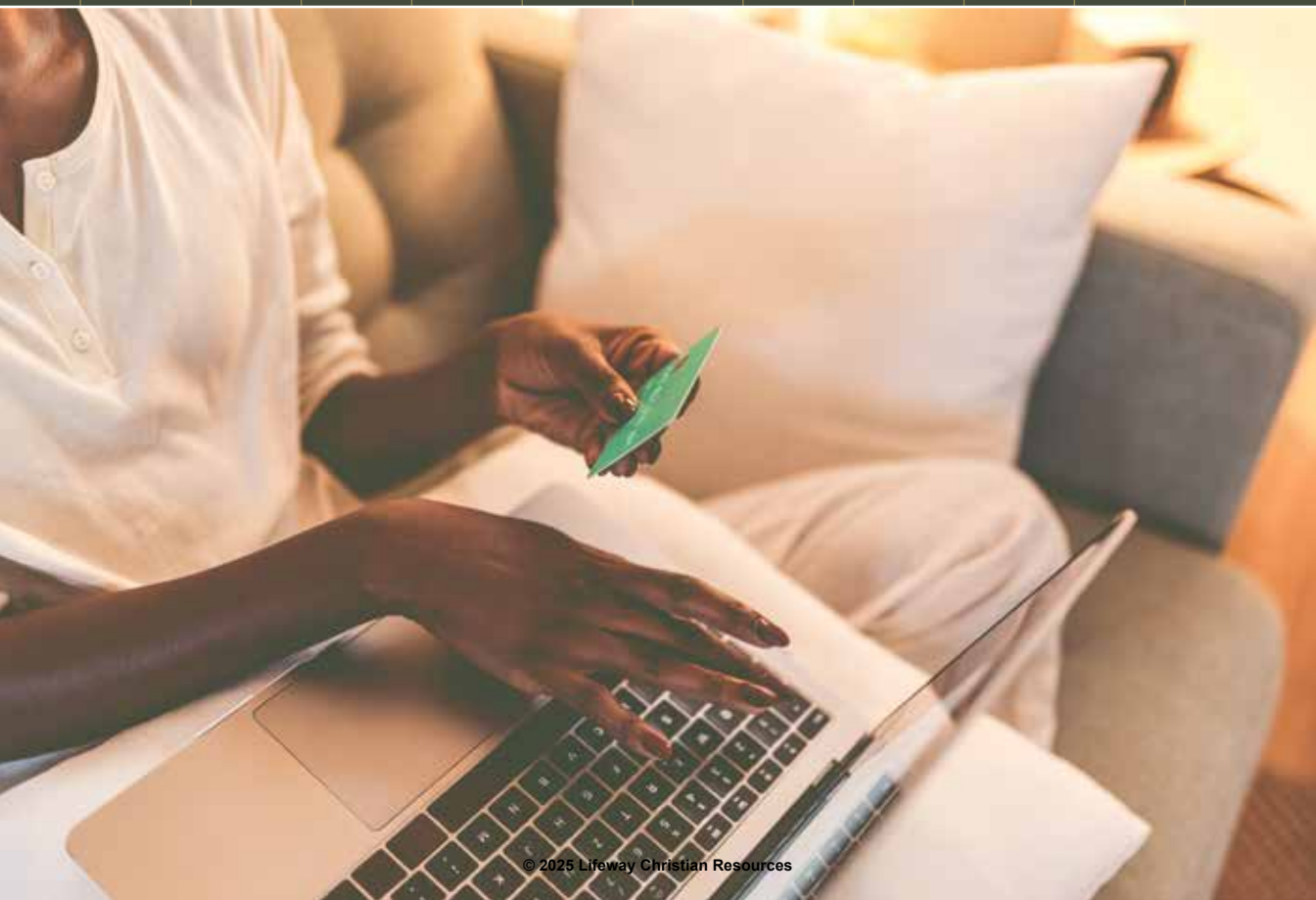


SESSION 5

# *Treasure*

MATTHEW 6:19-34

JESUS CHANGES OUR PRIORITIES.



Common types of household debt include mortgages, car loans, student loans, and credit cards. Debt is any money you owe a person or a business. Money experts talk about good debt and bad debt. They describe good debt as debt you can leverage to build wealth. Bad debt is debt used to purchase items that lose value over time. Or, it is any debt you are unable to pay. Many people today are drowning in bad debt because of misplaced priorities.

