
Lesson Overview

Biblical Passage Matthew 6:19-34

Supporting Passage Matthew 6:1-7:29

Memory Verse Matthew 6:25

Biblical Truth By maintaining a right attitude toward treasures and by trusting God in every situation you face, you can experience the most abundant life.

Context As Jesus continued to teach the people gathered on the shores of the Sea of Galilee during His Sermon on the Mount, He provided a proper view of treasures, explained how to overcome worry, and most importantly, encouraged hearers to shift their focus so that they were striving solely for the things of God.

Learning Goals • Students will explore Jesus' teaching about worrying.
• Students will identify how Jesus' words can help them overcome worry.

Prayer Suggestions As you prepare to teach this lesson, pray for your students.
• Pray that students will explore Jesus' teaching about worrying.
• Pray that students will identify how Jesus' words can help them overcome worry.
• Pray that students will seek after God and discover how He provides abundantly.

Biblical Commentary

Investigation

The most famous sermon ever delivered was the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus was at the height of His popularity with the people at this time. His teaching through this sermon was primarily for His twelve disciples and His followers. However, crowds of people followed Him, hoping to witness other miracles (see Mt. 4:23-25 and Lk. 6:17-18). They, too, heard the message.

The Sermon on the Mount (Mt. 5:1-7:29) was a series of teachings about how to experience the life God intended. Jesus delivered the teaching on a hillside, probably near the Sea of Galilee. As was the custom for rabbinical teachers, Jesus sat down to teach. Because of the scope of the teaching and the mounting size of the crowd, scholars propose that the teaching lasted for more than a day.

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus focused on the life perspectives that a believer should possess. This includes the believer's priorities in life and his or her trust in God. As with other parts of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus' teachings and challenges may seem radical and impossible to follow. Yet for those who have been transformed by the Spirit of God, it is possible to live according to what Jesus demands.

Importance

This passage emphasizes that **The Future is in God's Hands**. For followers of Christ, life on earth is a brief period of time that precedes spending eternity in heaven in the presence of God. This passage is important for students because it vividly reminds us that our focus should be on building and serving God's Kingdom instead of attempting to satisfy our desires for temporary possessions. Furthermore, this passage teaches that money and possessions can become obstacles to knowing and serving Christ, to whom we owe all our hearts' affections.

This passage also teaches that **The Bible is God's Word**.

Interpretation

Matthew 6:19-21 In verses 19 and 20, Jesus described both the wrong way and the correct way to treat possessions. In verse 19, Jesus instructed His listeners to "not store up . . . treasures on earth." Some commentaries translate His words as "Stop storing up treasures." Jesus' words indicate the need to break the habit of accumulating wealth and possessions.

Jesus did not condemn having possessions. In fact, the Bible underscores the importance of using possessions correctly: providing for relatives (1 Tim. 5:8), providing for the future (Prov. 6:6-8), and enjoying God's provisions (1 Tim. 4:3-4, 6:17). Rather, Jesus focused on the value placed on the possessions. He condemned

personal greed and stressed how clearly a treasure demonstrates the true values of a person's heart.

Jesus emphasized that God's people must not focus on storing up material possessions. These so-called treasures are, at best, temporary. Jesus used two word pictures to describe what could happen to worldly possessions: moths and rust. First, clothing styles in New Testament times changed little, and articles were passed down from person to person. Yet these articles were susceptible to damage from moths. Second, possessions created from metal were susceptible to rust, corrosion, and eventual ruin. Jesus stressed that those things we can collect for ourselves can be taken away, used up, worn out, lost, or destroyed in an instant.

In verse 20, Jesus described the correct way to approach treasures. He did not require followers to assume a vow of poverty or to scorn all earthly possessions. But Jesus offered an alternative to acquiring earthly treasures. He emphasized storing up treasures in heaven. Heavenly treasure cannot be destroyed, lost, or stolen. Storing up treasures in heaven brings a contentment never experienced by storing up earthly treasures.

In verse 21, Jesus emphasized that a person's heart would be where his or her treasure is—either on earth or in heaven. What occupies the heart directs the thoughts, emotions, and desires, and will, therefore, direct actions and attitudes as well.

