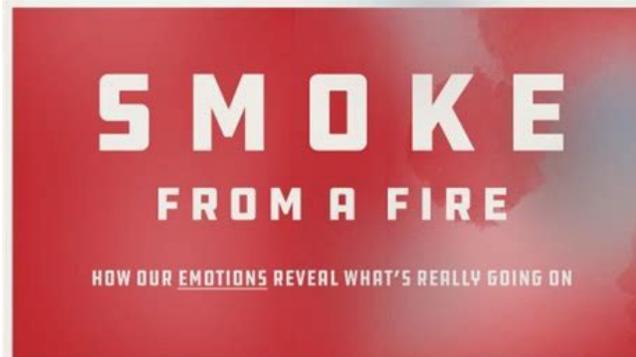


**“Anxiety” (Matthew 6:24–34)  
Smoke From A Fire #2**

**Weekend of July 13-14, 2019**



We are in our second week of our series on Emotions called “Smoke from a Fire.” The basic idea is that our strongest and deepest emotions function like smoke from a fire—we can follow the trail of that smoke down to see what is “on fire” in our life.

When you smell smoke in your house, the wise thing to do is never to whiff it away— instead, you should follow the trail of that smoke and figure out what is on fire. In the same way, we need to learn what our emotions are telling us about the state of our heart. This week, we are going to talk about an emotion we’ve all dealt with to varying degrees: ANXIETY.

Here is the question I want us to explore... **“What makes YOU anxious?”** Here are some answers I have gotten to this question...

- **Money (usually this was expressed as, “I’m worried about not having enough to take care of my kids or my aging parents.”)**
- **Being alone**
- **The future**
- **Being Accepted by others**
- **Going to the doctor**
- **Finding the right spouse**
- **Losing a spouse or child**
- **Failing as a parent**

Anxiety is one of those problems that gives birth to all kinds of other problems. Like one fire that quickly spreads throughout the whole house of your life. John Piper says, **“Think about how many other sins are connected to the root sin of anxiety. Anxiety about money will cause you to hoard or steal. Anxiety about succeeding will make you irritable and impatient with those around you. Anxiety about relationships will make you withdrawn or indifferent toward other people. Anxiety about what others think about you will make you lie or stretch the truth. If anxiety could be conquered, a mortal blow would be struck to many other sins.”** –John Piper

Today, we’re going to look at what Jesus says about worry—it’s one of his most profound and insightful teachings. It comes at the end of Matthew 6, right in the middle of his famous Sermon on the Mount.

One quick caveat—as with all of these emotions, there can a lot going on when you

experience anxiety. Last week I explained that our bodies and souls are integrated, so what happens in one inevitably affects what happens in the other, and for some of you there are other factors going on in anxiety that have to do with your physiological makeup, or past traumatic experiences, or even the kinds of relationships you are in in the present. And I want to be careful not to collapse all anxiety problems into the spiritual bucket. I am dealing with, primarily, the spiritual root causes of anxiety. Let's look at this passage...

**“No one can serve two masters. For either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will hold to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money. Therefore, I say to you, take no thought 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 than clothing? Look at the birds of the air, for they do not sow, nor do they reap, nor gather into barns. Yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much better than they? Who among you by taking thought can add a cubit to his stature?”**

**“Why take thought about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: They neither work, nor do they spin. Yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory was not dressed like one of these. Therefore, if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is here, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will He not much more clothe you, O you of little faith?”**

**Therefore, take no thought, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ (For the Gentiles seek after all these things.) For your heavenly Father knows that you have need of all these things. But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be given to you. Therefore, take no thought about tomorrow, for tomorrow will take thought about the things of itself. Sufficient to the day is the trouble thereof. Matthew 6: 24-34.**

In this passage, Jesus makes 3 main points about anxiety...

**Anxiety thinks too little of God:** This is the most profound, counter-intuitive point in this passage. Most of us think of anxiety as an emotion that just naturally arises from the uncertainty of life, but Jesus says it is an emotion that is intimately connected to our deepest desires. We worry most about what we are devoted to most.

We worry about what we are most devoted to. Which is why Jesus starts this discussion on anxiety by challenging what we are most devoted to. Upon what is (for many us) is our devotion centered? He starts this discussion by talking about money. He says, **“If you are devoted to money, then that’s what you’ll worry about all the time. If you think that money is the one, indispensable ingredient in the good life, then you will worry all the time about it—about getting it, keeping it, not losing it.”**

THEN he asks a series of questions that challenge our devotion to money. He says, **“Isn’t life more than food and the body more than clothing?” Matthew 6:25.**

Here is what he is really asking about money... **Is money really what defines the good life?** He then gives 2 examples that demonstrate it is not: **First**, he says, consider the birds in the sky (vs. 26). They don’t sow or gather in barns and yet the Father feeds them. Birds don’t spend much time worrying about saving, yet they never seem to lack because God takes care of them.

