



Series Title: Overcome
Week 1 | The Way of Priorities
March 12, 2023

INTRO – What worries you? What are the things that keep you from fully enjoying the day or moment you are in, because you are stressing or worrying about a thing or day to come? What are the things that cause you to worry?

- For me, I can worry about my family. Specifically, my 3 teenagers! Am I doing enough to shape their life and faith. My daughters going away to college this year, is she ready, will that go well, can I pay for it! And when I start worrying about tomorrow it robs my joy in today, in the moment I'm in.
- I worry a lot about this, our church. I love you and this community deeply. This church has changed my life and my family's life. I want to serve the Lord and you well, and so I worry about this. I can get caught up worrying about tomorrow, things that might or could happen, and it when I do it robs my joy in today.

That's just the top of my list, what's yours? What causes you to worry? Because we all worry at some level. It's part of our human condition because we don't have certainty about much do we? You know the old saying "*the only thing certain in life is... DEATH & TAXES*". That's a joyful thought, both those things suck, and they are certain!

See, worry is created when there is a GAP of uncertainty. A gap between where are & where we want to be. Or a gap between what we know & what we don't or want to know. And we all fill in the gap with something!

But did you know we have a choice what we put in that gap of uncertainty? We can fill that gap with worry & fear & stress OR we can learn to fill that gap with TRUST & FAITH & HOPE. The battle for overcoming worry is deciding what you put in the gap of uncertainty.

We are going to look at a section of scripture today where Jesus taught his followers a way of living that helps us overcome worry. A way of living that helps us fill in those gaps of uncertainty with trust & faith rather than worry & fear. (*Important Note – Not talking about clinical anxiety, or depression. If you are seeing a Dr & taking medication you should continue. Jesus is talking about general everyday worries that we all deal with*)

TRANSITION - And we are going to start with Jesus' answer/solution to worry, this first verse is actually the 2nd to last verse at the end of a Jesus teaching on worry, but it's the answer to how we overcome worry. Let's read this verse OUTLOUD together...

Matthew 6:33 (NLT) *Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and live righteously, and he will give you everything you need.*

I know that is the total Bible answer, but we are studying the Bible! And before we write Jesus off, let's dig into what he was saying about worry just before this. Because Jesus is teaching us a few very important and powerful things that happen when we put him first.

TRANSITION - Let's jump into them and see what he says. The first thing that happens



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When God is first:

1) It decreases my capacity for worry

When seeking God goes up, worry goes down!

ILLUSTRATION - It's like a Teeter-Totter or See-Saw. (PIC) Remember those? You sit on one side, a friend sits on the other, and you push off and go up and down, had to make sure you jumped on with people in your weight class or you could get stuck all the way up or down!

Jesus is going to show us that there is a direct relationship between seeking him first and worry. When we are focused on God 1st, trust goes up and worry goes down. But when we are focused on all the other the things more than God worry goes up & trust goes down.

TRANSITION - You'll see the first thing Jesus wants us to do is take a

- Look at my LIFE.

Jesus is going to invite his first century listeners and us to examine what causes worry. Because worry is most often about the stuff of everyday life:

Matthew 6:25 (NLT) That is why I tell you not to worry about everyday life—whether you have enough food and drink, or enough clothes to wear. Isn't life more than food, and your body more than clothing?

Jesus is talking about the everyday things of life. The things needed for survival, and in the first century world, survival and just everyday things were hard! If they didn't catch it, kill it, grow it, or buy it that day, they didn't eat it! Keeping food fresh was hard back then. I'm pretty sure we all have these boxes in our house that keep food cold. Maybe 2 of them! They didn't have closets full of clothes. Clothes weren't for fashion as much as they were for protection, protection from the elements – heat in the day, cold at night.

Most 1st century people were consumed by the everyday things of life. We are the same. We can get consumed with our jobs, our school work, the kids' schedules, keeping the bills paid and everyone's life moving.

What Jesus is telling them is to have a greater focus than just on the immediate or temporary things that consume us. Jesus isn't saying ignore those things, he's saying put them in the right priority and perspective.

