

The Heart of Anxiety

Matthew 6:24-34 - NCBC, November
24, 2019

Main Point: **Anxious hearts doubt our Father's goodness.**

- Doubting that God is our Creator who sustains (24-25)
- Doubting that God is our Father who cares (26-31)
- Doubting that God is our King who provides (32-34)

Application: **Trust your Father while you pursue His kingdom priorities.**

Opening Announcements:

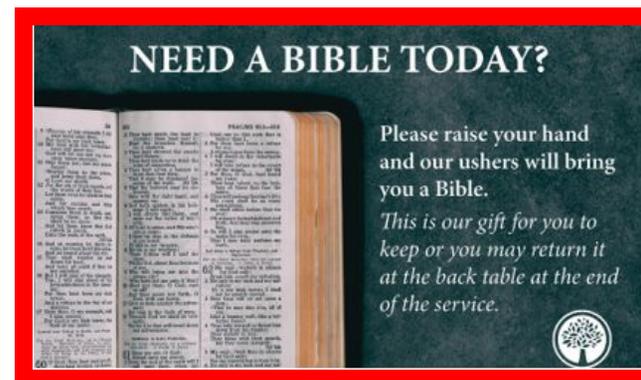
- **Debt Retirement Pledge Cards** - Together we can pay off all our remaining mortgage by May 2020!! Use the pledge cards provided in today's worship folder or our app or website to make a pledge and link arms with our passion for God's greater glory together!

<<He will hold me fast>>



Jesus loves me, this I know. O how that truth inspires our worship this morning!

Please continue your worship now by opening your Bible to **Matthew chapter 6, verses 24-34**. Today's Scripture is well known, much loved, and very needed by all of us: *The Heart of Anxiety*.



If you do not have a Bible with you, simply raise your hand. It would be our joy to give you a copy of God's life-giving Words this morning.

And while you prepare to read from **Matthew 6**, I want to encourage us to pursue greater hospitality towards one another on Sunday mornings.



We are very thankful that most Sundays there are new people in our worship gathering. (And if you are new to our church family – please know we are blessed and humbled that you have chosen to worship Christ with us. We know it is not easy to walk into a new church. We pray you sincerely feel loved and encouraged by your time spent with us.)

But let me encourage those of us who are settled at New Castle. I've received several testimonies in recent weeks from newcomers who have shared how difficult they are finding our church family to assimilate into. We are friendly, but not always hospitable. Some have attended for weeks before ever being personally engaged by anyone other than one of our greeters or ushers.

Remember the Scriptures call God's beloved to *seek to show hospitality*. Pursue sincere friendship with strangers

with the same proactive intentionality as a deer hunter chasing game! *Seek* to show hospitality!

While there are of course notable exceptions among us, I believe on the whole we must grow in hospitality. I'm just as guilty. On many Sundays I habitually talk to pretty much the same people that I normally talk to each Sunday. And that's not all bad...but, I end up missing opportunities to sincerely reach farther with Christ's love towards strangers.

So here's my idea... immediately following the conclusion of every church gathering ...let's make the first 2 minutes count for hospitality! During those first 2 minutes, focus on initiating a friendship with someone around you that you don't yet know well. After the first 2 minutes, then you can talk with someone you already know. But those first 2 minutes after dismissal are strategic, aren't they? Because if you're new and no one engages you in the first 2 minutes, you'll leave. Those first 2 minutes provide a huge opportunity for us to genuinely befriend those we don't yet know well.

So from now on, use the first 2 minutes after service ends to intentionally pursue friendship with any strangers near you. Introduce yourself. Ask sincere questions. Invite to lunch. Share your life. Make a friend. If they are new to our church, seek to help them connect.

And don't worry if you discover your "stranger" is also a long-time attender at New Castle. God's church pursues authentic relational wholeness ... that's why we wear name tags! We want to cultivate an environment of authentic spiritual friendship within our community however possible. It is a privilege to share Christ's love

together for the glory of God. So let's stay humble, dependent, and loving towards those whom we do not yet know well...and trust God to make the first 2 minutes after dismissal really count!



