



A Centered Life

WHAT DO YOU WORRY ABOUT?

The POINT >

When your life is centered in Christ, everything else falls into place.

> MATTHEW 6:25-34

²⁵ “Therefore I tell you: Don’t worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Isn’t life more than food and the body more than clothing? ²⁶ Consider the birds of the sky: They don’t sow or reap or gather into barns, yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Aren’t you worth more than they? ²⁷ Can any of you add one moment to his life span by worrying?

²⁸ And why do you worry about clothes? Observe how the wildflowers of the field grow: They don’t labor or spin thread. ²⁹ Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was adorned like one of these. ³⁰ If that’s how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and thrown into the furnace tomorrow, won’t he do much more for you—you of little faith? ³¹ So don’t worry, saying, ‘What will we eat?’ or ‘What will we drink?’ or ‘What will we wear?’ ³² For the Gentiles eagerly seek all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. ³³ But

seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be provided for you. ³⁴ Therefore don’t worry about tomorrow, because tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.



FOR LEADERS (15 minutes)

THE POINT // WHEN YOUR LIFE IS CENTERED IN CHRIST, EVERYTHING ELSE FALLS INTO PLACE.

LEVELS OF BIBLICAL LEARNING // HOLY SPIRIT

Jesus promised that God would send the Holy Spirit, and the Spirit has come to convict, teach, comfort, lead, strengthen, and seal us, as well as to produce fruit within and through us.

Message to Leaders

Because of the curse of sin upon creation, we will, without a doubt, face all sorts of uncertainties, pressures, and troubles throughout our lives. When we depend on ourselves to deal with these, we'll find we often fall short, and this produces a great deal of worry. However, if we depend on God to provide for us, we're released from our worries and moved to deeper faith in Him. Among all the ways the Holy Spirit ministers to us are:

- **comforting us when we experience fear and worry.**
- **opening our eyes to the character and truth of God.**
- **strengthening us to live in obedience to God, even when it's difficult.**

As you lead students through this session, help them identify the role of the Holy Spirit in their living by faith, in their experiencing God's comfort, and in their living a life of obedience.

➤ Engage Option 1

Create two large targets (similar to a dartboard) on the floor using tape, and ask students to get into two teams. Give each team a set of plungers, and challenge them to throw the plungers at the targets for points. Each plunger that sticks to the target earns points. Say, **"There are many distractions in this world, but if Christ is at the center of our lives, we can experience the blessings of being a part of God's kingdom."**

➤ Engage Option 2

Place a large poster board in the middle of the room and have students sit in a circle around the board. Ask each student to write down something that takes up a lot of their time (e.g., school, sports, video games, TV, etc.). Say, **"We should evaluate our lives daily to make sure we are centered on Jesus and not losing sight of His will for our lives."**

➤ Engage Option 3

Search the Internet for "Jesus-Centered Life - YouTube - You know Jesus." Play the video as you begin the session. Say, **"Our lives should be centered on Christ making Him the priority above all else."**

NOTE: Always make sure you preview any video clip you show students and ensure it is appropriate for your church and ministry.



For **free online training** on how to lead a group visit MinistryGrid.com/web/BibleStudiesForLife
For **free Midweek Options** for your group, visit lifeway.com/BSFLsimplicityFall19

LEADER PACK ELEMENTS

If you have the optional Leader Pack, consider the following:

ITEM 1: Introduce students to the unit by displaying the **Unit 1 Simplicity** poster.



THE BIBLE MEETS LIFE

THE POINT // WHEN YOUR LIFE IS CENTERED IN CHRIST, EVERYTHING ELSE FALLS INTO PLACE.



THE SETTING

Directly following His baptism and temptation in the wilderness, Jesus began doing ministry in Galilee, the northern, rural region of Israel. As He performed miracles, multitudes began to follow Jesus. On this particular occasion, with His disciples seated next to Him, Jesus shared the truth of God's message with the many who were present. The Sermon on the Mount is perhaps the most well-known sermon ever preached, and it contains many practical truths related to life and faith, including how we are to deal with the worries we face.

FACT:

Anxiety can confuse our sense of smell. People who worry a lot tend to perceive neutral smells as really stinky.²

Some people never worry about anything. They're carefree and nothing seems to bother them. Most of us, however, face a good number of challenges. Anxiety is the most common mental disorder in the US, and approximately 265 million people suffer from an anxiety disorder.¹ Personally, there have been seasons in my life when it would have been fair to characterize me as an anxious person. I wanted to stop worrying. I knew Jesus had called me to remove worry from my life. But it was easier said than done. However, it's important that we realize Jesus has given us the key.

If our focus is on the world, then worry is often the result of things not going our way. But when we focus on Christ, everything changes! If things go well, we're grateful and see it as a reason to give thanks and praise to God. If things go badly, we still know God is in control and can use the challenges to help us grow.

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus called us to seek His kingdom and His righteousness above all other things. When we do this, we can trust that everything else will fall into place.



IMPART (30 minutes)

THE POINT // WHEN YOUR LIFE IS CENTERED IN CHRIST, EVERYTHING ELSE FALLS INTO PLACE.

MATTHEW 6:25-30

“Therefore I tell you: Don’t worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Isn’t life more than food and the body more than clothing? Consider the birds of the sky: They don’t sow or reap or gather into barns, yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Aren’t you worth more than they? Can any of you add one moment to his life span by worrying? And why do you worry about clothes? Observe how the wildflowers of the field grow: They don’t labor or spin thread. Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was adorned like one of these. If that’s how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and thrown into the furnace tomorrow, won’t he do much more for you—you of little faith?” **MATTHEW 6:25-30**

When I played baseball in high school, I primarily played third base, but I also pitched from time to time. After one particular game, my arm was really sore, and a trip to the doctor revealed that I had an overuse injury. The answer—rest. No baseball! This seemed like the end of the world to me. But my dad, who was wiser and older (and I trusted him more than anyone in the world), came to me with a simple message which helped me more than I realized—“It’s going to be all right, buddy.”

People tend to worry about a lot of things, and this is a picture of our hearts. When our focus is on the physical rather than the spiritual, we end up with the wrong state of mind, which leads to anxiety and worry. The problem is not when we have a concern for our physical needs, but when we let the physical take priority over the spiritual. Jesus was clearly telling us during the Sermon on the Mount that life is more than food and clothing.

However, when we struggle or face uncertain circumstances, simply putting worry away seems tough—even impossible. But it’s important that we recognize who spoke these words. The command came from the mouth of the Creator. The One who put the stars in place, who controls the oceans, who holds the world in the palm of His hand. He is the One who said, “Don’t worry!”

When I couldn’t play baseball, I was devastated, but my dad knew better than I did what the future held, and he was right. Similarly, when we worry, it’s because we fail to see the big picture. We choose to focus on earthly things, and we fail to trust God as we should. But Jesus reminds us we have a heavenly Father who takes care of the birds and adorns the flowers, and He loves us even more than these. In spite of our sinfulness, the Creator of the universe—who has the power to take care of us—values us deeply. This wonderful truth should change our perspective and, therefore, cure any worry.

Leader: Ask students, “When have you had trouble understanding the perspective of someone older and wiser?” Also consider sharing your own example.

DAILY DISCIPLESHIP GUIDE (P. 6)

- 1** Describe the relationship between faith and worry.
- 2** What are some lies that cause worry to increase?



IMPART

THE POINT // WHEN YOUR LIFE IS CENTERED IN CHRIST, EVERYTHING ELSE FALLS INTO PLACE.

MATTHEW 6:31-32

*So don't worry, saying, 'What will we eat?' or 'What will we drink?' or 'What will we wear?' For the Gentiles eagerly seek all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. **MATTHEW 6:31-32***

Without Christ, our minds are consumed with living the American dream—having the best and being the best. We look for identity and meaning in the things of this world. Great shoes, popularity, and remarkable talent aren't bad things. In fact, they can be good things when we use them for God's purposes. However, when we seek personal worth in these, even if we do achieve all we set our hearts on, we'll find we come up empty. None of these things truly satisfy, and we're left hungry for more. It boils down to a matter of trust, and without Christ, our trust is in the wrong place.

VERSE 32: According to Jesus, worry is a "Gentile" mindset. While we may sometimes equate "Gentile" with anyone who is not a Jew, more generally it refers to those who are outside the family of God. Those who are lost have every reason to worry about life. God is the source of all we need, and those with no trust in God have to trust in their own abilities to provide for their needs.

When we place our faith in Jesus, we are trusting that He will meet our earthly needs, such as food and water, clothing and shelter. He's also met our greatest need. Because of our sin, we were separated from God and deserving of His punishment. So He sent Jesus to pay the price for our sin, which we could never pay. Without Jesus, we would have endured God's wrath for eternity, but He provided the answer because of His great love.

- **Because of Jesus, we can trust God hears our requests (Ps. 66:18-20).**
- **Because He owns "the cattle on a thousand hills," we can trust He will provide (Ps. 50:10).**
- **Because He always pursues our best interest, we can trust He will take care of us (Lam. 3:25-26).**

If there is a problem, it's with us. It's a faith problem. Worry is simply a product of not trusting God. The good news is we do not have to remain faithless! When we experience God's faithfulness, our trust in Him grows and our worries tend to disappear. So get to know Jesus. Trust Him with your life. Make the choice to put away worry in light of the fact that you are a beloved child, and God is faithful.

***Make the choice to put away worry.
You are a beloved child, and God
is faithful. #BSFLsimplicity***



DAILY DISCIPLESHIP GUIDE (P. 7)

- 3** List some ways people deal with worry in their lives.
- 4** When has God provided for you in an unexpected way?
- 5** How can remembering God's faithfulness help you deal with worry?



