applying for a job in a New England factory many decades ago. Asking for the owner, he found himself in the presence of a nervous, fidgety man who looked hopeless. "The only vacancy here" he told the applicant, "is a vice-presidency. The man that takes the job must shoulder all my cares."
"That's a tough job" said the applicant. "What's the salary?"
"I'll pay you ten thousand a year if you will really take over all my worries."
"Where is the ten thousand coming from?" asked the applicant, suspiciously.
"That my friend," replied the owner "is your first worry."
- Worry is one of our greatest foes of the day
 - a few years ago, Time magazine informed us that Americans swallow 7 tons of sleeping pills every day to help deal with our worries
 - alcoholism
 - ulcers
 - stress
- Les Carter, in his book *Mind Over Emotions*, lists some causes for worry:
 - Overemphasis on responsibilities
 - perfection stimulates greater worry over needless details
 - Unrealistic ideals
 - Always concerned on how things "ought" to be
 - Not flexible
 - Excessive fear
 - A fragile ego
 - The worrier assumes he/she is too incompetent to cope with problems
 - Either become too controlling or too dependent
 - Letting feelings fester

1. What We Worry About

- **Top 10 Senior Fears**

<https://info.daystarseattle.com/senior-living-blog/understanding-your-aging-parents-seniors-top-10-fears>

1. Loss of Independence
2. Declining health
3. Running out of money
4. Not being able to live at home
5. Death of a spouse or other family member
6. Inability to manage their own activities of daily living
7. Not being able to drive
8. Isolation or loneliness

9. Strangers caring for them
10. Fear of falling or getting hurt.

- **What Seniors Worry About Most:**

<http://seniorstring.com/what-seniors-worry-about/>

1. Fear of losing memory
2. Becoming a victim of a scam
3. Fear of finding affordable health care
4. Fear of terrorism
5. Fear of the government
6. Fear of selling home

- **American Teens Are Even More Stressed Than Adults**

By Carolyn Gregoire, 2/13/14

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/02/11/american-teens-are-even-m_n_4768204.html

American teenagers are now the most stressed-out age group in the U.S., according to APA's 2013 Stress In America survey. While adults rate their stress at a 5.1 on a 10-point scale, teens rate their stress levels at 5.8.

This year's report, conducted online by Harris Interactive on behalf of APA, consisted of 1,950 adults and 1,018 teens in the U.S. in August 2013. Here are some of the survey's biggest findings about teens and stress:

- *Teens report that their stress level during the school year (5.8/10) far exceeds what they believe to be a healthy level of stress (3.9/10).*
- *31 percent of teens report feeling overwhelmed as a result of stress, 30 percent say that they feel sad or depressed as a result of stress, and 36 percent report feeling tired or fatigued because of stress.*

... Teens' habits around sleep, exercise and technology (the average teen consumes an average of 7.5 hours of media per day) may play a role in contributing to higher stress levels. More than one in three teens says that stress has kept him up at night in the past month. But most teens aren't sleeping enough to begin with: The average teen sleeps 7.4 hours on a school night (far less than the 9-10 hours recommended by the CDC), the APA survey found. The survey also found that one in five teens reports exercising less than once a week or not at all, despite the proven stress-relieving benefits of physical activity. The negative health effects of lack of sleep and too much screen time for teens could be significant.

- **Ie/ Hakuna Matata** – is the solution our problem free – philosophy? Does it mean that there are no more worries for the rest of our days?
- **People in Jesus' day had more reason to worry than we do today:**
 - we might think it was easier to live 2000 years ago than today, but I don't think so
 - most of the people in the ancient world lived like members of the third world countries today
 - laborers were paid every day because they needed the money to live the next day
 - they had no safety net - no unemployment insurance, no pensions, no retirement funds, no severance pay, no guaranteed salary - just pay per day

- the average citizen in Palestine paid at least 40% of his wages in taxes
- sure it's difficult today - but it was super tough back then
- Yet Jesus tells us not to worry

2. What Is Worry?

Matthew 6:25 (NLT) "So I tell you, don't worry about everyday life—whether you have enough food, drink, and clothes. Doesn't life consist of more than food and clothing?"

- **"Worry" is an anxiety caused by fearing what can not be controlled**
- "Worry is the anxious care that comes from assuming a responsibility which we are incapable of discharging." (Dwight Pentecost, *Man's Problem, God's Answer*)
- "Worry is concern about something that one *can do nothing about* and that he *cannot even be sure about.*" (Jay Adams, *What To Do About Worry*)
- Lou Priolo: "Worry is a good emotion (concern) focused on the wrong day." ("The Anxiety Journal: Helping People Overcome Worry," *The Journal of Modern Ministry*, Volume One, Issue One, <http://jofmm.com/>; http://loupriolo.com/id19_what_s_got_you_down_.htm)
- There is a correlation between fearing the future and a lack of faith in God
- If we firmly believe God is in control, there would be no need to fear the future
- As long as God is out of the picture, there will be worry and anxiety
- Augustine describes the "restlessness" of those outside of God when he wrote: "Thou hast made us for Thyself, and our hearts are restless until they find rest in Thee."
- **"Worry" is a Divided Mind that second guesses trusting in God**
 - The word for "worry" or "thought" (KJV) in Matthew 6:25, *merimnao*, comes from the word *meridzo* which means "to distract or divide" and *nous* which means "mind"
 - *Merimnao* literally means to "divide the mind"
 - One's understanding of God in their life is divided
 - One's emotional status is divided between faith in God and being overwhelmed by circumstances
 - the term was used of healthy concern in Phil 2:20 when Paul was "genuinely **concerned** for your welfare)
 - "care" = 1 Cor 12:25 "have the same **care** for one another"
 - The difference between worry and a good care is that we start considering different **options** to rely on for our answers and solutions
 - God or our observation of a circumstance
 - God or reason
 - God or medicine
 - God or education
 - God or business acumen

