

# Finer Grounds Mini-Series

## Matthew 6

### Lesson 5: Matthew 6:35-

As we conclude the study through Matthew 6, let's recap one last time on the material we have covered. Remember that chapter 6 is part of a central theme that Jesus is addressing (cf. Matthew 5:20). In chapter 6 we have been specifically examining Jesus' comparison of what a God-centered righteousness looks like compared to self-centered righteousness. We've seen that this chapter breaks down into the four main points of doing charity (vv. 1-4), praying (vv. 5-15), fasting (vv. 16-18) and wealth and material resources (vv. 19-34). In our last lesson we focused on verses 19-24 which address the issue of storing up treasures on earth. This last lesson will cover verses 25-34 which address how we view our physical necessities.

#### Read Matthew 6:25-34

Jesus starts out this passage in verse 25 by saying "for this reason." Some translations say "therefore." Whenever we see these words we should ask, "What is it the 'therefore' there for?" When we see a phrase like this we should look to the verse or passage that immediately precedes "for this reason." Jesus just finished saying "you cannot serve God and wealth" and demonstrated how we can either have a God-centered focus or a self-centered focus on our wealth/material stuff. Now Jesus is going a step further in verses 25-34 to show how constant worrying about physical materials is a self-centered focus and not a God-centered focus.

So continuing in verse 25, Jesus says "do not be worried." Is Jesus telling us quit our jobs, stop buying food and clothing and just wait for free handouts? Does He say "don't worry about those things because they will just come to you"?

#### Read 2 Thessalonians 3:6-15

God wants every physically and mentally capable person to work at earning their own living for food. Jesus is not contradicting God's will here in Matthew 6:25. Remember, the context of the last passage was not to store treasures on earth and not serving money.

**In context, what do you think Jesus means then by "do not worry" here?**

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Worry is what motivates us to make material goods our priority in life. When we worry about accumulating material things we make those objects our master. Our focus in life then shifts toward self-centered righteousness.

**In verse 25 what kinds of things Jesus telling us to not worry about?**

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It is clear that the items Jesus lists in this verse are not luxuries, but necessities. In verses 19-24 we know Jesus was telling us to not to make attaining wealth our priority. Now He switches the focus over to our basic needs. Jesus doesn't even want our primary focus to be on our most essential basics. Sure we need food,

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water and clothing to survive, but Jesus doesn't want worrying about those essentials to become our master. Now it is important to remember the group of people that Jesus is talking to. Is He talking to a group of naked, starving people? Well... no He's not. Jesus is talking to people who've seen the negative example of the scribes and Pharisees, people who loved storing up treasure on earth (cf. Luke 16:14), and now He's saying don't even worry about your most basic necessities. I think for women especially this can be difficult. Our roles as wife and mother can cause us to be natural worriers.

**What are some examples of material things that you worry about on a daily or weekly basis?**

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As wives and mothers, we worry about how we can provide a nutritious, filling meal at an affordable price. Then we have to repeat it 2-3 times a day. Keeping growing children in clothes may cause us to worry. Many of us clip coupons, shop sales and find other ways to save money. It can be exhausting and time consuming, but if we're not careful it can also steal our focus from trusting God. Yes even worrying about being frugal can steer our focus away from a God-centered righteousness. Jesus wants us to understand that there are much more important things than even our most basic physical necessities.

In verse 26 Jesus gives us reasons as to why we shouldn't worry. He uses the birds as His first illustration here. Birds are not lazy by any means. From dawn till dusk they are flying around gathering food for themselves or their young.

**What is the difference though between how birds and most people go about their work?**

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Birds are not capable of thinking about tomorrow. They live in the present and complete their tasks and everything works out for them. However Jesus says that we are worth more than they are.

**Why are we worth so much more to God than the birds?**

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Our relationship to God is the most important thing to Him. As we grow to understand that it is easier to not to worry because we know that He won't treat us worse than the birds.

Jesus continues in verse 27 by saying that worrying cannot lengthen your life. This verse is a little tricky to translate. Some translations describe it as lengthening our height whereas the NASB describes it as lengthening our time (both give the same conclusion). Usually when we do something for any period of time and put a lot of effort into it we expect a great benefit. If we exercise and eat right, we expect to benefit physically from that.

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*When we put effort into our Bible studies we expect to benefit spiritually from studying. What benefit do we get from worrying?*

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*The only results we get from worrying might be high blood pressure, stress and ulcers, all of which are negative effects. Studies have even shown that prolonged anxiety will shorten life due to effects such as heart attacks and hypertension (Goldberg). Jesus is teaching us that constant worrying won't improve our quantity or quality of our life, so why do it?*

*In verses 28-30 Jesus uses flowers as a second illustration as to why we shouldn't worry, although this illustration focuses on clothing instead of food. In verse 28 Jesus says the flowers "do not toil, nor do they spin." Is His point here to say that flowers are lazy? No! Remember Jesus is pointing out that we should not worry, and the flowers certainly don't worry. Jesus goes on to say in verse 29 that even King Solomon didn't clothe himself like one of the flowers. We know that King Solomon was one of the wealthiest kings in the world so what is His point in bringing up King Solomon? Even his great wealth couldn't provide clothing as beautiful as the flowers. In verse 30 Jesus says that God clothes the insignificant grass. If He does that for the grass imagine, what will God do for us when we focus on Him and trust Him?*

