

# Jesus' Case Against Worry

## INTRODUCTION

Most people experience worry and anxiety from time to time—some certainly more than others. Now that we are in the middle of a global pandemic, overwhelmed with daily reports of new cases, more deaths, the rise of massive unemployment and a failing economy, even those who typically *never worry* may find themselves feeling more and more anxious about the future. It may seem that worry makes a lot of sense right now, what with things so out of control and so much that could go wrong!

Mental health professionals tell us that fear is a natural human response to a real threat or danger, like our house being on fire. Anxiety on the other hand, is our response to an *anticipated or imagined* threat or danger—we *worry* that our house will catch fire. The bible would agree that worry is a problem with our *thinking*. In fact, the word in Greek literally means a “divided” or “distracted” mind. We cannot focus because we are preoccupied and obsessed about our cares and our worries (like Martha in Luke 10:38-42).

In Matthew 5:1-7:29, Jesus' most famous teachings known as the Sermon on the Mount, He lays out His standards for how we should live. A whole section is devoted to the subject of worry. Jesus, however, doesn't just tell us to *stop it—no more worrying!* Almost like a lawyer, He builds a case. He presents arguments and addresses our *minds* about why worry never makes sense. So in this anxious time of COVID-19, let's consider Jesus' case against worry.

## READ ALOUD (slowly, allowing time for people to reflect on Jesus' words)

*Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes? 26 Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? 27 Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life?*

*28 “And why do you worry about clothes? See how the flowers of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. 29 Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. 30 If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith?*

*31 So do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ 32 For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. 33 But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be*

given to you as well. <sup>34</sup>Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

Matthew 6:5-34

**DISCUSSION & SHARING** (allow time of silence for people to reflect on their answers before having them share)

1. Note the things Jesus said people worried about in His day. What are the things you find yourself worrying about right now? Name them and write them down. Imagine Jesus saying to you, "I tell you, do not worry about \_\_\_\_\_." Share how this make you feel.
2. Jesus begins His case by presenting into evidence "the birds of the air" and "the flowers of the field." Take some time to "consider" birds and wildflowers. Share your observations with the group. What is it about birds and wildflowers that build Jesus' case against worry?
3. Re-read aloud verse 27. What bit of evidence does Jesus now add to His case? Sit with that for a moment. Reflect on how worrying is powerless to makes any difference at all with \_\_\_\_\_ (what you worry about).
4. Next, Jesus enters pagans into evidence. What characterizes pagans? Why should we not be like them? How does this further build Jesus' case against worry? Reflect on *whom* you are more like: a pagan (who does not know the real God) or Jesus' follower (a child with a heavenly Father).
5. Re-read aloud verse 34. This is Jesus' closing argument in His case against worry. According to Him, worry is always preoccupied with tomorrow. Where should our focus be and why? We often act as opposing counsel, raising objections in our minds to why we *must* worry about tomorrow. Reflect on any internal objections you have. For you, what is Jesus' most convincing argument against your objection(s)?

**MINISTRY TIME** (these are just suggestions; as a leader always listen to and follow the lead of God's Spirit)

Discipleship (following Jesus and becoming more like Him) is a process that takes time—it's one step after another. We want to consider "next steps" for us, so that we can begin to *win* over the worry in our lives:

- What is one takeaway from our discussion that you found most relevant and helpful and why? What are some practical ways you can put this into practice in the coming week?
- What is one care or worry you struggle with that we can pray for now *and* continue to pray for until we meet again?