

OVERCOMING

FINANCIAL

WORRY

Part 2

Introduction & Review

The instruction from the Sermon on the Mount preached by our Lord Jesus Christ is practical and touches us right where we live. The heart of the matter to which Jesus speaks in Matthew 6:25-34 is the issue of materialism -- worrying about our finances, worrying about our life, worrying about our earthly existence, and worrying about the necessities of life. Three times the Lord gives the injunction in this passage that we are not to worry. Such anxiety, fear, and worry have absolutely no place in the life of a Christian. Of course this is a marked antithesis to everything we know in our own world. The materialistic world in which we live is totally preoccupied with material possessions. Life begins and ends with the things which people possess. Scripture says the exact opposite: {it}"...a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth"{ei} (Lk. 12:15b).

And yet the heart of the matter, even in our own country, is that most people live for nothing more and nothing less than all the possessions they can possibly grasp to feed their determined life-style. But the whole thing may be crumbling before their very eyes because America cannot sustain this constant economic over-indulgence, over-consumption, and over-production that it is currently experiencing.

A. The Emerging Perspective

There is an interesting book entitled, {it}The Emerging Order{ei}, subtitled, {it}God In The Age Of Scarcity{ei}. Jeremy Rifkin has written this book in an attempt to say that we cannot continue to over-produce and over-consume and still maintain our current approach to life.

1. THE SCARCITY

For example, he says, "We are nearing the end of an epoch that stretches across half a millennium of history. The age of expansion with faith in unlimited economic growth and the governing truths of science and technology, is about to give way to a new age of scarcity and economic contraction, an age so utterly different from our own that any serious attempt to give form and substance to it all but boggles the mind." In other words, we are a generation of incredible materialists and limited resources.

Rifkin goes on to say, "Emphasis on continuous economic growth is a black hole that has already sucked up a majority of the world's critical non-renewable resources."

We have over-production, over-consumption, and a materialistic economic mania that not only destroys the soul but the environment as well. And Rifkin is not a Christian.

2. THE SOLUTION

At the close of his book he offers a solution: The re-emergence of the evangelical Christian ethic -- an ethic of unselfishness and low consumption. If we don't return to an evangelical ethic we will wind up in a constrictive, totalitarian dictatorship

where we will have no freedom.

I wonder if that is still the evangelical Christian ethic. I am not sure that even if they gave us the responsibility to pull it off we would still have the commitment to live the ethic. If we want to have an effect on our society then we are going to have to be distinctively Christian. Unfortunately, we are almost as materialistic as those who are a part of the system around us. We all suffer from the inroads, the temptations, and the power of the materialistic age in which we live. We have all fallen prey to it. So, when somebody outside of Christianity calls for us to be the standard, we better re-examine our own house to make sure we still have what it takes to live that standard.

B. The Biblical Perspective

What is the Christian view of money and possessions? Where do we stand and what does the Bible teach? What is my perspective to be on the luxuries and necessities of life? Our own Lord Jesus Christ gives the answer to these questions in Matthew 6:19-34 -- the greatest statement Jesus ever made on the view we must have toward material things. Verses 19-24 deal with our view of luxury. In verse 25-34 He speaks of our view of necessity. So, the Lord touches on that which is beyond what we need, and that which we need. He gives us an affirmation of where our commitment is to be.

1. THE LUXURIES

What is to be our perspective on luxury -- that which is beyond what we need for the basic necessities? The Lord makes a simple statement in verse 20a: {it}"But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven..."{ei} We are to invest in heaven.

We are to commit ourselves to placing that which we possess in an eternal investment, not stockpiling it in earthly things because moths, rust, and thieves will destroy it (v. 19). And we are to do this for three reasons:

a. {it}Eternal Significance{ei}

According to verse 21, our heart should be in heaven. If you put all your treasure in the earth that is where your heart will be. You will worry about your bank account instead of the Kingdom of God. But if you invest all that you have in God's purposes and projects, then your heart will be there as you watch your investment bringing eternal dividends.

b. {it}Clear Sight{ei}

According to verses 22-23 our spiritual eyes are opened. The Lord says that if you invest in the earth, you pull the shades down on your spiritual eyes and you become blind to spiritual reality. If you invest in eternal things, the shades go up and the light of God floods your heart.

c. {it}Undivided Service{ei}

The third reason that we are to invest what we have in eternity, is that it determines that we serve God and not money. It makes our service to God undivided.

So, in dealing with luxury we need to invest it in eternity and not stockpile it here. Then our heart is where it should be, our spiritual sight is clear, and our

service is undivided. You should invest with God magnanimously and generously because you know the eternal has far more consequence than the temporal.

2. THE NECESSITIES

From this He moves to the necessities of life in verses 25-34. If we are concerned about anything, we are concerned about the basics. In fact, the reason some people stockpile their luxuries in the present, is to hedge against not having the necessities in the future. Is this what we should do?

I. THE GENERAL PRINCIPLE (v. 25; see pp. xx-xx)

The heart of this passage is reiterated in three statements: {it}"Therefore, I say unto you, Be not anxious.... Therefore, be not anxious.... Be, therefore, not anxious..."{ei} (vv. 25a, 31a, 34a). The thrust of this passage is built around those three statements. In the Greek, the first one says, "Stop being anxious."

The next two say, "Don't start being anxious." The Greek word for {it}"anxious"{ei} is {it}merimna{ei} which means "to worry, to fret, to fear, to have anxiety." In fact, in the Greek manuscript found from the first century, there was a list of names of certain Christians in the early church. One name they found was one Titedios Amerimnos. By putting an alpha in front of {it}merimnos{ei} it means "not to worry," hence his name was Titedios, the man who never worries.

We are not to worry about {it}"what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on"{ei} (v. 25b). Don't worry about the basics -- your food, your drink, and your clothes.

II. THE GUIDING PROTECTION (vv. 26-32, 34)

You say, "That's easy for you to say. On what basis does He say this?" There are three reasons not to worry: it is unnecessary because of your Father, it is uncharacteristic because of your faith, and it is unwise because of your future.

First of all, we are not to worry about the basics of life. It is...

A. Unnecessary Because Of Your Father (vv. 26-30; see pp.xx-xx)

Worry is unnecessary since God is our Father. If your concept of God is right and you see Him as Owner, Controller, and Provider, and beyond that as your loving Father, then you have nothing for which to worry. If He has all things in His control, then He controls those things on the behalf of His children. If you are His child, that should be the death of worry.

For example, Matthew 7:7-8 says {it}"Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you; for every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened."{ei} Now, those two verses have been applied to many things, but the basic issue to which our Lord is speaking is the issue of physical sustenance.

He illustrates that principle in verses 9-10: {it}"Or what man is there of you whom, if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone? Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent?"{ei} In other words, you know that in human terms a man is not going to give his son a rock when he asks for a piece of bread, or give him a snake when he asks for a fish. Human fathers give their children what they seek if what they seek is what they need.

Then verse 11 says, {it}"If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father, who is in heaven{ei} [He is not evil but absolutely righteous, just, holy, perfect, and good]{it}, give good things to them that ask Him?"{ei} And {it}"good things'{ei} speak first of the necessities of life. If an evil, sinful father knows how to give good things to his children, won't an absolutely holy God know how to give good things to His children?

1. THE ILLUSTRATIONS (vv. 26-30a; see pp. xx-xx)

a. {it}Food{ei} (v. 26; see pp. xx-xx)

Matthew 6:26 says, {it}"Behold the fowls of the air...your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?"{ei} He is your heavenly Father; if He takes care of birds, don't you think He will take care of you? He will supply your food. The next illustration is of the...

b. {it}Future{ei} (v. 27; see pp. xx-xx)

