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Matthew 6:19 - 6:34: God or Money



Sermon on the Mount - Steve Gregg

Steve Gregg examines Matthew 6:19-34, which presents a conflict between God and money. He views possessions as superfluous and believes that Jesus forbids work and job when taken without modification or qualification. Gregg proposes that Christians should lay up their treasures in heaven and serve God rather than money. He emphasizes that worrying is pointless and that trusting God is the sensible option because just like God provides for the animals, he will also provide for his children.

Transcript

We have to pick up now at Matthew 6 and verse 19, I believe it is. Here again, the discussion, it's not really a discussion except that Jesus is discussing, monologuing on this, but the subject matter changes a bit again. There are some very clear breaks in sections of the Sermon on the Mount.

The Beatitudes quite clearly stand as a section of their own. The discussion about the law and the prophets and I say unto you versus what you have heard said, that's obviously a self-contained section. The portion we just finished, verses 1-18 of Matthew 6 also has very clear markers of being a defined section because of the business of not doing your righteousness to be seen by men.

Now we have a turning point again. And I'd like to read first of all the remainder of the chapter and make some comments. If therefore your eye is good, your whole body will be full of light.

But if your eye is bad or evil, your whole body will be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in you is darkness, how great is that darkness? No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.

Therefore I say to you, do not worry 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? Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns. Yet your heavenly Father feeds them.

Are you not of more value than they? Which of you, by worrying, can add one cubit to his stature? So why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow. They neither toil nor spin. And yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.

Now if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? Therefore do not worry, saying, What shall we eat, or what shall we drink, or what shall we wear? For after all these things the Gentiles seek, for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things.

Sufficient for the day is its own trouble. Now, in this whole section, and it is a long one, I mean it's not necessarily longer than the previous one, but a long amount of material to try to take in one session, there is a common thread here. And it has to do with life.

Quality of life, I suppose is what we might call it. Quality of life has become sort of a catch term today in discussions about things like abortion and euthanasia. You know, well, if this child is not going to have a very good quality of life, perhaps we should abort it.

Its life isn't worth much. Or if this person has gotten so old that they're not able to enjoy life, it's more painful to be alive than pleasant. Then their quality of life is diminished to such a point that perhaps it should be ended.

The assumption is that quality of life is what makes life worth living. Well, the term quality of life may well be a modern term, but the concept certainly is not. Forever, people have been seeking for themselves a better quality of life.

And quality of life, I think, is measured in two measures. One is the comfort level of life, or enjoyment of life, on the one hand. And the other, of course, is the length of life, living a long time rather than dying young.

These two things are usually what we would consider to be important factors in determining quality of life. Did a person live happily and comfortably, enjoyably, and did they live long? If either of these is answered no, we usually think it a great tragedy. And the fact that we think it a great tragedy means that we value these things for ourselves, and therefore we pity others who don't have them.

We want for ourselves quality of life. We want comfort and enjoyment in life. We want to live long by nature.

But there are different ways and different places from which to seek quality of life. That would be enjoyment and comfort on the one hand, and security and longevity on the

other. The one way is to, of course, find it in God, which is what Jesus advocates.

The other is to find it in something other than God. And the most common substitute for God in seeking enjoyment and comfort and security in life is money. Or at least the things that money can buy.

Money can buy a great number of things. Solomon said in Ecclesiastes, money answers all things. It doesn't really, but it seems to at times.

First of all, if you need food, you can buy food if you have money. In most cases, if you live somewhere where food is available. There are times you might have all the money in the world and there would be no food available.

But for the most part, all things being equal, if you have money, you can usually supply your needs, food, clothing, and luxuries. And you're likely to live more comfortably. Have more comfortable things to wear and live in and sleep in and so forth.

And maybe have more friends as a result, too, because people love rich people. At least they act like they do. They say you can't buy love with money, but you can certainly buy a counterfeit love with money.

And sometimes a counterfeit works just fine for some people. You don't have to love me, but if you act like you do, that's good enough. What Jesus is pointing out is that there's a basic dichotomy, a basic conflict here.

All people, of course, want their lives, at least by nature, we are driven by a desire for a high quality of life and a long life. So for a long life, we need security. For quality of life, for comfort, we really need something.

Money is the main thing that most people think they need. They think that if they had more money, they could be more comfortable, more happy, and so forth. And the two options are to look to money and the things that money can buy, in terms of security and comfort, or to look to God.

Now, the Sermon on the Mount is addressing major issues. Not every little issue is addressed in the Sermon on the Mount, but major issues where God wants us to have our minds reformed. So Jesus talks about issues like the role of the law and our understanding of how the law relates to righteousness, or how religious acts are to be done toward God, not toward man.

Likewise, one of the most important things that dictates behavior, for good or for ill, is whatever values a person adopts. And if a person adopts comfort and enjoyment and long life as his values, he will be strongly tempted to seek those things in the ways that natural man seeks them, through finances, through money. But Jesus wants us to have different values, and to realize that a quality life is not measured necessarily in its

comfort level, or its length, or its natural security.

A quality life is one that lasts forever, for one thing, eternal life. And that has eternal comforts of a spiritual sort, and eternal rewards. Such a person who seeks and values that kind of quality life, spiritual life, will sometimes not have much of the comforts of this world.

And they won't always live a long time. Jesus himself didn't live to be very old, before his crucifixion. And, therefore, Jesus wants them to take their eyes off of that natural source of, that natural valuing, of the things of natural life, length of life, and luxuries of life, and to value things of heaven.

Paul later would say in Colossians, if you are raised with Christ, then seek the things which are above, where Christ sits. Set your affections on the things above, and not on the things of the earth. And Jesus is saying something like that, too.

Your values have got to shift, so that you value more the things of heaven, than the things of earth. And that, although it may be arguably the case that the things of earth will make your life more comfortable here, at one level, and may even help you to live long, where others would die for lack of money. But yet, you will not live as long as you could, if you don't have eternal life.

And you will not live as comfortably as you could, even if you have all the money in the world, and all the earthly comforts, but you don't have a conscience that's comfortable. You have no treasure in heaven. You have no relationship with God.

One way Jesus put it, in Luke chapter 12, was about the rich fool who gathered much things, and said to his soul, take your ease, eat and drink, and be merry. And God said, you fool, this day your life will be taken from you, then who shall those things be that you have laid up for yourself? And Jesus concludes that parable in Luke 12, verse 21, by saying, so is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God. Now here's the two ways to be rich.

You can be rich in terms of having laid up treasures for yourself, or you can be rich toward God. Now Jesus begins this section by saying, do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven.

In other words, be rich toward God. The opposite of laying up treasures for yourself. For neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in and steal.

For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. Now, obviously, your principal concern in this area of money and treasures, and security and values, has got to be a concern for your heart. That was obviously the case throughout the Beatitudes.

Blessed are the pure in heart. Blessed are the poor in spirit. It's what was at issue in the law.

Don't commit adultery, but also don't have anger at your brother. Don't commit adultery, but also your heart should not be murderous. Don't commit adultery, your heart also should not commit adultery.

Your religious deeds should be done from the heart, and not from a desire to be seen by men. Heart religion is what Jesus is trying to get his disciples aware of. The internal life, not just the external.

And he says, where your treasure is, your heart will be also. That's the warning. That's the motivation.

Assuming you are concerned about your heart, know this, that if you lay up treasures on earth, your heart will be in the things of earth. If you lay up treasures in heaven, your heart will be in the things of heaven. And he doesn't have to tell you which is more desirable, which is to be sought.

It says in Proverbs chapter 4, keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life. The heart is the most important thing, and if your heart is earthbound, if your heart is tied up in the things of earth, then you are vulnerable to much greater sorrow. Even if you build up a very comfortable life, and a fluent life, you are vulnerable to much more sorrow and grief in the long run.

