

**AUTHENTIC CONTENTMENT**  
**Matthew 6:25-34**

**INTRODUCTION:**

The number 8 top-grossing movie of 1988 was “Cocktail” – a movie about a guy who starts tending bar to make money so he can go to college and earn a business degree. It was a terrible movie!

Cocktail won the “Razzie” awards for Worst Picture, Worst Screenplay, Worst Director (Roger Donaldson) and Worst Actor (Tom Cruise). But it did win an ASCAP award, a Golden Globe and a Grammy for one of the songs on the soundtrack: “Kokomo”, by the Beach Boys. “Kokomo” charted at #16 on the top 100 hits of 1988.

#38 on the music charts that year was another song from the same movie. It was a goofy little song. I don’t know how it ever made it to the charts but it did. Do you remember it? It started with a carefree vocalization and then these lighthearted words:

*Here is a little song I wrote  
You might want to sing it note for note  
Don't worry be happy  
In every life we have some trouble  
When you worry you make it double  
Don't worry, be happy.....*

But we aren’t humming a carefree tune now, are we? With \$4.00 gasoline, a crisis in the mortgage markets, plunging house values and inflation in the wholesale price index, we have a major economic crisis on our hands. Alan Greenspan says, “*The current financial crisis in the US is likely to be judged in retrospect as the most wrenching since the end of the Second World War.*”

We have American troops deployed on foreign soil fighting in two different wars. Iran and North Korea are on the verge of becoming nuclear powers.

It is no wonder that Dr. Ernest R. Hilgard, past president of the American Psychological Association and a distinguished psychologist in his own right, has observed that anxiety has become the official emotion of our age and the most pervasive psychological phenomenon of our time.

In our high-stress, high-strung, high anxiety age, you may wonder if Jesus knows anything about life in the fast lane. After all, he was a simple carpenter in a simple time 2,000 years ago. What did he know about stress? He had no mushroom-shaped cloud hanging over his head. He didn’t have to worry about promotions and the competition among co-workers. Time wasn’t measured in nano-seconds. VCRs, DVDs, MP3s, IRAs, the IRS, the GNP, and your BMI hadn’t even been thought of.

And on top of that, Jesus wasn't married. He had no wife and kids and no mother-in-law. What did he know about stress? What could he teach us about living without worry?

I will resist the urge to the obvious. I will resist the temptation to list all the stress that Jesus faced as a part of his every day existence: everything from the first assassination attempt on his life when he was still an infant, right up to his execution on trumped-up charges when he was still a young man. I'll not detail all the pressures he faced.

Suffice it to say that this is a teacher who knew the subject he taught. And he does have something to teach us about how to live in the pressure-cooker of life. He will not take us back to the careless, carefree days when we were oblivious to the troubles of the world. Rather, he will show us how to triumph over stress, anxiety and worry. Are you interested?

In Matthew 6:25-34, Jesus addresses this "official emotion of our age" and this "most pervasive psychological phenomenon of our time." Let's read what he had to say (starting on page 960 in the pew Bible in front of you).

*<sup>25</sup> "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 important than food, and the body more important than clothes? <sup>26</sup> Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? <sup>27</sup> Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life?"*

*<sup>28</sup> "And why do you worry about clothes? See how the lilies of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. <sup>29</sup> Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. <sup>30</sup> If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? <sup>31</sup> So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' <sup>32</sup> For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. <sup>33</sup> But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. <sup>34</sup> Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own."*

In this text, Jesus give us four reasons not to worry and four steps to overcoming worry. Let's study them.

- I. **FOUR REASONS TO AVOID WORRY (6:25-32)**
  - A. **Worry is illogical (6:25)**

Just think about what worries you. Are you really worried about the important things? Do you worry about the basic needs of life?

If you are like most of us, you are most likely fretting about relatively unimportant things like the luxuries of life. The things you are worried about, are they worth the worry? Are they really important?

Is anyone here worried about where his next meal is coming from? Jesus points out that life is more than food and drink. Food and drink are pretty important but they are not the most important things in life.

Does anyone here really have to worry about having any clothes to wear? Does anyone in our community? But do you know what: even if you were one step away from nakedness, Jesus says that your body is more than mere clothing.

And typically, we worry about the lesser things. Worry is illogical because life is more than food...the body more than clothing. And if these basics are not worthy of worrying (and they are not) then why should we waste valuable energy worry about that which is even lesser than these?

**B. Worry is unnecessary (6:26, 28-30)**

Do you see what Jesus pointed out? Birds don't worry and God takes care of them. Flowers don't fret and God adorns them.

And neither of these were made in God's likeness and image. Do you really think He will neglect you if He cares for birds and flowers?