Now this morning we continue studying the Sermon on the Mount. Last week, we considered the heart of investing from **verses 19-24**. Today, Jesus continues pressing towards a single-minded devotion to His kingdom. We can't store up treasures both on earth and in heaven. We can't live with a generous outlook and a stingy outlook at the same time. We can't serve both God and money. Righteous hearts live entirely for God and His kingdom!

Although we live in a material world and all have material bodies, God doesn't want us to become blinded by the double vision of materialism. So Jesus continues now by addressing the double-minded unbelief of anxious hearts. Having addressed our ambition in **verses 19-24**, **verses 25-34** warn us against the paralyzing anxiety of worldliness.

Please stand in honor of the reading of God's Word. From the English Standard Translation, I'll begin reading from **Matthew 6:24**, to pick up the context:

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. ²⁵ "Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious 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? ²⁶ Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? ²⁷ And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life? 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? ³¹ Therefore do not be anxious, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' ³² For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. ³³ But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. ³⁴ "Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.

This is God's Word. Please be seated.

Let's Pray.

What does anxiety feel like to you? How do you experience the emotions of worry?

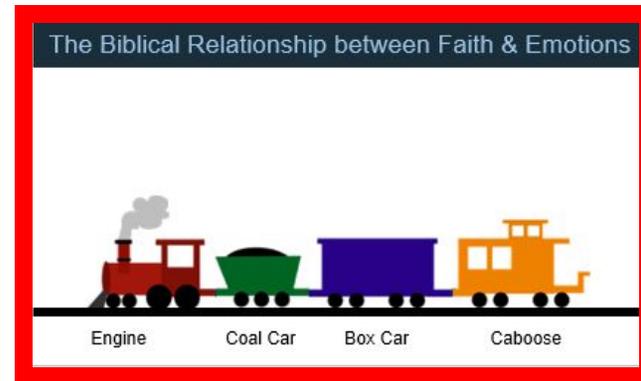
Anxious emotions feel like my stomach in knots. Anxiety feels like an internal, consuming pressure that drains my energy while agitating my soul. Anxiety feels like nervousness, unease, and sometimes panic. Anxiety is a noisy rabble-rouser that visits all of our souls far too frequently and always overstays its welcome.

So it's interesting that 3 times in this passage Jesus commands us *do not be anxious*. Stop feeling anxious! How is it that Jesus can command us to stop feeling a certain way? Is it even possible to change our emotions?

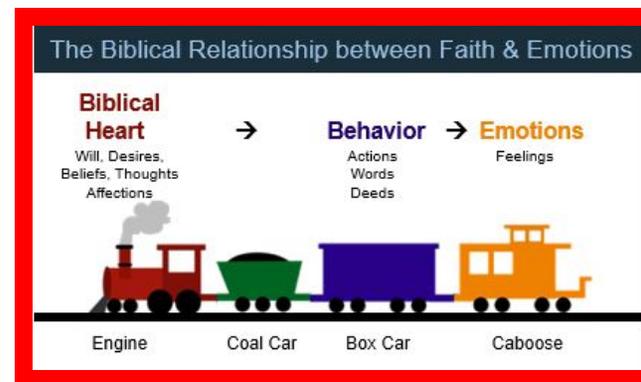
Contrary to the hopeless victim mentality of our world, God's Word offers real help and hope for anxious hearts. But before we unpack Jesus' teaching, it's helpful to understand Scriptures' teaching on human emotion.

We are created with emotions, because God Himself has emotions. Emotions, in and of themselves, are not bad or something to be avoided. Emotions are like dash-board warning lights on a car: When they light-up they help us better understand what is happening with the engine. So our emotions are directly related to our biblical heart. Feelings like anxiety, joy, anger, and pleasure are experienced because of the active thoughts and beliefs running through a person's mind.

The relationship between a person's faith and their emotions can be helpfully illustrated using,



a steam locomotive. A train engine powered by steam usually has a coal car which fuels its power, several box cars which transport goods, and finally a caboose – or comfort car, at the very end. The relationship between the various parts of this train helpfully illustrate the relationship between our faith and our emotions.



The engine corresponds to the biblical heart. The human mind. Our will, desires, beliefs, thoughts, and affections. The box car refers to human behavior. Our actions, words, deeds. And the comfort car at the end refers to human emotions or feelings.