Because your heart is not in heaven. You have no treasures in heaven. Wherever you lay up your treasures is where your affections will be drawn naturally.

It says in 1 John chapter 2, verses 15 through 17, 1 John 2, 15 through 17, it says, Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. So you've got this conflict here.

If you love the world, you don't love the Father. It says, For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the pride of life is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passes away, and the lusts of it, but he that does the will of God endures forever.

Now, if you love the world, you are loving that which is going to pass away. You will be deprived of it someday. To set your heart on treasures on earth is to be a fool, really.

Because your heart can't just be shifted automatically. As soon as those treasures are gone, you can't just automatically say, OK, now I'll love something else. You condition your heart to value and to pursue and to crave and to love the things that you encourage it to crave and to love by acquisition and by seeking.

And if you acquire many things, your heart will be in them. It's an amazing thing. If you have an old car, many times you don't think much about the car.

Your heart's not in it. You get a fancy car, and now you're concerned about it all the time. Concerned that it won't get stolen.

Concerned that it won't get scratched. Concerned that someone won't spill something on the seats. Concerned that someone won't get the smell of cigarette smoke in there.

I mean, it's a fancy car. You don't want anything to go wrong with it. Your heart is now all caught up with anxieties and worries about this thing.

When you have something that's highly valued in the world, it's hard for you not to highly value it yourself. And have your heart place a lot of importance on it. But if you have few things on earth, then your heart will not be taken up with many things on earth.

If you lay up treasures in heaven, that is where your heart will be, Jesus is saying. Now, when he says, do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, this command, taken at face value, would seem to condemn the acquisition of all goods that are perhaps not necessary. What is a treasure, after all? A treasure is a thing of value.

But no one would speak of treasure as your daily bread. Treasure is possessions that are superfluous, really. At least superfluous for current needs.

No one considers a person to have treasures if he has only enough to stay alive. Although he should be grateful for that. Paul said, having food and rain, let's therewith be content.

We don't call those possessions that just merely keep us alive. We don't call those treasures. But anything beyond that is a treasure of sorts.

It is a luxury. Now, we have come to have such a high degree of luxury in our society that we don't think of lots of things as luxuries. We think of them as needs.

If the phones didn't work. If the television doesn't work. If today I find out there is something wrong with my computer, I can't access my email.

I'll get it fixed. But it's very frustrating. I get a lot of email every day.

I go to open it up and my computer crashes every time I try to do it. It's frustrating. I need that email.

I need that. I need my computer to work. But I really don't, I suppose.

I'm not going to die and no one else is likely to die if I never get that email. It's going to

be inconvenient. But that's not the same thing as a need.

We have become accustomed to so many extravagances and luxuries that we begin to think of the luxuries as needs. But when you really get down to it, the majority of people who have ever lived on the planet Earth and who still live on the planet Earth have very little more than just what it takes to keep them alive. And some don't even have that much and die for lack of food or clothing.

And much of what we consider needs are really our luxuries, are really what we have to call treasures. They are affluence. Now, is there something wrong with having more than you need? That's the question.

Jesus said, do not lay up treasures for yourself on Earth. Well, that's a command of Jesus. We have to obey Jesus.

Is it wrong for me to have more money in the bank than I need to write checks on for the day's needs? Is it necessary for me to divest myself of everything that I don't need for today and just trust God for my daily bread each day? Is that what this teaching is suggesting? Some would say so. This teaching has been used, along with other things in the Bible, and there are a number of things that can be construed this way, to suggest that total poverty is the only real life of piety. And thus monasticism began, where the monks would take vows of poverty and chastity and obedience because poverty was considered to be a virtue and by the teaching of Jesus you couldn't really be right.

You'd be sinning if you had anything besides what you needed for survival, if you lay up treasures on Earth. Almost everyone who has a bank account has more there than they plan to write checks on this week. And therefore they've laid up treasures on Earth.

Is this forbidden? Well, Jesus said, don't do it. What does he mean? Well, there's three ways to understand it. One is in the most literal sense, that it is wrong for you to have anything that could be construed as luxury, as a treasure, more than what someone else has, more than what you need.

That is wrong. He's forbidding it. In that case, Christians would have to live, of course, in total poverty and own nothing more than what is absolutely necessary for survival.

Now, I do not understand that to be the case here for the simple reason that the disciples themselves did not seem to live that way. The disciples were not rich men. In fact, to a large extent, we would call them poor men.

But it's not as if they had only enough for that day. There were people in the early church who had houses, who didn't sell them, but they had prayer meetings in them, according to Acts chapter 12. There are people who had things that they could probably have survived without.

What constitutes a treasure? Certainly owning a house would be a luxury when you could perhaps stay out of the rain under a bridge or live in your car. Now, if we begin to say that it is wrong to have treasures on earth, period, that his statement is simply taken in the most absolute sense without any modification, without any qualification, then we begin to put ourselves in a position to judge people based on how much money they have or don't have. And there's really no end to this, because a person could get down to wearing nothing but a loincloth and say, this is all I need.

And I eat grass like an ox. And anybody who eats a hamburger, that's rich. That's treasure.

That's more than he needs. Anybody who has a change of clothes, you don't really need a change of clothes. That's a luxury.

You could wear the same clothes until they hang in rags and then get another pair when you have to toss them out. Until you go all the way down to the bare essentials for minimal survival, you are at some level of luxury that someone could criticize and say, well, look, you've got some luxury there. You are laying up treasures for yourself on earth.

Now, if Jesus taught that and meant it that way, then we just have to live with that fact that everyone should be judging everyone else in a way, as spiritual or non-spiritual, based on how many changes of clothing they have and whether the car they drive could have possibly been a less expensive one or a more economical one to drive or some other consideration like that or a humbler looking car or something. There's all kinds of ways in which this, I think, could be turned into something very different than what Jesus wanted it to be turned into. There are two possibilities that are equally valid to understand his words here that would not be forbidding the possession of all things that are, in any sense, a luxury.

One would be to suggest he's using what we call a limited negative where he says, don't do this, but do that. But he means don't only do this, but also do that. That is, don't do the one without doing the other.

We know that Jesus does talk that way in some passages, in some situations. This is a Hebraism, this limited negative. Whenever you find it, it is a statement, don't do this, but do that.

Or not this, but that. But it really means not only, but also. We have an example of that, for example, in John chapter 6, when the people whom Jesus fed the multitudes the day before, they came and found him.

And he said to them in John 6, verse 27, Do not labor for the food which perishes, but labor for the food which endures to everlasting life, which the Son of Man will give you,

because God the Father has set a seal on him. Now, obviously, this statement is not too far removed in meaning from do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, but lay up treasures in heaven. Don't labor for the food that perishes, labor for the food that endures to eternal life.

But taken without modification or qualification, basically, Jesus is forbidding you to work a job. Don't labor for the food that perishes. Well, if I go and get a job, I get a paycheck, one of the things I'm going to buy with that is food that perishes, because I have to eat it.

Those who don't work should not eat. And therefore, the hours I spend at my job, I am working for food that perishes. And that would be a sin if Jesus said, don't ever do that.

But he did say that, don't labor for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures to eternal life. The only reasonable way to understand this statement of Jesus is for him to be saying, don't only labor for the food that perishes, but also make sure that you're making provision for the eternal food. There's no sin in working a job in order to feed yourself.

In fact, the Bible elsewhere commands people to do it. And Jesus' statement must not be a forbidding of all work for money or for food. It must be rather saying, don't only work for your food, don't only concentrate on your physical needs, you need to also give attention to your spiritual needs, to that food which endures to eternal life.

