

Grace Bible Church

Robert R. McLaughlin Bible Ministries

The TREE OF LIFE is a weekly teaching summary.

The Tree of Life for week ending 07/15/01.

The Doctrine of worry. Part 2.

In life, particularly that of a believer, there are many things that are encountered that are not understood right away. Sometimes not even until the end of our lives do we grasp an understanding of the things that we encounter. Philosopher Soren Kierkegaard said "life can only be understood backwards, but it must be lived, forwards."

Usually we are so consumed by the present that it prohibits our understanding of all that is transpiring. That is why the Bible is so important and why we should appreciate God's word so much. There is something about the Scriptures that provides a backwards view of life while we are living it in a forward mode.

God gives us insight and wisdom through His word and that gives us understanding. The Psalmist wrote in Psalm 119:100 "*I understand more than the aged, Because I have observed Thy precepts.*"

People who observe the precepts and the doctrines of God are given an understanding about life. For the believer, life must be lived both in the vertical and in the horizontal planes. While we are living life on the horizontal, we are moving from the past into the future and God brings in wisdom in the vertical plain with insight and perception, which we would not otherwise have. The believers goal is to live vertically while still living in the horizontal world. We can think vertically, but we have to live horizontally. When a believer gets too vertical about life, they can become hard to live with. We can become pious, religious and so heavenly minded that we are no earthly good. We have to live horizontally because we have to live in the world. We have to deal with the things of life, in the meantime God intercepts and interjects wonderful vertical truths to guide us through our lives especially when it comes to the area of worry.

In the twelfth chapter of the gospel by Luke, Jesus is teaching this vertical wisdom to a body of people walking in the horizontal plane. He has already begun to warn them about the leaven of the Pharisees, where leaven is a symbol of sin. He pinpoints the sin of the Pharisees, which was and always will be hypocrisy. He warns His followers to be on guard against it.

The following eleven verses, Luk 2-12, Jesus talks about living before God in an authentic manner. Not as a phony hiding behind a mask, but living a real life before a real God in a real world. In verse 13, *"And someone in the crowd said to Him, Teacher, tell my brother to divide the {family} inheritance with me."* Now this it has nothing to do with hypocrisy, it has nothing to do with what Jesus has been teaching. People are not always thinking about what the speaker is talking about, they are not always on the same track.

Jesus had been talking about the hypocrisy of the Pharisees, and suddenly the man says *"Tell my brother to divide the {family} inheritance with me."* Now, The Lord Jesus Christ, never wanting to lose an opportunity decided to pin point that question, or that request, and to turn it into a moment of teaching vertical wisdom for people living on a horizontal plane. That's exactly what He does., but not by getting involved in the family squabble, in verse 14, He says *"Man, who appointed Me a judge or arbiter over you?"*

But notice He goes on to say *"Beware and be on your guard against every form of greed."*

He would change the subject from the sin of hypocrisy, verses 1 to 12, to the sin of greed, 13,14,15 and following that, to the sin of worry. He heard the motive in the tone, in the voice of the interrupter *"I want what I've got coming to me, the buck stopped before it got to me, and I want the money that my family ought to give me!"*

Our Lord will use this opportunity to address greed in the next several verses, 15 through 20.

He tells the story of the rich farmer who not only enjoyed a bountiful crop in the past, but now looked out of his window and saw a bumper crop and rather than thinking how this wealth can be shared, the farmer is thinking how to take these blessings and build greater barns, keeping more for himself, making a greater name and getting more money. It's not the sin of possessions but the sin of keeping all of it to himself.

There is an evil belief held by some that if anybody has anything in this world that is good, it is not of God or does not represent that which is godly. Our Lord never taught that, rather, He taught, that when we have more, we simply give more. If we store up riches, we violate one of God's most important laws. The more we hoard and store up, the more we show our trust in what we have stored instead of trusting in God. Pro 11:24-26 *"There is one who scatters, yet increases all the more, And there is one who withholds what is justly due, but {it results} only in want. The generous man will be prosperous, And he who waters will himself be watered. He who withholds grain, the people will curse him, But blessing will be on the head of him who sells {it}."*

The blessing of God is provided, not to make us poor, but to help others be able to make it with our assistance so that our giving increases as we make more. That is the story behind the scene in Luk 12. In fact, He calls the man who tries to keep it all to himself, in verse 20 *"But God said to him, You fool! This {very} night your soul is required of you; and {now} who will own what you have prepared?"*

This man was living in a forward manner, but he didn't take time to look backwards. He was living for the now and for the future, the horizontal, but he forgot about the vertical. Everything for this man was for the horizontal, and Jesus interjects the vertical. He turns to a smaller group of people in verse 22, to His disciples, to those who care about things like the filling of the Holy Spirit. To those operating their lives in the energy of the Spirit not in the energy of the flesh. To those who are not only converted to Christ, but who want Christ to live His life through them. To those, Jesus would now address, He could have said His reply to the man, but He didn't. He could have said His reply to the crowd at large, but He didn't. He singled out His disciples, as He does to this very day. He picks and chooses among the large listening audience and He puts His finger on the soul of a few individuals who are intense about their faith. People who want their lives transformed, who are tired of playing religious games, and wearing the vertical mask.