- Dr. Gary Collins: "Worry comes when we turn from God, shift the burdens of life on to ourselves and assume, at least by our attitude and actions, that we alone are responsible for handling problems. Instead of acknowledging God's sovereignty and power, or seeking His kingdom and righteousness first, many of us ... slip into sinful self-reliance and preoccupation with our own life pressures." (*Christian Counseling*, p. 79)

James 1:8 "A doubleminded man [is] unstable in all his ways."

Luke 10:40-41 "But Martha was distracted with much serving....And Jesus answered and said to her, 'Martha, Martha, you are worried and troubled about many things.'"

- **"Worry" comes from the Anglo-Saxon root meaning "to strangle or give pain"**

Luke 8:14 "Now the ones that fell among thorns are those who, when they have heard, go out and are choked with cares, riches, and pleasures of life, and bring no fruit to maturity."

- Les Carter, in *Mind Over Emotions* defines "Worry is a choking, harmful emotion that can sap one's energy and strength. Worry is a feeling of uneasiness, apprehension, and distress, usually about something impending or anticipated in the future."
- it's related to fear
- it's related to mistrust
- it's related to pessimism
- it's also translated - "being anxious" so it is related to anxiety
- **Worry is unnecessary stress caused by imagined dangers**
 - Lou Priolo: "Worry is fear in the absence of actual danger. It is overestimating the possibility of danger and magnifying the degree of potential adversity. Worry is often accompanied by imaginary pessimistic and foreboding outcomes that have been distorted beyond all likelihood." ("The Anxiety Journal: Helping People Overcome Worry," *The Journal of Modern Ministry*, Volume One, Issue One, <http://jofmm.com/>; http://loupriolo.com/id19_what_s_got_you_down_.htm)
 - **Stress:**
 - Defined By Doing
 - Driven In Performance
 - Debilitated By Worry
 - Distracted By Restlessness
 - Depleted Of Joy

Proposition: What is Jesus' Solution To Overcoming Worry?

I. Put Away The Distraction Of Worry: Evaluate & Eradicate (Mt 6:25-32)

A. Worrying Is Needless: Prioritize Our Concerns (25)

²⁵“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?”

- “worry” = *merimnao* = mental anxiety, worry, striving, stress
 - used 6x in this paragraph
- Most of our worries are needless because they are not important compared to others things in life.
- What we wear or eat is not as important as righteousness
- Our lack of money is not comparable to His promised Kingdom

Matthew 6:24 No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money.

- V. 24 – you can’t serve 2 masters, you can’t love money
- V. 25 – so don’t worry about what money can buy – your love trusts God – perfect love casts out fear

IE/ Norman Wright, in his book *Living Beyond Worry And Anger* gives us a breakdown on the things we worry about:

- 40% of the things we worry about **never happen**
- 30% of the things we worry about are in the **past**
- 12% are needless worries about our **health**
- 10% of the things we worry about are **petty, miscellaneous** worries
- 8% of the things we worry about are **legitimate concerns**
- Corrie ten Boom: “Worry is an old man with bended head, carrying a load of feathers which he thinks are lead.”
 - She understood that worry is about things that aren’t really there
- Mark Twain: “I’m an old man and I’ve known a great many troubles, but most of them never happened.”

Matthew 6:33 “But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.”

- We are to be more concerned about being righteous and serving God’s Kingdom than our minor concerns
- Reprioritize our concerns

B. Worrying Is Senseless: Think Reasonably, Not Negatively (26)

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?”

Luke 12:6 "Are not five sparrows sold for two copper coins? And not one of them is forgotten before God."

- Logic: if God cares for the birds of the air and feeds them, how much more important are you than a bunch of 2 for a quarter sparrows

Romans 8:32 "He who did not spare his own Son but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also graciously give us all things?"

C. Worrying Is Useless: Choose Faith Over Fear (27)

²⁷"Which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature?"

- A cubit is equal to 18 inches
- Jesus was also probably inferring that we can not add years to our life as well. In fact, we've probably lost more years to worry and gained none in the process.
- Vance Havner: "Worry is like a rocking chair; it will give you something to do, but it won't get you anywhere."
- William Hendrickson in his *Commentary on Matthew* wrote "A man may worry himself to death; [but] he cannot worry himself into a longer span of life."

D. Worrying Is Faithless: Trust His Sovereignty (28-32)

²⁸So why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; ²⁹and yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. ³⁰Now 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? ³¹Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' ³²For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things.

- These particular flowers are wild. They need no particular tending. Yet they are so beautiful that they are compared to the splendor of the richest king Israel ever had - Solomon.
- Solomon's wealth is described in 1 Kings 10:14-29 and 2 Chron 9:13-28.