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*DO YOU AGREE OR DISAGREE THAT MISPLACED PRIORITIES FUEL DEBT?  
EXPLAIN YOUR ANSWER.*

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## UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

In chapter 5, Jesus declared that the righteousness of His followers must exceed the hypocritical righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees (Matt. 5:20). In chapter 6, Jesus contrasted sincere religious activities with the insincerity of those He called “hypocrites.” Jesus was speaking of motivation. The hypocritical scribes and Pharisees were motivated by selfishness and pride. They performed acts of piety for the attention and accolade of others. Jesus’s followers were to engage in acts of devotion out of a desire to glorify God.

Jesus used the example of helping the poor (6:1-4). The religious leaders gave to the poor in such a way that everyone could see their actions and speak highly of them. The followers of Jesus were to give quietly and discreetly, not calling attention to themselves. Their reward would come from God and not from the watching crowds.

The same principle held true for prayer (vv. 5-15). The Pharisees prayed loudly in public in such a way that they would be noticed. Jesus’s followers, on the other

hand, were to pray in secret to the only audience that really mattered—the heavenly Father. Rather than the temporary accolades of the watching crowds, they would be rewarded with eternal blessings.

Jesus moved next to the practice of fasting (vv. 16-18). Fasting was abstaining from food for religious purposes. Here again, the hypocritical scribes and Pharisees wanted everyone to notice that they were fasting, so they feigned a ragged appearance in public. This was designed to gain attention—not to deepen their walk with God. For Jesus’s followers, fasting was done only for God and His eyes alone.

Chapter 6 concludes with Jesus’s teaching about possessions and priorities (vv. 19-34). He challenged them to store up for themselves treasures in heaven, not treasures on earth. He then gave them the antidote to anxiety—trust in the heavenly Father.



**19** “Don’t store up for yourselves **treasures** **A** on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal. **20** But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves don’t break in and steal. **21** For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. **22** The **eye** **B** is the lamp of the body. If your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light. **23** But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. So if the light within you is darkness, how deep is that darkness! **24** No one can serve **two masters**, **C** since either he will hate one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money. **25** Therefore I tell you: **Don’t worry** **D** about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Isn’t life more than food and the body more than clothing? **26** Consider the birds of the sky: They don’t sow or reap or gather into barns, yet **your heavenly Father feeds them**. **E** Aren’t you worth more than they? **27** Can any of you add one moment to his life span by worrying? **28** And why do you worry about clothes? Observe how the wildflowers of the field grow: They don’t labor or spin thread. **29** Yet I tell you that not even **Solomon** **F** in all his splendor was adorned like one of these. **30** If that’s how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and thrown into the furnace tomorrow, won’t he do much more for you—you of little faith? **31** So don’t worry, saying, ‘What will we eat?’ or ‘What will we drink?’ or ‘What will we wear?’ **32** For the **Gentiles eagerly seek** **G** all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. **33** But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and **all these things** **H** will be provided for you. **34** Therefore don’t worry about tomorrow, because tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.”

**A.** The things an individual values most. Jesus drew a distinction between material treasures on earth and eternal rewards in heaven (v. 20).

**B.** Spiritual focus, parallel to one’s heart in verse 21. In context, a healthy eye (heart) represents a whole, God-centered perspective, while an unhealthy eye signifies selfishness.

**C.** Jesus drew a contrast between a heart devoted to God and a heart devoted to the world. Only one can hold authority over a person’s life.

**D.** Worry demonstrates a lack of faith and leads to spiritual distraction. See Philippians 4:6.

**E.** The key to avoiding worry is trusting God’s provision. He cares for birds and flowers (see vv. 28-29), so He will care for His people.

**F.** Solomon was unmatched in both wisdom and wealth (1 Kings 10:23). Gold was so abundant that silver was like rocks (2 Chron. 9:27). Yet, God gave humble wildflowers greater glory.

**G.** Jesus told His people to be different. Instead of seeking earthly riches like the Gentiles, they were to pursue God’s kingdom (v. 33).

**H.** For those who seek Him fully, God will provide the material needs that are necessary for life.

# EXPLORE THE TEXT

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## 1. Possession

(Matt. 6:19-24)

Believers should focus on heavenly treasures rather than worldly possessions.

- **How can we assess where our true devotion lies?**

## 2. Worry

(Matt. 6:25-30)

Placing too much priority on material possessions leads to worry and anxiety.

