

How To Stop Worrying About Money

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Mastering Your Money

Matthew 6:25-34

Last week I began teaching on the subject of money. I am calling the series, *Mastering Our Money*. And I told you last week that I am particularly excited about laying out the scriptural message on money. I mentioned a few reasons why I wanted to teach on this subject. Let me repeat a few of the reasons that I mentioned last week for doing this particular series and then I will add a couple more.

I mentioned to you last week that I personally have never heard a series of teachings that cover the whole scope of issues on money. It really is one of those taboo subjects. And while I have heard teachings and given teachings on giving to church or giving to the work of the kingdom, there is so much more in the Bible than material on giving. And yet, what I find is that Christians, even people who have been Christians for a very long time, are almost completely uneducated when it comes to what the Bible teaches about money.

The church (and me included) has done a very bad job of communicating biblical principles of money management. The average Christian does not know what the Bible teaches about taking out a loan. The average Christian does not know what the Bible teaches about debt or credit or where work fits into their lives; what God thinks about work and why we are supposed to work. The average Christian doesn't have basic principles down regarding giving and how much they are to give and why they are to give, or how they are to think about their present state, if they are wealthy or if they are poor.

I mentioned that there is a huge amount of material on money in the Bible. I read this past week, somebody figured it up, that there were over 2,000 verses on money alone. I read another stat that there were over 5,000 verses. Well, I don't know how many verses and I didn't take the time to count them, but I have read many, many passages on money in the past month. I have been surprised at the amount of material that is devoted to money. I guess God knows that this is a big area of needed instruction. That a good deal of our life and our frustration—our bondage is going to be around the subject of money.

Now, I am particularly concerned about teaching in the area of money for a church like this. I teach on this subject because we are a church of baby boomers and baby busters, folks born after the war, primarily. And while this church has had a higher level of faithfulness than the national average of evangelical church goes, still we are not where we should be. Do you know what percentage of income [listen to this statistic], do you know what percentage of income the average conservative evangelical, born-again, person gives to the work of the kingdom of God each year? Do you know what the percentage of income, the average baby boomer, born-again person gives to the kingdom? It is somewhere between 1.8 and 2.2% of their income; 1.8 and 2.2% of their income goes to the work of the kingdom each year. On a \$25,000 salary, the average boomer gives about \$400 to the work of the kingdom.

I think to myself, "That is not what God wants." What if we, in the sphere that we are responsible for, just us, what if we took God's Word seriously and began to do it in the area of money? What if this church had most of its members tithing, giving 10% of their income to the work of the kingdom here in the Vineyard? Do you know that if that happened, along with everything that is currently going on, along with it—current programming, staff salaries, the building, everything else, along with that we could fully fund 30 families to go overseas to participate in church planting and world missions overseas? 30 families, fully funded—about 120 people.

We could open up our Day Care Center that we want to start in the next six months, but we could open a Day Care Center with a particular emphasis on poor men and women who cannot afford the rates charged to parents in most other day care centers. We could take children in from poorer families at a reduced rate. We could afford that, and we could radically expand our food ministry. And bank a bunch of money for future facility expansion. Just on adults here in the church tithing. I am not talking about every adult in the church selling every thing that they have and going into hock and all of that. I am just talking about tithing.

A last sort of random thought and then we are going to look at the scriptures in terms of why I am teaching on this subject. Along with wanting the church to be faithful, along with what I see happening in the future and needing to get our economic house in order, along with what I believe the church could do if we together obeyed the scriptures; along with all of that, I am concerned with what I see happening with our children – with my children and your children. A major symptom of us not having a biblical view of money is the way our children thinks about money. Let me ask you parents a question, those of you who have kids here in the church. What is your kids' view of money? If your children got money for Christmas from a relative, what did they talk about doing with that money? When your children get an allowance, what do they think about doing with that allowance? If your children are working, what is their view of the proper use of that money? You see, our kids pick up our value-system. Are your children learning about using their money to fulfill the priorities of God in the world? That is part of what I am concerned about—the 450 children that we have here that by and large don't have the mind of God regarding money. I want to see that change.

