

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

TODAY'S VERSES

Introduction

Most issues of faith and doubt come down to our feelings about things, our anxiety. When we truly trust Him our anxiety, begin to diminish.

Discussion

What things do you fret about the most?

Explanation

What things have you never worried about?

Why do certain things not bother us?

Why do you think some tragedies destroy some people's faith while others are strengthened by them? Which one are you?

Application - Read Matthew 6:25-33

How is worry tied to a lack of faith?

Discuss this statement by Elie Wiesel, "No heart is as whole as a broken heart, and...no faith is as solid as a wounded faith."

Mission

What are the right and wrong ways to respond to doubt in those around us?

Homework - Read James 2:14-18

What is something that you trust and why do you trust it?



SERMON

On The Mount



TRULY, I SAY TO YOU



FAITH & DOUBT PT. I

Matthew 6:33 *But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.*

In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus has been setting a trajectory about trusting Him and all that He does. It starts with first understanding God's blessing, then salt and light (and our call to be Salt and Light), He moves into worship and righteousness, relationships, oaths, fasting, prayer, and treasure. All of life's issues only come into focus when they are understood in light of Jesus.

Most issues of faith and doubt come down to our feelings about things, our anxiety. Anxiety is what Jesus starts to nail on the head in Matthew 6:25-33. Jesus starts with "Therefore," therefore would mean, "in the light of the alternatives" set out verses 19–24, when we truly trust Him our anxiety diminishes.

When Jesus says "do not be anxious" it doesn't mean that we don't think about certain things, Jesus himself demands that we think about birds and flowers. "Do not be anxious" can become a false absolute by neglecting the limitations of the context of the passage. The point here is not to worry about the physical necessities (or the luxuries implied in the preceding verses) because such anxiousness suggests that our entire existence focuses on and is limited to such things. The argument is: if God has given us life and a body, both admittedly more important than food and clothing, will He not also take care of us how He sees fit? Worrying about such things betrays a loss of faith and the forgetting of all Jesus has spoken of in the Sermon on the Mount.

To worry about food and drink is to have learned nothing from the natural creation. If the created order testifies to God's "eternal power and divine nature" (Rom 1:20), it testifies equally to his providence. The point is not that disciples need not work, as birds do not simply wait for God to drop food into their beaks, but that they need not fret. Our faith should be strengthened when we remember that God is (in a special sense) our Father (not the birds' Father), and that we are worth far more than birds (the "you" is emphatic).

Jesus is assuming a biblical world view that is essentially, "without faith, nothing makes any sense." God is so sovereign over the universe that even the feeding of a bird falls within His concern. Because He normally does things in regular ways, there are "scientific laws" to be discovered; but the believer with eyes to see simultaneously discovers something about God and His activity.

"Lilies of the field" may be any of the wild flowers that were abundant in Galilee, and these "flowers of the field" correspond to "birds of the air." The point is a little different from the first illustration, where birds work but do not worry, the flowers neither toil nor spin. The point is not that Jesus' disciples may opt for laziness, but



that God's providence and care are so rich that He clothes the grass with wild flowers that are neither productive nor enduring.

Jesus poses questions ('What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?') are meant to be unanswerable because the underlying attitudes are thoughtless towards God who knows the needs of his people. To a Jewish audience those questions would be essentially pagan because people are seeking them and not the God who gives them.

Jesus calls His disciples to live lives qualitatively different from those of people who have no trust in God's fatherly care and no fundamental goals beyond material things.

Jesus says that His disciples are not simply to *refrain* from the *pursuit* of temporal things as their primary goal in order to differentiate themselves from pagans, but instead are to *replace* such pursuits with goals of far greater significance. To seek first the kingdom (of God) is to desire above all to enter into, submit to, and participate in spreading the news of the saving reign of God, the messianic kingdom already inaugurated by Jesus, and to live so as to store up treasures in heaven in the prospect of the kingdom's consummation.

This idea also points back to the very beginning of the Sermon on the Mount because it is the Poor in Spirit who understand that all life is a gift, who live by grace in that Kingdom. Those who live in the Kingdom pursue the things already prayed for in the first three petitions of the Lord's Prayer (6:9–10).

"Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name.
Your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread,
and forgive us our debts,
as we also have forgiven our debtors."

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