**Second**, he says, consider the wildflowers in the field in verses 28-29. Flowers don't spend much time worrying about looking pretty, yet they are beautiful because God adorns their lives. The point is not that we shouldn't save, or that we shouldn't ever use money to buy nice things for ourselves. Just that we should not be devoted to money as the primary source of security and beauty, because our Heavenly Father will take care of those things for us. He then makes the key statement in this passage in **verse 33... "But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be given to you."**

Be devoted to God—worry about pleasing him and doing his will, focus primarily on obeying him with your money—and God will take care of everything else—including your security and your beauty.

When it comes to worrying about money, people fall into one of two personality types, both of which are addressed in Jesus's illustrations. For some, money is their source of security. So, their favorite thing to do is save it. When they get an extra dollar, they save it. For others, money is the beauty, their significance, and their joy. And so, when they get an extra bonus, they spend it—they upgrade the car, the wardrobe, the lifestyle... Savers and spenders. And, in God's sense of humor, these two kinds of people always get married to each other. And both of them think the other one has a problem with money. The saver thinks the spender is too irresponsible; the spender thinks the saver is too uptight. **Jesus is telling both the saver and the spender that they have the same root problem with money, just in different directions—both are devoted to money as necessary for some aspect of the good life.**

Jesus addresses the saver through the 'birds' illustration—the birds don't save, and they are fine; He addresses the spender through the 'wildflowers' illustration—they don't spend any money on clothes and they are gorgeous.

He tells both of them: **Devote yourself instead to God, he says, and let God be the primary source of your security and the primary source of your joy, and just like the takes excellent care of the birds of the air and the flowers of the field, he'll take care of you.**

You can apply this principle, of course, to other things besides money—Jesus just knew this was the big one. Jesus could have said, "Don't worry about your parenting. Do the birds of the field worry about their parenting? They just push the kids out of the nest and say "fly" and their kids turn out all right—because God makes sure they will learn what they need to know.

Do you follow Jesus's thought pattern here? When it comes to money, parenting, marriage, education and career and any of the other litany of things we worry about, God is not telling us to sit back and do nothing. He is saying that we need to do what we do in obedience to God to the best of our ability and trust him with the results and not stress about them.

Anxiety thinks too little about God—because it elevates the obtaining of other things besides him as the most essential element the good life. The good life is more than making a lot of money; it is more than good career choices and successful parenting techniques and finding the right person. Which leads to the 2nd observation...

**Anxiety minimizes how much God thinks of me:** Look at what Jesus says in verse 30...  
**“Therefore, if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is here, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will He not much more clothe you, O you of little faith?”**  
He’s pointing us to the character of the Heavenly Father. Isn’t it obvious from creation that we serve a blessing, prospering God—a good, good Father who loves to bless and prosper us?

**Anxiety, for the Christian, is completely irrational—it means you believe God can take us to heaven but can’t handle you on earth; that God is good for eternity but insufficient for time; that he delivered us from damnation but won’t do the details of our day to day lives. You’ve got to choose—you either believe in the God of the Bible or you don’t.**

Listen to how Paul says it... **“Be anxious for nothing, but in everything, by prayer and supplication with gratitude, make your requests known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will protect your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” Philippians 4:6-7**

It helps me to reflect on the fact that I am COMMANDED not to worry. **“Fear not” is the most repeated command in the Bible: 366 times.** That can’t be a coincidence. Every single day there is a new “fear not” command for you! The only way those commands make sense is if God is thereby promising he will take care of the things we are worried about. Right?

There is one more great statement Jesus makes about worry in Matthew 6...

**Anxiety is a false prophet:** Jesus points out two issues about worry in this passage... **Worrying doesn’t actually change anything.** Look at **verse 27...** **“Who among you by taking thought can add a cubit to his stature?”** Will worry actually add to your life? No. Ironically, if anything, it will just shorten it.

**Second, Jesus says, anxiety is a false prophet because the vast majority of the things we worry about never take place!** You worry about 1000 things that never take place. I’ve heard it described as paying interest on a debt you may not even owe. Look at how Jesus deals with this idea in verse 34...

**“Therefore, take no thought about tomorrow, for tomorrow will take thought about the things of itself. Sufficient to the day is the trouble thereof.” Matthew 6:34**

I think, “Well, that’s exactly what I was worried about with tomorrow!” But guess what will also be there tomorrow? God. And the God who gives you strength today will give you strength tomorrow.

Tomorrow will have troubles. Everybody look at your neighbor and say, “Something’s gonna go wrong next week.” But there is a way to face the uncertainty of tomorrow—or next week—without anxiety today. Because he lives, I can face tomorrow! Because he lives, all fear is gone! Because I know he holds the future, my life is worth the living, just because HE LIVES!

The great preacher **Charles Spurgeon** said it this way... **“Anxiety does not empty tomorrow of its sorrows. It empties today of its strengths.”** Whatever tomorrow holds, God will be there to give you daily strength.

Anxiety is a false prophet. In the OT they stoned false prophets. You need to stone anxiety every time it shows up in your life and turn your attention to the one, true prophet—the prophet who never lies, never fails, and always keeps his promises—JESUS! Jesus was not just a prophet that told the truth—he was a prophet that took everything we would have been afraid of to begin with and put it away on the cross and tells us now to trust him with everything else.

The answer to worry is not a trouble free-life, or an invulnerable future, but a relationship with the God who controls time and who promises not a hair falls from your head without his knowledge and permission.