

26 Look at the birds of the sky, that they do not sow, nor reap, nor gather crops into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more important than they?

Jesus illustrates that anxiety is _____ because it represents a failure to trust God as provider. Jesus asks us to consider the birds of the sky. The example that God provides for the animals is used again and again to let us know that we can trust God to provide (see Job 12:7-10; 38:39-41, Psalm 104:25-28). God, in his mercy and goodness feeds even the birds. Jesus assures us that God cares for them in Matthew 10:29 saying **Are two sparrows not sold for an assarion? And yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father.** Birds, except doves, get a pretty bad rap overall in the Bible (Gen 15:11; Lev 14:22; Gen 40 16-19; Matt 13:4, 19 in the Parable of the Sower; Rev 18:2)

27 And which of you by worrying can add a single day to his life's span?

We're going to talk a little bit about worry and anxiety.

Worry is ineffective

We can _____ calamity after calamity, trouble upon trouble that could happen-but 85% of it won't. Not only does stress not add a single day to our lives, but because of the _____ of continual stress, it causes us to age faster and die earlier. Since you don't have the power to change the things that you're worried about anyway, why don't you **"cast all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you"**

Worry is disobedient-Philippians 4:6-7 tells us **Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and pleading with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.**

There is a big difference between prudence and anxiety. Prudence is acting with care and _____ for the future and necessarily concerns things that we can _____ about. The anxiety it's referring to is that kind of "anxious, harassing concern" that eats away at us. That _____ concern of those who are continually full of cares, especially about the future and especially about those things that they can do _____ about! Since God commands us not to be anxious about anything, then continually worrying and fretting is _____ and therefore sin.

Worry can become a habit and a vice.

Did you know that you can become _____ to worry? Continually asking all of those "What If this happens?" questions can lead to overthinking and worrying that can become a _____. Uncertainty is part of life, but when we let worry go into overdrive, it is _____ to us, and can be a hard pattern to break. Worry is based in fear, and according to 2 Timothy 1:7 **For God has not given us a spirit of timidity, but of power and love and discipline.** God will help us discipline our minds not to be consumed by fear and anxiety, if we will _____ him. We must "take every thought captive" before worry and anxiety takes _____. Get rid of the worry, before it becomes a stronghold in your life. Stop it now.

Numbers 4:13 we read **"13 Then they shall clean away the ashes from the altar, and spread a purple cloth over it.** The altar was a very important thing—there were many _____ concerning the altar. In Exodus 20:24-26, for instance, the altar was to be made **"of earth or stone that had not been shaped or cut with human hands" and "there were to be no steps up to the altar."** And then, in Deuteronomy 27:5-6 and Joshua 8:31 it says that **"the stones were not to be hewn or cut stones because this would pollute the altar."** There were no _____ up to the altar. This is a picture of the fact that we cannot approach God on the basis of _____—making little steps for ourselves to complete to get closer to God, or making the worship and service of God something we want it to be by cutting the stones _____. The main function of the altar was for sacrifice and worship -- and special care had to be taken to keep it Holy. -- And part of that special care was to get rid of the _____ that accumulated on a daily basis. Now why was that important? Removing the ashes kept the fire burning.

Sitting around worrying is causing many a person's fire to go _____ today. Worry and anxiety can _____ the Word if we are not careful, and distract us from what is really important. Scrape off the ash that causing you to _____ the joy, miss the peace, miss the deliverance that God wants to give you, and start worshipping God. Remember that you have been delivered from this body of death and sin, covered by the blood, covered by that purple cloth and stop letting the enemy put out your fire with the _____ of anxiety. God has provided! Our brains are such that we can _____ our brain to stop worrying. It starts with the decision not to _____ the misfortune that your worried thoughts see in your future and trust God. Philippians 4:8 tells us **8 Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, think about these things.**

whatever is true-Truth from God's perspective; absolute truth.

whatever is honorable-noble or worthy of respect, having dignity, worthy of serious consideration and paying attention to. This _____ out much of the news. But it rules in God's Word.

whatever is right- "approved by God", righteous, or Just in the _____ of God; Everything God does is just. He will demonstrate through His Word, or through the circumstances of our life. And as we think about these things, we learn to _____ our God more, and love and appreciate His character in a deeper way.

whatever is pure-untainted, pure, holy, innocent, having integrity, morally upright. We should consider and dwell on things that are pure, innocent and have integrity; the kind of moral uprightness that God _____ of His people.

whatever is lovely-worthy of affectionate caring; so dearly prized, or worth the effort to have and embrace. If the thoughts going through your head don't cause you to be joyful that you're thinking about them before you go to bed at night, or are happy to wake up to in the morning, then don't dwell on those _____ things; choose thoughts that you as a Christian can _____.

whatever is admirable- "well-sounding", or "good report", This idea in English might be: "If you can't say anything nice, don't say anything at all". The key here is love for people as we're telling them the truth. Ephesians 4:15 says **15 but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ,**

if there is any excellence - *Areté* means moral _____. Paul is summing them up by urging us to "look to the good" in any situation or anytime we wander off in thought. Find the good in the situation and _____ on that! The great temptation here is to think about all of the bad and evil in a situation—and there's plenty to choose from.

and if anything worthy of praise-*épainos* means appropriately judged as deserving praise—fitting praise, praiseworthy. Of course, most often when the word praise is used in the New Testament, it's most often referring to praising God. In Philippians 1:11 **11 having been filled with the fruit of righteousness which comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.** Things worthy of praise are those things that are praiseworthy because we're acting like God acts, emulating our God.

dwell on these things-Now when this verse says "dwell on these things", it doesn't mean think on them a little bit, and then go on about your day thinking about _____ else. It means let your mind continually be taking these things into _____. Continually _____ on these things. We can think of Philippians 4:8 as a kind of guard checking the credentials of thoughts that come into our head. If it doesn't pass this test, it will probably _____ us—don't let it in—don't keep dwelling on it. We will remove the ashes, we will stop this _____ of anxiety and worry when we dwell on these things, and (2 Cor 10:5) **We are destroying arguments and all arrogance raised against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ.** When we do this, we will have victory! Phil 4:7 **7 And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.**