Now think about these relationships biblically: **James 4** teaches that we do what we do, because we want what we want.¹ **Matthew 15** teaches that *what comes out of the mouth proceeds from the heart*.² So just as a box car always follows the engine... our behavior outwardly manifests what is first going on in our heart.

Likewise then, our emotions follow our behavior. Comfort follows repentance.³ Satisfaction follows striving after righteousness.⁴ In **John 15** we see these relationships clearly. Jesus taught His disciples to abide in His love.⁵ That's referring to the engine of faith. Then He said abiding in His love means keeping His commandments.⁶ The box car of obedience always follows faith.⁷ And abiding in His love, and keeping His commandments leads to fullness of joy.⁸

Biblically speaking, we *feel* what we feel because we *do* what we do. And we *do* what we do because we *want* what we want or *treasure* what we treasure!

By the way, this is exactly opposite to what the world teaches, right? Our culture says, if it feels good, do it! Follow your feelings! But the caboose has no power to navigate life's unexpected dips and turns, and so a

¹ James 4:1-4

² Matthew 15:18

³ Matthew 5:4

⁴ Matthew 5:6

⁵ John 15:9

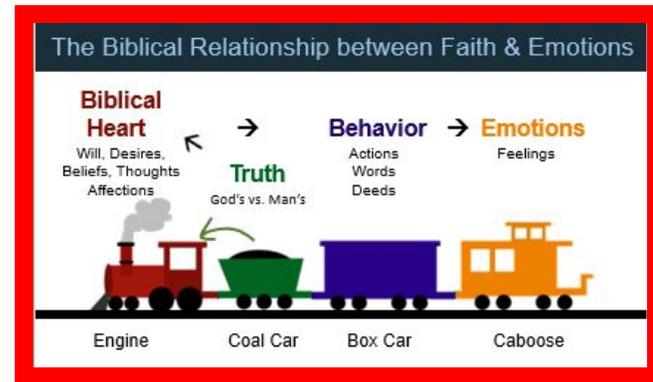
⁶ John 15:10

⁷ Romans 1:5; 16:26

⁸ John 15:11

feeling-oriented life will quickly find itself off track of God's good design.

God cares about your emotions. He created you emotional in His image. But we must not live by feelings! God's design for managing your emotions requires us to first increase our faith – our beliefs, and then pursue righteous living no matter how we feel, while we wait for our feelings to come back into line.



And this is why the coal car of truth is so important.

Jesus said Gospel truth sets us free.⁹ But that truth has to be believed and embraced by faith before it has the power to fuel any lasting life transformation.

Now stop the train. What does this have to do with Jesus' teaching on anxiety in **Matthew 6**?

Look carefully at the end of **verse 30**. How does Jesus describe anxious hearts? *O you of little faith*. Jesus connects the engine of *faith* to the caboose of *anxiety*. The root of anxiety is inadequate faith...specifically

⁹ John 8:31-32

unbelief regarding the character and goodness of our Heavenly Father.



Anxious hearts doubt our Father's goodness.

Anxiety is practical atheism. It is a sin to worry. Because worry forgets who God truly is. Anxiety refuses to believe what the Bible says about God and His eternally secure grace towards you.

This explains how Jesus can command us to stop feeling anxious. Because He understands that it is our lack of faith in our Heavenly Father that selfishly re-centers our life around the wrong ambitions and breeds anxiety.

Three times in this passage, Jesus commands us to stop being anxious. You might underline these phrases:

Verse 25 – *Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious...*

verse 31 – *Therefore do not be anxious...* and **verse 34**

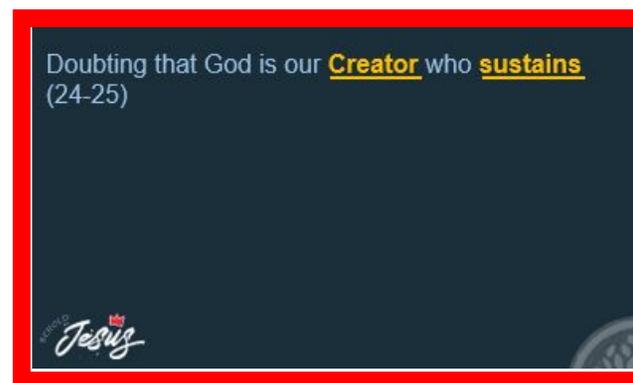
– *Therefore do not be anxious.* And notice how each of these commands begins with, *Therefore*. *Therefore* is a marker which helps us understand Jesus' threefold argument against anxiety. Because of the truths in

verses 19-24, the Christian is not to worry. Because of

the reasons in **verses 26-30**, the Christian is not to worry. And because of **verses 32-33**, the Christian must not worry.