1 Kings 10:26-27. ²⁶And Solomon gathered together chariots and horsemen. He had 1,400 chariots and 12,000 horsemen, whom he stationed in the chariot cities and with the king in Jerusalem. ²⁷And the king made silver as common in Jerusalem as stone, and he made cedar as plentiful as the sycamore of the Shephelah.

- Josephus describes his Solomon's wardrobe (Antiquities Book VIII, Ch. 7:3)

*3. ... for they sent him **vessels of gold, and silver, and purple garments**, and many sorts of spices, and horses, and chariots, and as many mules for his carriages as they could find proper **to please the king's eyes, by their strength and beauty**. ... Their riders also were a further ornament to them, being, in the first place, young men in the most delightful flower of their age, and being eminent for their largeness, and far taller than other men. **They had also very long heads of hair hanging down, and were***

clothed in garments of Tyrian purple. They had also dust of gold every day sprinkled on their hair, so that their heads sparkled with the reflection of the sun-beams from the gold. The king himself rode upon a chariot in the midst of these men, who were still in armor, and had their bows fitted to them. He had on a white garment, and used to take his progress out of the city in the morning. There was a certain place about fifty furlongs distant from Jerusalem, which is called Etham, very pleasant it is in fine gardens, and abounding in rivulets of water; thither did he use to go out in the morning, sitting on high [in his chariot.]

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-8.htm>

- v. 30 tells us that the flowers are only going to end up in the oven for fuel
- The housewives in Palestine would gather up these dried flowers to put in their ovens to bake bread
- so don't worry about: food, drink or clothing – our basic necessities
- Martin Luther: "I have one preacher that I love better than any other on earth; it is my little tame robin, who preaches to me daily. I put crumbs upon my windowsill, especially at night. He hops onto the windowsill when he wants his supply, and takes as much as he desires to satisfy his need. From thence he always hops to a little tree close by and lifts up his voice to God and sings his carols of praise and gratitude, tucks his little head under his wing and goes fast to sleep, and leaves tomorrow to look after itself. He is the best preacher that I have on earth."

ie/ **God Knows – He Is Provident**

When Birds Worry

When the birds begin to worry
And the lilies toil and spin,
And God's creatures all are anxious
Then I also may begin.

For my Father sets their table,
Decks them out in garments fine,
And if He supplies their living,
Will He not provide for mine?

Just as noisy, common sparrows
Can be found most anywhere -
Unto some just worthless creatures,
If they perish who would care?

Yet our Heavenly Father numbers
Every creature great and small,
Caring even for the sparrows.
Marking when to earth they fall.

If His children's hairs are numbered,
Why should we be filled with fear?
He has promised all that's needful,
And in trouble to be near.
(Anonymous)

- **Worry Draws Us To Seek Comfort In God's Sovereignty**

- The basic meaning of sovereignty means "principal, chief supreme"
- W. Tozer: "God's sovereignty is the attribute by which He rules His entire creation, and to be sovereign God must be all-knowing, all-powerful, and absolutely free." (*The Knowledge Of The Holy*, p. 115)
- F. H. Klooster: "The biblical teaching that God is king, supreme ruler, and lawgiver of the entire universe." ("Sovereignty of God", *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, ed. Walter Elwell, p. 1038)
- Jerry Bridges: "He does whatever pleases Him and determines whether we can do what we have planned.... No creature, person, or empire can either thwart His will or act outside of the bounds of His will." (*Trusting God Even When Life Hurts*, NavPress, 1988, p. 36)
- John S. Feinberg: "Divine sovereignty can be defined as God's power of absolute self-determination. This, of course, needs explanation and amplification. God has this power in virtue of his ability to deliberate and make choices, as opposed to others deciding for him. Moreover, self-determination means that God does his own actions, and that they are in accord with his choices." (*No One Like Him: The Doctrine Of God*, Crossway Books, 2001, p. 294)

Psalm 135:5-6 For I know that the LORD is great, and our Lord is above all gods. Whatever the LORD pleases He does, in heaven and in earth, in the seas and in all deep places.

1. Absolute Ascendancy: God Is Supreme Over Any Other Being Or Thing (Ps 135:5; cf. 1 Tim 6:15)

Psalm 135:5 *For I know that the LORD is great, and our Lord is above all gods*

- L.S. Chafer: "He yields to no other power, authority or glory, and is not subject to any absolute greater than Himself."
- John Feinberg: "Divine sovereignty or God's sovereign will is closely related to divine omnipotence. Whereas omnipotence tells how much and which powers God has, sovereignty clarifies the extent to which God uses those powers. This is significant, because God could possess all the powers a being with his nature could have and yet never exercise them or do so only occasionally. Moreover, God might constantly use his powers over everything except human free will, or it could be that

he created our universe and then decided not to intervene in it at all, not even in the natural events that occur. The attribute of divine sovereignty clarifies which of these suppositions, if any, is correct.”

... “This notion of divine sovereignty means, of course, that God is the ultimate, final, and complete authority over everything and everyone. Whatever happens stems from his decisions and control. God’s sovereign will is also free, for nobody forces him to do anything, and whatever he does is in accord with his own purposes and wishes.” (*No One Like Him*, p. 294)

1 Timothy 6:15 He who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords

ie/ The most important political question in my mind is not who will govern California, but who governs the Governor of California.