So, over the next several months we are going to be talking about mastering our money. I am going to talk about debt, and if you are in debt, how to get out of debt biblically. We are going to talk about how to think about yourself if you don't have very much money at all, and how to think about yourself if you have a lot of money. We are going to identify some of the major financial errors that people make. And we are going to talk about the subject of giving and how God regards giving. I am going to try to be non-apologetic as I teach. I will teach this subject as I try to teach all of the subjects, just trying to be honest with you and with the Word of God.

This morning what I want to continue to tackle is another of the really big attitudinal struggles that we all face when it comes to our finances. Now, in a certain sense, Jesus is changing his audience here. In the first part of Matthew 6 he was addressing treasures on earth – that is primarily, but not exclusively, a

problem of the well-off. This week we are going to deal with one of the major attitudinal problems surrounding money and finances for those who have less or who are facing the prospect of having less—that is the attitudinal problem of worry.

Let me lay out my basic premise. It is the will of God that Christians never be consumed with worry or anxiety about money. Let me say that again. It is the will of God that Christians never be consumed with worry or anxiety about money. I've called today's talk "How to Stop Worrying About Money."

Now, I want to show you something about Jesus' teaching method as we consider the issue of worry over money, our finances and our future. Take a look at how many times Jesus repeats himself. In verse 25 he says, "Do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink..." And then in verse 31 he says, "So, do not worry saying 'what shall we eat or what shall we drink.'" And then verse 34 he says, "Therefore, do not worry..."

Do not worry...Do not worry...Do not worry

And then in verse 27 he says, "Who have you, by worrying..." In verse 28, "Why do you worry?"

Jesus is a master teacher and I think those of you who have to communicate in some kind of setting with children, perhaps at school or when you do presentations at work or if you are involved in speaking at church, you need to understand the value of repetition. People don't get it right away. I am continually amazed at how often I will get done speaking about a subject and have somebody come up to me and raise exactly the point that I covered in my message. They will say to me, "Well, I just don't understand 'x'." That is what I had just spent 20 minutes going over. But we are all very slow in really understanding.

And so Jesus knows that and he repeats himself saying, "Do not worry, do not worry, do not worry." You need to understand that repetition is particularly necessary when we are dealing with the issue of worry. You see, worry comes to us as a power that grips our minds. It is almost like a vice grip. And if you have ever spoken to somebody who is in the grip, in the power of worry, what you will find is that as you talk with them, they seem to be unable to hear the truth. You will say, "Do you have enough food now?" And their answer is, "Yes, but, I don't know if I am going to have enough tomorrow."

"Do you have money in your bank account now?"

"Yes, but, I foresee something else going on in the future."

And no matter what you say, there is a "yes, but" response to that because worry confuses the mind. Do you know that the Greek word for "worry" or "anxiety" literally is to have a divided mind? It speaks to us about a person whose mind is distracted. They are only paying attention to what you are saying with part of their minds. But there is this distraction going on. The distraction is the grip of worry. Yes, we're praying for the Father to give us this day our daily bread; but with the other half of our minds we're plotting and planning how we are going to get the bread tomorrow if God doesn't intervene – strategizing. So, if somebody is only listening to you with part of their mind, but they are distracted as if their baby is fussing or there is a radio on in the background or they are

concerned about what is happening in another room, then they are not going to pick up the truth that is being offered unless you say it over and over again. And I am sure that those of you who have been in the grip of worry, or presently are, know what I am talking about. That hearing the truth once just doesn't get it for you. Your mind is divided. You are distracted. You are only part way there. So, Jesus knowing that repeats himself. He really understands how we are wired and what our emotions are like.