So let's walk through Jesus' teaching now to understand how anxious hearts doubt our Father's goodness.

In **verses 24-25**, we learn that anxious hearts,

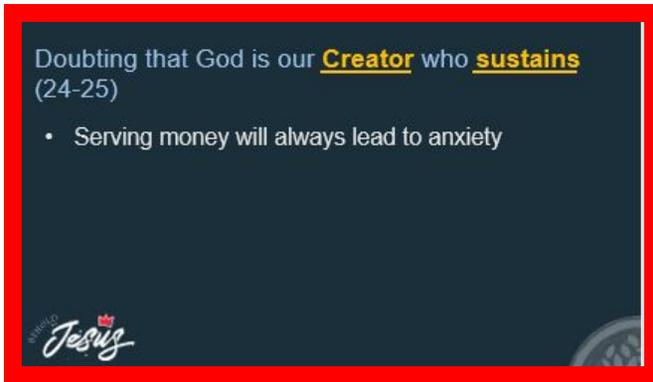


Doubt that God is our Creator who sustains.

First **verse 24** summarizes the righteous necessity for a single-minded ambition to worship God alone:

You cannot serve God and money.

It is impossible to worship both God and money. Whenever you set your heart on storing up earthly treasures – you are blinded by the double vision of materialism.

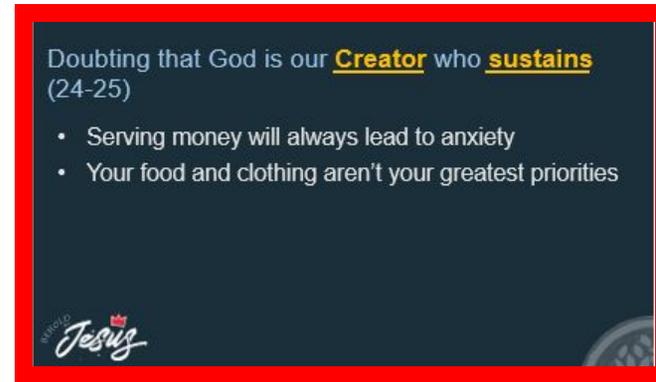


Serving money will always lead to anxiety.

I think it is fascinating that the Biblical word for anxiety is a compound Greek word made up of *merizo* which means “to divide,” and *nous* which means “mind.” Quite literally, anxiety means “a divided mind.”¹⁰ Anxiety is the idolatry of unbelief – a mind which is fearfully looking in two directions at the same time for security. The anxious heart is literally pulled apart by its dependence on material wealth.

Yes money can buy food, and drink, and clothing. But your life is more than what you can buy with money.

Verse 25 says since you can't serve two masters, you must remember that life is more than food, and the body is more than clothing!



Your food and clothing aren't your greatest priorities.

If you worry about your aging, and you worry about your health, and you worry about your diets and your fats and your carbs, and you worry about your power drinks and your juices, and you worry about your fashion, ...you'll get caught up in this world's vicious cycle of self-love. You'll soon believe that happiness comes from what you eat, and drink, and wear... and it won't be long before these basic needs become your functional gods.

But your life is more than what you eat or wear! After all, who gave you life? Where did your life come from?

¹⁰ Greek word is *merimnao*

Doubting that God is our Creator who sustains
(24-25)

- Serving money will always lead to anxiety
- Your food and clothing aren't your greatest priorities
- Your life is an undeserved gift from God Himself

Jesus

Obviously, **your life is an undeserved gift from God Himself!** You didn't initiate your own life. You didn't create yourself. The fact of the matter is that the only reason you are alive today is because God Himself created you and has sustained you up to this point.

