

THE SOLUTION TO WORRY

Matthew 6:33

By Andy Manning

I. INTRODUCTION

1. Worry is a big problem. Psychologist Rollo May called worry and anxiety “one of the most urgent problems of our day.” It has been called the “official emotion of our age,” and “the most pervasive psychological phenomenon of our time.”
2. Maybe worry is a big problem because we have a lot to worry about. I have to take care of my wife and kids. I have one kid in college, three in high school, and two in middle school. I work two jobs because I have to pay the bills and keep food on the table. I have to take care of three cars. I have to lead and feed and care for the church. I have a lot to worry about it, and I know it’s the same for you. So we tend to worry.
3. Worry is the fear of what might happen tomorrow.
4. When we worry we play the “What If?” game. What if I lose my job? What if I get sick? What if I get cancer? What if I die? What if I don’t get the job? What if I don’t get the scholarship? What if I fail the test? What if I can’t bring my grade up? What if? What if? What if?
5. When you worry too much, you can have an anxiety attack. I experienced this for the first time in 2017. I felt light-headed, like I was going to pass out. I had chest pains, sleeplessness, constant shaking and trembling. I couldn’t sit still. I couldn’t concentrate on anything. I was having trouble breathing. I felt like I was dying, so I went in to the emergency room only to find out there was nothing physically wrong with me. It was only later that I realized I had been having an anxiety attack. My worry had gotten so out of control that my body started to break down.
6. Worry is a big problem because it 1) steals your focus and hurts your job performance; 2) prevents joy; 3) hurts your relationships (makes it hard to love others, and makes it hard to love you) 4) damages your health (irritability; depression; insomnia; tightness of the muscles of the neck; fatigue; headaches; high blood pressure; elevated heart rate; upset stomach; ulcers; weakens the immune system so that you are more susceptible to colds, disease, and even cancer; can lead to overeating, overwork); 5) points to deeper spiritual problems.

- i. Worry is sign of weak faith.
 - 1. When the disciples were afraid Jesus said, “Why are you afraid, you of little faith (Mt 8:26)?”
 - 2. **Daniel Fusco** (Pastor, Crossroads Community Church, Vancouver, Washington) “The problem with worry is worry is functional atheism. When we worry, we act like God isn’t in control, like He’s not the King of kings and the Lord of lords. We act like we don’t believe that all things will work together for the good. When we choose to trust God, we’re also abandoning worry.”
 - 3. **Stephen Altrogge** “Worry is the act of imagining a future without God.”
 - ii. Worry is a sign of misplaced devotion.
 - 1. We tend to worry about the things we are most devoted to.
 - 2. If you want to know what you are most devoted to, just look at what you are worried about.
 - 3. Health, money, your job, your family, your education – these things are important. But worry is the result of making them too important. It’s when you start to worship those things.
7. It’s no wonder why the Bible says “Don’t worry.”
- i. **Matthew 6:25** “Therefore I tell you: Don’t worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Isn’t life more than food and the body more than clothing?”
 - ii. **Philippians 4:6** “Don’t worry about anything, but in everything, through prayer and petition with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.”
8. Today we are going to learn the solution to worry.
9. Matthew 6:33 has the solution to worry. Not only that, but it tells us what our priority in life should be, and it tells us the easiest way to get our needs met.

II. TEXT: Matthew 6:33

- 1. **Matthew 6:33** “But seek first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all these things will be provided for you.”
- 2. Big Idea: If you prioritize spiritual things, then God will make sure you don’t have to worry about material things.

- i. This verse can be divided into two parts: The command, and the consequences.

III. **THE COMMAND: “But seek first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness...”**

1. “But”

- i. The word “but” here means “rather than,” or “instead of,” or “in contrast to.”
- ii. We are supposed to seek the kingdom of God and his righteousness instead of doing something else. What is the something else?
- iii. The context of this verse is verses 25-34, where Jesus is teaching His followers not to worry about your life, what you will eat or drink or wear. Don’t worry about your needs.
- iv. The meaning of the word “but” in Matthew 6:33 is “in contrast” to worrying about your life. Instead of worrying, seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness.
- v. This is not just something to do instead of worrying; this is the antidote to worry. How do you stop worrying? By focusing your attention and energy on something else – specifically, the kingdom of God His righteousness.
- vi. Let’s try something. Don’t think about the color red. What happened when I said that? You thought about the color red. You can’t simply not think about red. You have to replace thoughts of red with other thoughts. You have to think about green, or something else. In the same way, you can’t just stop worrying. Instead, you have to think about something else. If you focus your thoughts and energy on seeking the kingdom of God and His righteousness, then your mind won’t be able to worry.