Daniel 4:17 That the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, gives it to whomever He will, and sets over it the lowest of men.

Psalms 22:28 For the kingdom is the LORD’s, and He rules over the nations.

1 Chronicles 29:11 Yours is the kingdom, O LORD, and You are exalted as head over all.

- **El Elyon** (God Most High)

- Gen 14 - Chedorlaomer, king of Edom, took Sodom & Gomorrah in a battle of 4 kings over 5, also kidnapped Lot, the nephew of Abraham in the process. Abram performed daring rescue attempt in a great battle. Melchizedek (friendly king and priest) provides food for Abram’s troops and acknowledges El Elyon.
- **Gen 14:18-20** - El Elyon is described as the strongest of the strong

Genesis 4:19 Blessed be Abram of God Most High, Possessor of heaven and earth

- emphasizes the strength & sovereignty of God who enabled Abram to have victory
- **Q:** Where are we weak? When God makes our weaknesses His strength, we have the Strongest of the Strong perfecting our weaknesses.

- **Adonai Yahweh** (Sovereign Lord)

- **Genesis 15:1-2** - Abraham’s fear of going childless is calmed by God
- Abram responds to LORD GOD (Adonai Yahweh)
- Abram requests adopting a son (Eliezer) but God promises his own son through own wife (v.4)
- Adonai - means Sovereign Lord or Master
 - in singular form it means lord, master, owner - can designate a relationship between men (ie/ master and slave)
 - in plural form it means “MAJESTY” for He is Lord of lords and King of kings

- Abraham put His confidence in God as the Sovereign Lord having a master plan in his life

Q: Do you entrust your life to His master plan?

2. Absolute Autonomy: God Is Absolutely Free To Do Whatever He Wishes

Psalm 135:6a *Whatever the LORD pleases He does*

Psalm 115:3 But our God is in heaven; He does whatever He pleases.

- God is not bound by natural law, space, or time
- God is free to act in any way He pleases except in a way that contradicts His nature
 - ie/ can't create a rock too big for Him to carry
 - ie/ not sin - contrary to righteousness & holiness
 - ie/ Rom 3:24 "being justified freely by His grace"
 - freely = without a cause
 - the fact salvation is free not only describes the nature of the gift but also of the Giver
- "As our sovereign Lord, He does *always* as He pleases, *only* as He pleases, and *all* that He pleases." (Steven Lawson, *Made In Our Image*, p. 92)

Isaiah 46:10-11 "Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things that are not yet done, Saying 'My counsel shall stand, and I will do all My pleasure.' Calling a bird of prey from the east, the man who executes My counsel, from a far country. Indeed I have spoken it; I will also bring it to pass. I have **purposed** it; I will also **do** it."

ie/ proposal to Daisy - will, plan, do

- Westminster Shorter Catechism states a decree as "His eternal purpose, according to the counsel of His will, whereby, for His own glory, He hath foreordained whatsoever comes to pass."
- St. Augustine "Nothing happens, unless the Omnipotent wills it to happen. He either permits it to happen, or He brings it about Himself."

3. Absolute Authority: God Is In Total Control Of Every Aspect Of The Universe

Psalm 135:6b *in heaven and in earth, in the seas and in all deep places*

- Nothing happens outside of God's command

Psalm 103:19 "The Lord has established His throne in heaven, and His kingdom rules over all."

- God's sovereignty possesses absolute rule

- Ryrie in *Basic Theology*: "A sovereign could be a dictator (God is not), or a sovereign could abdicate the use of his powers (God has not). Ultimately God is in complete control of all things, though He may choose to let certain events happen according to natural laws which He has ordained."

Q: Are there not many galaxies in outer space? Then why don't we call it a "multi-verse"? Because everything is included in one UNI-verse which falls into the hand of the sovereign God.

- A.W. Tozer in *Knowledge Of The Holy*: "God's sovereignty is the attribute by which He rules His entire creation, and to be sovereign, God must be all-knowing, all-powerful, and absolutely free. The reasons are these: Were there even one datum of knowledge, however small, unknown to God, His rule would break down at that point. To be Lord over all the creation, He must possess all knowledge. And were God lacking one infinitesimal modicum of power, that lack would end His reign and undo His kingdom; that one stray atom of power would belong to someone else and God would be a limited ruler and hence not sovereign. Further more, His sovereignty requires that He be absolutely free, which means simply that He must be free to do whatever He will to do anywhere at any time to carry out His eternal purpose in every single detail without interference. Were He less than free He must be less than sovereign."
- J.I. Packer, *Evangelism & The Sovereignty Of God* points out that all Christians believe in God's sovereignty in salvation, even if some try to deny it: "Two facts show this. 1) In the first place, you give God thanks for your conversion. Now why do you do that? Because you know in your heart that God was entirely responsible for it. You did not save yourself; he saved you...2) There is a second way in which you acknowledge that God is sovereign in salvation. You pray for the conversion of others...You ask God to work in them everything necessary for their salvation.. So our thanksgivings and intercessions prove that we believe in divine sovereignty. On our feet we may have arguments about it, but on our knees we are all agreed."

