

Worry Warriors

Jesus Says: A Series on the Sermon on the Mount Part 11

Matthew 6:25-34

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This is a really stressful week.

- At the beginning of each sermon I usually tell a story to get our attention to draw us into the text we're going to be talking about, and to show how the scripture we're looking at is relevant to our lives.
- This week, I don't have to work very hard at doing that. All I have to do is ask "How many of you are stressed?" and most, if not all of you, will relate.
- This week we are going to be talking about anxiety and worry.
- This is something we have all struggling with lately. The end of the semester is crazy busy. With papers, exams, and projects it is so easy to get anxiety.
 - On Monday I had a 12-page paper due at 8:15am. At 8:15pm the night before Katelyn said to me, "In 12 hours you have to have to write seven more pages."
 - Crunch time is really when stress hits.
- Many of you are stressed right now. You're thinking about a project you've got, relationship issues, exam, or friendship drama. We all encounter stress, worry, and anxiety, at least to some degree.
 - "I'm pre-stressed about the stress I'm about to stress about."

We live in a stressful culture.

- Quotes from Max Lucado's new book, *Anxious for Nothing: Finding Calm in a Chaotic World*
 - "According to the National Institute of Mental Health, anxiety disorders are reaching epidemic proportions. In a given year nearly fifty million Americans will feel the effects of a panic attack, phobias, or other anxiety disorders."¹
 - "Anxiety disorders in the United States are the 'number one mental health problem among...women and are second only to alcohol and drug abuse among men."²
 - "The United States is now the most anxious nation in the world."³

¹ Max Lucado, *Anxious for Anything: Finding Calm in a Chaotic World* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2017), 5.

² *Ibid.*, 5.

³ *Ibid.*, 6.

- Anxiety is a part of the American culture. “Citizens in other countries ironically enjoy more tranquility. They experience one-fifth the anxiety levels of Americans, despite having fewer of the basic life necessities...When these less-anxious developing-world citizens immigrate to the United States, they tend to get just as anxious as Americans. Something about our particular way of life, then, is making us less calm and composed.”⁴
- In a study of over 200,000 college freshman research showed that “students reported all-time lows in overall mental health and emotional stability.”⁵
- “The average [American] child today exhibits the same level of anxiety as the average psychiatric patient in the 1950s.”⁶
- We as a culture have a major problem with anxiety.

Anxiety Disorder versus Normal Anxiety

- Before we continue to our text and talk about anxiety, I want to make sure we’re on the same page. There is a difference between what psychologists call “anxiety disorders” and “normal anxiety.”
 - Anxiety disorder is a mental illness and at times must be treated. Just like people should seek medical attention when we have the flu or other illnesses, people should seek help when they experience mental issues.
- There are at times a stigma surrounding mental illnesses like depression and anxiety disorders. It is wrong to look down upon someone with mental illnesses in the same way it would to look down upon someone with a physical illness. There is no shame in it.
- I struggle with anxiety.
- Difference:
 - Normal anxiety: Occasional worry about *circumstantial* events, such as an exam or breakup, that may leave you upset.
 - Anxiety disorder: *Constant, chronic, and unsubstantiated* worry that causes significant distress, disturbs your social life, and interferes with classes and work.⁷
- Tonight, I am not addressing and I don’t believe Jesus is addressing anxiety disorder. He is addressing the common anxiety and worry we all experience.

Matthew 6:25-34

- In this passage of the Sermon on the Mount we’re going to see how Jesus addresses the anxieties of this world.
- We’re going to see how to be **Worry Warriors**.

⁴ Ibid., 6.

⁵ Ibid., 6

⁶ Ibid., 6.

⁷ “What’s the Difference Between Normal Anxiety and Anxiety Disorder,” *Blinn College*, accessed on November 27, 2017, <https://www.blinn.edu/counseling/Anxiety.pdf>.