OK, well let's take a look at this now. Why do we worry so much about money? Why is it that to this day financial pressures and problems are the leading cause of divorce? Still number one in America, above sexual infidelity, by far, above in-law problems, why are money problems number 1? Well, let's look at the sources of our anxiety. And I would say that in looking down this text that there is one leading cause of all of our anxiety about finances and that is false standards. We find this powerful grip on our minds because we have false standards. We have bought into lies about possessions, about ourselves, and about life in general.

Let's look at verse 25. Jesus says, "Therefore, I tell you do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear." When I took a look at what Jesus is telling us not to worry about, eating, drinking, clothes, I thought, "My goodness, I don't know anyone in my circle who is literally worried because they have nothing to wear. I also know no one who is literally worried because they can't find anything to drink. That they are running out of water. And virtually everyone I know has at least something to eat. Jesus is talking about necessities, the bottom line of survival—food and drink and clothing. And while some of you may, at some point in your life, have reached the place where you really were worried about just survival that is not what the vast majority of Americans are living. A great deal of our struggle with money and finances is that we have completely unrealistic expectations about what we should have and how easy life should be.

And living with completely unrealistic expectations creates in us tremendous discontent and worry. If you hold up for your child, unrealistic expectations regarding what your child's performance ought to be like in school, that your child never should get angry, always be the best in everything—if the bar is so high that your child, no matter how good he or she is, never feels like they can make that leap over the bar, then your child is going to be deeply discouraged and unhappy. And some of you grew up in situations that the bar was so high, no matter how talented you were or what you did, it just never was enough. And you had worked into you a profound sense of falling short, discontent and discouragement.

You see the same unrealistic standards in what women's bodies ought to be like. The standard is so unrealistic that unless you are 5'10" and weigh 115 pounds, like 1 out of every 15,000 women do, you have an unacceptable body. And brothers and sisters, I will tell you that the standard of what is considered passable, what is considered necessary financially that is set by our culture is completely unrealistic, is completely fallacious and it results in tremendous discouragement and discontent for most of you. The culturally imposed standard of necessities in the United States, right now, requires an income that is well beyond where most of us live.

It is a cultural requirement that people own their own houses by the age of 30 or 35. No one should ever work for minimum wage; all children are supposed to be above average. It is practically a cultural requirement that if you are a married couple, you have two vehicles, both of which are fairly new. And it is a cultural requirement that if you have children, that those children be sent to college. And that you as a parent should be able to afford to pay for their college. And you also ought to have a retirement account. You also ought to be storing up money for savings and have insurance for every possible contingency. And if you don't touch all of these bases (and many of us don't), then we experience no peace financially.

Those of you who are worried about money – do you ever stop and ask yourself, “What do I really need?” Not what do I want. What do I need? Is the thing I'm afraid of truly threatening my needs? Or my family's needs?

Trying to live up to false standards regarding our possessions creates worry, false standards regarding ourselves and who we are creates worry. Jesus underlines that in verse 25 when he says, “Is not life more important than food and the body more important than clothes?” And in the United States, we would answer “no.” Do you understand what Jesus is addressing here? He is addressing an identity issue. He is saying, “What are you anyway? Is your life simply the sum of your possessions?” In other words, is your net worth your true worth? In the United States we believe that a person's net worth is their true worth. And we very definitely esteem people who have more money and more possessions as being more worthy of our time and more worthy of our respect than people who have less possessions. If you have less money, then you are less of a person. At least that is the false standard of American culture.

How about if we changed our standard of evaluation to something other than American culture? Let me put it this way: Do you take time out to picture yourself standing before the judgment seat of Christ on a regular basis? If you are a follower of Christ, I hope that if you don't take time out to picture yourself standing before the judgment seat of Christ, you will begin to do that on a regular basis. There are few things that are more purifying to your thoughts and will help you to eliminate false standards than picturing yourself being in the final judgment. Do you think that the evaluation of your life is going to be what you have owned? What you have accumulated? What you have hoarded up? I can tell you Jesus doesn't care what symbol you have embroidered on the pocket of your shirt. It doesn't matter to him whether it is Polo or Odd Lots. What you did with what you had will be evaluated. How you acted as a traffic cop in directing your money will be evaluated as well as what I did with my money will be evaluated. But the amount that you had the opportunity to gain, what kind of shirts you wear, what kinds of cars you drive—I think God's analysis is going to go a little bit deeper than that!