TRANSITION - That's why Jesus gives them an example next when he says:

- Look at the BIRDS.



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To that we would say, no thank you Jesus, because I'm too busy to look at the birds, I'm too busy worrying about all the things going on in my life. But Jesus says this...

Matthew 6:26 (NLT) Look at the birds. They don't plant or harvest or store food in barns, for your heavenly Father feeds them. And aren't you far more valuable to him than they are?

Jesus is saying if God takes care of the birds, who don't have refrigerators, and God loves you WAY more than the birds, don't you think he will take care of your daily needs!

My daughter Emma bought a Humming Bird feeder at the dollar store maybe a month ago. It's hanging in out our backdoor from the pergola, and it has become the humming bird hangout of Chula Vista! The word is out among humming birds, because every time I look back there or sit outside they are whizzing around! 3-4 humming birds at a time all day!

Jesus would say if Emma can take care of the Humming birds, don't you think I can take care of you! If God is faithful to them, don't you think God will be faithful to you?

TRANSITION - Then in the next verse Jesus says:

- Look at the **FACTS**.

Jesus is telling them there is not a single tangible benefit to worry.

Matthew 6:27 (NLT) Can all your worries add a single moment to your life?

And we all know the answer to that is? NO... Worry never lengthens your life, it actually shortens it. It does, worry shortens your life, because you miss the joy and you miss being present in so many moments and days, because you are worrying about tomorrow and things you can't control!

TRANSITION - Next Jesus uses another object lesson that was nearby everyone could see. Jesus says:

- Look at the **LILIES**.

Jesus is talking about flowers, and he goes back to the whole clothes thing.

Matthew 6:28-30 (NLT) And why worry about your clothing? Look at the lilies of the field and how they grow. They don't work or make their clothing, ²⁹yet Solomon in all his glory was not dressed as beautifully as they are. ³⁰And if God cares so wonderfully for wildflowers that are here today and thrown into the fire tomorrow, he will certainly care for you. Why do you have so little faith?

ILLUSTRATION - Have you been to the flower fields in Carlsbad? (**PIC**) When they are in bloom they are beautiful. Can walk or take a ride in a wagon pulled by a tractor. It's one of SD's great yearly attractions.



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Jesus is reminding them and us that flowers don't work for their beauty. They just have it; it's just given by God. And if God cares for the flowers that are just in bloom for a moment, you can be confident that God will care for you.

TRANSITION - See, Jesus is trying to increase their faith in God. He wants them to fill in the GAPS of uncertainty with trust in God. That's why he says this next:

- Look at your **HEAVENLY FATHER**.

Jesus is trying to get our focus off of the temporary things that so easily dominate our time and energies. And he wants us to know that God is aware and cares about those things.

Matthew 6:31-32 (NLT) So don't worry about these things, saying, 'What will we eat? What will we drink? What will we wear?'³² These things dominate the thoughts of unbelievers, but your heavenly Father already knows all your needs.

Jesus is saying that his followers, believers in Him, we should have a different mindset and focus than unbelievers. We should think differently and trust differently and worry differently. WHY? Because we know we have a GOOD HEAVENLY FATHER who knows what we need.

This doesn't mean we don't struggle or go through hard things. We do. But we fill in the gaps of life and uncertainty with TRUST in our GOOD Heavenly Father.

ILLUSTRATION – This week I did a graveside memorial service for a great woman in our church. Vicky Faithfully followed Jesus since she was a teenager, married for 52 years, several months ago she didn't feel right, went to Dr. & got a diagnosis of aggressive cancer, and a few months later died. We prayed for healing, wanted it for her here and now, yet Vicky went to heaven and received her ultimate healing from God there. As you can imagine this is so hard for all of her family here... especially her husband David of 52 years. I asked him the other day how he was doing and I loved his response. He said *"I'm having good days, with some really tough moments in them, but the days are all good days, because I know where Vicky is, I know God is with me & my needs are met"*

That's a great picture of what it means to trust in your heavenly Father. It doesn't mean everything will be easy or go perfect. It won't. But we can have less worry and more trust because we know we have a GOOD heavenly Father. We can choose to fill in the GAPS with trust & faith, and that is what David is doing. He's hurting, and he's trusting God is still good and God is still with him.

