



## ME AND MY WORRIES

Pastor Al Detter Matthew 6:25-34

5:30, 9:15 & 11:00am Grace Church July 12-13, 2008

Last weekend, I challenged our whole church. We can do what 50,000 Jews did in 520 BC. In the 4 years it took Israel to build the Temple, most of us can be debt free if we decide to follow the Word of God like they did.

We're in a 4-part series this month called "econoME". Last week we looked at the subject of ME AND MY SPENDING. I talked about the downward spiral of spending that can take a person to financial ruin and I ended with 4 mile markers on the road to financial freedom.

One of my very good pastor friends in Erie is seeing great results. He pastors an inner city church of about 150 people. He took his church through Financial Peace University with Dave Ramsey. 23 families cancelled \$84,000 in debt in a 4-week period. They also managed to save \$44,000 just by changing their behavior in the way they spend money. By the way, that's a ministry we've just started at Grace.

Friends, if we make our spending a spiritual discipline and take steps to knock down debt, 4 years from now, even in this economy, most people in our church can be out from under the pressure of relentless debt into new and Biblical habits of spending.

In the meantime, if we owe a lot of money and it seems we don't have enough money to make ends meet, we tend to get anxious and worry. That's why we're talking today about ME AND MY WORRIES.

In 1999, Marie and I went to Australia. In Sydney, we had the privilege to attend a conference at Hillsong Church where Darlene Zscheck is the worship leader. Perhaps her best known song is "Shout to the Lord". As visitors, we were full of questions about many things. By far and away, the #1 response when we needed help from the people of Australia was, "No worries!"

Financial pressures cause lots of stress. We come to a passage today in which Jesus, if He were Australian, would say about financial pressure, "No worries!" READ THE PASSAGE—Matthew 6:25-34 (cf. Lk. 12:22-31).

This passage is tucked away in what I consider to be the greatest sermon in the Bible. It's a 3-chapter segment in Matthew 5-7 called "The Sermon on the Mount". Jesus spoke this sermon on an unidentified mountainside in Galilee to a large crowd (Mt. 5:1).

In our passage today, 1 word stands out. It's the word "anxious". Jesus uses that word 6 times in 10 verses (Mt. 6:25, 27, 28, 31, 34). The New International Version uses the word "worry". The King James Version says "take no thought". The English language has changed since the King James Version came out in 1611. Please don't understand Jesus to be saying that we're not to plan or provide for the future—"take no thought".

The Greek word (merimnao) from which these translations come means "to have anxiety, to be anxious, to be unduly concerned (cf. Luke 10:41 and Martha)". In other words, don't let worry get a grip. Don't get worked up. Don't allow yourself to be harassed by fear. Don't be deeply disturbed mentally and emotionally. You see, anxiety and worry can hurt you on a number of fronts—physical, emotional, spiritual, and relational.

Look at verse 25. The 1st word is "therefore". That means that this section is related to what went before it. Jesus was talking about how we feel about money and God in the section just prior. He said that you can't love them

both at the same time. You have to make a choice. Of course, the choice He wants us to make is to love God and use money wisely under His control.

The truth is—many of us worry, some more than others. It's part of our nature. If you choose God, you're going to worry—will God come through? If you choose money, you're going to worry—what if I don't have enough? Financial problems are in the top 3 reasons why most married couples have major problems. The other 2 are communication problems and sex problems.

In this passage, Jesus is telling us—if you choose God, don't worry! If you choose money, then worry your head off.

I've given this center chair a name—the **“Worry Seat”**. It's the seat of anxiety that Jesus was talking about. Some of us were born worriers. Your personality is just nervous and jerky by nature. Fewer of us were born extremely composed and unphased about almost anything. But at some point, when we begin to buckle under the load of debt, most of us get very concerned. We feel the bruise of stress and we land in this chair.

Most of us will be in the “Worry Seat” at some point in life. Maybe you're there right now. Has it ever done anything good for you? Has worry ever fed you? Has it ever clothed you? Has worry ever given you 1 more hour of time?

Jesus is saying that worry will never help you. Never! But worry will hurt you. The Erie Times-News on June 10 (2008) carried an article in the business section about worry. Worry over debt makes millions of Americans sick. The article said that medical research links chronic stress to a wide range of physical ailments. And our bad economic times are sure to increase worry and illnesses, so says the article.

Worry can't lengthen your life but it can shorten it. And it can damage relationships as well. Jesus is telling Christ-followers, when you choose God over money, you have to get out of this chair, the “Worry Seat”. You can see that there are 2 ways to move from the “Worry Seat”. You can move towards less worry and you can move towards more worry. If you move towards less worry, you can actually become worry free. If you move towards more worry, you can move towards debilitation. What does debilitation mean? Weakness and ruin. So you don't want to move in that direction!