This is the most reasonable way to understand that. And there are other examples, even later on in Matthew 6. But when he says, do not lay up treasures on earth, but lay up treasures in heaven, it's very possible that his meaning is intended to be, do not only provide for your needs on earth, but also make sure you provide for your needs in heaven. Remember a moment ago, I read to you what Jesus said about the foolish rich man in chapter 12 of Luke.

The man died, he'd laid up much goods for himself, but his soul was unprepared, he went to hell. And Jesus said, so is he who lays up treasure for himself, but is not rich toward God? Now does this mean that if you have treasures, you are not rich toward God? Or does it mean that if you have treasures, you are not secure unless you also are rich toward God? Are there any persons in the Bible who had treasures and were rich toward God? Of course we have some in the Old Testament, there's no question about that. Job and Abraham and David would all be examples.

And many, all the kings of course, and many other men, Isaac and Jacob, were rich. Of course we're saying that's Old Testament. In the New Testament, Jesus brought a new ethic of poverty.

I'm not so sure he did bring in a new ethic of poverty. He certainly brought in a teaching

that we should not love things, and we should not seek to be rich, and that we should be content to have only food and clothing. In other words, there is a teaching in the New Testament that poverty should be accepted, if necessary, by the believer.

If the call of God in your life requires that you have nothing but food and clothing, then you should be content with that. Paul apparently faced those circumstances from time to time, and he was content. That is true.

The Bible tells us not to value riches too highly. But does it tell us to value poverty as a necessity? I personally don't think so, because there were, as I say, people in the book of Acts, godly people, in good terms with the church, who had money. And Paul even tells Timothy in 1 Timothy 6, 17, Charge those who are rich in this life, not to trust in their riches, but in the living God, and not to be high-minded, but to be free with their money, willing to share and willing to distribute.

These were Christians, apparently, who were rich. But they were to be willing to distribute, and to put their trust in God. It would appear from much of the Scripture, Old and New Testament, that a person can be rich and still be a man of faith, or at least he can have more than just his bare necessities.

He doesn't have to be a total pauper in order to be a godly person. Paul was sometimes a total pauper, and he was content to be in that condition. But he wasn't always that way.

He says, I've learned how to be abased, and I've learned how to abound. Now, I realize that abound, for Paul, was not what we think of it. We think of abounding as having a beach home, and a ski lodge home, and a suburban home, and several cars, and a yacht.

That's abounding. When Paul said, abound, I know how to abound, he later said in the same chapter, which is Philippians 4, I have all, and I abound, having received the gift that was sent by you through Epaphroditus. Interestingly enough, he was in jail, and he described himself as abounding.

So he says, I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Apparently, being abased is worse than being in jail. But abounding is relative.

All I can say is, because it is relative, the Bible doesn't place any particular dollar figure on how much you can have before you're cheating, how much you can enjoy before you're a bad steward. Paul did say that God richly gives us all things to enjoy. And he's talking about material things in this particular context, in 1 Timothy 6. It's in the same passage I quoted earlier about commanding the rich ones.

1 Timothy 6.17, Command those who are rich in this present age not to be haughty or trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God who gives us richly all things to enjoy. God

gives us what we have, because he has no grudge against us enjoying the creation. Certainly when he put Adam and Eve in the world before the fall, they were not sinful to enjoy the fruit and the goods and the beauty and the animals and all the wealth of the earth that was given to them.

There's no sin in that. The kind of asceticism that denies material things is not from Christianity, it's from Greek religion. It's something that's very often found in Christian circles, but it's not something found in the Bible.

The Bible does say that if we place our hearts on material things, then we are certainly sinning. And therefore we need to be cautious not to lay up treasures on earth at the expense of having greater treasures in heaven. Wherever your greater treasure is, more likely your heart will be devoted to.

You can have some things on earth so long as your real treasure is elsewhere. And therefore it's possible that Jesus' words should be taken as a limited negative. Do not lay up for yourselves only treasures on earth, but also lay up treasures in heaven.

So that whether you have treasures on earth or not is really not all that important so long as you do have treasures in heaven. That should be not neglected. That's essential.

That's one way of understanding his words. Another way that I've often considered he may have meant this is where he says, do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven. You need to watch out for your own soul and your own eternal life.

That has got to be your first priority. Even though we should be concerned about the souls of the lost, it does no man any good to win souls for others if he himself is a castaway, Paul said. Paul says, I buffet my body and so forth.

He says in the closing verses of 1 Corinthians 9, lest having preached to others, I myself should be a castaway. That would be a great tragedy. Even if a thousand people got saved through my preaching, if I was lost, that's a tragedy.

I have an obligation to make sure that I obey God, that my relationship with God is what he wants it to be before I am going about caring for other people's souls. When it comes to treasures in heaven, I am to lay up for myself treasures in heaven. On earth, I am not to lay up for myself treasures on earth.

Now, there may be times when laying up treasures is a right thing to do, but it's not for myself, that is. It's not just for me, not even principally for me. But rather, I see myself as God's steward, and if I have abundance, it is his abundance, not mine.

It's not for myself. Some of it may indeed be accessible for my needs if I believe them to be God's will for me to use in a certain way, but the money is God's. And it is therefore

for others as much as for me.

And we have the example of Joseph in Genesis, laying up the treasures of Egypt by command of God. God revealed it to him. This is what he should do.

There's going to be seven years of famine. Lay up treasures, food, during the seven good years. But he didn't do that for himself, at least not merely for himself.

Certainly, he benefited from it. He did it for the nation. He did it for his family, who were able to survive because of it.

He did it for other people. He did it in order to fulfill the will of God and minister to a great number of people with the surplus. That was laid up.

There was no sin in laying up treasures. On earth, it was not for himself. Likewise, the ant commended in the sixth chapter of Proverbs, Go to the ant thou sluggard, learn of her ways, be wise.

In the summer, she lays up food for the winter. The ant puts aside more food in the summertime than it will eat in the summer. It's laying it up, laying up treasures on earth.

Why? For itself? No, not essentially. It's for the community. The ant gathers food for the anthill, for all the ants, for his whole society.

What he has laid up is not selfishly laid up for his own needs. He may benefit along with all others, as Joseph did, but it's not a selfish thing. Now, I could understand Jesus saying that and meaning it that way.

That if you lay up things for yourself, see, that's the problem, the self. If you're laying up things and it's for others, or for God's purposes, and not something for your own selfish comforts and so forth, and ambition and greed, then I don't know that there'd be a violation here. As I'm saying, there's these three ways to understand it.

Either Jesus is saying all Christians should be totally poor with no luxuries, or, secondly, it's a limited negative, you should not only lay up treasures for yourself, but also lay up treasures in heaven for yourself, or the emphasis is on yourself. You can lay up treasures on earth, but not for yourself. They're for God.

In any case, any of these understandings, I'm inclined to believe the third, or at least the second or the third, is what Jesus had in mind, but any of them, any of those three understandings, goes against the grain of the natural man who believes that life will be made more enjoyable, more comfortable, that quality of life will be elevated by having more luxuries, more things that money can buy. And Jesus said, no, that's not the way you're supposed to be thinking. Put that thought aside and look to the issue of being rich toward God, having treasures in heaven.

You should have, if you have possessions at all, hold them with a certain amount of disattachment. If you have too much for yourself laid up on earth, your heart will be there. Where your treasure is, your heart will be.

And your heart is what you need to be concerned about. Now, this business about the lamp of the body being the eye, this is interesting and difficult, really. Because he uses a Hebrew idiom we are not very familiar with.

He says, the lamp of the body is the eye, verse 22. If therefore your eye is good, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness.