{it}"Which of you by being anxious can add one cubit to his stature?{ei} [life span]{it}."{ei} There are people who worry about how long they are going to live because they are afraid of death. Some people don't want to get on an airplane, some people are afraid of diseases -- they go from doctor to doctor, from health spa to health spa, from bottle to bottle of vitamins and pills. They live in constant fear about their life. What good does that do? Your Father cares for that. All the worry in the world isn't going to add to your life, if anything it will subtract from it. Thirdly, there is an illustration from...

c. {it}Fashion{ei} (vv. 28-30a; see pp. xx-xx)

Some of you worry about whether you have enough clothes or the right clothes to fit into the fashions of the day. But when you are all done dressing yourself you won't be dressed as beautifully as a lily. Why not let God do the dressing. Solomon, the richest man ever, could not make a robe as fine as the petal of a flower.

In other words, God takes care of food, He takes care of life spans, and He takes care of clothing.

{*}Supplies For the Children{et}

God does provide the basics of life -- that's the promise. The basis of the promise is that God is our Father. God is a loving Father who supplies for His children.

1. PSALM 34:10 -- {it}"The young lions do lack, and suffer hunger..."{ei} (v. 10a).

There are times when lion cubs hunger but the mother is unavailable to provide the food. Yet the psalmist says, {it}"...but they who seek the LORD shall not lack any good thing"{ei} (v. 10b). Animals may lack but God's people will not. God supports His own. That is a repeated biblical truth that you can find all over the pages of Holy Writ. God sustains His people.

2. PHILIPPIANS 4:19 -- {it}"But my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus."{ei} There is nothing to worry about. Why would you worry about your life when all of your worry can not add one day to your life?

Why would you be in great distress over having enough food when God, who gave you life, will give you the lesser gift that sustains that life? Why would you worry about having something to wear when the Lord has designed clothing for human beings -- you are His children and He will give you clothing.

3. 1 PETER 5:7 -- Peter was a worrier. He worried about drowning when he was walking on the water even though the Lord was right there (Mt. 14:29-31). He worried about what was going to happen to Jesus in the garden so he pulled a sword and tried to fight the Romans (Jn. 18:10). He worried about Jesus being crucified and told Him not to go to the cross (Mt. 16:22). He was a real worrier. But he finally got the message and wrote this great truth in 1 Peter 5:7: {it}"Casting all your care upon Him; for He careth for you."{ei} It took him awhile to learn it, but he did.{e*}

So, first of all, our Lord says don't worry -- it is unnecessary because of your Father.

2. THE INDICTMENT (v. 30b)

{it}"...O ye of little faith?"{ei}

If you worry, what kind of faith do you manifest? Little faith; puny faith; inadequate, infinitesimal, small faith. The sum of an attitude that worries about food and clothes and life span is an attitude of little faith in God.

a. {it}The Representatives of Worry{ei}

The phrase, {it}"O ye of little faith"{ei} is used four other times in the Gospels.

For example, it is used in Luke 12:28 when people worry about clothing. It is used in Matthew 8:24-26 when the disciples worried about drowning -- they were afraid the Lord was going to let them drown. They said to Him, "How can You sleep when the storm is going to drown us?" In Matthew 14:31 it is used when Peter was worrying about drowning. And it is used in Matthew 16:8 when they were worried about their food. Every time that phrase is used it referred to someone who worried about food, clothes, or their life span. And every time, He directed His speaking to the disciples -- those who should have known better.

You believe that God can redeem you, save you from sin, break the shackles of Satan, take you from hell to heaven, put you into His kingdom, and give you eternal life, but you just don't think He can get you something to wear and to eat in the next couple of days. That is pretty ridiculous. We can believe God for the bigger gift and then we stumble and can't believe Him for the lesser one. We believe God is going to take us to heaven when we die, but we don't believe He is going to provide us a meal or take care of the length of our life. The fact that Jesus speaks to His disciples in each case indicates to me that this is a passage geared for believers.

He would never say to unbelievers, "O you of little faith," He would say, "O you of no faith." We have the faith, we just don't apply it.

b. {it}The Results of Worry{ei}

1) {it}Worry Strikes Out at God{ei}

Someone might say, "Worry is a small, trivial sin." No, it is not trivial. I think that much of mental illness and some physical illness is directly related to worry.