- **What kinds of things might you be tempted to worry about—and why?**
- **What are practical things you can do to get through times when you have “little faith” in God?**

## 3. Trust

(Matt. 6:31-34)

Believers can trust God to provide what they need.

- **Why does “tomorrow” create so much anxiety for us?**
- **What situation do you need to entrust to God today?**

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### DID YOU KNOW?

The Bible includes more than 2,300 verses about money and possessions.

## Apply the Text

- **People in your Bible study group likely face challenges related to material possessions and/or making ends meet. How could you help one another in these areas?**

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### KEY DOCTRINE: Stewardship

God is the source of all blessings, temporal and spiritual; all that we have and are we owe to Him. (See Luke 12:16-21; Philippians 4:19.)

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### BIBLE SKILL: Notice repeated words or phrases in a Bible passage.

Jesus referenced worry six times in Matthew 6:19-34. Identify each reference to worry and put them in a list. Identify the commands. Identify where worry or worrying is used as a noun and note how it is used. Write a summation of each point Jesus made. How do these statements about worry apply to your life? What steps can you take this week to overcome worry?

## TALK IT OUT

**Focus on Matthew 6:33, noting what Jesus said about priorities.**

In teaching His disciples about possessions (Matt. 6:19-24), Jesus emphasized the fleeting value of material things. Instead, we should pursue spiritual blessings that hold eternal value. In verses 25-30, Jesus addressed a similar issue: worry. He told His listeners to not worry about daily needs like food and clothing. Worry and anxiety occur when we lack faith in God to provide for our needs. Again in verses 31-34, Jesus taught His followers not to worry since God knows what we need. Instead, we are to pursue kingdom priorities and righteous living.

### What things do you worry about? Why?

Verse 33 provides the antidote for worry. To “seek” infers more than mere desire; it means actively going after something to obtain it. It’s not enough to want something; we must pursue it. The qualifier “first” means pursuing God’s kingdom priorities is the primary concern of our lives.

**How would your life change if you handed all your worries over to God by trusting Him and pursuing His Kingdom priorities?**

Agree to text Matthew 6:33 to each other this week as a reminder to seek first the Kingdom of God.

## Prayer Requests / Notes

## DAILY EXPLORATION



### Day 1: Matthew 6:19-21

#### *Note the two types of treasures.*

God cares about how His people handle their money, and He cares about their attitude toward material things. In Luke 16:14, Jesus called the Pharisees “lovers of money.” He didn’t want His followers to be like them. Literally, Jesus said, “Don’t treasure up treasures for yourselves.”

Jesus admonished His followers to avoid storing up these items that don’t last. Wool clothing could be eaten by the “moth.” Things made of metal might be corroded by “rust.” This word *rust* means “an eating” and can also refer to possessions being eaten by rodents and insects. Thirdly, thieves might “break in and steal.” Often valued possessions were buried in the ground to hide them. (See Matt. 13:44.) The term *break in* literally means to “dig through” and could refer to digging through a mud wall into a house or digging up buried possessions from their hiding spot.

Jesus called on His followers to “store up . . . treasures in heaven.” The things that carry over into the kingdom of God include the godly character of the disciple and the souls of people influenced for Christ. As Christ followers use their material resources in this life to meet the physical and spiritual needs of others, they are storing up treasure in heaven. Earthly possessions are to be used for the work of building God’s kingdom.

**What treasures are you storing up in heaven?**



### Day 2: Matthew 6:22-24

#### *Identify the choice Jesus is presenting.*

Just as the eye gives entrance to light into the whole body, so the heart gives entrance into the whole of a person’s character. If the eye is healthy, all is well. The word *healthy* speaks of a clear, singular focus on one purpose alone. A bad eye causes the entire body to be darkened. In the Greek translation of the Old Testament, the word *bad* sometimes is translated as “evil eye” and speaks of being stingy and begrudging. Such is the attitude of those who allow possessions to put a choke hold on their lives.

Jesus used this analogy of the eye and light and darkness to picture the heart or character of a person. The heart is either healthy with a proper perspective on material things, or it is unhealthy in its approach to wealth. Thus, the disciple’s attitude toward possessions and money impacts every aspect of life.

Wealth and possessions can easily become one’s master. The word *masters* is often translated as “lord” and relates to the owner of a slave. A slave is under the total control of a master. There is no allowance for any other devotion.

We cannot walk in two directions at the same time; neither can we serve Jesus and love possessions at the same time. The result will be love for one and hate for the other.