Sure, you need food and clothing to survive. But food and clothing alone is not enough to sustain life. Only the sovereign will of your Creator is able to sustain your life on this earth.

Therefore, stop worrying. This is an argument from the greater to the lesser.

If God Himself is good enough to give you life, and sustain your life and your body by giving you every breath that you take... can't you believe He will also ensure that your responsible efforts produce sufficient provision for your basic needs in life?

Doubting that God is our Creator who sustains
(24-25)

- Serving money will always lead to anxiety
- Your food and clothing aren't your greatest priorities
- Your life is an undeserved gift from God Himself
- Since God created your life, He can also sustain it

Jesus

Since God created your life, He can also sustain it. Since God gave you the greater gift of life itself – He will also see that your life is sustained and able to continue until His good purposes are completed in you.

Anxiety forgets that God is our all-powerful and all-sufficient Creator, who sustains all of His creation according to His good and sovereign will.

Second, anxious hearts doubt the goodness of God by

Doubting that God is our Father who cares
(26-31)

Jesus

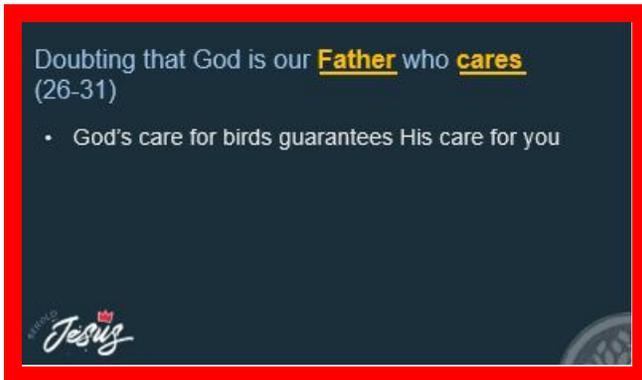
Doubting that God is our Father who cares.

Little faith in God's Fatherly care leads to double-minded anxiety. But strong faith in your Heavenly Father's care crucifies the sin of worry.

Verse 26 uses the birds as Exhibit A to prove God's fatherly care:

Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?

The Jews considered birds to be worthless animals. And so Jesus makes an argument from the lesser to the greater.



God's care for birds guarantees His care for you.

Just think about all the wild birds who live on this planet who never have any earthly caretaker making sure there are enough worms and insects to feed them.

Birds are industrious – always seeking food. So Jesus isn't promoting laziness. But He is condemning worry. Because unlike humans, birds have no process for

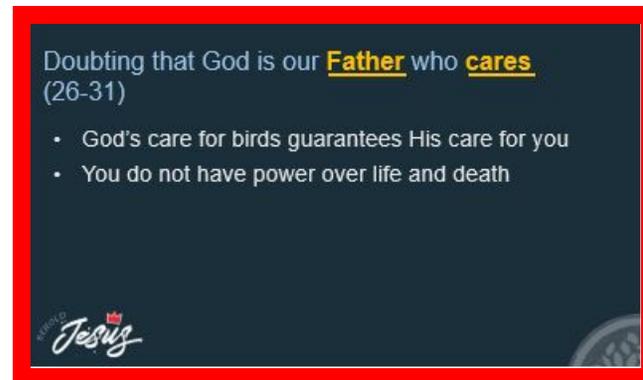
planting and harvesting and storage. And plus, God has no personal relationship with birds! He is their Creator yes. But He is not their Heavenly Father. God is only a Heavenly Father to those souls who have been adopted through the sovereign election of His grace – born again into life through faith in the death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ!!

So listen Christian... if *your* heavenly Father feeds worthless birds... how much more will He care for you whom He has purchased out of slavery and granted an eternal inheritance as the Bride of Christ!¹¹

Besides, **verse 27** argues that our anxious efforts are pointless.

And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life?