Matthew 6:22-23 Jesus used another series of word pictures to explain the danger of earthly treasures: good eyes and bad eyes. Although eyes have often been described as the windows to the soul, Jesus focused on the work of the eye. First, the eye gives sight to the body and helps the body find its way. Second, the eye is "the lamp of the body" and allows light to enter the body. According to Jesus, good eyes allow light to fill the body, while bad eyes cause the body to remain in darkness. Good eyes can recognize the danger of storing up earthly treasures, while bad eyes are blind to the greed and deceit found through earthly treasures.

The phrase "whole body" refers to the entire person. The eye, therefore, impacts the entire person; its impact cannot be separated from the body. Just as bad eyesight can cause physical problems, bad spiritual eyesight can cause problems when a person tries to focus on both the heavenly and earthly realms (especially where treasures are concerned). It is impossible to focus on two things at once. Spiritual eyes that try to do so will cause nothing but problems and heartache, as if the person were living in "darkness."

Matthew 6:24 In verse 24, Jesus used a third set of word pictures to describe the problem with earthly treasures: slaves and masters. In ancient times the word "serve" meant to work as a slave, and the word "master" meant owner. Slaves had no rights; they were at the owner's complete disposal. Jesus said it would be impossible for a slave to work for two different owners. Each would want the slave's full service, attention, and devotion. If a slave tried to serve two owners at once, he or she would end up having to reject one of the owner's orders while carrying out the other's.

Jesus concluded that a person couldn't give his or her loyalty to two competing concerns—"God and money." The word for **money** can also refer to material things or riches. Jesus wanted His listeners to understand the impossibility of committing to both God and material things at the same time.

In the spiritual realm, *divided loyalty* is an oxymoron—a contradiction in terms. God demands our ultimate loyalty. When our attention or devotion is given to something besides God, we have already turned away from God. Only by giving complete devotion to God and His Kingdom will we be able to have the full, meaningful, abundant life He wants us to experience.

Matthew 6:25-30 Jesus next commanded His hearers not to **worry** about the things they needed, neither the requirements for life nor desired luxuries. His concern was that attention and worry focused on providing for physical needs moved the focus from God, the provider. The Greek word for life refers both to physical and

spiritual aspects of existence—our souls and spirits as well as our bodies. Since God gave us life, we can depend upon Him to fulfill our physical needs as well.

Jesus used two objects as examples of God's care: birds and lilies. Although birds do not "sow or reap or store away in barns," God provides what they need to live. Since people are "much more valuable" to God than birds, we can trust God to meet our physical needs as well.

Jesus described the flowers in the field whose beauty comes as a result of God's work: They are totally dependent on Him. Yet in God's eyes these temporary flowers are of no comparison to the worth of humanity. God is much more concerned about the wellbeing of those He created in His image (Gen. 1:27) whose souls are eternal. Therefore, when we worry about material possessions or needs, we are demonstrating "little faith," a lack of trust in the God who created us, redeemed us, and provides for our needs.

Matthew 6:31-34 Jesus noted that worrying about the necessities of life is characteristic of "**pagans**" rather than people of faith. In ancient times, those who were not Israelites, God's chosen people, were considered pagans. As the pagans worshipped their gods, their lives were focused on materialism and immorality. Jesus stressed that believers should live differently from the pagans, who do not know God.

Jesus offered the key to a worry-free life: staying focused on God. Jesus commanded His listeners to "seek first his kingdom and his **righteousness**." Then everything else will fall into place. God's reign over our lives should be our all-consuming concern as believers. When God's Kingdom is our treasure, all other things pale in comparison, and all our worries fade away. We can trust that God will provide for our needs ("all these things").

Jesus wrapped up this section of His teaching with a final command against worrying "about tomorrow." Instead, we should focus on living for God today. There is enough for us to do today as we seek to follow God without thinking about what might happen tomorrow. Because God is our Father, we can trust Him to provide for our needs and accompany us through whatever circumstances we face during the days, months, and years to come.

