

## THE CURE FOR MATERIAL ANXIETY

**Intro:** A few years ago a rock star wrote what became for a time to be a very popular rap song: "Don't worry; be happy." That song recognizes the obvious incompatibility of anxiety and happiness. And perhaps there is no area more likely to cause us anxiety than the challenge of meeting the material needs of life.

Most of us grew up in middle class homes where the American dream became a reality. Our parents were able to attain a good portion of this world's goods and provide a good life for us. Many of us now pursuing that same standard of living, and perhaps sometimes wanting more, have found new challenges to participation in our parent's prosperity. The double digit inflation of the late 70's and early 80's basically robbed us half of our income. Virtually every young family is now reliant upon two breadwinners to realize the same level of living as before. Few of us have any ultimate control over our incomes and the pressures of providing for our families can begin to get a strangle hold on our lives! Most of us live from paycheck to paycheck; and virtually all of us can look wearily into the future and wonder how we are going to pull off some of the material challenges awaiting us--providing for ourselves in old age, educating our kids.

Though we are far better off than the people of Jesus' day, we are not immune to the challenges of material worry. If anything, we may need these words more, because our society has created an unrealistic dream of happiness toward which most of the people of our generation press. I hope all of us can profit today by being reminded of Jesus' thoughts on how to cope with the challenge of anxiety over the material things of life! Let's read Mt. 6:25-34.

Jesus in this text gives us 4 keys to overcoming the challenges of personal anxiety.

### HE URGES US TO DISTINGUISH BETWEEN MAKING A LIVING AND MAKING A LIFE

*We need to rise above pagan concerns (v. 32). To the Jew the Gentile was the classic infidel. If we are to act as if all that is worth seeking in life is food, clothing, and shelter (and better food, clothing and shelter), then we are no better than unbelievers! The Gentiles could see no realm of life or living beyond the physical. Jesus warned about that problem: Lk. 12:15. But that raises the more profound question: What is life? What is the body? What is living?*

I believe the best way to answer that question is to read Rom. 8:2. It is to walk by the law of the Spirit who gives life! It is to let the Spirit cultivate in us His fruit! Gal. 5:22ff. Life is...love; joy; peace; etc. Cf. Rom. 14:17

That's the reason Jesus closes with the exhortation of v. 33.

Putting the kingdom first is seeking true life! It doesn't mean putting the "church" first, if we mean by church the people whom

**God saves. It means putting the doing of God's will first! That's the only real life that there is!**

**HE URGES US TO SEE THE UNPRODUCTIVENESS OF ANXIETY.**

*"Which of you by being anxious can add one cubit to his life's span?"*

*When someone adds another birthday we say, "He has reached another milestone". But who can add, not a mile, but just 18 inches to his life by worry? The obvious answer is "no one".*

*Worry is one of the most unproductive things that we can do! It won't add one second to your life; actually, it may take time off of it! It won't make a dollar; it won't pay a bill; it won't teach a child; encourage a weak brother; save a soul; increase your knowledge of the word of God. It is a futile, empty, worthless act that feeds upon itself to produce self-centeredness and its resultant unhappiness!*

**HE URGES US TO SEE THAT GOD KNOWS AND CAN MEET OUR NEEDS.**

*He urges us to look for God's care in the lower order of the creation.*

**Consider the birds. (Jesus uses humor here!) Ever seen a bird driving a tractor and plow? Pulling a wagon to the barn? Yet they do not die of starvation!**

**Consider the lilies. The beautiful "lilies" were probably the variety called anthemis palestina, or the chamomile. This common grass was cut for hay and was used for fuel for the oven. It produces a small white flower at harvest time. One could imagine them growing around the Lord's feet as he spoke. Their beauty was greater than the finery of Solomon.**

*If God takes care of these, will He not take care of men? To say "no" is to express a true lack of faith in God's love and power and our worth to God.*

**People of faith know that God has the power!**

**That God has the concern!**

**That we have a worth to God beyond unspiritual creatures!**

*Therefore, God will meet the needs of His people!.*

**HE URGES US TO LIVE ONE DAY AT A TIME.**

*The real problem with anxiety is that it is typically concerned with what has not yet occurred! We worry about the future. We project ourselves into the future and anxiously imagine the worst scenario.*

*Jesus says, "Live one day at a time. Let tomorrow worry about tomorrow.*

*Every day has enough trouble to deal with without dragging into it those things that may or may not happen!"*

*One of the most popular songs ever written was the country hit of several years ago. I remember going to senior citizens places and the older people would sing that song almost every time: "One day at a time sweet Jesus, that's all I'm asking from you; just give me the strength to do every day what*

*I've got to do; Yesterday's gone sweet Jesus and tomorrow may never be mine; So keep me today, show me the way, one day at a time".*

**Conclusion:** Have you allowed worry to strangle your contentment and peace? To make you feel like a rope in a emotional tug-of-war? Jesus shows us how to find real peace in a world of anxiety. Put your life in God's hands with a committed trust. Rest in His love & power. Take it one day at a time. Put His will first and you will live in the confidence that all the needs of your life will be met.

Such assurance belongs only to those who show their faith in obedience to the gospel. Have you?