Mrs. Civilla Martin said that, in 1905, while she and her husband were vacationing in Elmira, NY, they became friends with a Mr. and Mrs. Doolittle. Mrs. Martin wrote:

*"Mrs. Doolittle had been bedridden for nigh twenty years. Her husband was an incurable cripple who had to propel himself to and from his business in a wheel chair. Despite their afflictions, they lived happy Christian lives, bringing inspiration and comfort to all who knew them. One day while we were visiting with the Doolittles, my husband commented on their bright hopefulness and asked them for the secret of it. Mrs. Doolittle's reply was simple: "His eye is on the sparrow, and I know He watches me." The beauty of this simple expression of boundless faith gripped the hearts and fired the imagination of Dr. Martin and me. The hymn "His Eye Is on the Sparrow" was the outcome of that experience."*

If God's eye is on the sparrow, I know He'll care for me. So worry is totally unnecessary.

**C. Worry is unproductive (6:27)**

And worry is unproductive. It doesn't accomplish anything. Jesus' illustration of the futility of worry is that worry won't add a single hour to the length of your life. In fact, recent medical research has revealed that far from adding length to one's life, worry actually shortens a person's lifespan.

If you will look at Matthew 6:27 in your Bible, you will probably see that there is a footnote to this passage. Some ancient manuscripts of Matthew's gospel read, "Who of you by worrying can add a single cubit to his height?" Do you know how long a cubit is? It's 18 inches. I'm barely 5'6" tall. If worry would add a single cubit to my height, I'd be seven feet tall! As much worrying as I've done in my lifetime, I ought to be worth at least three more cubits – and that would make me ten feet tall!

But I'm not. And that is exactly Jesus' point. Worry is unfruitful. It won't add inches to my height or years to your life. In fact, it is the most unproductive thing you can do.

**D. Worry is unworthy (6:31-32)**

Worry is not only illogical, unnecessary and unproductive, it is also unworthy.

We are subjects of the King of Heaven. What does it say about what we think of our King if we worry that He is not going to care for us? Our worrying implies that He is an incapable King – or an uncaring King. And He is neither.

We are children of a Heavenly Father. What does it say about what we think of our Father if we worry that He is not going to look after us? Doesn't it imply that He is incompetent or indifferent? He is neither. He is a loving Father who all-wise and all-powerful.

Pagans who don't know any better, spiritual orphans and souls without a country may worry. But that is unworthy of a Christian.

Well, hopefully you are convinced that you ought not to worry. But that's easier said than done...right?? Believe it or not, in the next two verses, Jesus gave us a plan for avoiding worry.

**II. FOUR WAYS TO AVOID WORRY (6:33-34)**

**A. Determine your priorities**

First of all, we must establish our priorities. Jesus said to "seek *first* his Kingdom and his righteousness". That speaks of priorities.

Often, when we worry, it is because we've lost track of our priorities. When we know what the important things are, we can pour our time and energies into them and know that we are using our time, talent and treasure on the highest priorities.

Jesus said not to worry about food, clothes or shelter but rather to focus first on the most important things. His assurance to us is that if, as our top priority, we seek first his Kingdom and his righteousness, then all these other things will be added to us as well. But even food, clothing and shelter are not to be our priorities. They are added blessings.

And note that Jesus says these will be added to us. We are not to be grasping after them. In fact, Jesus says that those who are his disciples will inherit the earth...but not yet. Seek *first* the advance of his Kingdom in yourself and in the world; seek *first* his kind of righteousness in yourself and in the world. These are to be our priorities.

## **B. Develop a plan**

To seek first implies a plan.

Jesus was a master of planning. When he fed 5,000 people, he seated them in groups of 50. That is organization and planning.

When he sent out the 70 to be his witnesses in the world, he sent them out two-by-two.

When he deployed the first evangelists to carry the Good News of the Kingdom, he told them what to carry, what to eat, how to react if rejected...he told them what to do in all circumstances.

Jesus was a master of planning; therefore, he mastered the time at his disposal. And he expects us to serve with a purpose and that demands a plan. Planning keeps us from needless fretting over the future.

## **C. Do what you are able to do now**

Proverbs 18:9 condemns laziness: "*One who is slack in his work is brother to one who destroys.*" To avoid worry does not mean that we are to become lazy.

I sometimes hear people say that they are inactive because they are waiting for the Lord's direction for their lives. But have you noticed that

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Jesus was never idle. He sought God's direction *while he was serving*. And he left that as an example for us.

**D. Depend on the Lord for the rest**

Proverbs 16:3 reads, "*Commit to the Lord whatever you do and your plans will succeed.*"

Philippians 4:6-7 says, "*Do not be anxious about anything but in everything, by prayer and petitions, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God which, transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.*"

And I Peter 5:7 commands, "*Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.*"

The clear teaching of Scripture is that we are to do what we can when we can and then depend on the Lord for the rest.

**CONCLUSION:**

Fog can be scary and it can obscure vision, causing accidents. But do you know how much actual water is in fog? Very little. A fog covering 40 acres 100 feet deep only contains as much water as an 8 ounce drinking glass.

Worry is like a thick fog that will settle in and shut you down. But when you get right down to it, usually there's really nothing to it! Someone has said that 90% of what we worry about never actually happens. So the 10% that might actually happen ends up dominating our lives, ruining our health and robbing our joy.

Don't be anxious. Not about anything. You have a Father who knows your needs and will move to meet those needs when you present them to Him. Trust Him to care for you.

**INVITATION:** #692 – "*God Will Take Care of You*"