All the worrying in the world accomplishes nothing. Even if you try to care for your own basic needs in life,



¹¹ Matthew 10:29-31

you do not have any power over life and death. No one has the power to lengthen their life through their own ambition.¹²

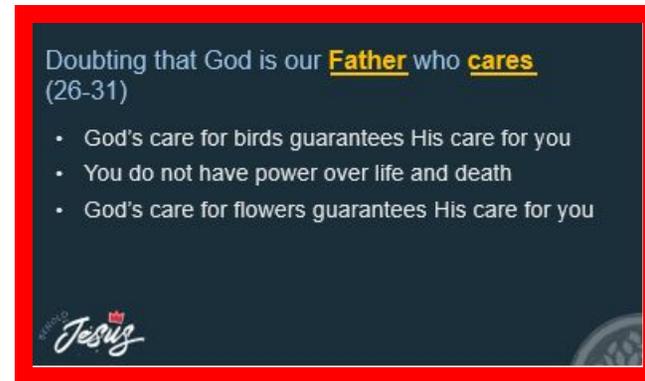
The noisy soul of anxiety does no good. Yes you should work. Yes you should pursue good medical care when you are sick. God made us to sow, reap, harvest, labor, and toil. But we must not worry. For all our days are numbered and safely secure in our Father's good hands.

Verse 28-30 then returns to the school room of Creation, as Jesus uses field flowers as Exhibit B to prove God's fatherly care:

Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.

Here's the point: Wildflowers can't take any credit for how beautiful they are. God alone provides them with their radiant colors and glory. Even the wealthiest human king on earth – King Solomon himself – could not compete with the intricate and radiant beauty of God's flowers.

Listen dear child of God – flowers and grasses are very short-lived. Again it's another argument from the lesser to the greater.



God's care for flowers guarantees His care for you.

Why would Christians become sinfully anxious about what we should wear? Our Heavenly Father will take care of His children. He has dressed us eternally in the robe of His righteousness!¹³ If God dazzles simple grasses with glory – how much more can we trust Him to make us as radiant as Himself?!

Verse 31 summarizes this section by restating Jesus' point,

*Therefore – for these reasons found in **verses 26-30** – do not be anxious, saying, What shall we eat? Or What shall we drink? Or What shall we wear?*

Fuel your faith with this truth – You can be confident that your Heavenly Father truly cares for you!

Finally **verses 31-34** reveal further ways sinful worry doubts God's goodness. Because anxious hearts,

¹² Job 14:5; c.f. Deuteronomy 32:39; 1 Samuel 2:6; Psalm 39:4, 139:16; James 4:15

¹³ Isaiah 61:10



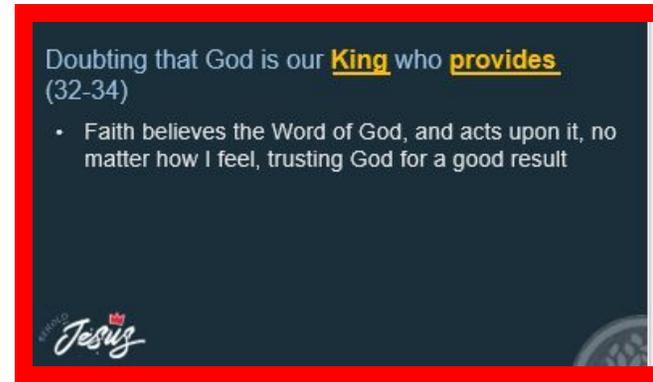
Doubt that God is our **King** who **provides**.

We worry about our material provisions in life because we don't actually believe we are in a personal relationship with a good and all-sovereign King. When you live like an orphan – even after you've been adopted – you dishonor the nature of God's sufficient provision.

That's what Jesus means in **verse 32** when He says,

For the Gentiles seek after all these things...

Gentiles – or unbelievers – those who don't personally know God as their heavenly Father – prioritize living for what they can see, touch, taste, and wear. Unbelievers have no one else to trust for their basic necessities except themselves.