But if therefore the light that is in you is darkness, how great is that darkness? Now, the problem with this is understanding how the imagery is to be applied. Obviously, it is not literal. Because even, I mean, your body isn't some hollow room that emits light through the windows of the eyes.

That's not what he is saying, at least not literally. Your body can't be filled with light by having your eyes functioning well. Now, some translations say if your eye is healthy, if your eye is bad, meaning unhealthy.

But it's not entirely clear why this would be any more true than any other translation. The eye does not really emit light into the body. The eye does perceive light and transmits images to the brain.

This benefits the body. The body is, of course, guided by the light images that come through the eye to the brain. But Jesus used an image as if the eye is like a window to a room.

And if there is light coming in the window, then the room is light. If there is not light in the window, there is no light in the room. And that, of course, is not a literal picture of the human body or the human soul.

What is he talking about? Well, if you understand the Hebrew idiom of an evil eye or of a good eye, it will help you understand what he is saying in the whole statement. An evil eye is a greedy heart. An evil eye was simply greed.

A good eye is generosity. Now, obviously, the idiom probably came from the idea that you see somebody who is in need and seeing it, if it causes you to help them, you have a good eye. Seeing it, if it doesn't cause you to help them, you have a bad eye.

But really, having a good eye or a bad eye, an evil eye, in the Bible always means being either greedy or generous. Let me show you several places where this is obvious. One of the places, actually, we looked at earlier, though I didn't call attention to this idiom, maybe I did, in Deuteronomy 15, where it's talking about the need to give to the poor,

the needy in your land.

In Deuteronomy 15, in verse 9, he says, Beware lest there be a wicked thought in your heart, saying, The seventh year, the year of release is at hand, and your eye be evil against your poor brother, and you give him nothing. Now notice, if your eye is evil toward your brother, you give him nothing. Look at Proverbs chapter 22, in verse 9. It says, He who has, literally in the Hebrew, he who has a good eye, will be blessed, for he gives of his bread to the poor.

Now the New King James has a bountiful eye, but literally in the Hebrew, it's a good eye. So, the evil eye does not give to the poor. The good eye is bountiful and gives to the poor, and is blessed as a result of that.

In Proverbs 23, in verse 6, it says, Do not eat the bread of a miser, nor desire his delicacies. Actually, the word miser, literally in the Hebrew, is one who has an evil eye. But as you read the passage, it's clearly talking about a man who's a miser, a greedy person.

But the Hebrew idiom, in the actual passage in the Hebrew book of Proverbs, is, Do not eat the bread of a he who has an evil eye. The translator's very well understood. This meant a miser, a greedy person.

In Proverbs 28, verse 22, it says, A man with an evil eye hastens after riches. What is he then? He's a greedy guy, he's a miser. And he does not consider that poverty will come upon him.

So an evil eye is a greedy eye that loves money. A good eye is a person who helps with the poor. He's not greedy.

He does things for the poor. If you'll look at Matthew 20, in verse 15, you'll find Jesus even uses the expression that way. In the parable about the workers, some worked all day and some worked only an hour, but they all got paid the same thing.

Those who worked longest complained that they got only what they expected, since others got the same amount who worked less. And the Master rebukes them. In Matthew 20, verse 15, he says, Is it not lawful for me to do what I wish with my own things? Or is your eye evil because I am good? In other words, are you greedy because I've been good to these other people? Are you greedy for me to give you more than what I offered you in the first place? So you can see that an evil eye and a good eye are contrasted in a Hebrew idiom, even in Jesus' teaching, as a reference to greed or non-greed.

Now, in the Sermon on the Mount, in the passage where he says, If your eye is good, your body will be full of light. If your eye is evil or bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. First of all, he's obviously making a distinction between being greedy or being generous.

And that fits the context well, because he just said don't lay up for yourself treasures on earth, but lay up treasures in heaven. Do you recall how treasures are laid up in heaven? He told the rich and ruler, Sell your goods, give to the poor, and you will have treasures in heaven. He told the disciples in Luke 12, 21, Sell what you have and give alms, and provide for yourselves bags that wax not old, a treasure eternal in the heavens.

When it comes to laying up treasure in heaven, the way that the Bible usually speaks about that being done is by giving to the poor. And that being so, it's natural enough after Jesus says don't lay up treasures on earth, lay up treasures in heaven for him to talk about being greedy or being generous. Don't have an evil eye, have a good eye.

But what he's saying is not so much thou shalt not have a good eye or a bad eye, and thou shalt not have a good eye. He's making a statement. Your eye, in this sense, is the lamp of the body.

Not the eye, the natural eye, but the sense in which a person has a good eye or a bad eye. In other words, the heart, the way you feel toward money. Your attitude toward money.

If you have a greedy attitude that is a bad eye, then your life will be in darkness. If you have a good eye, which is being not greedy for money and generous, then you will be full of light your whole life. Now, just as the eye is symbolic here, so is the body symbolic.

It's not really your eye that is either merciful or unmerciful, greedy or ungreedy. It's a figure of speech. So is the body a figure of speech.

The body represents your whole life. Your attitude toward money will affect your whole life. If you are greedy for money and acquisitive and clinging and covetous, then your whole life will be affected negatively.

You'll be living your life with a false value system. Groping around in the dark, not knowing where you're going. If, on the other hand, you are not greedy, if you're generous, if you're, in other words, laying up treasures in heaven, your whole life will be enhanced spiritually by that.

You'll be full of light. This is and must be what Jesus is saying here, because it is right in the context of attitudes about money. You think having money will make you happy? You think quality of life is enhanced by money? And you are greedy, therefore, to obtain more? No, your quality of life is improved by being generous.

Your body will be filled with light. That's a better quality of life than having your whole body filled with darkness, which is spiritually a bad quality of life. And he closes this part by saying, No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other.

You cannot serve God and mammon. Now, mammon simply is an Aramaic word that means money. Some people have suggested that mammon was the name of a pagan deity.

If you've heard that, that is stated without any authority from history or scripture. There's no reference elsewhere in the scripture or in history or from archaeology that anyone ever worshipped a god called mammon. You'll notice it is not capitalized in the New King James.

Some people think it should be. They think it's a proper name like Baal or Molech. It's not.

Mammon just means money. And you can't serve God like a slave and serve money as a slave. A slave can only have one master.

Now, it is the case that you as a free person who is not a slave can work two jobs. You can have two employers. That's not the same thing as a slave having two masters.

You expect a certain number of hours per week out of you. The other hours are your own. And therefore, if you want to take some of those hours that are your own and devote them to another employer who only requires a certain number of hours a week and there's no conflict between the two schedules, you can work two jobs, three jobs, whatever.

When she said you can't serve two masters, she's not speaking about masters and servants as we think of employees and employers. She's talking about slavery. A slave is owned full time by his master.

Every waking hour, that slave is at his master's service. It's obviously impossible for a person who has only one life to live to serve two masters in that sense because every moment of that one life belongs to one master. He has none left to give to another.

And therefore, it's obvious. You have to make a decision. Will I live my life every moment serving the master of financial security, financial gain, acquisition of goods and money, or will you spend every moment serving God? Now, you can't do a little of both.

You can't serve God and serve money too. Now, he doesn't say you can't serve God and have money, but you can't serve money. Serving a master means that the master dictates your behavior.

That's what a slave does. He does what his master dictates. If desire for money is dictating your behavior, then God will not be able to dictate your behavior because money and God are not the same thing.

They are in fact rival gods. Covetousness, Paul said, is idolatry. In Colossians 3, 5 and in

Ephesians 5, 5, he said it both places.

Covetousness is idolatry. It's a false god, money is. Therefore, you can't have two religions at once.

You can't ride two horses going different directions at the same time. You can't give all of your time and energy in the pursuit of God's interests and give all your time and energy in the pursuit of money's interests. In fact, if you are serving either, you can't serve the other at all.