II. Pursue An Undistracted View Of God: Faith & Focus (33-34)

A. Redirect Your Focus Towards God's Glory And Personal Righteousness (33)

Matthew 6:33 "But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you."

- **Seek First** - tense of this verb indicates continual seeking
 - Eliminate doublemindedness and distractions by being single minded
 - That's why Jesus' emphasizes a singular focus: "Seek First"
 - Focus on what's most important, not unimportant or uncontrollable details
- **His Kingdom** – it's all about Christ being our King and living for His Kingdom

ie/ Arthurian legend – knights lived and fought for King Arthur and Camelot
- sole purpose - honor and propagation of Camelot

- **His righteousness** – doing the right thing
 - even in economic turmoil
- **In Our Pursuit Of Righteousness, When Does A Genuine Concern Become A Sinful Worry?**
- Lou Priolo: “Worry is the acceptable sin. Everybody does it-so how can it be that bad? Counselees often use terms to describe this problem that help them feel less culpable- words such as, nervousness, apprehension, distress, or uneasiness. But God calls it sin.”

1. **When God Tells Us Not To Worry And We Still Persist (Phil 4:6)**

Philippians 4:6 “be anxious for nothing”

Matthew 6:34 “Do not worry about tomorrow.”

2. **When Worry Precludes Exercising Faith (Heb 11:6)**

Hebrews 11:6 And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.

Matthew 6:28-30 28 And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, 29 yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. 30 But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith?

3. **When Worry Erases Grace (2 Cor 12:8-9)**

○ Priolo: “Worry is anticipating future suffering without anticipating the grace God has promised to those who suffer.”

2 Corinthians 12:8-9 8 Three times I pleaded with the Lord about this, that it should leave me. 9 But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

- Sammy Tippett, in *The Prayer Factor*, sharply pointed out that: "First one cannot pray, 'Give us this day our daily bread,' until he has prayed, 'Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.' The provision of God is built upon the reign of God. God has no obligation to finance that which is outside of His will. There must be a deep commitment to the will of God before there can be confidence in the provision of God There are many good and

godly things that we can do in life, but the will of God is always the best. God may withhold His provision from that which is good in order that we can have His best."

B. Resist Tomorrow's Fears, Manage Today's Problems (34)

Matthew 6:34 "Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble."

- This proverbial remark "Sufficient for the day is its own trouble." simply tells us "We have enough problems to manage today. Don't worry about tomorrow."

James 4:13-15 ¹³ Come now, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, spend a year there, buy and sell, and make a profit"; ¹⁴ whereas you do not know what will happen tomorrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away. ¹⁵ Instead you ought to say, "If the Lord wills, we shall live and do this or that."

- Albert Einstein: "I never think of the future. It comes soon enough."

Psalm 95:7 "Today, if you will hear His voice"

IE/ There was a farmer who, while drawing water from his well, wondered what would happen if his well went dry. Before long his wondering turned to worrying. Soon he couldn't enjoy the water he had because of his concern that he might not have any for the next day.

- Milton Berle once joked "If you want to test your memory, try to remember the things that worried you yesterday."
- A. W. Pink: "Deny that God is governing matter, deny that He is 'upholding all things by the word of His power,' and all sense of security is gone!"

Conclusion:

1. The Gospel cures our ultimate worries – death and sin (John 5:24)

John 5:24 ²⁴Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life.

- Many worry about dying – Christ will pass us from death to life
- Many worry about being judged for our sins – we won't come to judgment if we believe in Christ
- Many worry about sin and the effect of sin – Jesus defeated all that on the cross

2. Pray about your worries to the Lord – God gives peace of mind

Philippians 4:6-7 (Phillips Translation) "Don't worry over anything whatever; whenever you pray tell God every detail of your needs in thankful prayer, and the peace of God, which surpasses human understanding, will keep constant guard over your hearts and minds as they rest in Christ Jesus."

Psalm 37:1-2 "Do not fret because of evildoers, nor be envious of the workers of iniquity. For they shall soon be cut down like the grass, and wither as the green herb.... Rest in the LORD, and wait patiently for Him; Do not fret because of him who prospers in his way, because of the man who brings wicked schemes to pass."

- David Jeremiah, *Slaying The Giants In Your Life*, gives Six Words of Wisdom for Worriers: "Worry about nothing – Pray about everything."
- Dr. Winfred Neely: "God generally does not explain Himself to us in those times. Rather, He tells us who He is! He reminds us that He is good, He is wise, He is faithful, He is in control." (*How to Overcome Worry: Experiencing the Peace of God in Every Situation*, Moody Publishers. Kindle Edition. P. 16)

3. Overcome Worry By Disciplining An Undisciplined Mind

2 Timothy 1:7 for God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control.

4. Cast your burdens on the Lord – God is SOVEREIGN

1 Peter 5:7 "Casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you."

Psalm 55:22 "Cast your burden on the LORD, and He shall sustain you; He shall never permit the righteous to be moved."

- Elyse Fitzpatrick: "God's sovereignty is the only safe harbor when we're assailed by the sins of fear, doubt, and worry." (*Overcoming Fear, Worry, and Anxiety*, p. 128)
- IE/ Clovis Chappell in his book *Questions Jesus Asked* shared this pertinent story: "In the early years of aviation, a pilot was making a flight around the world. After about two hours after his last landing for a fuel stop, he heard a noise on the plane that he recognized as the gnawing of a rat. While on the ground, a rat probably crawled up the plane. He started to worry - for all he knew it could be gnawing on a vital cable or control of the plane. He was two hours from the last landing field and two hours from the next landing field.

