

A BIBLICAL STUDY ON FEAR
LESSON EIGHTEEN: FOCUS ON GOD

by Sandy Harber

"Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed?" Matthew 6:31

Jesus addressed the subject of worry in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7). So worry, or anxiety, is not a modern problem. Although it seems like we have taken it to a whole new level. The fast pace of our lifestyle and the pressure to succeed has brought stress into our lives. In the first century people worried about how they could get the basic necessities of food and clothing. Jesus' advice to the people of His day is still relevant today.

The section on worry begins in Matthew 6:25 with "therefore. . . ." The word "therefore" is a connector that ties the previous passage in with the one under review. That is, because of what was said previously, here's what you must do. When studying Scripture, whenever you encounter the word "therefore" you want to ask the question, What is it there for?" What conclusion is the author making based on the previous section? "Therefore" appears three times in this passage on worry (Matthew 6:25-34).

In Matthew 6:19-24, Jesus was teaching His disciples to get their priorities straight, to focus on God, and to modify their activities to reflect that heavenward thinking. They were to work on building up their treasure-store in heaven, not on earth (vv. 19-20). That is, spend their time wisely on spiritual things. This is true for us, as well, Yes, we have to work to receive a paycheck so we can provide necessities for ourselves and our families. But we do not have to make acquiring money our primary focus. Our job, money, material possessions serve a purpose in our lives; however, when we start serving them, they become our god. Jesus reminds us that we can only serve one master. Have you chosen the Living God or money and material goods (v. 24)?

If we choose God to be our primary focus, then our hearts and minds should be busily occupied serving Him. That doesn't leave room for worrying about the necessities of life. Jesus reminds us that God knows what we need (v. 32). He takes care of the birds (v. 26) and the field (vv. 28-30). People are more important to God than birds (v. 26) and grass (v. 30). "Therefore" trust God to meet your need and stop worrying (v. 31).

Our job is to "seek first the kingdom of God" (v. 33). First means just that: before anything else. Even before our most basic needs of food and clothing. God wants to be Number One in our lives. The Greek word translated "seek" indicates a continuous action. Every day, all the time, we should be seeking the spiritual realm of our God. A "kingdom" is a territory or realm over which a king rules. The "kingdom of God" is the realm over which God, through His Son, has sovereign rule. At present, Jesus' kingdom is not of this physical world (John 18:36) but is spiritual (Luke 17:20-21). In the future, Jesus will rule on earth for 1,000 years (Revelation 20:4), after which His rule becomes eternal (Revelation 22:3-5).

In addition, we should be seeking His righteousness (v. 33). The Greek word translated "righteousness" means "the character or quality of being right or just." Righteousness is an attribute of God (II Corinthians 5:21). As Christians we should be striving to be more like Jesus (Romans 8:29). We demonstrate our righteousness by our right actions. Think, "What would Jesus do?" Then, do it.

The passage closes with the third "therefore" (v. 34). If we focus on seeking God's kingdom and righteousness, He will, in turn, provide for our needs (v. 33). "Therefore" we don't need to worry about our future (v. 34). We can safely trust God to supply whatever we need.

"But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." Matthew 6:33