It's going to be a love-hate relationship. It's not going to be, okay, I'll serve God for the most part, but just a little bit, serve money. You can't serve money if you're going to serve God.

You can't serve the two at all because God claims everything. All of your energy, all of your time, all of your talents, all of your good health and potential, all of your intelligence, all that you have, he claims. He is your master, you're his slave, it's all his.

Now, obviously, that doesn't mean you can't make a living, but you can't make a living unless God wants you to make a living, and in any other way than he wants you to. And when you do, you do it as an agent of his, a servant of his, doing exactly what he wants you to do at that time. In other words, you get a job because he wants you to get that job.

You quit a job when he wants you to quit the job. You work the hours you do because God wants you to work those hours. The job you work as opposed to some other job is the one God wants you to work at.

The money you earn is his money because even while you're at the job, which your employer sees you as making money, you see yourself as serving God there. You're God's slave all the while you're there. Therefore, whatever is generated in terms of finances is God's money.

You are his. And that's the opposite of thinking one's so free to pursue their own capitalistic pursuits. Now, when I say capitalistic, I don't mean to say that I'm for socialism.

As economic systems go, I'm a capitalist. I believe that there should be free enterprise. I don't believe in socialism.

I think socialism is robbery and injustice and oppression and unbiblical. But at the same time, even though I believe that a society should, people should be left free to invest their capital and to labor and to grow rich if they wish, the Christian, the personal life of the Christian cannot be that he thinks of himself as a free agent, free to do whatever he wants with his money, to make as much profit as he wants and feather his own nest as

much and live as comfortably as he wants. What I'm saying is that the government should not be set up in such a way as to inhibit this.

Men should be left free to do this on their own. But the Christian must consider things for himself quite differently than for his neighbor. His neighbor is free to become rich and spend as much money as he wants to.

The Christian is not. The person at the job that he works with, side by side, may be doing the same kind of work but for different reasons. The Christian is an agent of God, a servant of God, doing everything he's doing because he believes that to be what God wants him to do at that moment.

His whole life is devoted to God. He's a slave of God. He may work side by side in the same job, doing the same activity as a man who's serving money.

The difference is who is calling the plays, who is dictating behavior in each case. God is dictating your behavior. The man doing the same job at the same store, at the same factory, whatever it is you're doing, but is not a servant of God, he's doing it for money only.

Money is dictating. Concern for money is dictating his behavior. You see, when this difference is recognized, then you never have to worry about money.

That's the next thing Jesus says. Therefore, I say to you, don't worry. Because if you're serving God, then you look to God not only to give you instructions, but also to give you provisions.

A slave not only served his master, he was supported by his master. If you are a servant of money, you look to money to give you your directions and to provide for your things. Now, money has a system by which it provides.

The banking system, the employment system, and so forth. And if a person is serving money, his master's money, then he depends on a job, he depends on the stability of the economy, he depends on the whole money system for his security, for his provision. And therefore, because a man is driven by his craving for security, he does whatever he thinks will serve this purpose.

Whatever he thinks money demands. For him to have money, he has to do this thing. And this is how the average person lives, and how many Christians sadly are living because they are not obedient to Jesus in this respect.

You cannot be a servant of God and a servant of money. Money cannot be dictating your behavior, and money cannot be looked to for your security and for your provision, if you're a Christian. God dictates your behavior, and you look to him for your provision.

What this means is that you may in fact work at the same job that a pagan works at for a while. But if you lose that job, or if God calls you to give up the job, you are as content if God gives you a promotion as if he gives you a demotion. You are as content if God puts you out in the ranks of the unemployed, as if he gives you what people call job security.

You see, God calls some people away from their jobs. The disciples who were fishermen, for example, left their vocation. And how were they supported? Well, they didn't have a clue.

They knew how they were supported before that. They fished. They had nets, boats, caught fish, sold fish.

They served mammon. Jesus said, come and follow me. You're going to fish for men now.

I've got a new vocation for you, and if you're serving me, you'll fish for men. But there's not a lot of pay in it. In fact, there's no guaranteed income.

But you have this guarantee, if you serve me, I'll provide for you. I'm your master. If you serve God, you can work at a job that God calls you to, or leave the job and trust him in other ways, if he calls you to.

It is not for you to decide whether God will have you in a job or out of a job. Lots of people I knew when I was younger said, I'm going in full-time ministry, going to trust God for my income. What that just meant is they didn't want to get a job.

They were not necessarily in full-time ministry, and if they were, they weren't always in the kind of ministry that was blessed of God. There's reason to question whether they were called to it. A very wise pastor said to a bunch of young Jesus people, something that stuck in my mind that I think is very wise, and that is that if you want to be in full-time ministry, first get a full-time job, support yourself, and minister in your free time.

If the demands of the ministry legitimately exceed what you're able to do in your free time after you've earned your living, then cut back to a part-time job and earn as much as you can to support yourself, and use the additional time for ministry. If your ministry is indeed so demanding that it requires more than the time you have after working a part-time job, then you may have to quit your job and just trust God to provide. But don't just say, I'm not going to get a job because I'm going into full-time ministry.

Too often people who say that aren't really in full-time ministry. And God doesn't want you to just sit around doing nothing and expecting a paycheck from Him. The labor is worthy of His hire, but if God hasn't hired you to sit around on your hands, then don't expect a paycheck from Him.

If He has you involved in full-time ministry and working is not an option, then you have to trust Him to pay your wages. If He has you working part-time, then you'll have to trust

God to provide part of your wages, and He'll provide part of them through your job and part of them some other way, no doubt. If He has you working full-time, then He provides for you through your wages.

But the point is, even then, even people who work full-time sometimes don't make as much as they'd like, and therefore they strive for promotion. They strive to make another job. They do anything they can to get more money.

This is serving money. The Christian has one concern, and that is serving God. Once that is in place, money is a side issue.

At the end of this presentation, Jesus says, Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. Matthew 6, verse 33. And so His point is, you must serve God.

Seek His kingdom, what is right in His sight, first. First and completely. Because He's your master, you're His slave.

You can't serve Him and another master as well. The other things you'll find, however, are provided in the course of life. If you do the will of God, you'll find He provides all the things you need.

You don't have to seek and serve mammon as well. Now, Jesus says in verse 25, Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what drink you will put on, but life rather than food and the ball or the... Now, when He says, don't worry about your life, here I do not believe that Jesus is talking about riches or treasures anymore. Treasures have to do with the comforts and enjoyment of life.

What He talks about here is survival. What am I going to eat? What am I going to wear? How am I going to live? This has to do with security. This has to do with long life, not quality of life in the first sense we were talking about.

There are two aspects, as I say, of life that people are concerned about. Their quality in terms of comfort and enjoyment, and their length of life. It is at this point that Jesus shifts and says, Listen, just as your treasures should be in heaven, and you should seek enjoyments of a spiritual sort, rather than pursuing enjoyments and luxuries of a physical sort, so also in terms of security, of how long you will live and how you will survive.

These things too, you don't have to think like the world does. They trust in money. You trust in God.

Now, don't worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink. These are the only illustrations he gives here, which are things necessary for survival. He says, he gives several reasons.

Now, notice he says, Do not worry. In this remaining portion of this chapter, he says, Do not worry, several times. He says it there, Do not worry about your life.

And he says in verse 28, So why do you worry about clothing? In verse 31, he says, Therefore do not worry. Saying, What shall we eat or what shall we drink or what shall we wear? In verse 34, he says, Do not worry about tomorrow. Four times he forbids worry.

Now, worry is therefore a sin. And the reason that worry is a sin, is because it is the opposite of faith. We see him say that very clearly when he says to them, when he tells them not to worry, Why do you worry? In verse 30, he says, O you of little faith.