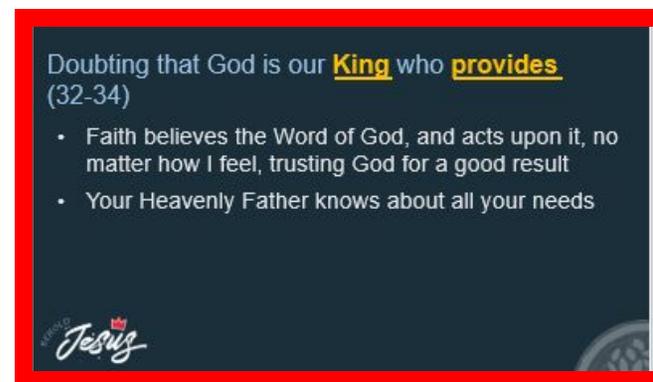


But faith believes the Word of God and acts upon it, no matter how I feel, trusting God to bring about a good result in His time. Anxiety is a failure to apply our faith to our daily lives. Anxiety is practical atheism.

And look at the second truth Jesus gives against anxiety in **verse 32**,

for your Heavenly Father knows that you need them all.

Your Heavenly Father is not indifferent or aloof.

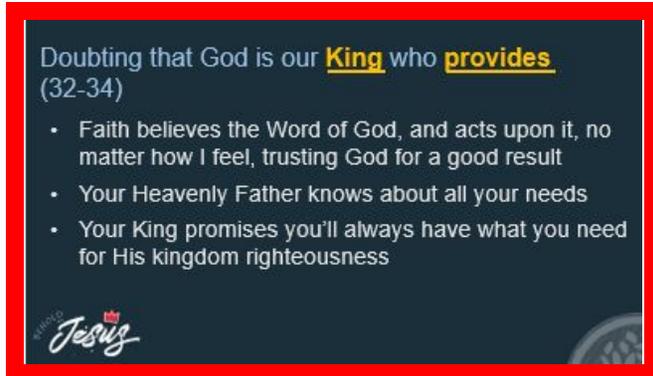


Your Heavenly Father knows about all your needs.

Therefore, you don't have to fret and worry about whether or not your basic necessities will be met in this life. Taking God at His Word frees your life for singular devotion to the kingdom of God and His righteousness.

Consider the marvelous promise of **verse 33**:

But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.



Your King promises you'll always have what you need for His kingdom righteousness!

Do you doubt this? Such unbelief will lead to sinful anxiety in your soul. Believe this wonderful promise from King Jesus!

Seek first – meaning your life's highest priority and obsession must be God's kingdom and righteousness.

What is God's kingdom? It is His reign and His rule. So your life's first and best efforts should be spent on

submitting to the reign of God's Spirit – surrendering to the Spirit's control in your life.

To seek His kingdom is to pursue a life of obedience – a life which is truly right with God. A righteous life of love!

Devote your life to knowing God and spreading His glory – and when you do the King Himself promises to provide for all your food, drink, and clothing – everything you need to materially sustain your life and body until your earthly mission is complete.

Therefore, Jesus concludes in verse 34, do not be anxious about tomorrow for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.

Don't misunderstand what Jesus is saying. He's not promising that heavenly minded Christians will never have hunger, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword.¹⁴

No, in fact Jesus is clear here that His disciples will face a sufficient amount of trouble every day.

Instead this is what Jesus is teaching: Don't worry anymore about tomorrow's trouble. You have trouble today, and God's grace is sufficient for today's trouble. Tomorrow's grace will be sufficient for tomorrow's trouble as well. But live every day one day at a time. Because today's grace is not sufficient for both today and tomorrow as well.

Anxiety sins by foolishly trying to store up today's grace for the future. But our God is the King of the

¹⁴ C.f. Romans 8:35-39

kingdom...and when we are aligned with His kingdom purposes – we can confidently trust Him to provide sufficient grace for every day – just when we need it!¹⁵ So do you believe that God is good?



Anxious hearts doubt our Father's goodness.

Anxiety refuses to believe that God is a good Creator who sustains our life, and a good Father who sincerely cares for our needs, and a good King who is able to sufficiently provide what we need one day at a time.

Repent of all anxious unbelief.



Instead Trust your Father while you pursue His kingdom priorities. Anxiety will control hearts with little faith.