2. “Seek”

- i. The command is to “seek” the kingdom and His righteousness.
- ii. Let me point out two things about this word “seek”:
 - 1. The Greek word “seek” (*zeteo*) means to try to gain, to strive after, with the idea of earnestness and anxiety.
 - a. This is not casual seeking. A laid-back seeking. A half-hearted seeking. A lazy seeking. This is an earnest seeking.

- b. **JFB Commentary** “The seeking of these is the making them the object of supreme choice and pursuit.”
 - c. **Matthew Henry** “A careful concern and an earnest endeavor.”
 - d. **RC Sproul** “Seeking demands an intensity, a perseverance that will not be denied, and a zeal to achieve the desired objective.”
 - e. This seeking is passionate, zealous, fervent, wholehearted, intense.
2. The Greek word “seek” is in the present imperative.
- a. Imperative = command; present = continuous, habitual.
 - b. We find the same word used later in the Sermon on the Mount. Notice how the Amplified Bible translates it:
 - i. **Matthew 7:7 (AMP)** “Keep on asking, and it will be given you; keep on seeking, and you will find; keep on knocking [reverently] and [the door] will be opened to you.”
 - c. This is daily seeking; a constant seeking; a persistent seeking.
 - d. One time I decided to learn piano. I started practicing thirty minutes a day, five days a week. And I improved quickly. But after a month or so I quit. This word “seek” is the opposite of that. It means keep on continually seeking. Don’t stop. Stick with it.
- iii. When you put all this together, the word “seek” means a passionate obsession.
- iv. Maybe an illustration will help. When our oldest children were just three, two, and one year old, my wife put them down for their afternoon nap. She went to the garage to run on the treadmill for thirty minutes, and then she went back to check on the kids, and they were fine. Next she took a shower. Then she put her robe on and went to check on the girls to make sure they were okay. They were not in their room. She checked the playroom, but they weren’t there either. She checked every other room in the house, and then the garage, but they weren’t there. Then she checked

the back yard, but they weren't there. So she went back inside, thinking they have to be in there, but maybe she just missed them. She checked everywhere inside, and they weren't there. So she checked the back yard again, and this time she checked around the side of the house, even though they normally don't play there, and she saw that the gate was open. She was terrified. She ran out the gate to the front of the house to look for them, and she saw them down at the end of the street taking a walk. The three year old was in the middle, holding the hands of the other two girls. They were all three barefoot, two of them in their diapers. Imagine the intensity, the earnestness, the passion, the zeal, the fervency in my wife's attitude as she was looking for her little girls. That's the kind of seeking we are to do. We are commanded to seek the kingdom of God and His righteousness with the utmost energy, attention, and passion.

3. "First"

- i. The Greek word is *protos*, and it means not first in time, but first in importance.
- ii. The command is not to seek God first thing in the morning, and then get around to seeking other things. Seeking the things of God should be your top priority. Your primary, and greatest, and central concern.
- iii. **Pulpit Commentary** says we are to seek God "above riches, honor, comfort, ease, even above the love of those who are nearest and dearest."
- iv. Your priority is the thing that's most important to you in life, the thing that gets your greatest energy, your greatest attention, your greatest effort.
- v. This verse tells us what our priority in life should be: seeking the kingdom of God and His righteousness.
- vi. The main thing is to keep the main thing the main thing.
- vii. What does it look like to prioritize the things of God? I've never met anyone who prioritized God who wasn't doing at least these three things:
 1. Give God the first hour of your day (daily quiet time).
 2. Give God the first day of your week (Sunday worship).
 3. Give God the first ten percent of your finances (tithe).