Then he remembered that the rat is a rodent. It is not made for high altitude, but to live on the ground and under the ground. So he began to climb. He ascended one thousand feet, then another, until he was more than 20,000 feet high. The gnawing ceased. Two hours later, the pilot landed the plane and found the rat dead.

**Worry is a rodent. It gnaws away at us when our focus is here on earth. When we lift our cares up to God, worry cannot survive.

Discussion Questions:

- What are your most prominent worries in your life right now? How are these worries “choking” you spiritually and emotionally?
- How does the Gospel ultimately defuse our worries? (John 5:24; Isa 32:17)
- Read Matthew 6:27. If we know that worry isn’t beneficial, why do we tend to persist in worry? What costs do we pay by worrying?
- Read Matthew 6:28-32. How can we be reminded of God’s sovereignty while we struggle with worry? How does Nebuchadnezzar’s tribute in Daniel 4:34-35 periscope our worry to His sovereignty?
- Read Matthew 6:33-34. How is seeking God’s kingdom and righteousness a cure for our worries?

Appendix 1 On The Providence Of God’s Sovereignty:

- Henry Thiessen: “Providence means that continuous activity of God whereby He makes all the events of the physical, mental, and moral realms work out his purpose, and this purpose is nothing short of the original design of God in creation.” (*Systematic Theology*)
- Louis Berkhof: “... that continued exercise of the divine energy whereby the Creator preserves all his creatures, is operative in all that comes to pass in the world, and directs all things to their appointed end.” (*Systematic Theology*, p. 166)
- Westminster Larger Catechism: “God’s works of providence are his most holy, wise, and powerful preserving and governing all his creatures; ordering them, and all their actions, to his own glory.” (18)
- Westminster Confession of Faith: “God, the great Creator of all things doth uphold, direct, dispose, and govern all creatures, actions, and things, from the greatest even to the least, by His most wise and holy providence, according to His infallible foreknowledge, and the free immutable counsel of His own will, to the praise of the glory of His wisdom, power, justice, goodness, and mercy.” (5.1)
- Benjamin Wirt Farley: “The conviction that God, in his goodness and power, preserves, accompanies, and directs the entire universe.” (*The Providence Of God*, Baker, 1988, p. 16)

1. God’s Providence Is Expressed Through Decrees (God’s Purposes)

Isaiah 46:10-11 “Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things that are not yet done, Saying ‘My counsel shall stand, and I will do all My pleasure.’ Calling a bird of prey from the east, the man who executes My counsel, from a far country. Indeed I have spoken it; I will also bring it to pass. I have **purposed** it; I will also **do** it.”

ie/ proposal to Daisy - will, plan, do

- Westminster Shorter Catechism states a decree as “His eternal purpose, according to the counsel of His will, whereby, for His own glory, He hath foreordained whatsoever comes to pass.”
- St. Augustine “Nothing happens, unless the Omnipotent wills it to happen. He either permits it to happen, or He brings it about Himself.”
- His decrees extend to all parts of His creation. The Scriptures say more about God’s work in providence of creation than it does about creating His creation.
- His decrees extend to all nation

ie/ politics - Hitler, Stalin, JFK, Nixon, Clinton, Bush, communism, democracy, monarchy, poverty, famine, bull market, bear market

Daniel 4:34-35 – Nebuchadnezzar: “For His dominion is an everlasting dominion, and His kingdom is from generation to generation. All the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing; He does according to His will in the army of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth. No one can restrain His hand or say to Him, “What have You done?””

- “the inhabitants...are...as nothing” – man makes no impact on God’s will
- “no one can ward off His hand” - God’s will is unthwarted

Deuteronomy 32:39 “Now see that I, even I, am He, and there is no God besides Me; I kill and I make alive; I wound and I heal; Nor is there any who can deliver from My hand.”

- “life & death” – scope or spectrum of control – even death
- Bruce Ware: “Life and death, wounding and healing, is to establish the extremes of life over which God has complete control....This passage does not say that God merely attempts as best he can to *use* the death and wounding brought about by others (which things he cannot, without destroying freedom, stop free creatures from doing) while he himself *brings* life and healing.” (*Whatever...*, p. 114)
- “no God besides Me” – God is unique and unimpacted
- “nor is there any who can deliver from My hand” – God’s will is uninfluenced

Psalms 135:6 “Whatever the LORD pleases ***He does***, in heaven and in earth”

- God is supremely superior and does as He pleases, not affected by man’s will

Romans 9:18-20 “Therefore He has mercy on whom He wills, and whom He wills He hardens. You will say to me then, ‘Why does He still find fault? ***For who has resisted***”

His will? But indeed, O man, who are you to reply against God? Will the thing formed say to him who formed it, Why have you made me like this?"

- no one resists the will of God
- Open Theists make it sound like God's will is resistible
- God's glory is at stake (Rom 9:22)
- God chooses who will be vessels of mercy and wrath (22-23)

Romans 9:22-23 "What if God, wanting to show His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, and that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which ***He had prepared beforehand for glory.***"

Proverbs 16:4 "The Lord has made all for Himself, Yes, even the wicked for the day of doom."