Worry is devastating. But more important than what worry does to you is what it

does to God. When you worry you are saying in effect, "God, I just don't think I can trust You." Worry then strikes a blow at the Word and the person of God.

2) {it}Worry Disbelieves Scripture{ei}

To me, worry is a monumental sin because worry disbelieves Scripture. You can say, "I believe in the inerrancy of the Bible. I believe in the absolute authority of the Scripture. I believe in verbal, plenary inspiration of every word," and then just live your life worrying. You are saying one thing out of one side of your mouth, and another thing out of the other. Why would you say how much you believe the Bible and then worry about God fulfilling what He says in it?

3) {it}Worry is Mastered By Circumstances{ei}

Worry means that you are mastered by your circumstances and not the truth of God.

Worry misunderstands your position as a child of God. Worry is a devastating sin -- a killing, debilitating, self-indulgent, possessive anxiety that says God cannot care for me. That makes God a liar -- it ignores His love and His power. I don't understand how people can make the vicissitudes and the trials and the circumstances of life a bigger issue than their salvation. They can believe God to save them from eternal hell, but they can't believe He can help them in this world. It just doesn't make sense!

In Ephesians 1:18-19a Paul prays, {it}"The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of His calling, and what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe..."{ei} You had better go back to Scripture and have your eyes opened again.

4) {it}Worry Distrusts God{ei}

If you worry, you are not trusting your heavenly Father. If you don't trust your heavenly Father, the number one cause might be that you don't know Him well enough.

If you knew Him, you would trust Him. You had better study the Word of God and find out who He really is and how He has supplied the needs of His people in the past. That will be confidence for the future. Even those of us who know God and study the Word worry now and then. This happens when you are not fresh in the Word every day so that God is in your mind. Then Satan moves into that vacuum and makes you worry about something. That is a sin. God is worthy of a greater faith than you give Him.

The second reason worry is a sin is that it is...

B. Uncharacteristic Because Of Your Faith (vv. 31-32)

It is unnecessary because of our Father and it is uncharacteristic because of our faith. He comes right back to the same principle again.

1. THE IGNORANCE OF GENTILES (v. 31-32a)

{it}"Therefore, be not anxious saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, With what shall we be clothed? For after all these things do the Gentiles seek..."{ei}

Jesus is saying that it is uncharacteristic of our faith to act like ungodly people.

For us, worry is needless because of God's bounty, senseless because of God's promise, useless because of our impotence to do anything, and faithless because we put ourselves in the same category as an unbeliever.

a. {it}Living Without Divine Resources{it}{ei}

The word {it}"Gentile"{ei} can also be translated "pagan" or "heathen," and means "people without God and Christ." These people worry about this world. That is all they have going for them. They live to grasp and possess because they don't have God to supply for them, to promise them anything -- they don't have any divine resource to come to their aid. They have to do it all on their own. They are ignorant of God's supply, so they anxiously and worryingly set their minds on the necessities. But for a Christian, this is senseless and without excuse. It is a serious sin.

b. {it}Living In Fear{ei}

When heathen people invent a god or deity, inevitably their deities are not the kind they look to in a trusting way. Whenever the nations of the world build their own gods, they are typically the gods of Satan -- the demons behind those gods.

They are gods of broken promises, gods who lack compassion, gods of fear, gods of dread, gods that have to be appeased, gods that everyone is afraid of -- not gods everyone can count on. They are not gods who supply for their people. The people still have to supply for themselves while at the same time appeasing their god with sacrifices or whatever their religion calls for. Since they have vague ideas about the future life, life becomes consumed in the obsession to obtain comforts, wealth, security, and prestige.

c. {it}Living Like the World{ei}

In the phrase {it}"For after all these things do the Gentiles seek,"{ei} the word {it}"seek"{ei} gives the idea of of an emphatic seeking -- they are seeking with all their might, totally consumed in material gratification: "Eat, drink, and be merry for tomorrow we die. Grab all the gusto you can." Now, imagine a child of God approaching life in this way. It is ludicrous. The nations of the world seek after these things (Lk. 12:30). It is unworthy for us to worry.