4. "The kingdom of God"

- i. Now we come to the two things in particular that we are to seek first: the kingdom of God, and His righteousness.
- ii. The kingdom of God is a major theme in the NT, yet many Christians are unclear about its meaning, and what it means to seek first the kingdom of God.
 1. When John the Baptist comes on the scene, he preached about the kingdom of God. He said, "Repent, because the kingdom of heaven has come near (Mt 3:2)!"
 2. In the Gospel of Mark, the first sermon Jesus preached was, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news (Mk 1:15)."
 3. After Jesus rose from the grave, He spent forty days teaching His disciples before He ascended into heaven. What did He talk about? The kingdom of God (Acts 1:3).
- iii. To understand the kingdom of God, remember three words:
 1. Promise. The kingdom of God was promised in the Old Testament. God promised to send a king from the line of David who would redeem Israel from its enemies and who would establish an eternal kingdom (Ps 89:4; Is 9:6-7; Dan 2:44).
 2. Inauguration. The kingdom of God was inaugurated, started, introduced, by Jesus when He started His ministry. Jesus was clear that His kingdom was spiritual, not political. He came to deliver Israel from sin, not from Rome. His kingdom was invisible, not territorial. It exists in the hearts of people who trust in Christ as Savior and King, and it advances as more people turn to Christ.
 3. Consummation. Even though the kingdom presently exists as Christ reigns in the hearts of His followers, it is not yet completed, as there exists many things in the world that are outside of God's will. But one day King Jesus will return to earth in the flesh and will destroy all evil and its effects and create a new heavens and earth where He will reign for all eternity. The kingdom therefore is already, but not yet. It is already here, but not yet completed. Already inaugurated, but not yet consummated.

- iv. What does it mean to seek the kingdom of God? We must seek the kingdom in three ways:
 - 1. The realm of the king. We must seek to enter the realm of King Jesus by faith. This is the realm of eternal life; of salvation. It is a right relationship with the King. Make sure that you are a citizen of the kingdom. Make sure you have a saving relationship with Jesus.
 - 2. The rule of the king. We must seek the full submission of our lives to His authority. We must devote our lives to His will.
 - 3. The resolve of the king. We must seek to bring others into the realm and under the rule of the king.
- 5. “And His righteousness”
 - i. The Bible uses the word “righteousness” in two ways: Judicial righteousness and ethical righteousness.
 - 1. Judicial righteousness:
 - a. Definition: A right relationship with God
 - b. The problem is that we before salvation we are guilty sinners who deserve hell.
 - c. How can we be made right with God? How can we make peace with God? How can we become acceptable to God? How can we make it to heaven?
 - i. Through faith.
 - ii. **Romans 5:1** “Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”
 - iii. When we put our faith in Christ, we are justified.
 - iv. Justification means that when God saves us, He declares us legally righteous in His sight. We change from sinners deserving hell to believers deserving heaven.
 - v. It is both instant – the moment you believe; and permanent – you never lose your salvation.

- vi. Your judicial righteousness, or justification, means that when you die, God will let you into heaven rather than send you to hell.
- vii. It is all by faith. According to every other religion in the world, you get to heaven by being good enough. Christianity is different in that it says you are not good, and cannot be good enough. Good people don't go to heaven; forgiven people do. The way to heaven is not by earning it, but by trusting in Christ, who earned it for you. When you trust in Christ, rather than in yourself, God declares you righteous in His sight.
- d. How can God declare the guilty righteous?
 - i. Because Christ paid for our sins.
 - ii. **Romans 5:9** "How much more then, since we have now been justified by his blood, will we be saved through him from wrath."
 - iii. Christ died for our sins and rose again. When we trust in Christ, God counts our sins against Christ, and He counts Christ's righteousness as ours.

2. Ethical righteousness:

- a. Definition: Right living before God.
- b. Now that we are saved, we are called to imitate God's character and obey His commands.
- c. How do most people base their ethical decisions? What is most popular? What is legal? What can I get away with?
- d. But as Christians we are to seek "His" righteousness. We are to do what is right in God's sight – all the time, no matter the cost.
- e. A butcher was asked what difference Christ made in his life since he became a Christian. He said, "I stopped weighing my thumb." Before becoming a Christian, he put meat on the scale in such a way that his thumb pushed on the scale, adding an extra

ounce. So if someone asked for sixteen ounces of meat, for example, he gave them fifteen. But after he became a Christian, he took his thumb away from the scale and gave them the full sixteen ounces. And when customers came in whom he had formerly cheated, he added an extra ounce to make up for previous wrongdoings.

- ii. To seek His righteousness is to seek a right relationship with God through faith in Jesus Christ, and to seek right living before God by imitating His character and obeying His word.
6. The solution to worry begins with a command: Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness.
7. The next part of the verse has the consequences, or the result of living this way.