So pray for God to increase your faith. And while you pray, feed the engine of your faith with biblical truths about your Father. Stop being distracted by the lies of future fears. Ponder the character of your Heavenly Father by taking in large portions of Scripture. And then know this... anxiety cannot live in an atmosphere of gratitude. So purify your heart with thanksgiving. Consider God's bountiful provision for you, and give

¹⁵ Lamentations 3:21-24; 1 Corinthians 10:13
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thanks.¹⁶ When you step off this world's vicious cycle of self-love, you will discover that God has indeed treated you far better than you deserve. And then lastly, **Proactively pursue loving God and loving others.** Make sure your box cars are overflowing with love. After all, isn't this what it means to practice righteousness?¹⁷ Live for His kingdom priorities, while you trust your Heavenly Father for all your needs.

If you believe God is good enough to save your soul for all of eternity, certainly you must believe that God is able to work through your sowing and reaping and harvesting to provide all your daily provisions in a way that best serves His kingdom purposes. You need not worry.

Your God sustains, cares, and provides. He is your Creator, your Father, and your King.



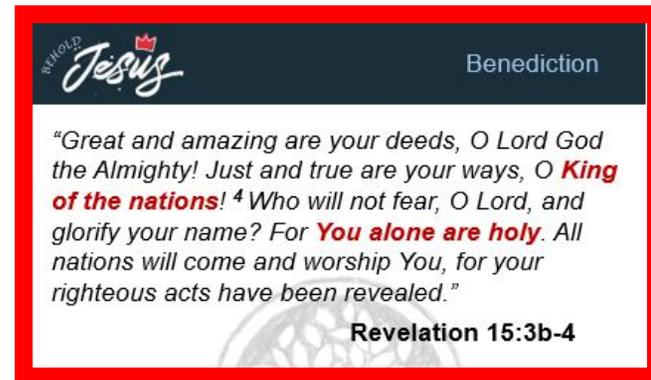
Let's pray.

¹⁶ Philippians 4:6; 1 Thessalonians 5:18; Ephesians 5:20; 1 Timothy 6:6-8; Hebrews 13:5-6

¹⁷ Romans 13:8-10

<<Great is Thy Faithfulness>>

Let's pray our benediction together as we dismiss.



Great and amazing are your deeds, O Lord God the Almighty! Just and true are your ways, O King of the nations! 4 Who will not fear, O Lord, and glorify your name? For you alone are holy. All nations will come and worship you, for your righteous acts have been revealed.
Revelation 15:3b-4





After 2nd Service Only

Recommended Resources on The Heart of Anxiety:

- Psalm 56:3; 94:19
- Proverbs 3:5-6; 25:28
- Isaiah 26:3-5; 41:10
- Matthew 11:28-30
- Mark 4:35-41
- Luke 12:22-34
- John 14:1-14, 27
- Romans 8:32
- 1 Corinthians 7:29-32
- Philippians 4:4-9
- 1 Timothy 6:8
- 1 Peter 5:6-7

- “*Peace for Anxious Hearts*” sermon from John 14:1-14 preached on 10/16/16 at NCBC

- <https://www.desiringgod.org/series/do-not-be-anxious/labs>
- <https://biblicalcounseling.com/tag/anxiety/>
- <https://www.ccef.org/what-good-dont-worry-times-these/>
- <https://www.rightnowmedia.org/Training/Post/View/83371> (Elyse Fitzpatrick on Worry)

- [Overcoming Fear, Worry, and Anxiety](#), Elyse Fitzpatrick
- [Worry: Pursuing a Better Path to Peace](#), David Powlison
- [Fear: Breaking its Grip](#), Lou Priolo
- [Battling Unbelief](#), John Piper

Growing Deeper: Life Group Questions

1. Review Matthew 6:25-34. How many times does Jesus command us to stop anxiety? Is anxiety an emotion? How should we think about biblical commands towards our emotions? What is the relationship between faith in biblical truth and anxiety?
2. Read 1 Peter 5:6-7. What is the connection between pride and anxiety? Peace and humility?
3. What most troubles your heart? Share together what Scriptures help to give peace to your heart in the midst of anxiety?
4. Review Matthew 6:30-32. Do you believe God loves you? Can you trust God’s fatherly provision for you? Why or why not?
5. Read Lamentations 3:21–23 (with Matthew 6:34). In God’s care and provision, what is the relationship between today’s grace and today’s trouble? What about between today’s grace and tomorrow’s trouble?
6. What does it mean in practical terms for a person to “seek *first* the kingdom of God and his righteousness”?