Implications

Like adults, students tend to be consumed with acquiring stuff. Yet the things they gather over the years—clothes, toys, electronics—can be taken away, used up, worn out, lost, destroyed, or made obsolete in an instant. It is a fact of life that thieves, insects, natural disasters, man-made disasters, and aging all take their toll on our possessions. When bad things happen to students' possessions, that can take an emotional toll as well. While our society can invest in climate-controlled environments, high-tech security, and other protective measures, taking care of the things we own takes more and more of time.

When time is spent purchasing, paying for, and protecting the things we own, it turns out that those things end up owning us. When our earthly treasures get our attention, we are left with little time to pay attention to the more important things in life—the things that really last. And when our attention is diverted from things that truly matter, we will never be fulfilled and will never experience the best life possible: abundant life that Jesus offers. Jesus' teachings on treasures can help students begin to value those things that are of God over those things that they can obtain on their own.

Teaching Plan

Connect

Review Questions

(5-8 minutes, easy set-up)

Students will answer five review questions from the previous lesson.

Print one copy of the "Review Questions" activity sheet for your use.

After greeting students, use the review questions to test what they can recall from the previous lesson as well as to provide the context for today's lesson.

Master Teacher Option: Why Worry?

(10 minutes, easy set-up)

Learners will discuss their worries.

Provide index cards and pens.

Pass out index cards and pens to students. Instruct students to make a list of the things that cause them to worry. Share that answers could include money, dating, sports, friends, college, jobs. After a few minutes, encourage students to number their worries in the order in which they cause the most stress. Then, instruct students to write down the amount of time they spend worrying at the top of the paper. Invite students to discuss these questions with two to three others: **What good does worrying about something do? Does worrying have the potential to change anything? Why?** After responses, state that worrying is almost never productive and can't change the outcome of any given situation.

Point out that throughout life, students will always have things that cause them worry, such as college, jobs, family, marriage, children, housing, money, or politics. Conclude by saying: **Jesus' perspective on worry is helpful for us in every stage of life.**

Explore

Master Teacher Key Study: Seek First His Kingdom

(15-20 minutes, easy set-up)

Students will study Matthew 6:19-34 to explore Jesus' teaching about possessions and worrying.

Print one copy of the Master Teacher Key Study for your use. Provide a copy of the Student Worksheet

and a pen for each student.

Learning Goal: Students will explore Jesus' teaching about worrying.

Pass out pens and copies of the Master Teacher Student Worksheet. Then, use the Master Teacher Key Study to teach Matthew 6:19-34.

Transform

Deeper Discussion

(10 minutes, easy set-up)

Students will discuss the consequences related to Jesus' birth.

Learning Goal: Students will identify how Jesus' words can help them overcome worry.

Lead students to discuss the following questions:

- **What are the things in my life that make me happy? What do these things say about my "treasure?"**
- **How can I develop and maintain a right attitude toward material possessions?**
- **What does my worry indicate about the things that I treasure and my trust in God?**
- **How can I trust God in every area of my life?**

Divide students into groups of two or three and encourage them to discuss worry in their lives. Then, encourage students to discuss how worry affects their lives today. Point out that worry cannot make a difference or change anything, but it can stop us from depending upon God's provision in our lives. Encourage students to pray in the small groups, giving their worries over to God and having faith in His provision.

Master Teacher Option: Worry Antidotes

(10 minutes, easy set-up)

Students will discuss antidotes to worrying.

Provide a dry erase board and marker.

Learning Goal: Students will identify how Jesus' words can help them overcome worry.

Observe that there are all sorts of products that are supposed to help us alleviate worry, such as worry stones, Guatemalan worry dolls, and even a humorous six-page "Worry Insurance Policy" that promises to pass off our worries to a professional worrier. Note that spas, cruise lines, and resorts also often present themselves as places we should visit to escape the worries of our daily lives.

Lead students to discuss the following questions with the person next to them. Ask: **Why do all of these**

things ultimately fail to remove worry from our lives? (*They are quick fixes that bring only temporary relief from our worries.*) **What failed strategies have you tried in the past in an attempt to get rid of worries?**

Remind students that Jesus taught that the antidote to worry was to shift our focus from our concerns to God's priorities. Note that this is something that Christians have to do on a daily basis. List the following on the dry erase board: Bible, prayer, worship, and friends. Discuss: **How can each of these help us to avoid worry and trust God more?** Conclude in prayer, asking God to help students learn to focus on His God's priorities over their own.