1) {it}Expressions of the Christian Faith{ei}

The Christian faith says that God will supply all my needs...and God can be trusted.

To worry about my food or my physical welfare or my clothing is to have a worldly mind.

a) Philippians 4:6 -- {it}"Be anxious for nothing, but in everything, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God."{ei}

Those who do not trust in God's goodness and promise miss the whole point of being a Christian. So many people have empty professions of faith: "We love Christ and we serve God," but they don't believe God for anything. Instead they worry. They are in the world and they are like the world.

b) John 17:15 -- {it}"I pray not that Thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that Thou shouldest keep them from the evil."{ei}

c) Romans 12:2a -- {it}"And be not conformed to this world...."{ei}

Jesus is saying that sons of the King do not conduct themselves like the devil's beggars.

2) {it}Examinations for Christian Faithfulness{ei}

Ask yourself the question: "Do I face life like a Christian or a pagan? When things are difficult or the future is insecure, how do I react?" You will tell yourself how much you trust God. You could sum up the question this way: "Does my Christian faith affect my view of life?" If it doesn't, you are either not a Christian or you have denied the very essence of your faith. Ask yourself this: "Do I always place everything in the context of my faith -- every trial, every anticipation of the future, and every present reality?"

2. THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD (v. 32b)

{it}"For your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things."{ei}

There is a basic difference between the gods of the heathen and our God. The gods of the heathen are dumb, ignorant, nonexistent -- they don't know anything and they cannot help their people because they don't exist. But our God knows. If you believe that our God loves and cares, now you see that He knows. If God knows my life and my needs, then all I need to know is that He cares. If He knows and cares, then I am home free. Your heavenly Father, in contrast to the gods of the pagans, knows that you have need. He not only has the knowledge, but He has the resources and the love to provide. So, what should you worry about? Nothing! Worry is unnecessary because of your Father, uncharacteristic because of your faith, and...

C. Unwise Because Of Your Future (v. 34)

{it}"Be, therefore, not anxious about tomorrow; for tomorrow will be anxious for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is its own evil."{ei}

The Lord is saying, "Don't worry about the future. The future is going to have its own trouble. Just wait till you get to it." Don't worry about tomorrow. Now, providing for tomorrow is good, but worrying about tomorrow is sin because God is the God of tomorrow just like He is the God of today. Lamentations 3:23a says that His mercies {it}"are new every morning...."{ei} He feeds you like He fed the children of Israel -- just enough manna for the day.

1. WORRIES OF TOMORROW

Worry is a tremendous force. Worry will endeavor to defeat us. First, it will endeavor to destroy you today -- it will try to make you upset and anxious today. But if it loses today, it will take you into the future until it finds something to make you worry about. That is the way worry functions. I am afraid that some people are so committed to the sin of worry they just keep looking to the future until they find something to worry about. The Lord says that you have enough to deal with today. Take the resources of today for the needs of today or you will lose the joy of today.

Lack of joy is a sin, too. Many people lose their joy because of worry for tomorrow and they miss the victory God gives them today. That is not fair to Him. God gives

you a glorious and blissful day today; live in the light and fullness of joy of that day and use the resources God supplies. Don't push yourself into the future and forfeit the joy of today over some tomorrow that may never happen. Learn this one little statement: Fear is a liar. It will cause you to lose the joy of today.

The Lord forbids this: "Let tomorrow be for tomorrow, each day has enough trouble for itself."

2. GRACE FOR TODAY

In addition, God only gives strength for one day at a time. He doesn't give me the grace for tomorrow until tomorrow. Many people worry about dying. But when somebody in their family dies, God gives a wonderful grace and peace and sustaining.

They can't understand it! They will say to me, "John, you know it's so wonderful how God has sustained me and supported me. I have a normal sorrow but I feel strength and confidence and a gladness in my heart that this one I love is with the Lord." And that is right, because God gives us grace for the hour that we need that grace.

