

February 28, 2023

## Strive First for the Kingdom of God

[Matthew 6:25-34](#)

*Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink,<sup>1a</sup> or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing?*

Bobby McFerrin received the Grammy Song of the Year Award for his song, *Don't Worry; Be Happy*. "In every life we have some trouble, but when you worry, you make it double. Don't worry; be happy." The song speaks truth. It's upbeat and fun. Nevertheless, "don't worry; be happy" may be easier sung than done.

Jesus' words from "The Sermon on the Mount" encourage us to consider the birds who neither "sow nor reap" and the lilies that "do not toil or spin." These words may bring comfort, but do they alone reduce worry?

I once worried more. I learned -- partly from today's passage, partly through prayer, partly thanks to help (whether they knew it or not) of my wife, my home and church families, and partly from experience -- that it helps to turn our worry over to God; just let go and let God. This passage is a great place to begin that quest as it informs us not to worry. If God provides for the birds and flowers, surely God will provide for us. "But strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness and all these things will be given to you as well" (verse 33).

Next, we engage God in conversation letting Him know our troubles. If words don't come easily in prayer, we remember the promise of Romans 8:26: The Spirit helps us and "intercedes with sighs too deep for words." The Holy Spirit prays on our behalf!

Step three is gratitude. Paul instructs us, "Give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you who belong to Christ Jesus." (1 Thessalonians 5:18). If we look, we will surely find something worthy of a "Thank you, God!" even in the midst of trouble. Remembering to be thankful reduces our tendency to worry, for it guides us beyond the immediate worry issue. An attitude of thankfulness brings forth an attitude of joy.

Surrounding ourselves with others of faith—family, pastor, church friends, or even those within our social sphere—helps to reinforce those things we already know, but may need reminding: the assurance of Jesus, the attitude of thanksgiving and the joy in our hearts. We do not walk alone.

Strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness.

Don't worry, be joyous!

***Prayer:** God of promises kept, help us in our striving for the kingdom of God and his righteousness. Help us to know You well enough and to rely upon You often enough to thank You in all circumstances, and to let go of our worry so that through the assurance of Christ Jesus and with help from the Holy Spirit, we can find joy in our hearts and lives. In the name of Jesus, we pray. Amen.*

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