*According to Jesus in verse 30, when we worry all the time what does that say to God about our trust in Him?*

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*If we are worrying all the time it doesn't give much value to the faith we have in God. Jesus concludes verse 30 by saying "you of little faith!" Worrying not only has physical consequences but spiritual side-effects as well.*

*What effects does worrying have on our trust and faith in God?*

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*Bringing worry back to our context, it doesn't seem possible to achieve a God-centered righteousness if we are worrying all the time. Our Faith and trust in God is weakened, at best, by worry. Worry promotes a self-centered righteousness which Jesus acknowledges in the next verses.*

*In verse 31 Jesus repeats Himself telling us not to worry about food, drink or clothing. If He is repeating Himself, surely it must be important not to worry about acquiring even our basic necessities. In verse 32 he says that "the Gentiles eagerly seek all these things." It is important to remember who the Gentiles were at this time before Jesus' death. The Gentiles were godless and no relationship with the heavenly Father. Certainly nobody any faithful Jew would want to behave like.*

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*Jesus says that Godless people seek these things through worrying. What does that say about His audience of Jews (or us Christians) if we worry?*

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*We are supposed to be at a much higher standard than any godless person, but if we worry about our necessities it makes us no better than godless person. Jesus uses the example of an anxious Gentile to illustrate what a self-centered righteousness looks like. God's people should not have to lower themselves to the level of the world. Jesus says we have a heavenly Father "knows that you need all these things." Think about the relationship between a child and a parent for a moment. If you were to ask a five-year-old how they were going to get their food or clothes what would their response be? They certainly wouldn't give some detailed explanation about how you have to work in order to spend money at the grocery store. They know it comes from mom and dad. Most children never worry about whether their mom or dad will provide for them; they have complete trust. That's the attitude Jesus hopes to cultivate in us as well. We know that we are not supposed to worry, so how can we overcome worry? Jesus explains that in verses 33.*

*We must have our focus in the right place and "seek first His kingdom and His righteousness." Now throughout the New Testament we know that "kingdom" sometimes refers to God's church.*

*Thinking back to our previous studies, and staying in the context of chapter 6, how do we know that "kingdom" here may not be specifically referring to the church?*

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*In verses 19-32 Jesus has been comparing a treasure on earth vs. treasure in heaven, God as our master vs. money as our master and finally trusting in God for necessities vs. worrying about necessities. Jesus has been asking us to seek a God-centered righteousness all throughout chapter 6. So staying in context it seems that "His kingdom" refers to God's rule and reign in our hearts as our King, and not His church. Also consider this: He's writing to Jews, and His church won't be established for quite some time. These Jews would have no clue what "seek first His church" would mean, but they would completely understand what it means to seek the kingdom of God in their lives (of course, after Acts 2 you won't find God's reign in people's lives outside His church but that's not Jesus' point in context).*

*What does Jesus want us to do in order for God to reign in our hearts (He has been talking about it throughout verses 19-32)?*

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*In order for us to seek God's righteousness we must do the things that please Him, not ourselves. If we do that, Jesus says "all these things will be added to you." Staying in context, what are "these things?"*

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*Remember that in verses 25-32 Jesus has been talking about physical necessities: food, drink and clothing. Jesus is not promising riches untold and a life of comfort and ease, but God will make sure we have everything we physically need in this life if we completely seek Him and trust Him.*

*Finally Jesus concludes this passage by saying for a third time "do not worry" in verse 34. If Jesus says something more than once we better believe it is important. Here He says don't worry about tomorrow simply because "each day has enough trouble of its own." God wants us to focus on serving Him one day at a time. Remember the Israelites wandering through the desert after their Egyptian captivity.*

*Why did God only give them manna one day at a time (cf. Exodus 16)?*

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*God wants us to be focused and devoted to Him on a daily basis, and worrying can be a distraction. It is so easy to get wrapped up in money, clothing, food and other materialistic things that we lose focus on God and our eye is no longer clearly fixed on Him.*

*If we really want to trust in God and focus on Him, Jesus is clear throughout chapter 6 how we can*

*practice a God-centered righteousness? We can do it through God-centered charity (vv. 1-4), God-centered prayer (vv. 5-15), God-centered fasting (vv. 16-18) and a God-centered view on wealth and other material goods (19-34). If that's how we practice our righteousness to please God then we will certainly surpass the scribes and the Pharisees, and God will invite us into His heavenly kingdom (cf. Matthew 5:20).*

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Works cited

"Physical Effects of Worrying." WebMD. Ed. Joseph Goldberg. WebMD, 4 May 2013. Web. 30 Jan. 2015. <<http://www.webmd.com/balance/guide/how-worrying-affects-your-body?page=3>>.

Note: The author uses the New American Standard Update for all quotations and references.