Ephesians 1:11 "In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, being ***predestined*** according to the ***purpose*** of Him who works all things ***according to the counsel of His will***"

** Westminster Shorter Catechism states a decree as "His eternal purpose, according to the counsel of His will, whereby, for His own glory, He hath foreordained whatsoever comes to pass."

* St. Augustine "Nothing happens, unless the Omnipotent wills it to happen. He either permits it to happen, or He brings it about Himself."

- His decrees extend to all parts of His creation. The Scriptures say more about God's work in providence of creation than it does about creating His creation.

Matthew 6:10 "Your will be done"

- not a combination of God and man's will, but God's alone

Romans 8:28 - all things work for good acc. to His **purpose**

Romans 8:28 - all things work for good acc. to His **purpose**

- o His decrees extend to birth, career, death, sickness, promotion, unemployment, etc.

2. **God's Purpose Is Focused On His Glory**

Isaiah 48:11 For My own sake, for My own sake, I will do it; For how should My name be profaned? And I will not give My glory to another.

A. Presiding Precedence – Let Him Reign

1. God's Reign Is Permanent (Psalm 2)

Psalm 2 ¹ Why do the nations rage, and the people plot a vain thing?

² The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD and against His Anointed, saying,

³ "Let us break Their bonds in pieces and cast away Their cords from us."

⁴ He who sits in the heavens shall laugh; The LORD shall hold them in derision.

⁵ Then He shall speak to them in His wrath, and distress them in His deep displeasure:

⁶ "Yet I have set My King on My holy hill of Zion."

- Kingship of Christ - mocks other kings in derision
- ie/ Presidents change every 4-8 years, kings in a lifetime or overthrow

2. God's Reign Is Absolute

- ie/ At the time of Christ birth, the emperor was Caesar Augustus
 - "August" = supreme authority - authority even over moral life of Rome
 - but only God is "August"

3. God's Reign Demands Obedience

B. Protective Preservation – Let Him Sustain

- Our concept of preservation is to smoke it, salt it sulpharize it or freeze it
 - beef jerky, canned foods, smoked salmon or frozen food
 - yet even preserved food gets rotten
 - when God preserves - it's absolute

1. God Not Only Creates The Universe, But Also Sustains It

Genesis 1:1 In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

- "Create" = Hebr. *Barah* which instills a legato vs. a staccato sense for creation
 - not create and leave it alone
 - contrast to Deism (T. Jefferson) - God created earth but left it alone
 - "Sustenance" gives sense that God is still personally involved in His creation

ie/ parenting goes beyond just the creative process

2. God Maintains The Existence, Property And Power Of Everything He Created

Colossians 1:17 And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist.

- “hold together” or “consist” is a form of *sunistami* which means “to place together, to stand together, to cohere”
 - God uses all glue
 - God is the glue which holds the universe together
 - He keeps planets in orbit
 - He keeps sun in place (any closer or farther - we’d burn or freeze)
 - He feeds sparrows & lilies of field
 - He keeps body functioning
 - God’s involvement involves whole universe

3. **God Alone Is The Author Of Our Being. Man Is Merely An Agent Of Being, Not The Author. (Acts 17:28)**

Key Issue: **CAUSALITY**

R.C. Sproul: “If anything exists then something/someone must have the power of *being* within itself or nothing would *be*”.

- man does not have the power of being within himself

Acts 17 – Paul addresses Athenians at Areopagus on the Unknown God
 - worship many gods and had an unknown God just in case they missed one

Acts 17:28 For in Him we live and move and have our being

- God alone is the author of being
- God is ultimate Author
- Jerry Bridges in *Pursuit of Holiness*: “Nothing exists of its own inherent power of being. Nothing in creation stands or acts independently of the Lord’s will.”

4. **His Very Word Sustains His Creation**

Hebrews 1:3 “And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power.”

- Through His sovereign decree, the electrons rotates properly around the proton and neutrons
- Through His sovereign decree, the molecules in the papal bonds of the timber which holds the roof over our head stay in place
- At His Word the universe was created; at His Word the universe is sustained
- **Let God preserve & sustain you**

Psalm 36:6 “O Lord, You preserve man and beast.”

Nehemiah 9:6 You alone are the LORD; You have made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth and everything on it, the seas and all that is in them, and You preserve them all. The host of heaven worships You.

Proverbs 2:8 He guards the paths of justice, and preserves the way of His saints.

C. Purposeful Providence – Let Him Aim

- *pro* = before
- *video* = to see (ie/ Veni, Vidi, Vici – Julius Caesar - I came, I saw, I conquered)
 - basically means "Foreseeing"
- ie/ Concept of Spectator
 - I yell at TV during football & basketball games but I can't change the outcome
 - God is more than a Spectator - He is ultimately and intimately involved with His creation

Romans 8:28 And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.