So if and when you get in the “Worry Seat”, I want to show you how to get out of that chair and move in the right direction.

### **The 1st chair from the “Worry Seat” to less worry is the “Priorities Seat”.**

This is the seat where we begin to assess what's really important to us. For many people, it's the externals of life, verse 25. It's what the body needs and enjoys—food, drink, clothing, shelter, comforts, plenty of stuff. That's what's really important to most people. Stuff to please the body. But Jesus says, “Those are really shallow priorities”.

Jesus is saying that life is about much more than externals. The life within is more important than the body without. The life within is about good relationships and character and connecting with God. The life inside is far more important than consuming ourselves with questions like, “What should I wear today?” and “What's for supper?”

In Luke 12:15, Jesus said that our life does not consist in the abundance of our possessions. He's saying the same thing in a different way. But here's the point. To pamper the body and shortchange the inner life is a big blunder. The inner life is what's really important. If externals are important to you, you'll spend a whole lot of money on unimportant things to the neglect of your spiritual growth.

And when you don't have enough money for all you want or if you have to pay for what you've already charged and don't have the money, you'll find that all the stuff you thought would make you happy won't! Instead, you'll be miserable with anxiety.

When you move to the “Priorities Seat”, you begin to evaluate what’s important in life. And you’ll discover that a whole lot of what you thought was important isn’t. You’ll find that you can spend less on externals and focus on developing your inner life with God and others and reduce anxiety! The “Priorities Seat” really affects your view of what’s important in life and the externals that cost a lot of money won’t capture you nearly as much. Moving to the “Priorities Seat” prepares you to move to the next seat.

### **The 2nd chair from the “Worry Seat” to less worry is the “Significance Seat”.**

In this seat, it’ll begin to dawn upon you how important you are to God! You’ll realize how God takes care of His creation and that He’s committed to taking care of His followers above everything else! Once you understand the “Significance Seat”, you’re going to be far less concerned about the externals of life. And you’ll realize that we’re so significant to God that He’s going to meet our needs. Jesus gives 2 illustrations.

The 1st illustration is in verse 26—the birds of the air. Jesus said that they don’t plant seed and harvest the crop. They don’t even put the crop in the barn for their winter food. And yet your Heavenly Father feeds them. God makes sure the seeds and worms are there every day.

The 2nd illustration is in verses 28-30—the lilies of the field, the beautiful buttercup-type (anemone) flowers and scarlet poppies in the meadows of Israel. As they grow and change sizes, God clothes them. They don’t manufacture their own clothes. And when you look at them, they’re more magnificent than Solomon, the richest Hebrew king, in the best of his royal garments. These flowers are wildflowers, of all things! Jesus classified them as grass. They have a short life span and then are used for fuel to make bread (vs. 30).

Here’s the point of these 2 illustrations. We’re incredibly more valuable than birds or wildflowers. If God feeds the birds and clothes the flowers, will He certainly not feed and clothe us? People are far more significant to God than the animal and plant kingdoms! If God takes care of the lesser, He’ll most certainly take care of the greater!

Once you understand the “Significance Seat”, the next seat isn’t far away.

### **The 3rd chair from the “Worry Seat” is the “Allegiance Seat”.**

Verse 33 is so well-known that it almost rolls off our tongues without meaning—“But seek 1st the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be added unto you.” This is the seat Jesus wants us to be in, but few ever get there. It’s the seat of total devotion to God. It’s the seat that says God is more important than the external stuff of life.

What’s this seat about? What happens when you get in this seat? There are 2 features that characterize the “Allegiance Seat”—surrender and supply. Surrender is in the 1st half of the verse and supply is in the 2nd half of the verse.

Let’s look 1st at surrender. Jesus said, “Seek 1st the kingdom of God and His righteousness.” The word “seek (zeteite)” has the idea of searching for something you really need or want in the hope that you’ll find it. Jesus is saying, “Search for the rule of God in your life. Search out His ways so you can be like Him. Surrender to God as Boss and make it your aim to imitate Him in all things. Step down from being king or queen of your own life.”

There’s actually an underlying irony going on here. When you’re in the “Worry Seat”, you’re searching for the externals of life—food, clothes, comforts—and you’re getting all worked up about trying to get them. Jesus is saying, “If you’re going to worry about something, be concerned about how you’re going to let God be Boss and reflect His character”. That should be the true “worry” of life.

The 2nd feature of the “Allegiance Seat” is supply. Jesus said in essence, “When you’re in this seat, God will meet all your needs. You don’t have to worry.” Did you hear that?! In this seat, God takes care of you like He cares for the birds and the lilies! When you’re not in this seat, that won’t happen. God will let you attempt to do His work at great expense to you.