Worry Warriors know that God will provide because he cares for you. (6:25-30)

- Jesus wants us to know that if God provides for birds and grass, he will provide for you.
- Understand your **value** (6:26)
 - We care about what we value. God values you.
 - There are so many implications of this verse. Do not look down upon other people. They are valued by God. Do not look down upon yourself. You are valued by God.
 - Humans typically seek their value from their works and talents.
 - This is where worry and anxiety comes in.
 - “If I make a bad grade or don’t get this job, I am worthless.”
 - This often creeps into relationship with God. We think “God will love me because of my good works” or “God does not love me because of all my sin.”
 - This is not the Gospel. The Gospel does not say, “I work so I’ll be loved.” It says “Because I am loved, I do good works.” There is a world of difference between the two perspectives.
 - The value of something has everything to do with how much someone is willing to pay for that thing. How much did God pay for you? You are so valuable.

Worry Warriors Don’t seek after what the world seeks after. (6:31-32)

- People of the world seek after sex, money, and power. People are dispensable. They find their identity in their GPA, job, status, popularity, looks, and talents. People of the Kingdom of God seek after God and people. They seek to love God more and to love people more.
- If you were not a Christian, would what you care about change at all?
 - In other words, is there a difference between what I care most about and what my non-Christian friends care most about?

Worry Warriors seek the things of God (6:33)

- What does seeking God’s kingdom have to do with worry?
 - When we seek the things of God the things we worry about aren’t as big.
 - What kept you up all last night worrying about will seem meaningless in a month from now.
 - Even something that seems like a super big deal now in eternity will seem meaningless.
 - The Kingdom of God will never let you down. The things you worry about will let you down.
 - We worry all the time about
 - The Kingdom of God is eternal. The things you worry about are temporary.
 - The Kingdom of God is eternal.
 - Like we talked about two week s ago-make eternal investments (6:19-20)
 - “Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.” *1 Corinthians 15:58*

Four Gospel-Centered Ways to Address Anxiety

C.A.L.M. -- Celebrate, Ask, Leave, Meditate⁸

C - Celebrate God's Goodness

- "Our opinions about God will not change God, but they can change us."⁹
- "Begin with God."¹⁰
- Remember that God is good.
- Remember that God is sovereign.
 - "The more you look to God, the quicker the problem is reduced to its proper size."¹¹ 146

A - Ask God for Help

- James tells us that we do not have because we do not ask (*James 4:2*)
- Struggling with big decisions are the cause of much anxiety.
 - One of the things that is guaranteed to happen when we pray is found in *James 1:5*. "If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him." God guarantees that if we ask for wisdom, he will give us wisdom.

L - Leave Your Concerns with Him

- "Let Him take charge."¹²
- God gives peace.

M - Meditate on Good Things

- "When life gives you lemons, make lemonade."
- School is hard and is a lot of work, but you are blessed to have the ability and opportunity to go to college. Not everyone can say that.
- Your parents calling you and texting you might be annoying, but you have parents that love you and want to be in your life.
- The hard times really point out what you takeoff granted.
 - When you're sick you realize how awesome it is to breathe.

So how should I feel if I do experience anxiety?

- If you are experiencing anxiety, you are human. You're in good company.
- Jesus himself experienced anxiety.
 - On the night before he was crucified, Jesus spent all night praying, and he started sweating blood.
 - "And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground." (*Luke 22:44*)
 - It's a struggle that so many of us experience. You're not alone.

⁸ Lucado, *Anxious for Nothing*, 10.

⁹ Austin Fischer, *Young, Restless, and No Longer Reformed: Black Holes, Love, and a Journey In and Out of Calvinism* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2014), back cover.

¹⁰ Lucado, *Anxious for Nothing*, 145

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 146.

¹² *Ibid.*, 147.

Imagine a week without worrying.

- Jesus had anxiety, but didn't stay anxious. We don't either. That's a hope of the Gospel.
- What would change if you did not worry for a whole week?
- What would happen if every time you started worrying about something you gave it to God?
- The other day when I was reading Revelation 21, I came across the section describing heaven. "He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore" (*Revelation 21:4*). It hit me that one day I will never stress again. I will never have anxiety over an issue again.