And then the final sort of anxiety and discouragement and distraction is that many of us live with the false idea that my life ought to be trouble free and if I encounter financial pressure or difficulty, God is probably not still in Heaven and all is wrong with the world. Not only do we lie about how much we should own; and not only do we live with lies about what we are and how much value we have based on what we own; but, we live with lies about what life ought to be like financially. And we say that life ought to be basically trouble free financially.

Brothers and Sisters, if life was to be trouble free, why do you think Jesus talks so much to us about worry? See, people don't worry if in life they experience no pressure, no testing. Worry is the result of experiencing the press of life. And life is full of trouble. Jesus says as much in verse 34 where he tells us, "Don't worry about tomorrow for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own."

Do you realize that the curse that came on the ground in the Garden and the curse on Adam where God said you will live by the sweat of your brow means that it will be tough sledding for most of us? Understand that your being freed from worry is not tied in Jesus' mind from your being free from trouble. People say, "Pray for me about my money problem. We have these bills; we have this debt; we have problems with our business." What they really mean is, "Ask God to make my trouble go away. Ask God to make my debt disappear – House mortgage, vaporize in the name of Jesus Christ!" You may or may not get out from under the financial difficulty that you are experiencing. We will talk about what God promises in a moment. But whether you do get out from under the difficulty or you don't get out from under the difficulty, Jesus tells you, "Don't worry."

See, there is nothing wrong with you necessarily if you are experiencing problems. One of the great lies that have come into the church is that we are to have a problem-free existence. Brothers and Sisters, you know when you put little things up on your refrigerator? Well, perhaps you could write this down as something to put on your refrigerator:

John 16:33—Jesus makes you a solemn promise. His solemn promise based on his character and his integrity is this: "In the world you will have trouble." Put that on your refrigerator. "In the world, you will have trouble." That is a promise. Do you think something is terribly amiss because you have trouble? Do you think something is radically out of joint, that God is no longer on the throne because you have money trouble? This is the nature of life.

And how else, but with trouble and stress will God ever be able to develop our faith and dependence on him? Be honest, when is it that you and I turn to God earnestly in prayer? When everything is smooth? When we are on vacation lying on the beach, sipping ice tea with those little umbrellas stuck in? Is that when you and I feel pressed to fall on our knees before God and cry out to him? Or when pressure is brought into our lives? When we encounter difficulty at work or stress in our families or a troubled kid or a problem in our marriage or something happening in our finances or some sickness—when is it that you and I turn to God and cry out to him? Trouble, particularly financial trouble, is often one of the things that God uses to make us exercise our faith.

Now, I don't know what particular stress or trouble you are currently facing, or if things right now are in a brief period of calm. You may be doing real well. But I know that there are lots of you who are not doing real well. You are either out of work or you have a large debt. You, perhaps, have creditors coming after you. You are experiencing some level of pressure. And for the sake of argument, I want to suggest to you that it really doesn't matter why you are experiencing the pressure. Certainly many of us are experiencing financial pressure that is self-induced.

Many of us would have to acknowledge right off the bat that a large part of the reason we face financial pressure is because of our own mistakes. Because we have over spent. Because we have misused credit. And maybe we feel pressured because we have those false standards I spoke about before. On top of that there are all the other problems and stresses that have nothing to do with any error or false standards on our part at all. You might have gotten sick or you were laid off from work entirely apart from your own merit. There were just cut backs at your job. For the sake of argument, let me just lay out this basic premise that it doesn't matter, for present purposes, why you are experiencing stress and financial pressure, you just are. How can you stop worrying about the stress you are facing? Practically speaking – how do you stop worrying about money problems?