**How can you assess where your true devotion lies?**



### Day 3: Matthew 6:25-27

#### *Consider the lesson of the birds.*

Moving from a warning against stockpiling wealth and possessions, Jesus warned against worrying about life's necessities. The common people in Jesus's day lived under a heavy burden of taxation. It became a struggle to obtain items like food and clothing. In fact, most people ate one meal a day, and meat was served once a week at best. Their daily existence was trying to scrape up what was necessary to sustain life.

As Jesus addressed these circumstances, He told His followers to stop worrying about these things. Worry is doubting God's faithfulness and ability or willingness to provide. Jesus told His followers to replace worry with trust in God.

Perhaps gazing out over the hillside, Jesus motioned to the birds to illustrate His point as He spoke about the need for food. While birds are industrious and constantly searching for food, they are dependent on God's provision. Forces beyond their control can make it difficult to find food: the weather, drought, the seasons of the year and so forth. Yet they are provided for in spite of all this. In the same way, despite all His followers might be facing in their daily struggles, Jesus said God can be counted on to provide.

**What kinds of things are you tempted to worry about—and why?**

**According to these verses, what is the antidote to worry?**



### Day 4: Matthew 6:28-30

#### *Compare Matthew 6:29 to 1 Kings 10:14-29.*

Next Jesus spoke of worrying about clothing. Observe, He said, the wildflowers of the field. As beautiful as they were, the flowers did nothing to bring about their beauty. The word *observe* means to “learn thoroughly from.” There was a lesson to be learned from the flowers that didn't labor, a word pointing to the occupation of men in Jesus's day. Nor did they spin thread, a reference to a task that typically belonged to women.

The lesson from wildflowers continues with a comparison to the splendor of Solomon's kingdom. First Kings 4:20-34 provides a description of Solomon's wealth and opulence. Jesus spoke of how Solomon adorned himself. The word *adorned* speaks of putting on clothing. Yet, the wildflowers of the field were clothed in even greater splendor than the king. Again, this was God's provision.

Wildflowers and grasses are temporary. But just like with the birds, God's care is evident. How much more will God care for His children! Jesus was following a typical Jewish form of logic, arguing from lesser to greater. If God cares for the little things, how much greater will be His care for us who are the pinnacle of His creation?

To worry is to show little faith in God; it is to deem Him as untrustworthy.

**What situation do you need to entrust to God today?**





## Day 5: Matthew 6:31-34

### **Highlight verse 33.**

Followers of Jesus are not to worry about how to make ends meet in life. To worry is to abandon faith. Faith says, “God will provide.”

In using the word *Gentiles*, Jesus pointed to those who were not His followers. A person who doesn’t find hope in a relationship with God will seek to find hope in material things. They will seek temporary substitutes for a faith relationship with God.

Jesus commanded us to align our priorities with God’s kingdom. The phrase “seek first” speaks of priority. We are also to be preoccupied with “the kingdom of God and his righteousness.” This is the kind of life that pleases God. This kind of life comes with an assurance. Jesus said, “all these things will be provided for you.” In context, this refers to food, drink, and clothing. This refers to what we need, not to the things we want.

Jesus returned to the original challenge of verse 25. A follower of Christ must daily exercise dependence on God and avoid the pointless worry about tomorrow’s problems. Each day has enough trouble of its own. This is a realistic look at life. Jesus said, “You will have suffering in this world” (John 16:33). Believers are to live one day at a time in complete trust of their heavenly Father.

**What should be the priorities of a follower of Christ?**

## APPLY THE TEXT

What would you consider to be your greatest barrier in seeking first the kingdom of God? What does your giving to God through your church say about your priorities in life? What is one step you might take to let Jesus be master of your finances?

## JOURNAL





# THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN IN MATTHEW

BY ROBERT WEATHERS

- With frequency and fervency, the Scriptures teach about the coming of God's kingdom on earth. In both the Old Testament languages of Aramaic and Hebrew and in the New Testament Greek, the terms translated "kingdom" referred more to the reign and authority of the king than it did to a geographical area. So in the Bible the "kingdom of God" referred primarily to God's rule, His divine kingly authority, which had come from heaven to earth. The kingdom was not so much a geographic place as it was the reality of God in action.

The Gospel writers used two terms interchangeably to speak of God's kingdom. They called it "the kingdom of God" and "the kingdom of heaven." All four Gospels use "the kingdom of God," but Matthew favored "the kingdom of heaven." Since "kingdom of heaven" was a typical Jewish way to "avoid the use of the name of God" when referring to God's rule, Matthew's preference for this phrase demonstrated his concern for reaching a Jewish audience with the message of Jesus.