Take Home Activity

Family Devotion

(10-15 minutes at home, easy set-up)

Distribute copies of the Family Devotion to students and encourage them to share the devotion with their family.

A copy of the Family Devotion will be included in your lesson PDF download.

Review Questions

(5-8 minutes, easy set-up)

Use these questions to review the content from Lesson 14: "Being Salt and Light"

The correct answer for each question is printed in bold, italic font.

1. Who was present when Jesus delivered the Sermon on the Mount?
 - a. Only a few of His disciples
 - b. Jesus' twelve disciples only
 - c. A crowd of people
 - d. ***The crowd and Jesus' twelve disciples***

2. When Jesus urged His followers to be *salt*, what did He really mean?
 - a. They were to be stern.
 - b. They were to become small.
 - c. ***They were to make a difference in the world.***
 - d. They were to liven things up a bit.

3. Jesus compared His followers to *light* because _____.
 - a. ***Light referred to good in comparison to darkness, which referred to evil.***
 - b. Judea experienced dark seasons of the year.
 - c. People needed light for their dark homes.
 - d. People chased after light.

4. Jesus described a *neighbor* as _____.
 - a. Those who lived next door.
 - b. Only fellow Jews.
 - c. Your circle of acquaintances.
 - d. ***Anyone in need.***

5. Jesus commanded His followers to _____.
 - a. ***Love each other as I have loved you.***
 - b. Love only those who love Me.
 - c. Love people for who they are.
 - d. Love only those who are like you.

SEEK FIRST HIS KINGDOM

(15–20 minutes, easy set-up)

Use this outline and any of the corresponding activities to share the Biblical Truth with students.

Introduction: We all know that worrying isn't good for us. Worrying can take a toll on our physical, emotional, and spiritual health. In fact, doctors have identified a medical condition called Generalized Anxiety Disorder, a condition marked by excessive, unprovoked worry. In His Sermon on the Mount, Jesus bluntly addressed the issue of worry.

1. By focusing on things with eternal value, we can avoid worry (Matthew 6:19-24).

Biblical Background: Jesus encouraged His disciples to discount the materialistic accumulation of possessions and instead focus on storing treasure in heaven (v. 19). Jesus noted that what a person considers to be his or her treasure is an indication of where that person's heart is (vv. 20-21). Jesus stressed that our eyes should be focused on the spiritual realm rather than worldly concerns (vv. 22-23). Jesus emphasized that our service to God cannot be halfhearted (v. 24).

Illustration: In Egypt, the pyramids are a great tourist attraction. But they were originally built to serve as a tomb for Egyptian rulers. When pharaohs were buried, their great pieces of treasure were buried with them because they thought that the treasure would be used in the next world. However, grave robbers and archaeologists can attest to the fact that the wealth of these people served them no purpose when they died. This kind of treasure is always temporary.

Application: We build up treasure in heaven when we are obedient to Christ and are involved in eternal actions. We must consider the things that we own as only "things" that are not as important as making disciples in all nations.

2. By focusing on God's provision, we can avoid worry (Matthew 6:25-30).

Biblical Background: Our lives are of surpassing value to God (vv. 25-26). Because God is the provider, no benefit can be gained from worrying (v. 27). Worry demonstrates a lack of faith in God (vv. 28-30).

Illustration: By the time he died in 1898, one of George Mueller's greatest accomplishments was building five large orphan houses and caring for more than 10,000 orphans in his lifetime. During this time, he never asked anyone for money and he didn't take a salary during the last 68 years of his ministry. Yet he never had a loan or went into debt. He simply trusted God to provide what he needed as he pursued God's will for his life. Mueller prayed fervently, and God consistently met His needs as the orphanages always remained open and the orphans were always fed. Mueller trusted God to be faithful as he focused primarily on following His commands.