Jesus makes a huge promise to His followers. When you sit in the “Allegiance Seat”, when you come under the leadership of God, then God will absolutely take care of you. You won’t have lack. The words of Jesus are specific in verse 33. When you sit in the “Allegiance Seat” as a subject in God’s kingdom, Jesus said, “‘All these things’ will be added unto you”. Now it’s pretty important to understand exactly what Jesus is promising, right? What are “all these things” that God will add to those who sit in this seat?

The context of the passage has to tell us. There are some key clues. Food, drink, and clothes were prominent in verses 25-31. Then in verse 32, Jesus said, “The Gentiles seek after ‘all these things’”. What things? The things mentioned in this passage. So we know that “all these things” includes at least food, drink, and clothes. By the way, the term “Gentiles” is Jesus’ way of indicating those who aren’t really interested in following Him.

And then Jesus adds another clue in verse 32, “Your Heavenly Father knows that you need them all.” Jesus is saying that God knows what we need to live on. He’s not ignorant. It’s His job to provide life’s necessities to those who sit in this seat. So now we know that “all these things” are life’s necessities. There are more necessities than the 3 mentioned here—food, drink, and clothes. They were representative for other needs like shelter and warmth.

Now let’s get really practical. I’ve got some examples of things in life that we spend money for. Jesus is telling His followers not to worry about the necessities of life because God will be sure we get them. According to Jesus, what things are we not to be anxious about? What is God promising to give to those who sit in the “Allegiance Seat”? This will be interesting.

\*Enough healthy food for 3 meals a day.

\*Plenty of ice cream, cookies, candy, chips, and pop. I went to K-mart one day and found my favorite cookies on sale—Oreos. \$1 for a pound bag—incredible deal. I bought 20 packages. Do you want to know something? Oreos are no longer my favorite cookie. By the time I got through about 10 bags, I was so sick of Oreos, I had to give them away.

\*Money to eat out at restaurants.

\*A pair of shoes, underwear, clothes for work, and something nice for social occasions like church, funerals, etc.

\*A dozen pair of shoes, 40 shirts or blouses, 30 skirts or trousers.

\*A Caribbean cruise.

\*A house with a bedroom, bathroom, kitchen, living room.

\*A family room addition complete with a home movie system.

\*Essential transportation.

\*A new car with all the options and big car payments. This is perhaps the biggest single drain on a person’s finances—lifelong car payments that literally throw thousands of dollars down the drain.

\*A boat for the lake.

I think you get the idea. We’ve tricked ourselves into believing that many of our wants are needs and we go into debt to finance those things and then we get into a whole lot of worry because of too much debt and we wonder why God isn’t coming through. God promised to supply our needs, not our wants.

When you sit in the “Allegiance Seat”, you stop worrying. You scale back to the necessities as painful as that may be. You watch God supply your needs. You get out of debt. And then you manage the extra from this seat

as a wise steward of the Heavenly Father. You can't sit in this seat and get mad at God for not bailing you out of foolish spending and debt.

The big question of the passage is—How do I move from the “Worry Seat” to the “Allegiance Seat”? The answer is in verse 30—faith. Faith! Actually, it could be translated, “You little-faiths”, almost like a nickname. Jesus told His followers, “You're after things you don't need and then worry because you don't have enough faith to believe that God will take care of you. So you try to manage on your own and it's killing you. You have to stop wanting all the stuff and believe that God will give you what you need!”

Faith in this passage is strong confidence that God will supply what He promised. It's a faith that changes your behavior so you stop spending for wants through debt as you watch God supply your true needs.

It all comes down to this. If you sit in the “Allegiance Seat”, do you believe God will do what He promised? Do you believe Jesus is telling us the truth? Last I checked, God made the incredible planets and stars and galaxies. Don't you think the Creator of the universe can cough up some food, water, clothes, shelter, transportation and those kinds of necessities for you? If Jesus isn't reliable here, we've got a huge problem on our hands!

Worry is a slap in the face of God. But when you sit in the “Allegiance Seat”, you decide to stop running your life and you watch God meet your needs in incredible ways, none the least of which is the wise spending of your paycheck.

Now I want to go back to the “Worry Seat” for a minute and move in the opposite direction. This will be a much short-er journey because Jesus spends a lot less time on this direction.

Moving from the “Worry Seat” in the opposite direction is so much easier than moving by faith to the “Allegiance Seat”. In verse 32, Jesus says that movement in this direction is a Gentile behavior. It's the behavior of those who don't claim to follow Jesus. So any Christian who moves in this direction is acting like an unbeliever. So let's start moving.