Luk 12:22-34 *"And He said to His disciples, For this reason I say to you, do not be worried about {your} life, {as to} what you shall eat; nor for your body, {as to} what you shall put on. For life is more than food, and the body than clothing. Consider the ravens, for they neither sow nor reap; and they have no storeroom nor barn; and {yet} God feeds them; how much more valuable you are than the birds! And which of you by being anxious can add a {single} cubit to his life's span? If then you cannot do even a very little thing, why are you anxious about other matters? Consider the lilies, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin; but I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory did not clothe himself like one of these. But if God so arrays the grass in the field, which is {alive} today and tomorrow is thrown into the furnace, how much more {will He clothe} you, O men of little faith! And do not seek what you shall eat, and what you shall drink, and do not keep worrying. For all these things the nations of the world eagerly seek; but your Father knows that you need these things. But seek for His kingdom, and these things shall be added to you. Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has chosen gladly to give you the kingdom. Sell your possessions and give to charity; make yourselves purses which do not wear out, an unfailing treasure in heaven, where no thief comes near, nor moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."*

That's vertical structure in a horizontal world, it can happen, and it's for the disciples who follow Christ closely.

There are three enemies that we have to handle if we are going to be close, followers of Christ; worry, fear and selfishness or greed. They are the unholy trinity of the disciple like life and we all fight them, do battle with them.

Observe there are two commands in this section on worry and both of them are saying virtually the same thing. Verse 22, *"For this reason I say to you, do not be anxious (worried)."*

Here is a command, to make it more emphatic, it could read *"Thou shall not worry!"*

In Verse 29, *"Do not keep worrying."*

In verse 22 the Greek word is "merrimnas" which means "the mind being distracted."

Jesus, according to Luke's record in chapter 10 uses this word to Martha, when He says *"Martha, Martha you are merrimnas about all these things,"* or you have your mind distracted by so many different things. Mary has chosen the good things to focus on, but you Martha are distracted.

When we are worried our minds are on many things and they distract us from the main things of life.

The word that is used in verse 29 is used only here and nowhere else, it is "meteoriizomai." We get the word meteor from it, it means to be up in the air, to be suspended in space. Here it is used for someone who is preoccupied, has something on their mind, suspended in the mystery of how it's all going to work out and we are commanded not to do that. In these instructions from our Lord, He gives us wonderful vertical wisdom in the two areas of worry that are most common.

Verses 22 and 23. We worry about things that are not our responsibility.

Luk 12:22-23 *"And He said to His disciples, For this reason I say to you, do not be anxious for {your} life, {as to} what you shall eat; nor for your body, {as to} what you shall put on. For life is more than food, and the body than clothing."*

Think of the hours we all spend focusing on food and focusing on the garments that we wear. We focus so much on our bodies, our pallets, on style, design, color and fabric that we have lost touch with the vertical. Our Lord is not saying, *"don't pay any attention at all,"* but rather not to become worried or distracted by focusing on the dress and the food, what we're going to serve, what we're going to eat, what's for supper.

The other area of worry is regarding things we cannot change or control.

Verse 25, *"Which of you while being anxious can add one inch to your height?"*

One can worry all they want, they will not live a year longer, in fact they may live a year or two less. We cannot make ourselves taller, we cannot make

ourselves live longer by worrying. We worry about those things that we can't change. Worry doesn't change anything, except that we become worrying parents, rather than nagging parents. God never built a Christian strong enough to carry today's duties, and tomorrow's anxieties piled on top of it, you're not built that strong. When you revert to worry you become a horizontal thinking Christian and you live just like you did when you were lost.

Horizontal existence feeds on worry, it loves to worry and it looks for things to worry about. Vertical living focuses on God, and waits for Him, it trusts Him, and it talks to Him, and it counts on Him.

How do we remind ourselves the importance of freeing our minds of worry? Our Lord gives us a couple of projects, first verse 24, consider the ravens we'll try crows, and you see those guys around all the time. They don't sow, they don't reap, they don't have a storeroom, they don't have a barn, they're just there. They're not going to die from lack of food and lack of water, when you're born a crow, God say's I got that covered.

Then in verse 27, "*consider the lilies.*" Look at how they grow, they don't toil, they don't spin.

God isn't telling us to focus on birds and plants, that's not it. He is saying focus on Me, I take care of all those things. You plant roses and they grow, they bloom in beauty that not even Solomon could have designed, and I fill these skies with all those birds.

Verse 24 contains the secret, God feeds them, how much more valuable are you than birds, in verse 28, how much more will He clothe you than rose bushes, and lilies.

We spend our days fighting, over those things we cannot change and cannot control, those things that are really God's business not ours. We must learn, that God provides for His own, therefore focus attention on the essentials. We must learn that God is about His business, and we must stay about ours.

His business is controlling and changing things that we cannot control.