So here you are. You are sitting around this high-stakes poker game and you are playing with men who have names like, Slim and Tony and Knuckles, Big Al. It is all on the line. All your finances, it is all on the line. If you lose here, you lose. So what are our options?

Well, one of your options, as you look at your hand, is to stand pat. To not do anything that would jeopardize your present position. You are not going to trade-in any cards. You are just going to hold on to what you have. I watch that all the time as a symptom of people's worry and stress. They just try to hold on to what they have. They stand pat. I watch men and women who are desperately afraid to even think about looking for another job, although they are quite dissatisfied in their current job. They are unfulfilled, they have reached dead ends. But they are afraid. Worry keeps them paralyzed in their same jobs.

Other people, as a result of worry, will attempt to create a buffer against any future contingencies or future problems. People say, "We have to make sure that nothing can ever threaten us. We have every contingency taken care of." They refuse to open their hand liberally. They don't know what they are going to get in the future. They don't know what cards are going to be placed in their hand, and so they hold on to what they have.

A common reaction to stress and worry is to simply hold tight. And another common reaction is to fold. The stakes in this game are too high, you say. I could lose it all, and so I am going to fold. Brothers and Sisters, I see fellow believers folding their hands all the time because of financial pressure, and so one of the options is to fold.

Let's talk about that for a moment in their faith when they are pressures. How do we fold? One of the major ways is that we employ deceit. People, when they are pressured, have a tendency to cut corners, to lie. I see that in the life of the great man of faith in the Bible, Abraham. You know, he used deception and compromise three times in his life when he was under pressure. And it struck me that when I was reading the story of Abraham this week, that Abraham failed the tests of God three times in his life before he finally passed the final exam with glowing colors.

He lied regarding his wife, Sarah, and who she was two times when he was under pressure in Egypt. And then he cut corners to produce a child with Hagar. Three acts of deceit and then he folded. But then he gloriously passed his final, which gives us hope that if we have applied deceit financially, by perhaps lying on your resume, by exaggerating your qualifications, manipulating words in order

to get a job. If you have done that in the past, you don't have to continue to do that and you can gloriously pass the final exam.

And, if you have used deceit on your taxes in the past, you do not have to lie on your taxes in 1994. If you have used deceit in procuring clients or in exaggerating a product, you don't have to continue to do that. Deceit is one of the ways people fold.

Certainly compromise is another way that we fold. Let me give you four very profound responses to financial stress that Jesus lays out here very quickly as a cure for worry.

Before I do, let me extend an offer to each of you on behalf of this church. If you are in genuine crisis right now, if you find yourself completely overwhelmed, we are committed here in the Vineyard to not only get up and do messages, but to assist you in a very practical way. We are setting up through our Administrative Pastor, Jerry Stephens, both crisis financial counseling for you and also help with long-term financial planning plans. We will have sign up sheets out next week or you can call at our office, and if you want to sign up for either some real good biblical counsel for your crisis financial problems or longer term financial planning, we will provide that for you free.

We are not going to sell you investments. We are not signing you up for a pyramid sales scheme. We just want to give you some assistance and advice that are both common sense and biblical. One of the ways that you can relieve yourself of worry is to get some good counsel. And we want to give that to you.

Well, here Jesus answers our worry. Solution number one - You and I need to increase our faith. Jesus says in verse 28, "And why do you worry about clothes? See how the lilies of the field grow? They don't toil or spin, yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all of his splendor was dressed like one of these. If that is how God clothes the grass of the field which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you? Oh you of little faith..." Here is my problem. Here is your problem in a nutshell. The reason we worry so much is that we have little faith.

What does Jesus mean by little faith? Two very simple images come to mind. One way to think about little faith is that little faith is faith that is squeezed into a little area of your life. Many, many people have little faith because all of their faith, whatever amount that they have, is squeezed into only one compartment of their life.