That last sentence in verse 30, O you of little faith. Worrying is little faith. To the degree that you have faith, you do not worry.

To the degree that you worry, you do not have faith. It is just that simple. It is like two ends of a continuum.

One is total faith. The other is total worry and insecurity. And if you have a little faith, then you move a little bit from total worry into the area of faith, but not very far.

You are still mostly worrying. If you have more faith, you have less worry. And if you trust God completely, you have no worry at all.

Obviously, one of the things Jesus intended to convey to his disciples, and to emphasize, was that trusting God is what God wants us to do in all things. Not only for salvation, but for all things. He wants us to live a life of trust and dependency on him.

And if we do so, it follows that we should not worry. And we will not. We will not worry.

In saying, do not worry, you are saying, believe God. Because the only way you can not worry is to believe God. Or to believe something.

You might put your faith in something other than God that is not secure. I mean, people might not worry because they have a lot of money in the bank. Then they have faith in money.

They might not worry because they have got a husband who can take care of everything for them. Then they have faith in their husband. But they have faith in something.

Worry is simply the shortage of faith in something. Of course, when we are to have faith, we are told to have faith in God. And that is what he brings out here.

But our faith in God should be such that we would never worry. Worry is therefore, we would have to say, a sin. It is the same thing as anxiety.

And we are told by Paul not to be anxious for anything, but by prayer and supplication. With thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God. You pray to God about your needs.

You trust Him and you do not have any anxiety. That is Philippians 4.6. He said, then the peace of God will keep your hearts and minds. In Christ Jesus, Philippians 4.7. So, faith in God and worry are opposites.

Since faith in God is what God wants us to have, worry is definitely something He does not want us to have. And Jesus tells us not to. But when Jesus tells us not to worry, He does not just give a bare command.

You know, if somebody is worried, and there are people who worry a great deal, there are some people who seem to enjoy worrying. I am not sure why, but they choose to worry even when they do not need to. It must be something they like to do.

I do not like to worry, so I do not. It is just not something I enjoy. Worrying is an unpleasant thing, and I just cannot live without it, so I do.

I am not a worrier. On the other hand, I have some relatives that are worriers, and some friends who are worriers that I know. And they even describe themselves as worriers.

Oh, I am just a worrier. As if that is just a chuckle. That is just my silly idiosyncrasy.

I am just a worrier. You might as well say, I am just an adulterer. That is just my little idiosyncrasy.

I am just a drug abuser. I am just a murderer. Serial killer.

Of course, worry is probably not as grievous a sin as adultery or murder, but it is still forbidden. It is a moral issue. You can say to your soul, Why are you cast down on my soul? Hope thou in God.

David did. You can talk to your soul. You can command your spirit.

He that has no rule over his own spirit is like a city broken down without walls. Do not think that you are just a victim of sins of the mind. You are a participant.

And you are a determiner of whether you will worry or not. You may feel like worrying. And there are times I feel like worrying.

But I will just command my soul and say, I will not worry. I will trust in God. I choose to believe God.

And therefore, I choose not to worry. Now, I think Jesus realizes that worry comes so naturally to people, especially since faith in God does not come naturally to some

people, that it is not going to help people a lot just to say, don't worry. If you talk to someone who is an inveterate worrier and they worry habitually and their habit of mind is continually better than worrying and anxiety, and you say, don't worry, that is not really going to help that much.

There are people who have anxiety and they take anti-anxiety drugs for it. There are people who have just constant habit of anxiety and worry. And sometimes those of us who don't believe in psychiatric drugs and don't believe in psychology are accused of just saying, you know, snap out of it.

Just don't worry. Come on, what's wrong with you? Well, there is something wrong with them, but just telling them that there is something wrong isn't necessarily going to fix it. To tell someone don't worry isn't going to make them not worry, even if they want to obey you.

Because worry is caused by a deficiency of something. Not a deficiency of some brain chemical. It is caused by a deficiency of faith in God, because worry is just the opposite of faith.

The degree to which you have faith is the same degree to which you never worry. Now Jesus, therefore, in telling us not to worry, tells us many good reasons not to worry, and they are all about faith. He gives us several incentives and reasons to believe God and not to worry.

And let me give you a list. He gives at least seven arguments against worry. Seven reasons not to worry.

And when you see it, he is so reasonable. He is not making some kind of unreasonable demand here. He says, this is why you shouldn't worry.

And once you hear him say, oh yeah, that's true. Yeah, that's true too. And that one is true too.

Everything he says is true. Worry is just plain stupid, because trusting God is sensible. And so Jesus tells us why it is sensible to trust God and not to worry about things.

First of all, his first argument in verse 25 is, he asks the rhetorical question, is not life more than food and the body more than clothing? What does that mean? What does that have to do with his instruction about worry? Simply this. Do you have life? Well, yes. The fact that you hear me speaking is because you're alive.

You have life. Where did you get that? Well, from God. Do you have a body? Yes, you have that too.

Where did you get that? Well, from God. Okay, so God gave you life and God gave you a

body. Isn't life greater than food? Isn't a body greater than clothing? If you're worried about food and clothing, how can you worry about when God has given you life, won't he give you food for your life? If he's given you a body, won't he give you clothing? He's given you the harder part.

Man can provide food and clothing, but he can't provide life and a body. God has done the hard part. Why won't he do the easier part? Jesus is arguing in this case from the greater to the lesser.

This is an argument from the greater consideration to the lesser conclusion. God has done the greater thing already. He gave you life.

He gave you a body. Why would he not do the lesser thing? Give you food and clothing for your life and for your body. That's what is implied by his question.

Is not life more than food and a body more than clothing? You're worried about food and clothing? Well, do you worry about whether you have life or a body? Of course not. God provides that. Of course he'll also provide the food and the clothing for it as well.

So he's arguing that from what God has already done, he's already got a tremendous investment in you. He's given you life and a body. Do you think he's not going to sustain that investment by giving you food and clothing, which are needed things for life and a body? He's given you the bigger parts.

Like he's given you all the hardware. You think he's not going to give you the operational software to make it work? Of course he's going to do that. Then he says, he gives the example of the birds and of the flowers.

In the case of the birds, he talks about food. In the case of the flowers, he talks about clothing. Food and clothing are the whole issue here.

Look at the birds there. They don't sow, nor do they reap or gather in the barns, yet your Heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of much more value than they? He also does the same thing with the lilies.

In verse 28, why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow. They neither toil or spin, and yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Now if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? Now, as his first argument was an argument from greater to lesser, God's giving you the greater, won't he give you the lesser? He now argues from lesser to greater.

God takes care of the lesser things, birds and flowers. Will he not take care of the greater thing, you? See, the argument works. Jesus can take it from any angle.

He can start with the greater consideration that's a given. God's given you life and a body. Therefore, he'll give you the lesser.

Food and clothing. Or you can start from the lesser. Look at the lesser things.

Animals, plants, flowers, birds. How do they stay alive? Now, he didn't talk about ants, because they do lay up. He didn't talk about bees.

He didn't talk about bears that eat enough to have fat on them to make them through the winter. Because those illustrations wouldn't work as well. But he does give example of animals that make no provision for their future.

A bird doesn't store up food for the winter. It doesn't lay up in barns, and it doesn't even go out and plant seeds to grow food. It just lives from the bountiful hand of God.

And God provides for it. Same thing for the flowers. Now, someone might say, but that's not very comforting.

If God's going to, you know, God does provide for the birds, and he provides for the flowers, and if that's the measure of how he's going to provide for me, that's not very comforting, because sometimes birds starve. Although God feeds birds, they don't live forever. Some of them are killed by predators.