Exploring Jesus's use of these terms in Matthew's Gospel illuminates compelling truths about God's reign in the universe. In fact, chapters 12; 13; 16; and 19 provide keys to understanding these truths. Chapter 13 is especially significant. In that chapter, Jesus defined the nature of God's kingdom through a series of parables. Four facts about Jesus's use of "the kingdom of God" or "heaven" emerge as we scan these chapters in Matthew.

*First, the kingdom is embodied in Christ.* The early Christians realized that the kingdom of God had actually arrived in

Jesus. As Messiah, Christ was the anticipated King. But more than that, He actually embodied the kingdom of God. He brought its mission to earth. He carried bodily the full authority of God.

Matthew recorded events through which Jesus demonstrated His regal authority. For example, when the Pharisees criticized Jesus for permitting His disciples to eat grain and for healing a man on the Sabbath, Jesus proclaimed Himself "Lord of the Sabbath" (Matt. 12:8). Jesus was inaugurating the kingdom of God on earth and asserting His authority as King. Matthew clarified that the King had come by quoting a passage from Isaiah that anticipated the Messiah's arrival (Matt. 12:15-21; Isa. 42:1-4).

Jesus further validated His authority by casting out demons. He taught that the contest between God and Satan was a battle of kingdoms. His arrival on earth meant that Satan was defeated. To the Pharisees, Jesus declared, "If I drive out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you" (Matt. 12:28).

*Second, the kingdom is a call to discipleship.* Jesus's coming requires a response from all who encounter the King. Jesus packaged His call to discipleship with His kingdom teaching. When the Pharisees tried to test Him and asked about His perspective on divorce, Jesus explained God's original intention for marriage. He used marriage as a way to call His followers to fulfill God's intention, rather than to look for a way to dodge God's design (19:1-12).

Not everyone would accept the demands of discipleship. Jesus used the parable of the sower and the soil to compare the ways people responded to His call to enter God's kingdom and become His followers (13:18-23). Matthew was careful to include an explanation with this parable. Although all hear the same message of the kingdom, not all respond the same way. Only the person who is fit for the kingdom "hears and understands the word" (v. 23). That disciple will produce a great bounty for the kingdom. Under the tests of time and endurance, his profession of faith will be proven genuine.

Even Jesus's closest disciples wrestled with the demands of discipleship. Following Peter's great Christological confession at Caesarea Philippi, Jesus promised that His followers would be kingdom disciples and would have keys to the kingdom. The gospel message was that key to the kingdom. Their actions of "binding and loosing" would create the church on earth, which would then carry out the mission of the kingdom.

The disciples did not fully understand this teaching. While they professed their faith in Jesus as the Son of God, they did not grasp that, as King, He would die a sacrificial death (16:13-23).

Matthew recorded other episodes to underscore Jesus's expectations for His followers. Jesus showed that citizens of His kingdom should have the faith of a child. He also taught

a rich young man that discipleship was a lifestyle that required a complete surrender to the priorities of God's kingdom (19:13-30).

*Third, the kingdom is a treasure that God reveals.* Jesus's disciples wondered why He taught kingdom truths using parables. Jesus answered, "Because the secrets of the kingdom of heaven have been given for you to know, but it has not been given to them" (13:11). He meant that parables have a dual purpose: to reveal and to conceal. The inability to understand stemmed from a hardened heart, but people who were open to the truth would understand Jesus's teaching and choose to follow Him. To see that the kingdom of God has come required accepting God's perspective. God revealed this truth (16:17).

Jesus also taught that, unlike the pomp and pageantry that so often accompanied earthly kingdoms, God's kingdom would begin small, with a handful of disciples. Ultimately, though, it would generate grand results. For that reason the kingdom was like a mustard seed that would become a great tree or like the leaven mixed with dough (13:31-33). He similarly compared the kingdom of heaven to a treasure found in a field and to a pearl of great value (vv. 44-46). The kingdom of heaven is precious—anyone would be wise to make any sacrifice in choosing it.

*Finally, the kingdom is both a present fact and a future hope.* Though the kingdom of God was established with the arrival of Jesus, its full coming is not yet complete. He has brought its mission to earth and given that mission to the church. However, one day in the future He will return and the kingdom will be realized in all its glory.

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