TRANSITION - So When God is first:

1. It decreases my capacity for **WORRY**; and then 2nd
2. It increases my capacity for **EVERYTHING ELSE**.



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Prioritizing the Kingdom of God does not ignore or minimize the other aspects of life, it puts them into perspective!

Matthew 6:33 (NLT) *Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and live righteously, and he will give you everything you need.*

God's Kingdom, The realm where what God wants done is done, doesn't have to compete with all the other things we all have in our lives – our work, our relationships, our hobbies. When God and his Kingdom work in me, and through me, is prioritized it enhances and energizes every aspect of my life. Bringing more purpose and perspective to my work, my relationships, and my passions.

I love this quote from C.S. Lewis:

“When first things are put first, second things are not suppressed but increased.”

Meaning what matters most gives meaning to everything else.

ILLUSTRATION - A favorite way I like to illustrate this is with these 2 jars. These Jars represent our life, our capacity to do all the things we have to do. And these small rocks represent all the things we worry about and stress about – our jobs, our kids, their schedules, their school, their sports & hobbies, our finances, our hobbies, our vacation plans... all the things...

These are important things.... Good things... but when we put that stuff first, there is often not room for God and what he wants to do in and through our lives. **(Big rocks on top)**

Rock 1 – we say I want a relationship with God. I want to follow Jesus & be at church

Rock 2 – I want to serve others at my church & in my community

Rock 3 – I want to join a group or be in Rooted

Rock 3 – I want to be a contributor and give, and honor God with my money

Many of us feel this way, it just doesn't all fit. We just can't do all the things we want to do and we worry so much about the things we know we shouldn't. And that is why Jesus says SEEK me first, put me and my Kingdom above all else. **(Big rocks in another jar first)**

Rock 1 – when I make God the center, the first, the foundation

Rock 2 – and I prioritize giving to his Kingdom not just my own

Rock 3 & 4 – and I make his people and purposes in my life a priority

*And then I take all the other things that I care about and are really important **(pour small rocks in)** Jesus says I got you, let's make it all happen together – your job, your kids, their sports, your hobbies, your finances, that vacation.. all the other things fit in. When Jesus is first there is room for everything else!

If we get our priorities right, God promises to help us with everything else. We can do more with God, than we can on our own. Maybe today is a day for you to realign some priorities. To say God, I focus on you first, and ask you to help me with everything else.



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TRANSITION - Let me give you the last point, and let's look at the last verse Jesus ended this with.

When God is first:

3. It gives the ability to be my best TODAY.

When I'm worried I've filled the GAPS in my life with FEAR. Fear is most often focused on tomorrow. Things that might or might not happen that I have very little control of. But when I trust God, make him my priority, he helps me fill the GAPS with FAITH. And helps me handle whatever might come my way.

Matthew 6:34 (NLT) So don't worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring its own worries. Today's trouble is enough for today.

In other words, today needs your best. Because tomorrow is not even guaranteed, and it will have its own challenges. So embrace the moment. And as you put God first, he helps us be our best.

CLOSE – where do you need God's help to OVERCOME worry and be your best today? Is it on your job, in your marriage, with one of your kids, in your finances?
Let's fill the gaps with TRUST, with Faith, and believe that God is with us and working in us, and then we bring our BEST into today, we live in the moment fully trusting God. Not being overcome by worry.

SONG – *Now Here* – It speaks to the power of God to change us and the things that worry us. Let's learn this song, and let us fill us with faith that we don't have to be overcome, because we have a God who overcomes. He overcomes our worry, our fear, our stress, our doubt, our struggles and sin.

PRAY

Philippians 4:6-7 (NLT) Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done.⁷ Then you will experience God's peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus.