

SEEK FIRST the KINGDOM of GOD

“Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your Heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? Which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature? So why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; and yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Now if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will He not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? Therefore do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your Heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things shall be added to you. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.” Matthew 6:25-34

What Are You So Worried About?

What are you most concerned about? Relationships? Your children? Friends?

Are you concerned what other people think of you? What other people say about you?

Consumed by Consumerism

Most people are concerned about things. Things they have, things they do not have and things they want. Our society has become obsessed with material things. Greeds not needs. Money and the things money can buy consume much of the time, energy and concerns of a huge section of society. Fashions and fads, shoes, clothes and accessories are of great concern to many in society. Health and wealth, our body and our bank account preoccupy most.

Celebrities and Trivialities

Looking at many of the popular magazines, it is clear that news and gossip about celebrities in sport and entertainment fascinate many. People, politics and personalities are the focus of much of the news and entertainment industry. Soap operas and so-called reality shows distract many from the real issues of life. Materialism and superficial trivialities seem to distract many from ultimate questions of meaning, purpose and direction in life. Instead of the pleasure of worship, many have substituted the worship of pleasure.

Distraction and Indoctrination

Instead of news of what is actually happening, most of us only receive the biased views of a mostly secular humanist mass media. Instead of education, many are receiving indoctrination. Instead of being taught how to think, many are simply being told what to think.

Techno Slaves

Tools and technology can be great time savers and helps in our daily duties. However, today it is very common to find multitudes of people who are techno slaves. They go from the TV to their computer, to their cell phone/tablet/i-phone, to their Facebook and i-pod. Technology can be a useful servant, but it is a fearful master.

Subsistence and Survival

Historically most people throughout most of history, were mostly concerned about survival issues: food, water, shelter, clothing and safety. For most of history, most people have been subsistence

farmers struggling to provide sufficient food for their families and adequate shelter and clothing to survive the winter. Frequently people have been concerned over their physical safety in the midst of natural and man-made disasters. Wars, famines, floods, earthquakes, pestilences and raids and looting from marauding bands of criminals have been clear and present dangers for multitudes, throughout history and in many parts of the world to this day.

Protection from Violent Attack in Nigeria

Geographically, if you were a Christian in Northern Nigeria, you would be concerned about your survival. Your primary daily concerns would probably be for protection, particularly when you go to church. Waves of Islamic terror bombings of Christian churches and mob attacks on Christian communities continue to be an ever-present threat for many in Northern Nigeria.

Survival in Sudan

For over 60 years, Christians in South Sudan and the Nuba Mountains have been preoccupied with survival issues. With the government of Sudan having declared *Jihad* against the Christian inhabitants, daily life in much of South Sudan and the Nuba Mountains has been consumed with concerns about food and water, firewood, shelter, clothing and safety from aerial bombardments, artillery barrages and scorched earth attacks by Islamic militants. Shortage of ammunition and scrounging for a few rounds for their rifle would be a primary concern.

Steadfast in Egypt

Christians in Egypt are increasingly concerned about safety and survival issues as radical Islamicists bomb and burn churches and attack, or kidnap, Christians throughout the country.

Islamic Persecution

Christians in Afghanistan, Syria and Iraq are deeply concerned over safety and security. Islamic attacks on churches have been frequent and fatal.

Communist Persecution

If you were a Christian in China, or North Korea, your primary concerns would be over your safety and survival, especially at secret worship services, or when receiving forbidden Bibles

Comfortable and Complacent

However, we are not amongst those 400 million Christians who live in 67 countries where they are subjected to state-sponsored discrimination and persecution. Many people in our societies live in comfortable homes, in comfortable suburbs and drive in comfortable cars, to comfortable, air-conditioned shopping centres and to comfortable churches, where they hear comfortable messages.

Media Saturated Distraction

Fashions and fads, music, media and movies, people, politics and personalities, celebrities and sports saturate our lives and distract us from those things which are eternally important.

Confused and Corrupted

Our society is being corrupted and confused by the world's education and entertainment, music and media. Our Lord Jesus Christ commands us: ***"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?"*** Matthew 6:25-26

Worrying is Destructive

Worry is Faith in the negative. Trust in the unpleasant. Assurance of disaster and belief in defeat. Worry is a sin against the loving care of our Heavenly Father. A day of worry is more exhausting than a week of work. Worry is the interest we pay today on tomorrow's troubles. Worry has an overactive imagination.

Worry vs. Worship

Worry and worship are mutually exclusive. You cannot be worshipping God and worrying at the same time. Evangelist John Wesley, declared: *"I dare not fret any more than I dare curse and swear."*

Observe the Birds of the Air

Our Lord commands us to take a good look at nature. Learn from the animals. It is not that the birds of the air are passive. Of course they are active, busy, building their nests and collecting food for their young. However, they do not evidence worry. Their Heavenly Father keeps them and our Lord challenges us: ***"Are you not much more valuable than they?"*** Matthew 6:26

Learn from Nature

Our Lord asks us: ***"Which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature? So why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; and yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these."*** The Lord command us time and again: ***"Do not worry."*** This is not a suggestion to be considered, it is a command to be obeyed.

Forsaking Trivialities

It is so easy for us to waste our time, our talents and our treasure on trivialities, missing the big picture. The main thing is to keep the main thing the main thing. We are commanded to ***"Seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness."*** We must live in the light of eternity. Put God first. Re-evaluate everything in the light of eternity.

Living in the Light of Eternity

What really matters? We are to love God with all of our heart, soul, mind and strength and we are to love our neighbour as we love ourselves. We must seek first God's Kingdom. Put your duty first. Your duty to God, to your family, to your church, friends, work and community. Fulfil your commitments and responsibilities first and foremost. Duty is ours, the results are in God's hands.

Ask the Right Question

There was a time when people asked: What do you think? Today the question more commonly asked is: How do you feel? In fact, neither of these questions are ultimately that relevant. The question really should be: ***What does God's Word say?*** Our feelings and opinions are ultimately insignificant when compared to the eternal Word of God.

The Final Verdict

You should not be too worried about what other people think of you. You should be overwhelmingly concerned with what God thinks of you and what He will say to you on the Day of Judgement.

The Only Opinion that Ultimately Matters

What other people think about us and what other people say about us is not nearly as important as what our Creator and Eternal Judge will say on the Day of Judgement. Will you hear: *"Well done good and faithful servant"*? Or will you hear: *"Depart from Me you cursed, into the lake of fire prepared for the devil and his angels"*?

Devilish Deceptions and Distractions

In *The Screwtape Letters*, C.S. Lewis warns of the devilish distractions and deceptions that keep us from what really matters. The book of Ecclesiastes warns us against squandering our time and talents on trivialities: chasing after the wind, vanity and meaninglessness.

"To the man who pleases Him, God gives wisdom, knowledge and happiness, but to the sinner He gives the task of gathering and storing up wealth to hand it over to the one who pleases God." Ecclesiastes 2:26

Martha and Mary

"But Martha was distracted with much serving and she approached Him and said, 'Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Therefore tell her to help me.' And Jesus answered and said to her, 'Martha, you are worried and troubled about many things. But one thing is needed and Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her.'" Luke 10:36-42

Balanced Hospitality

Hospitality is a Biblical command and a duty and a responsibility for all of us. However good hospitality includes giving attention to your guest, not only bustling around in the background. Preparations for hospitality should generally be completed before your guest arrives.

Keeping Perspective

At any rate, Martha was apparently too distracted with extravagant arrangements, instead of giving attention to what Jesus was teaching. So our Lord corrected her: *"You are worried and troubled about many things. But one thing is needed and Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her."*

Our Greatest Priority

The main thing is to keep the main thing the main thing. Our greatest priority is to love God with all of heart, soul, mind and strength. Mary chose what was better. She was focused on the unique opportunity of having the Lord in their home. She was sitting at His feet and was hanging on His every Word.

First Things First

The Lord is not here speaking against thoughtful hospitality, or against hard work. There is a time and a place for everything. At that moment, Martha was missing the big picture. She was not seeking first God's Kingdom. Mary chose a better way and the Lord commended her for that. We must focus on the goal, major on the majors, not on the minors. Re-evaluate everything in the light of eternity. **Seek first the Kingdom of God!**

God's Antidote to Worry

"Rejoice in the Lord always, again I will say, rejoice!... be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy - meditate on these things.... I have learned in whatever state I am to be content; I know how to be abased and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learnt both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." Philippians 4:4-13

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