- **Providence is God's continuing rule over all events so that everything works out according to His purpose**

Appendix 3 On How We Wrestle With God's Sovereignty

A. Dethroning The Sovereign

- "The conception of Deity which prevails most widely today, even among those who profess to give heed to the Scriptures, is a miserable caricature, a blasphemous travesty of the Truth. The God of the twentieth century is a helpless, effeminate being who commands the respect of no really thoughtful man. The God of the popular mind is the creation of a maudlin (sappy, over-emotional) sentimentality. The God of many a present-day pulpit is an object of pity rather than of awe-inspiring reverence." (A. W. Pink in 1930, *The Sovereignty Of God*, p. 20)
- Ie/ Steve Lawson (*Made In Our Image*, p. 91ff) relates a question once posed to **Napoleon** Bonaparte: "Is God on the side of France?"
 - the arrogant military conqueror replied "God is on the side that has the heaviest artillery"
 - Napoleon was really stating that it doesn't matter what God wills, but what he wills
 - but in 1815, Napoleon gets trampled in Waterloo by the British & Russian armies in Belgium, despite Napoleon's superior artillery
 - defeat changed Napoleon's view of life, history and God
 - The humbled dictator now quoted Thomas a Kempis saying "Man proposes, but God disposes."

- Ie/ **Nebuchadnezzar** – a once proud ruler – became crazy as God humbled him. After his humbling, the formerly haughty king gave a tribute to the sovereign God:

Daniel 4:34-35 For His dominion is an everlasting dominion, and His kingdom is from generation to generation. All the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing; He does according to His will in the army of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth. No one can restrain His hand or say to Him, "What have You done?"

- These powerful men needed to be humbled before the fact that God is the Most powerful God – the Lord of lords and King of Kings.

B. Manipulating God's Will

- **Manipulation:** Taking matters into our own hands and taking matter out of God's Hands.
- Jacob - Genesis 25:20-26
 - Esau = "hairy"
 - Jacob = 2nd born, hand on heel
 - Jacob = "grabber" or "heel tripper"

Genesis 25:23 "Two nations *are* in your womb, two peoples shall be separated from your body; *One* people shall be stronger than the other, and the older shall serve the younger."

1. Scheming For Prominence

Genesis 25 ²⁹ Now Jacob cooked a stew; and Esau came in from the field, and he *was* weary. ³⁰ And Esau said to Jacob, "Please feed me with that same red *stew*, for I *am* weary." Therefore his name was called Edom.

³¹ But Jacob said, "Sell me your birthright as of this day."

³² And Esau said, "Look, I *am* about to die; so what *is* this birthright to me?"

³³ Then Jacob said, "Swear to me as of this day." So he swore to him, and sold his birthright to Jacob. ³⁴ And Jacob gave Esau bread and stew of lentils; then he ate and drank, arose, and went his way. Thus Esau despised *his* birthright.

- **Prominence:** occupation, title, achievement
- **Exploit:** he knew brother's weakness and took advantage of it

2. Scheming For Approval

Genesis 27 ⁵ Now Rebekah was listening when Isaac spoke to Esau his son. And Esau went to the field to hunt game and to bring it. ⁶ So Rebekah spoke to Jacob her son, saying, "Indeed I heard your father speak to Esau your brother, saying, ⁷ 'Bring me game and make savory food for me, that I may eat it and bless you in the presence of the LORD before my death.' ⁸ Now therefore, my son, obey my voice according to what I command you. ⁹ Go now to the flock and bring me from there two choice kids of the goats, and I will make savory food from them for your father, such as he loves. ¹⁰ Then you shall take it to your father, that he may eat it, and that he may bless you before his death."

- **Approval:** father's blessing
- **Exploit:** parents' weakness

3. Learning Sovereignty Through A Ladder

Genesis 28:12-17 ¹² Then he dreamed, and behold, a ladder was set up on the earth, and its top reached to heaven; and there the angels of God were ascending and descending on it. ¹³ And behold, the LORD stood above it and said: "I am the LORD God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac; the land on which you lie I will give to you and your descendants. ¹⁴ Also your descendants shall be as the dust of the earth; you shall spread abroad to the west and the east, to the north and the south; and in you and in your seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed. ¹⁵ Behold, I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land; for I will not leave you until I have done what I have spoken to you." ¹⁶ Then Jacob awoke from his sleep and said, "Surely the LORD is in this place, and I did not know it." ¹⁷ And he was afraid and said, "How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven!"

- God is the authority
- God is accessible

4. Learning Sovereignty Through A Wrestler

Genesis 32:24-32 ²⁴ Then Jacob was left alone; and a Man wrestled with him until the breaking of day. ²⁵ Now when He saw that He did not prevail against him, He touched the socket of his hip; and the socket of Jacob's hip was out of joint as He wrestled with him. ²⁶ And He said, "Let Me go, for the day breaks."

But he said, "I will not let You go unless You bless me!"

²⁷ So He said to him, "What *is* your name?"

He said, "Jacob."

²⁸ And He said, "Your name shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel; for you have struggled with God and with men, and have prevailed."

²⁹ Then Jacob asked, saying, "Tell *me* Your name, I pray."

And He said, "Why *is* it *that* you ask about My name?" And He blessed him there.

³⁰ So Jacob called the name of the place Peniel: "For I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved." ³¹ Just as he crossed over Penuel the sun rose on him, and he limped on his hip. ³² Therefore to this day the children of Israel do not eat the muscle that shrank, which *is* on the hip socket, because He touched the socket of Jacob's hip in the muscle that shrank.