But if you want to worry about the future now, you are going to double your pain without any grace to deal with it. It is better that you should singly endure the trial with the grace to sustain you through it. I refuse to worry about tomorrow or the next day because I don't have any resource. First of all, fear is a liar -- I don't know the reality of what will be; and second, I don't want to double my trouble without the resource of God's grace. So, I shoulder the burden of today. As I see God lift the burden and carry it away from me, I can enjoy today and let tomorrow bring its own trouble so I don't cripple myself by worrying about a future that I cannot live in.

a. Sustaining His Perfection

When the Bible says, {it}"Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and today, and forever"{ei} (Heb. 13:8), it means He will be doing the same thing tomorrow that He was doing yesterday. If you have any question about the future look at the past.

Did He sustain you then? He will sustain you in the future. There is no past, present or future with Him. Worry is forbidden.

John Stott has said, "To become preoccupied with material things in such a way that they engross our attention, absorb our energy and burden us with anxiety is incompatible with both Christian faith and common sense. It is distrustful of our heavenly Father, and it is frankly stupid. This is what pagans do; but it is an utterly unsuitable and unworthy ambition for Christians." We are not spiritual orphans. God loves and cares for us -- He has all the resources of eternity at His hand for our disposal.

b. {it}Staying in Port{ei}

Alistair Maclean quotes a story from Tauler, the German mystic. One day Tauler met a poor man. "God give you a good day, my friend," he said. The poor man answered, "I thank God I never had a bad one." Then Tauler said, "God give you a happy life, my friend." "I thank God," said the poor man, "I am never unhappy." Tauler in amazement said, "What do you mean?" "Well," said the poor man, "when it is fine, I thank God; when it rains, I thank God; when I have plenty, I thank God; when I am hungry, I thank God; and since God's will is my will, and whatever pleases Him pleases me, why should I say I am unhappy when I am not?" Tauler looked at the man in astonishment. "Who are you?" he asked. "I am a king," said the poor man.

"Where then is your kingdom?" asked Tauler. And the poor man answered quietly:

"In my heart." Someone has said, "I am always happy, and my secret is always to sail the seas, and ever to keep the heart in port." Isaiah put it this way, {it}"Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee, because he trusteth in Thee"{ei} (Is. 26:3). Now, how do you find this port?

III. THE GUARANTEED PROMISE (v. 33)

{it}"But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you."{ei}

In other words, get your thoughts on the divine level and God will take care of the physical. God doesn't want us involved in the physical, He wants to free us from that.

A. The Contrast

{it}"But..."{ei}

According to the Arndt and Gingrich lexicon, the primary use of {it}de{ei} ({it}"But"{ei}) is to emphasize a contrast. The best way to translate it is {it}"rather."{ei} Rather than worrying, rather than being like the pagans, rather than being of little faith, rather than bringing the future into the present, {it}"seek ye first the kingdom of God..."{ei} Rather than seeking what the Gentiles seek, rather than being materialistically oriented, rather than being consumed with the possessions of this age, seek the Kingdom.

B. The Concern

{it}"...seek ye first..."{ei}

The Greek word {it}protos{ei} means "first in a line of more than one options." Of all the priorities of life, this is number one.

1. {it}"THE KINGDOM OF GOD"{ei}

What does it mean to seek the Kingdom? The Kingdom is simply {it}basileia{ei} in the Greek meaning "Christ's rule, the rule of God, the reign of God, the dominion of God, the Kingdom of God." We should seek that which is eternal. According to Matthew 6:10 we are to pray {it}"Thy kingdom come."{ei} We are to be lost in the Kingdom of God.

The Apostle Paul, on his way to Jerusalem and preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom, prepared to defend his faith at the point of a sword. The people kept saying, "Don't go Paul. When you get there you are going to get in a lot of trouble. They are going to put you in prison and they might take your life." So Paul says, {it}"But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself..."{ei} (Ac. 20:24a). He was not interested in adding a cubit to his life span, he was not concerned that he got enough to eat and wear. He continues {it}"...so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus..."{ei} (Ac. 20:24b).