### **The 1st seat to more worry is the “Acquisition Seat”.**

Jesus said in verse 32, “Instead of seeking the kingdom of God, the Gentiles seek after all these things”. The word for “seek (epizetousin)” is the same word Jesus used for seeking the kingdom in verse 33 but with a prefix (epi) that intensifies the search. The Gentiles are on an all-out search for the externals of life. They have no real understanding that the life within them is more important than the body.

So they're always on a search—to buy more and more stuff to make them happy. And for most people in this pursuit, they buy more than they can afford and get themselves deep in debt with tons of stuff that really doesn't satisfy.

Church, you need to know something. The credit card approach to buying things including necessities is the Gentile approach to life. The credit card stands in the place of God's supply. This is the wrong direction! You don't want debt to supply what God said He'll supply. And you certainly don't want to go into debt for things you really don't need.

### **The 2nd seat to more worry is the “Tomorrow Seat”.**

In this seat, you add tomorrow's troubles to today's. You know you're in trouble today and you're afraid of what's coming tomorrow. More bills. More trouble. More worry. Worrying about stuff that may or may not happen and robbing you of any serenity today. And even with anxiety about tomorrow, what do lots of people do? Insure that more trouble will be coming tomorrow because they can't stop the behavior of the “Acquisition Seat”.

When you sit in the “Allegiance Seat”, you don't have to worry about tomorrow. You know that God will meet your needs tomorrow just like He will today. But when you sit in the “Tomorrow Seat”, you're really deep into worry.

## **The 3rd seat to more worry is the “Vacuum Seat”.**

Someone has said that there’s a God-shaped vacuum in all of us and only God can fill that vacuum. That’s what Jesus is saying in verse 33, “Fill that vacuum with God and let Him satisfy you, not just with your external needs but with Himself!”

When you get to the “Vacuum Seat”, worry doesn’t leave you. Acquiring things continues. Tomorrow becomes more of a threat. And at some point, you realize that, despite all your attempts, you’re not really happy. Things can’t satisfy the divine vacuum within.

On this side of things, I’ve also have some examples of things that happen by the time you get to this seat. For the one who sits in the “Vacuum Seat” has done it all on his own and for his own benefit for the enjoyment of the body to the detriment of his soul. Let’s see what they are.

\*Continual spending for things—the immediate high that satisfies in the moment and quickly fades away.

\*Increasing debt—for people who don’t have millions of dollars. Increasing debt brings increasing emotional pain and no real satisfaction.

\*Often sex outside the boundaries—people trying to satisfy a vacuum by emotional and sexual relationships that God says will injure them.

\*Entertainment and partying—looking for fun times anywhere you can to numb the “pain” of the vacuum chair.

\*Crises—eventually things like failing relationships, broken marriages, inability to get credit, foreclosures, doctor bills.

\*Unfulfillment—you realize that you’re not happy. It may take awhile, but you’ll find out what Hollywood actors and millionaires find out when they have it all—they’re still not happy. Things don’t satisfy. What’s more, you end up with a ton of things and a mountain of stress to go with it.

The “Vacuum Seat” is not a good seat!

## **Conclusion**

We’re all in a seat today. Many of us have worries, especially during difficult economic times. The question is, “In which seat are you sitting?” Some of us are in the “Worry Seat”. You know it’s not a seat that Jesus wants His followers to be in. Some of you have moved out of the “Worry Seat” to the “Priorities Seat”. You know that your life is more than outward stuff.

Some of you have moved to the “Significance Seat”. You know that you’re infinitely more valuable to God than animals and plants. And some of you have moved to the “Allegiance Seat”. God is your Ruler and you’re trusting Him for all your needs and you’ve found Him to be the supreme satisfaction of your soul.

Some of you have moved the other way from the “Worry Seat”. You’re in the “Acquisition Seat”—always searching for more stuff, going into more debt. Some of you are in the “Tomorrow Seat”. Worry is escalating and tomorrow scares you to death. And some of you are sitting in the “Vacuum Seat”. You get there after a period of time going the wrong direction from the “Worry Seat” and you ask yourself, “Is this all there is to life?”

What seat are you in today? You know the seat Jesus is pointing to. We can find every excuse to stay in the seat we’re in if it’s not that seat. For your sake, your family’s sake, and your 1 and only shot in life, decide to get to the best seat in town. It’s not Tinseltown. It’s the “Allegiance Seat” of Matthew 6:33.

I can't say it any better than C.S. Lewis, "Aim at Heaven and you'll get earth thrown in. Aim at earth and you'll get neither."

I believe there are a number of people who are not in the seat you should be in today. You realize that you need to make some movement out of the seat you're in towards the "Allegiance Seat", where God is leading your life and you're seeing Him come through for you. If you're interested in changing seats, I'm going to ask you to make a change right now. Maybe you can only move up 1 seat, maybe 2. But if you want to move to a seat with less anxiety, decide to do it today! Staying in the wrong seat is too costly!