Understand that Jesus is talking in this passage to believers, to Christians. We know he is talking to Christians because he says, "Your Father in heaven knows that you need these things" in verse 32. And he contrasts that with the pagans who run after these things. And nowhere in the Bible do we read that God is the Father to anyone other than believers who have trusted in Christ.

A person is of little faith when they take their whole amount of faith and they squeeze it into the compartment, perhaps, of salvation. They say, "I have enough faith to trust that Jesus' death on the cross will pay for my sins and open eternal life for me in Heaven. But I am not going to apply faith to the whole of my life." Little faith restricts the scope, the sweep of faith. To increase faith, then, to have a bigger faith, what we need to do is to say, "I am going to begin to include God in areas that I have never thought about including God in before. I am going to start doing faith building kinds of exercises. Like when I am driving to the

store, I am going to pray, 'God, I never thought about including you in my grocery store trip. But I want to begin to spread faith over everything that I do. So, God, I am going to ask you to make me wise in my purchases today. And at the grocery store, help me today to save some money. Point out bargains to me. Also, give me sensitivity to some people around me and will you bring across my path somebody that you want me to talk to? I want to include you in my grocery store trip.'"

After you do that, then you say, "God, when I get together with my in-laws, you know it has always been difficult for me when we get together, but I want to stretch my faith over the area of my relationship with my in-laws. I want you to be brought into that relationship with my mother-in-law or my father-in-law."

"God, you know I am going to a woman's group. And you know that there is a very difficult relationship there and I have a lot of tension and friction with this other lady, but I want to stretch my faith over that."

Do you see how you increase faith? The increase of faith means that it has stopped being squeezed into a little box of your life and it stretches out over all of your life like a gigantic canopy including your finances. "God, I want to begin to include you into my budgeting. I never thought about asking you to help me balance my checkbook. But I want you to do that. Every time I take out my credit card, I want you to remind me about yourself. God, let me include you in my purchases."

Now another way to define little faith is a faith that doesn't think deeply about God. A little faith is not only a faith that is restricted in a very small area of a person's life, but a little faith is a faith that has thoughts about God that are only 2" deep. As Jesus goes through this passage, one of the things that he is trying to get us to do is to think a little more deeply about God.

See, I know the way that most people think when they worry. They repeat the same story to themselves over and over again. The moment you are gripped by stress, the needle drops into the groove of the record and you play the same record over and over again. "I know what is going to happen. I know all the terrible things that are going to happen in the future." Jesus says, "I want you to lift the needle off the record. I want you to take that old record off the stereo and throw it away. And now I want you to exercise your mind, concentrate your mind. Start using your mind to begin to think deeply about God."

People of little faith have thoughts about God that are 2" deep. If you want to increase your faith, take the time to think deeply about God. Jesus, in this passage you call God "My heavenly Father" What does that mean? I am going to take a minute and think about you God being my Father. What kind of Father are you? What does the Bible say about your fatherhood? How much do you care about me? What is your Father heart? Are you like my Dad? Is that what I believe about you? Are you different than my dad? Will you provide? Are you consistent? Are you reliable? Can I trust you?

You call me your child. I am going to think deeply about what the Bible has said. You take out a sheet of paper and go through verses in the scripture. You write down things that the Bible says about God's Fatherhood and about your childhood. That is how you increase faith. Think deeply.

Another cure for worry is very simple. Think about today! Live for today only! Jesus tells us "that a day's own troubles are sufficient for the day." See, there

are two very different ways to think and to live. We are always going to face troubles. Like I said before, there isn't this sort of zone in life where we say, "Hey, no pressure whatever. You have entered the problem free zone." Almost all of life has some stress to it or some pressure to it. And there are two very different ways to face our pressures.

The first way to face pressure is to add up the total of everything bad that has ever happened to you or someone you love in the past and combine that with everything bad that might happen to you or someone you love in the future. Take the sum of that—everything bad that has happened to you in the past and everything bad that might possibly happen to you in the future. Add all of those worries and all of that hurt together and then take the weight of that and carry it on your shoulders today.