This is the priority that will make someone go to a mission field in obscurity and say good-bye to all the fashions and fancy foods of the world -- to eat and dress in a very simplistic way, isolating their whole life to that situation because they

are not nearly so concerned about those things as they are with the advance of the Kingdom. This is what makes someone preach Christ to the point where they don't even fear for their own life because the Kingdom is far beyond any other concern.

a. {it}Conversion{ei}

Where is your heart and your preoccupation? Are you more concerned with the Kingdom, or are you more concerned with this world? Are you pouring all of your energies into the globe, or are you investing yourself in God's eternal Kingdom? Seeking the Kingdom means you seek to bring people to Christ because you seek the growth of the Kingdom, you seek the Gospel of the Kingdom to be preached, and you seek for people to become redeemed. We do not spread the Gospel because of some kind of a "sinful imperialism or triumphalism" as John Stott says. We do not seek to advance the Kingdom for any selfish goals, but for the glory of God.

b. {it}Commitment{ei}

Seeking the Kingdom also means that I seek Christ's rule to be manifest in my life.

I seek the Kingdom of God to be revealed in my life as righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit (Rom. 14:17). So, when the world sees righteousness, peace, and joy in my life instead of worry, it knows the Kingdom of God is there. You can say, "I want people to be saved and I want to tell them all about Jesus." But if your life is marked by worry, anxiety, and concern, they will not believe you have anything they want. They are certainly going to question the power of God.

The Kingdom of God is manifest in righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit -- that overcomes the worry. So, we seek the Kingdom when we seek to bring people into the kingdom and when we let it be manifest through us.

c. {it}Coming Again{ei}

Third, we seek the Kingdom when we long for Jesus to return in His millennial glory.

I can't get too excited about piling up stuff in this world because I am going to get it all for nothing when the Kingdom comes. The Bible says that I will be a joint-heir with Christ (Rom. 8:17), we will reign with Him forever and ever (Rev. 22:5), we will have a new heaven and a new earth throughout all eternity (Rev. 21:1), and we will have all of the majesty and the riches of eternal heaven (Rev. 21:1-22:5).

Why should I waste all my time stockpiling this stuff when the whole earth is going to be destroyed and the Lord is going to make a new one?

So, seeking the Kingdom is to seek that which is yet in the future -- the granting of eternal glory that comes from Christ when He gives His saints His own Kingdom.

It is to see the Kingdom manifest in my life through righteousness, peace, and joy. And it is to desire to win people to Jesus so that the Kingdom might grow and expand.

Second, we seek the Kingdom...

2. {it}"AND HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS"{ei}

Don't chase money, chase holiness -- pursue it. He is talking about practical righteousness. When you pursue something, pursue godliness, holiness, and righteousness. Some of us spend all our time pursuing money, cars, houses, clothes, and so on. You say, "If I get involved in the Kingdom and chasing holiness, then what happens?"

C. The Care

{it}"...and all these things shall be added unto you."{ei}

According to Psalm 84:11b, if you walk uprightly you will never have any need. God will take care of those who seek His Kingdom and His righteousness.

Solomon provides for us an excellent illustration. He didn't pray for riches, for fancy clothes, for fancy food, and for a long life. He prayed for wisdom. When he received wisdom he received all the rest. No one was ever dressed like Solomon, no one was ever as wealthy as Solomon, and no one put on feasts that could match his. The man was incredible -- he sought wisdom, and in the getting of wisdom all the rest was residual.

If you worry, it is a sin -- it is unnecessary because of your Father, it is uncharacteristic because of your faith, and it is unwise because of your future.