Some of them starve when the winter comes, and they haven't migrated. And they starve to death, or they die of exposure to the elements. And the plants, the flowers you speak of, Jesus himself admits they're in the oven the next day.

But you see, what Jesus is suggesting is that no bird starves until God wants it to starve. In another place, Jesus said, he says, "...are not two sparrows sold for a penny, and yet not one falls to the ground except for the will of your father." If a bird dies, it's God's will for it to die. Until it is his will for it to die, he will feed it.

And it doesn't have to worry about that. So long as the bird is willing to die when God wants it to die, it will be fed for as long as it needs to be fed. I can guarantee you that God will feed you as long as you live.

Can't guarantee you're going to live very long, because I don't know the will of God. You might even starve to death. Christians have starved to death, as have birds.

But not without the will of my Father. You see, he's starting from the assumption you want the will of God, of course. Well, if you want the will of God, then don't worry, he'll take care of all the details.

If he wants you alive, he knows how to do it. He feeds the birds, he clothes the grass. Whatever is needed, he provides.

Now, this is not an ongoing thing forever. The birds eventually die, the grass is thrown in the oven the next day. And you're going to die too, no problem.

That's a different consideration. We'll talk about that another time. In the meantime, so long as God wants you here, you will be provided for all things necessary, just like the birds and the other.

He takes care of the lesser creation, he'll certainly take care of you as well. That's arguing from the lesser to the greater, his second argument. His third argument is in verse 27.

Which of you, by worrying, can add one cubit to his stature? Now, literally, a cubit is 18 inches, and stature means height. However, most commentators are agreed that Jesus is not giving an illustration from actual literal height. Even a very short person who would like to be taller doesn't usually want to add 18 inches.

I mean, there might be some people extremely short who want to be basketball players, in which case they might want 18 inches. But 18 inches is quite an addition. There are very few men under 5 feet tall, but if you added 18 inches to a 5-foot man, he'd be 6 foot 6, and there's not many men who aspire to be that tall, necessarily.

So Jesus is not suggesting that you might want to add a cubit to your height, although that's the words he uses. He uses them figuratively. In the Old Testament, sometimes distances are used as images of measures of time.

For example, the psalmist says, I think it's Moses actually, in Psalm 90, says, All of my days are as a handbreadth. Well, a handbreadth is a measurement of distance from the thumb to the little finger. It was a measurement used for building and other things, you know, just like a cubit was.

But he says, all of my days, meaning the length of my life, is like a handbreadth. There's a mixed metaphor there. And that's probably how Jesus used it here.

He means that you couldn't add the smallest amount of duration to your life by worrying about it. Now, I realize he says you can't, by worrying, make yourself taller. But if he's using the imagery of the Old Testament, he's really not talking about a desire to be taller, but a desire to live longer, to lengthen, not your body, but your life span.

Now, the argument is that worrying will not make you live longer. The birds live as long as they do without worrying. If they worried, it wouldn't change the length of the time they lived.

Now, someone might say, but wait a minute. If I am worried about being hit by a train, and therefore I don't stand on a train track, will I not lengthen my life by not standing on a train track? Whereas if I'm not worried about trains, I stand on the train track, will I not

shorten my life? Doesn't worry, in some cases, breed caution. And caution, indeed, prevents accidents and may prolong your life.

Could Jesus be saying that you cannot, by worrying, prolong your life? Well, yes and no. For one thing, worry and caution are not the same thing. Caution, in order not to be worried, must be prudence.

Prudence or wisdom. There are obviously dangers. We don't want to get sick.

And we know something about nutrition, so we eat healthy food. We don't want to get smashed by a truck, so we don't stand out on the freeway. This is intelligence.

This is wisdom. This is caution. Worry is something else.

Worry is where you're not really sure there's a danger, but you can imagine there might be. You're not really sure there won't be enough food, but you can imagine there not being enough food. You see, if I stand out in the middle of the freeway, I can be sure I'm going to be hit by a truck.

If I eat unhealthy, I can be sure I'm going to ruin my health. Wisdom is seeing the natural cause and effect relationship of things and ordering your conduct agreeably with the best results of real-life circumstances. So if you know that if I don't get a job, I won't be able to pay my rent.

And I can get a job, but I'd rather sit around and watch soap operas. Well, dumb. I won't pay my rent.

I'll be out of my house if I don't do the right thing. So I should do the right thing. Is that worrying? No, that's just taking precautions.

If you knew that a missile had been launched from China with a nuclear warhead, or let's make it more realistic, from Saddam Hussein with anthrax virus, it was going to hit McMinnville in about 20 minutes. But if there was a civil service shelter where you could go and stay overnight and the worst of it would be gone and you'd be protected, would you be a worrier that you went and protected yourself from that known danger? Obviously not. Wisdom is one thing.

Paranoia is another. And the difference between ordinary legitimate fear on one hand and paranoia on the other is simply a difference in the degree of likelihood of the thing happening that is feared. I once saw a Peanuts cartoon where I believe it was Charlie Brown and Linus were standing next to each other under the night sky looking up at the stars.

And Linus said to Charlie Brown, what would you say the odds are of a comet smashing into the earth at this exact spot where we're standing? And Charlie Brown said, oh, I'd

say about a billion trillion zillion to one. And the last square Linus has removed himself from that spot by about 10 feet. Because he thought, well, if the chances are it might land in this spot, I want to be in another spot.

But a billion trillion zillion to one is not very likely. If a person won't go outdoors because they're afraid that lightning might strike them, there's not even an electrical storm, I mean, there might be a zillion to one chance that they could be struck by lightning, but that's paranoia. Now, if there is an electrical storm and you're out in a place where lightning is prone to strike the ground and you decide not to go out in the lightning, that's not worry, that's not paranoia, that's caution, that's wisdom.

It all has to do with the degree of likelihood of a thing happening. If something happening is very likely to happen, then for you to fear it and take precautions about it is not paranoia. And it's not worry, it's just plain wisdom.

The ant doesn't know for sure that there will be a harsh winter during which nothing will grow, there might be a mild winter for all it knows. But there will probably be, in most cases, the winter will not be a good growing time and therefore the ant stores up against the winter. Now, here's the thing.

You can certainly prolong your life by caution, but not by worry. And one way that worry is different than caution, besides in the question of realism and how likely is it that something's going to happen, is that worry by nature is a fretting, sort of a disabling, immobilizing kind of a thing. It saps a person of courage and resolve and activity.

If a person is a worrier, they're not necessarily doing anything about the thing they're worried about, they're just worried. A person who is wise and realizes there may be a danger that something will happen will take precautions, they'll do something about it. Am I worried that someone will break into my house? Well, then I'll lock the door.

I mean, that's not being worried, that's just taking a precaution. But for me to lock the door and say, but what if someone breaks a window? I mean, I've done all the precautions I can, but what if someone breaks in anyway and kills me in the night? I just worry all night and there's nothing I can do about it, but I just worry. That's what is not trusting God.

You see, what God gives us the ability to do in terms of wisdom and precaution, he expects us to do. What we cannot do, he expects us to leave in his hands. Worrying, when it is sinful and wrong and habitual, usually is a mindset that is afraid of things that are way beyond my control.

If there is a missile with anthrax coming to McMinnville in 20 minutes and there's a place to hide where it's safe, my being concerned and taking precautions is not worry, it's not a situation that's beyond my control. On the other hand, if I knew there was going to be

a nuclear bomb drop on McMinnville in five minutes and there's no way I could avoid it, for me to sit around and fret over it would be wrong. I just have to, well, my life's in God's hands.

That's the way it is, I guess I'm going to go to heaven, no problem. Worry is not constructive. Worry doesn't really lead to change or improvement.