IV. THE CONSEQUENCES

- i. **Matthew 6:33** “But seek first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all these things will be provided for you.”
- ii. This is a promise. When you seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, then all these things will be provided for you.
- iii. What are “all these things?” The things we tend to worry about: How am I going to get through my to do list? Am I ever going to get married? How am I going to pay for school? How am I going to afford a car? How am I going to pay the bills? What if I don’t find a job? What if I fail out of school?
- iv. “All these things” include your needs – physical needs, financial needs, relational needs, emotional needs, spiritual needs, family needs, health needs, etc.
- v. If you fulfill the first part of this verse, then God will take care of you. He will meet your needs.
- vi. If you prioritize spiritual things, then God will make sure you don’t have to worry about material things.
- vii. This verse answers three important questions:
 - 1. What is the answer to anxiety?
 - 2. What should my priorities be?
 - 3. What is the pathway to provision?
- viii. First, what is the answer to anxiety?

1. The Bible commands us not to worry. But you can't just not worry. You have to redirect your focus and energy. When you are tempted to worry, focus all of your energy and attention on spiritual things – His kingdom and His righteousness. That will help you to break out of the prison of worry.
 2. And as you are focusing on spiritual things, you can rest in the promise that God will take care of you.
- ix. Second, what should my priorities be?
1. The kingdom of God and His righteousness.
 2. Clarifying your priorities is essential for effective time management. A time management expert who was speaking to a group of business students. He pulled out a large, wide-mouth jar and filled it with fist-sized rocks. When he couldn't put any more in, he asked, "Is this jar full?" The class responded, "Yes." He said, "Really?" Then he pulled out a bucket of gravel and poured it in, shaking it down through the cracks. Then he asked, "Is the jar full?" The students were onto him, so they said, "No." "Good," he replied. He dumped in a bucket of sand. Once more he asked, "Is the jar full?" "No," they shouted. Again he said, "Good." He poured in a pitcher of water until the jar was full to the brim. Then he asked, "What is the point of the illustration?" One student ventured, "No matter how full your schedule, if you try hard, you can always fit more in." "No," the speaker replied, "that is not the point. The point is, if you don't put the big rocks in first, you'll never get them in at all." (First Things First, by Stephen Covey, Roger & Rebecca Merrill [Simon & Schuster], pp. 88-89.)
 3. This verse is saying if you will put God first, He will give you the time and energy to accomplish everything else in your life.
 4. In the late nineteenth century, John Wanamaker opened a department store in Philadelphia. Within a few short years it became one of the most successful companies in the country. On top of this, he served as the Postmaster General of the United States. On top of this, he served as

the superintendent of his church's Sunday school ministry, which had the largest Sunday school ministry in the world. When somebody asked him how he could hold all these positions at once he explained, "Early in life I read, 'Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.' The Sunday school is my business, all the rest are the things." One example of his desire to put God first in his life was a specially constructed soundproof room in his store. Every day he would go in there and spend thirty minutes praying and reading the Bible.

5. If you put God first, then He will give you the time and energy to achieve everything else.
 6. A successful violinist was asked the secret of her success with the violin. She replied, "Planned neglect!" She explained, Years ago I discovered that there were many things which demanded my time. After washing breakfast dishes, I made my bed, straightened my room, dusted the furniture, and did a host of other things. I then turned my attention to violin practice. That system, however, failed to accomplish the desired results. So I realized I had to reverse things. I deliberately set aside every-thing else until my practice period was ended. That program of planned neglect accounts for my success!" Isn't that what the Christian life is about? Planned neglect. There are a lot of things you need to do. The temptation is to do everything else first, and then give God the leftovers of your time and energy. Matthew 6:33 says the opposite. Put God's work first, and then He will help you do everything else.
- x. Third, how can I provide for my needs? How can I make ends meet?
1. We are all seeking something in life, whether it is pleasure, fame, money, etc. When you prioritize worldly things, two things will happen: Your needs will go unmet, and you will be consumed with worry.
 2. But if you prioritize spiritual things, then God promises to take care of you. He promises to provide for you.

3. During the reign of Queen Elizabeth I, she asked a businessman to serve as an ambassador. He asked to be excused because he was just too busy, and his income and business would suffer too much. The Queen replied, "You look after my business abroad, and I will look after yours at home." The merchant accepted the position and was gone for several years. When he returned, he found that the Queen was true to her word, and had more than adequately taken care of his business. Isn't that the point of Matthew 6:33? Put spiritual business first, and God will take care of your material business.
4. Big Idea: If you prioritize spiritual things, then God will make sure you don't have to worry about material things.