Focusing on the Facts

1. Why is it going to be difficult for Americans to maintain their current approach to life? Why do we presently have this particular approach? (see p.xx)

2. What is one possible solution to our present approach to life? What part do Christians have to play in this solution? (see p.xx)

3. What are the three reasons for investing our treasure in heaven? (see p.xx)

4. What four characteristics of God should eliminate any need for anxiety on our part? (see p.xx)

5. Explain the argument that Jesus gives in Matthew 7:7-11. Why can we trust God to give us what we need? (see pp. xx-xx)

6. List some verses that show that God provides for His people. (see p.xx)

7. What things did Peter worry about? What lesson did he finally learn? (see p.xx)

8. What kind of faith is manifested when someone worries? (see p.xx)

9. What is significant about the fact that each time Jesus used the phrase {it}"O ye of little faith"{ei} He was speaking to the disciples. (see p.xx)

10. What are four results of worry? Explain what each means. (see pp.xx-xx)

11. What is the number one cause for people not trusting God? (see p.xx)

12. Who are the {it}"Gentiles"{ei} Why do they seek after the necessities of life? (see p.xx)

13. How do the people of the world view the gods and deities they have created?

What do their deities do for them? Who are their deities? (see p.xx)

14. What kind of mind-set is revealed in those who do not trust God? What is the proper mind-set? Support your answer. (see pp.xx-xx)

15. What is the basic difference between our God and the gods of the heathens? (see p.xx)

16. Why is lack of joy a sin? Why do people lack joy? Why shouldn't you worry about tomorrow? (see pp.xx-xx)

17. When is God's grace made available to believers? In light of this fact, why is it wrong to worry about tomorrow? (see pp.xx-xx)

18. What priority must there be for God to take care of the physical needs? (see p.xx)

19. What is "the Kingdom of God?" (see p.xx)

20. What three things are manifested in the lives of those who seek first after God's Kingdom? Explain how each is manifested in the life of a believer? (see pp.xx-xx)

21. In what three ways should the Kingdom of God be revealed in a believer's life? (see p.xx; Rom. 14:17)

Pondering the Principles

1. In his book, Jeremy Rifkin calls for a return to the Christian ethic of unselfishness and low consumption. A better word for unselfishness might be humility. Look up the following verses: Philippians 1:29-2:11; James 4:1-10; 1 Peter 5:5-10. Write down as many observations as you can on what these verses teach about humility. How are the ones who are not humble described? According to James 4:4, where do their loyalties lie? What is consistently a part of a humble Christian walk? What did Jesus Christ endure according to Philippians 2:8? Can a Christian live a humble life without experiencing suffering (see Phil. 1:29; I Pet. 5:10)? What does God do for those who live a humble life? Where is Jesus Christ right now? According to I Peter 5:7, one part of humbling yourself under the mighty hand of God is that you will cast all your care on Him. Take the time to do that right now, and begin to live a life of humility, knowing that God will reward your commitment.

2. Do you possess little faith or large faith? Do you trust God in the situations you become anxious about? Does your life contradict the promises God has made to you in His Word? Are the circumstances in your life determining how you should behave rather than the Word of God? Do you know God well? If not, how can you know Him better? Read Joshua 1:8. What are the results that God promises to one who will meditate on His Word day and night? Will you covenant with God to get to know Him by spending time in His Word daily?

3. Do you face life like a Christian, or like a person who does not know God? When life is difficult and the future is insecure, how do you react? Does your Christian faith affect your view of life? How? Do you always place every trial, every anticipation of the future, and every present situation in the context of

your faith? If you are not facing your life experiences as a Christian should, you need to make some changes in your life. Begin those changes with prayer. As an incentive to your prayer, memorize Philippians 4:6: {it}"Be anxious for nothing, but in everything, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God."{ei}

4. The priority for a Christian, along with seeking God's Kingdom, is also seeking His righteousness. Look up the following verses: Psalm 42:1; Matthew 5:6; John 6:35. With how much intensity should you seek after righteousness? How does this hunger and thirst for righteousness become fully satisfied? Read Romans 8:3-5; 2 Corinthians 3:18; and 2 Thessalonians 2:13. Spend this time in prayer in thanks to God for having chosen you to salvation through sanctification in the Spirit.

Based on this, begin to seek after God's Kingdom and righteousness with a hunger and thirst that only God can satisfy.