Worry itself, of course, doesn't change anything for the better. And that's his argument. You can worry about a thing and it could still happen because worrying about it won't prevent it.

Worrying about it doesn't change anything. Worry is by nature non-productive. Now, to foresee an evil and hide yourself, to foresee a need and work harder to be prepared for that future contingency, that's not worry, that's constructive action, that's productive action.

But to sit and worry and say, well, I'll probably get cancer when I get older, oh, I might die in a nuclear war someday, oh, my kids are probably going to get on drugs. I mean, you know, people worry about all kinds of things. Anything that could happen, they find a reason to worry for it.

But that's not legitimate. Worrying will not change it. Sometimes constructive action will, but worry will not.

So his third argument against worry is, what good does it do? Worrying will not prevent the thing you worry from happening. Job said, the thing I greatly feared has come upon me. And the thing you worry about may happen although you've worried about it.

It didn't change anything. So why worry? It's wasted energy. Fourth argument is that, in verses 31 and 32, don't say, which we eat, shall we drink, after all these things the Gentiles seek.

The Gentiles, of course, are the pagans. They don't know God. It's inappropriate for people who know God.

Now, let the Gentiles worry. They've got plenty to worry about. If this is a pagan activity, worry.

They have no God to trust in. Let them worry about what they'll eat and drink. They have good reason to.

These are the things the Gentiles concern themselves with. In other words, it is altogether inappropriate for people who know God to indulge in an activity which is only appropriate for people who don't know God. It is an insult to God for you to worry.

It suggests that the God that you know or profess to know isn't maybe going to take care

of everything okay. Even though he has never let anyone down who trusted in him before, somehow you think you're going to be the first exception he makes. And that is not glorifying to God.

It's unglorifying to God when you worry. The Gentiles, let them worry. It's appropriate.

They've got stuff to worry about. They don't know God. But you do know God, and therefore you don't need to worry.

His fifth argument against worry is that you don't need to worry because God already is on the job. Verse 32, your Father knows that you need all these things. He's already aware of it.

He's kept a full inventory. He knew what you needed before you asked him, and probably before you even knew, you needed it. If God is on the job and God knows you need it, then what do you need to worry about it for? God's worrying about it.

Your concerns are his. The Bible says, casting all your cares on him, for he cares for you. He'll do the caring, like the Graham people used to say, leave the driving to us.

God says, leave the worrying to me. I will care for you, so you won't have to care. Like the woman who stayed in her home during the bombing of London and all her town was evacuated, and the people came out and said, where'd you sleep during the bombing? Oh, I slept in my own bed.

How'd you sleep at night? Wasn't it terrifying that the bombs dropped? She said, no, I read that God never slumbers or sleeps, therefore I thought there was no sense in both of us staying awake. And that's true. If God's going to worry about it, why should I worry about it? If he's going to care, why should I care? Let him do the caring.

Let him have the load. He knows what you have need of. He knows you need these things, so why are you worried about it? The sixth argument he gives is that worry is unnecessary if you are seeking the kingdom of God, because if you seek the kingdom of God, all else will be added to you.

All the other necessary things will be added to you if you seek first the kingdom of God. Therefore, worrying is a direction of your energies in the wrong direction, fruitlessly. If you put all your energies into seeking the kingdom of God and his righteousness, then the other things will come to you in the course of doing that.

Now, seeking the kingdom of God might mean working at a job, because God might say, okay, I've got you here stationed at this place to be my witness, and he provides these other things for you through your job maybe, or through your job plus other ways. If you have no job, if God is calling you to a full-time ministry that doesn't pay, then you have to trust God to provide some other way. But one way or another, all the things you need

will be added to you so long as you are seeking first God's will, God's kingdom, God's righteousness.

So that worry becomes superfluous if you are seeking the kingdom of God, because everything will be added that you need. His final argument, his seventh argument against worry is that, in verse 39, do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own thing. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.

He's saying, listen, God measures out enough trials and challenges for one day at a time. The challenge he's given you today, he will give you the grace for today. Tomorrow will be new challenges, but they will be sufficient for that day.

And God will be, by the way, sufficient then too, but he hasn't given you the grace today for tomorrow's troubles. He expects you to have exactly as many troubles today as he has given you troubles today. Not tomorrow.

You're not supposed to borrow tomorrow's troubles. The things that are not revealed to us belong to the Lord, says Deuteronomy 29.29. The secret things belong to the Lord. What He has revealed belong to us.

One of the secret things is what's going to happen tomorrow. We don't know. And that's the thing we're trying to get at when we worry.

I'm anticipating what might happen tomorrow. I don't know, but I'm worried that the worst will happen. I'm stealing things that aren't mine.

Those things belong to God. Those are the unknown realm. And it does me no good because, you see, if he says sufficient for the day are the troubles there, what he means is you've got enough problems on your plate already just from what is here today.

Why borrow tomorrow's problems too? You see, tomorrow you will have the right number of problems for you to face tomorrow, but you don't have the right number of problems tomorrow for you to face today. Sufficient to the day is the trouble thereof. What this essentially is saying is this, that you can give yourself more trouble than you need.

You will have tomorrow's troubles tomorrow. The ones God wants you to have tomorrow, you'll have whether you worry about it today or not. The only trouble is you'll have them both days.

God only intends for you to have tomorrow's troubles tomorrow, but you get them today and tomorrow if you worry about them today. You see, that's the point. This is why worry is so fruitless and so stupid, really.

It's a stupid habit because, as Jesus said, first of all, it doesn't help anything. If you're worried, obviously there's some negative contingency that may occur that you're worried

about. It's a possibility.

It could happen. It may or may not. We don't know.

That's why you're worried. If you knew it would, you'd prepare for it. If you knew it wouldn't, you wouldn't be worried.

You're worried because it might. It might not, but it might. And that's a scary thought, but it might.

Whatever it may be, let's just call it X. It might happen tomorrow. Well, I'll tell you something. If you worry about it, let's put it this way.

If X is not going to happen tomorrow, because God only knows whether it will, you don't. If X is not going to happen tomorrow, then worrying about it has been useless. You didn't need to worry because it didn't happen.

On the other hand, if X is going to happen tomorrow, then you won't stop it from happening by worrying about it. So, one way or another, you're wasting your worrying. You're wasting your energy.

Furthermore, if X is going to happen tomorrow, God wants you to endure it tomorrow, and you will. But if you worry about it today, you will suffer that X today and tomorrow. God never intended that.

He intends you to endure the troubles of one day at a time. So, here's the argument. On one hand, the thing you worry about might never happen.

If it ends up not happening, your worrying was bringing torture on yourself unnecessarily, because the thing you worry about didn't occur. On the other hand, if it is going to occur, you're still torturing yourself unnecessarily, because even if it is going to occur, you don't have to suffer it today, just then, just tomorrow. Why suffer it twice? And it's not yours to take.

So, Jesus tells us that materialism, basically, the craving, the concern, the fascination, the obsession with food, clothing, luxuries, things like that, is the wrong-headed way that most people seek quality and security of life. But he's saying, no, spiritual qualities are more important in life, and security comes from trusting God. It doesn't mean you'll live longer because you trust God.

Jesus didn't live very long, and he trusted God, but he lived as long as God wanted him to, and that's all that we want to live, I hope. I hope that none of you wants to live any longer than God wants you to live. What would be the use of being on the planet Earth if God has no more for you to do here? No sense in being here.

So, against worry and against greed, these are the teachings here. They both have to do

with one's interpretation of the value of things for making life long and enjoyable. Money is the major rival to God in these areas, and possessions, and those are things Jesus addresses.

The disciples must be distinctly non-materialistic and must not be overly concerned about material things, but fully concerned with one thing, which is the kingdom of God and his righteousness that's associated with it.