Application: If we are concerned with achieving personal gain, we focus on ourselves and make God's priorities second to our own happiness. When we focus our lives solely on God and His purpose, we are able to be completely obedient to Him and live in His abundant life.

3. By focusing on God's Kingdom, we can avoid worry (Matthew 6:31-34).

Biblical Background: A Christian's life should not be characterized by worry (vv. 31-32). Seeking God's Kingdom should be our first priority (v. 33). Because we know that **The Future is in God's Hands**, we can take life one day at a time, trusting that God will provide everything we need as we need it (v. 34).

Illustration: In his book *Anxiety Attacked*, John Piper wrote, "Christians who worry believe God can redeem them, break the shackles of Satan, take them from hell to heaven, put them into His kingdom, and give them eternal life, but just don't think He can get them through the next couple of days. That is pretty ridiculous. We can believe God for the greater gift and then stumble and not believe Him for the lesser one."

Application: We can trust God's goodness even in times of struggle. We can rightly trust Him to care for us as we work for His glory. Because His faithfulness is unwavering, we do not have to worry about His care but must seek out Christ above everything else.

Conclusion: We can choose to follow God unconditionally and without compromise, or we can focus our efforts on things that will not last into eternity. Jesus commands us not to concern ourselves with worrying about the future. Our loving Father cares for us, so we must focus primarily on becoming more like Him and sharing Him with others. Worrying takes away our energy for seeking God's glory and being part of His work. We must focus on becoming like Christ above all else and not being consumed with worry for our needs.

LESSON 15

SEEK FIRST HIS KINGDOM

CHRISTOS
STUDENT EDITION

Biblical Passage: Matthew 6:19-34

Memory Verse: Matthew 6:25

“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?”

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1. By focusing on things with _____, we can avoid worry (Matthew 6:19–24).
 2. By focusing on God’s _____, we can avoid worry (Matthew 6:25–30).
 3. By focusing on God’s _____, we can avoid worry (Matthew 6:31–34).

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What things in my life make me happy? What do these things say about my “treasure”?
- How can I develop and maintain a right attitude toward material possessions?
- What does my worry indicate about the things that I treasure and my trust in God?
- How can I trust God in every area of my life?

WHAT’S YOUR TREASURE?

List below five things that you consider your treasure. How long is each item supposed to last?

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT . . .

“Nothing in the affairs of men is worth worrying about.”—*Plato*

LESSON 15

SEEK FIRST HIS KINGDOM

Biblical Passage: Matthew 6:19-34

Marketers earn their living by convincing the people that they can't live without whatever product is featured in their advertising. They introduce us to new products that make us dissatisfied with what we have and create the desire for whatever new products they're selling . . . cars, computers, cell phones, beauty products, fashions. Somehow, they can construct ads that convince us that whatever they are selling will make us healthier, stronger, happier, or more content. And often, the marketing is so good, that'll we'll go into debt hoping to reap the benefits they're selling.

Read Matthew 6:19-34. Apparently people in our generation are not the first to worry about gathering possessions or simply meeting basic needs. This human desire for things typically causes worry—either worrying about how to gain those things or worrying about how to protect them. In response to this universal human trait, Jesus said His disciples should not worry about the provision for their lives. Instead, He said to consider how God cares for the birds and the lilies—which served as proof that He can take care of us. Therefore, instead of chasing after the latest trends, the hottest products, and the most recent fads, Jesus instructed His followers to stop gather things, even treasures, that will one day rust and ruin. Instead, Jesus told His followers that they should put their emphasis on building up treasure in heaven by seeking God's kingdom and His righteousness.

Note that Jesus didn't discount the fact that we need food, clothing, and housing. Instead, He emphasized that trusting God to provide those basic needs frees believers to focus their attention and effort on serving God by fulfilling their part in expanding His kingdom. When our priority is focused on Him, we no longer worry about accumulating things for ourselves.

CONNECTION QUESTIONS:

- What are some things that advertising makes you want? How do those ads make you think you need those products?
- What are things you worry about? Does the worrying help you deal with the situation that causes the worrying? Why?
- What would it look like if our family focused on spending money in ways that reflect God's desire for our lives?