IMPART

THE POINT // WHEN YOUR LIFE IS CENTERED IN CHRIST, EVERYTHING ELSE FALLS INTO PLACE.

MATTHEW 6:33-34

But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be provided for you. Therefore don't worry about tomorrow, because tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own. **MATTHEW 6:33-34**

My family lives in Baltimore, and we're about two and a half hours away from the beach. Every year, we drive over with our kids, and one of their favorite things to do is collect seashells. Sometimes, the beaches are lined with shells of all shapes and colors. However, most of the time, we have to really hunt to find large, complete shells.

When we think of seeking, what often comes to mind is hunting for hidden things. However, this isn't what Jesus meant when He told us to "seek first." The word Jesus used for "seek" means to desire and pursue. We are not seeking something hidden. We are pursuing the things God has clearly revealed, and we are called to do so with passion and as a matter of the highest priority.

Leader: Ask students, "When have you experienced 'seeking' after something, perhaps something hidden?"

VERSE 33: Jesus used the Greek word "zeteo" for seek—to desire or crave; reason about how to acquire the object of our desire.

When we worry, there is no benefit whatsoever. A lot of the things we worry about never even happen, and all the worry was for nothing. And when tough situations do happen, instead of making it better, the worry usually makes it worse. Jesus taught that we are to refuse to worry about tomorrow—it doesn't help anyway. Instead, we should concern ourselves with today, specifically, setting our hearts on Christ. We can think about tomorrow ... tomorrow.

This does not mean that if we seek God wholeheartedly, we will have whatever we want—at least, not in an earthly sense. In many parts of the world, there are countless believers who truly love Jesus and live in poverty. Jesus' words do not promise prosperity, but they do promise God's provision.

Jesus also wasn't teaching that we shouldn't plan for the future. We are to be diligent about preparing for what may come and putting ourselves in a position to honor God for our whole lives. However, we must also accept that the future isn't in our control. God is sovereign, and seeking Him first means doing our part to live in obedience and trusting Him with the rest.

All people seek joy and fulfillment. God hasn't hidden it from us—instead, He's made it available in Jesus! If we set our hearts on earthly treasures, they will ultimately be destroyed or stolen. However, when our treasure is in heaven—when our greatest desire is God and His kingdom—we can trust that He'll take care of everything else in our lives.

DAILY DISCIPLESHIP GUIDE (P. 7)

- 6** What does Jesus promise in these verses?
- 7** What does it look like to seek God's kingdom first?
- 8** How can we follow Jesus' instruction not to worry about tomorrow, yet still plan for the future?



LIVE IT OUT (10 minutes)

THE POINT // WHEN YOUR LIFE IS CENTERED IN CHRIST, EVERYTHING ELSE FALLS INTO PLACE.



GOD

JESUS

HOLY SPIRIT

BIBLE

SALVATION

CREATION

CHURCH

PEOPLE

FAMILY

COMMUNITY
& WORLD

LEVELS OF BIBLICAL LEARNING // HOLY SPIRIT

Jesus promised that God would send the Holy Spirit, and the Spirit has come to convict, teach, comfort, lead, strengthen, and seal us, as well as to produce fruit within and through us.

We may be tempted to think that by living in obedience to God, our lives will be without trouble. However, this simply isn't the case. Because of sin's curse upon creation, we will face difficulties, and sometimes following Christ can bring even more trouble. Though we will experience worry or fear at times, the Holy Spirit ministers to us by:

- comforting us.
- opening our eyes to the character and truth of God.
- strengthening us to continue forward in obedience to God.

➤ CHRIST

Faith in Christ is foundational to our relationship with God. Faith is more than simply "believing." True faith is belief plus an element of trust, which is then demonstrated in the ways we live.

FAITH = Belief + Trust + Action

CONFESS

In order to overcome worry, confess the areas in which you struggle to trust God. List your worries, and then cross through each as you give it over to God and allow Him to begin working in you.

MEMORIZE

Hold strongly to the promises of God and memorize Matthew 6:33 this week. Write the verse in your journal, on a note card, or on your bathroom mirror, and continually remind yourself of God's promise to provide.



LIVE IT OUT

THE POINT // WHEN YOUR LIFE IS CENTERED IN CHRIST, EVERYTHING ELSE FALLS INTO PLACE.

> COMMUNITY

Among the greatest gifts God has given us to deal with worry are Christian friends. When we deal with difficult things alone, we're likely to worry more. However, when we allow others to share in our struggles, God has a way of easing our worries.

9 Think of someone you trust and write down his or her name. Go to this friend and share the things that cause you to worry and the areas of your life where you fail to trust in God. Invite this friend to pray with you and for you.



Listen for others who are dealing with worry and find ways to support them.

> CULTURE

In our culture, worry and anxiety are among the biggest problems people face. Identify a lost friend and share a story of how God has provided for you and how He's calmed your fears. Help your friend to see that Jesus is the answer to our worries.

10 Who is the friend you are going to share with?

11 What story will you tell?