Everything bad that happened in the past. We had these struggles in the past. We really didn't have enough in the past. When I prayed for this person or this situation, I didn't find a quick answer. I was disappointed. I was hurt.

And in the future, who knows what might happen? My spouse might possibly leave me. My spouse might possibly die. Something terrible might happen with my children. I might not be able to find work. The economy may turn down. I may lose business if they pass this particular piece of legislation. They are talking about lay-offs at my job. I add all of that and walk around with that like two bags of cement on my shoulders.

Or, we follow Jesus' counsel, "Carry today's problems on your shoulders today." What do you think will be the lighter load; carrying today's problems today or everything past and future today? Regarding the past, what we are to do with those problems is to forgive people if they have hurt us. And regarding the past, if we have done something stupid, even financially, that we think is somehow going to prevent the blessing of God in our life, let us acknowledge that before God and let us repent to the extent that we have to repent. Let's try to correct what we can correct, apologize where we need to apologize, and leave the rest with the mercy of God. Live in today. Focus on today. Today's troubles are enough. Today's troubles are heavy enough. Live in today.

Now, don't misunderstand. God is not against planning. The Bible is not against forethought. But it is against anxious thought about tomorrow. And if considering tomorrow prevents you from having peace today, if considering tomorrow so preoccupies your mind that you can't be obedient today, then that is anxious thought. The Bible is not against forethought. We are going to talk about planning in future talks. It is not against forethought, but it is against anxious thought. It is against the distracted mind that can only focus a little bit on today and has the rest of its attention gripped by what might happen in the future. It is against the divided mind. That is the second cure for worry. Live for today.

The third cure for worry is to remind yourself repeatedly of the promises of God and cling to them. Through the Bible, God our Father makes a promise to us over and over again to meet our needs. You can take that to the bank. Through the Bible, God our Father promises over and over again to meet you needs. In verse 31 Jesus says, "Do not worry saying, 'What shall we eat' or 'What shall we drink' or 'What shall we wear?' for the pagans run after these things and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first his

kingdom and righteousness and all these things will be given to you as well.” “I promise,” the Father is saying, “that I will meet your needs.”

In case we miss that, God repeats the promise in Philippians 4:19 which says, *“And my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus.”* since we need repetition. So God repeats himself again in 2 Corinthians 9:8, “And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work.”

I believe that God has made several solemn promises from my reading of the text, to meet the needs of his children. Now worry is simply an accusation that says, “God you are a liar. Despite the fact that you stand in front of me and you tell me to my face that ‘I made you a promise to meet your needs’ I cannot believe you. I will not believe you. I think that you are untrustworthy. God, I think you are a liar.” That is the essence of worry. And so we need to repent of that and say, “No, Lord, you are not a liar. I choose to believe and I embrace your promise that you will meet my needs.”

Now, let’s quickly say what is not promised and then we will finish up. God promises to meet your needs. He does not, in the Bible, promise to meet your wants, as I said before, except as your wants are converted into his wants and his delights. The scripture says that if you delight in the Lord, he will give you the desires of your heart. Many people’s delight is not in the Lord. Folks delight in more possessions and delight in running their credit cards up. God does not promise to meet all of our unconverted wants. He promises to meet our needs and in fact it is the glory of God to meet his children’s needs. Nothing honors God more than to be the one who meets our needs. He also wants to restore your happiness as your delights are converted to His delights.

A second thing that God doesn’t promise here, he doesn’t promise a quick-fix for long-term financial problems. Many people believe that God is not going to help them or God is not helping them because God is not providing them an answer right this second. Sometimes, as a result of our own foolishness, we have run up tremendous debts. Sometimes, as a result of things completely beyond our control, we have run up tremendous debts. God has not promised a quick fix today. But he has promised that in whatever situation we are in, if we turn to him, today he will meet your needs. The solution may take a very long time. Paying off your debts may take you years, and that is God’s provision. God may use your brothers and sisters in the church to help you, but He never promises a quick fix to debt over the next few seconds.

He also doesn’t promise to meet your needs apart from your activity. Ah, this is an important one. Some people think that when the Lord says, “Consider the birds and the flowers” what the Lord is saying is that you can sit back and that God is going to give you that “A” on the final exam. Just relax. Trust him. You will get the “A”. If you are unemployed, relax. Wait by the phone. And having been unemployed in my own life, let me share with you my own story.

Trust me, having been unemployed myself for some time – if you are out of work now or face unemployment in the future, if you stay on the sofa watching television, no one will call up and say, “Hey, we have heard of you and we want to offer you a job. I know you haven’t applied. I know you haven’t done anything to get a job here. But we want you. Will you come work for us?”

God doesn't promise to meet our needs apart from our activity. That kind of scenario that I just described will never happen. If you want to consider the birds, consider the fact that birds are very busy. You will never see a lazy bird. And you will never see a fat bird. They work all day long in finding their food. And as Martin Luther put it, "Birds of the air don't just sit around with their mouths open waiting for a worm to drop in."

Finally, God doesn't promise to meet our needs if we continue in clear violation of his Word in a major area of our lives. He says, "Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness." To get right with God and all these things will be added to you. "I will take care of your needs." But you are responsible to put God first in your life. And to get rid of and to conform yourself to what God wants in your life. To the extent that a business practice that you know about continues to be sinful and you are saying to yourself, "God I want your blessing on my business" while you continue to violate God's Word, then God is not going to bless that. And I have seen God remove all financial blessing and reduce people literally to poverty when they have been going in a way that is a major violation of his will and his Word.

I am not suggesting, don't hear me, that your poverty or your struggle is a result of major disobedience. I am not saying that. I am saying that I have seen that. And everyone of us who is going through major struggles needs to ask ourselves, "Have we done something that is displeasing to you, O God?"

Folks that have been involved in significant immorality, significant deception, significant walking away from the will of God, can sometimes find that God disciplines through financial hardship. God has not promised to meet our needs in known violation of his Word. God has promised to meet our needs. Not our wants, not a quick-fix, not apart from our activity and not as we walk in violation of his Word.

The last cure and perhaps the best solution for worrying about money is worry about something bigger and better. You know, worry grips the mind and you can't think about anything else? Jesus understands that. He understands the grip of worry on the mind and so you know what he says to us?

"OK, if that is the way your mind is wired, then how about instead of worrying about something so silly and temporary as money, how about if you allow your mind to be in the grip of something bigger and better?" And that is why he tells us in conclusion, "Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness." That is his ultimate answer to worry about money. In other words, how about, if you want to worry, worry about how God's kingdom can be spread in your circle of influence. "O, God, I am so deeply concerned today that your reign and your righteousness come into my family. O, God, what is becoming of my kids if they don't know you – they are in terrible trouble. Please do something. Work in their lives Lord."

"O, God, we are so far from you. Lord, there is no peace in my home. I am going to fret and worry and struggle and strive before you in calling out to you until I see peace brought back into my home."

"And I am going to press you and pray and hold onto you and cry out to you until I see your reign come into my job."

You see, we are taught in America that ambition is only to be confined to the area of money making and business—career advancement. If somebody is

ambitious, we immediately think that ambition must be confined to getting ahead and having a great job and pushing your way through school and excelling in the areas of academics or business. Jesus says, "How about if you take all of that drive, men and women, and all of that ambition and we devote it to the kingdom." How about if we had some of the men and women here who really pursued excellence on the job, pursuing excellence for the Lord on the job and excellence for the Lord in the church and excellence for the Lord in your homes.

Want to get rid of worry about money? Worry about something bigger. Worry about something better. Worry about something more worthy. God has promised to meet all of our needs. No need to fret. No need to worry about money. So long as you are absorbed with him, he will meet your needs. Let's pray.