

# Walking With God in a Pandemic

## How You Can Conquer Coronavirus Worry

Rough Transcript

Patrick Morley

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Good morning men. Please turn your Bibles to Matthew chapter 6, verse 25. I hope you enjoyed Brett Clemmer's Easter message last week. We're going to continue today in our series Walking with God in a Pandemic. I do hope that you and your loved ones are able to be safe. I hope that the virus has not stricken your family or any of your loved ones and pray for your health and protection. Just a few personal remarks I suppose, so my wife Patsy and I, we have been self-isolated for five weeks now. We're doing great. We have a travel trailer, so I actually set it up in the driveway and had been doing some camping in our driveway and with campfires and the whole works and then leaving early in the morning and going and doing a couple of hikes each week. Then also plenty of time for personal reflections and I've been doing church on FaceTime. So we've been keeping up with everything just like you have been. And so today, this is a very interesting time. People are worried.

I mean and why wouldn't they be? It's like this giant granite fist from the heavens has pummeled us with this gut punch, the entire world, this coronavirus punch. And so stay at home until further notice. Work from home and oh, by the way, educate your kids while you're doing that. I'm sorry, but we're going to have to let you go. I don't have enough money to pay my bills. You're going to have to pay your rent now. You see, I've got bills too and a mortgage to pay. You've tested positive, you're being admitted. So Jesus actually has something to say to us in a time like this and today we're going to look at some of the most comforting words from the most important speech or sermon that's ever been given by the most famous person who's ever lived. And I'm talking about the Sermon on the Mount. It's about 2,350 words and we're going to be looking at about 230 of those words. So about 10% of those words this morning.

So if you have your Bible open to Matthew chapter 6, let's begin reading. And as we do that, maybe I'd just like you to think about this. Think about your own father and maybe you are close to him. Maybe you're not so close. Maybe you're estranged, maybe you never have really known your father and now here you are. Maybe you've lost your job, your savings are decimated. Your retirement might be on the rocks and you're deeply concerned, worried. And so you have an older brother and think of these words that we're about to read as words from an older brother telling you about this father, the father you already know very well or maybe not so well. So in Matthew chapter 6, verse 25 we read words of Jesus. "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink, or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes? Look at the birds of the air, they do not sow or reap or store in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them."

So this is our older brother, the firstborn among many brothers and sisters. He's telling us about our father, "Yet your heavenly Father feeds them." And then Jesus asks a series of questions, reflective questions. Interrogatives really force us to not just listen to what's being said, but to process it. He asks, "Are you not much more valuable than they? Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to this life?" So he's given us this overarching instruction, do not worry about your life, what you will eat, what you wear, what you drink. And now he's telling us why we don't need to worry because the birds of the air. Your father feeds them. We're much more valuable than they, are you not? We can't add a single

hour to our lives and then in verse 28, "And why do you worry about clothes?" Another illustration from Jesus.

"See how the flowers of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all of his glory was dressed like one of these. If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and gone tomorrow, will he not much more clothe you of little faith? So do not worry, saying what shall we eat? What shall we drink or what shall we wear? For the pagans..." And the word pagan here is not used in a pejorative term like it is in our age. It really is the Greek word, ethnos, E T, H, N, O, S and it means gentiles or nations. So those are not of the family of God. "For the pagans run after all these things." So what are these things? What you eat, drink, and wear.

They, "Run after these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first his kingdom and righteousness, and all these things..." Again, what you eat, drink and wear, "And all these things will be given to you as well. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own." So it's interesting. Jesus says, "Your heavenly Father knows what you need." This is actually the same thing that he said when he introduced the, "Our Father," earlier in this Sermon on the Mount. He said for these pagans, they keep on babbling thinking that their prayers are going to be heard because of the many words you said. But you're not like that for your heavenly Father already knows what you need before you even pray for it.

And so there's a Big Idea that comes out of this, and I want to share this with you this morning today, whenever you're viewing this. **Our Father already knows what you need and he wants to give it to you.** Our father already knows what you need and he wants to give it to you, "But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all of these things will be given to you as well." So this passage begins with Jesus reminding us of how much our Father cares. You have a handout here that you have perhaps already downloaded and if you have not downloaded it, you go to [mimbiblestudy.com](http://mimbiblestudy.com) and go to this current message, **How You Can Conquer Coronavirus Worry**, and you can download this and use this for a listeners outline, taking notes on. But also there are discussion questions on here as well. If you're not doing this in a group already, I'd encourage you to do it in a group.

And for those of you who have been doing the Bible study for a while, you know that we usually have a PowerPoint that we show and then we fill in information in these different circles. And so for this series, I'm just going to tell you what to write in the circles and in the first circle, you want to write the words, "Jesus reminds us just how much our Father cares." And then in the second circle, in the upper right hand corner, write, "Two ways of living contrasted." So in this text, we see that Jesus starts the text with the word, "Therefore," which means for that reason. So for that reason he says, "Do not worry." Well what is that reason for us not to worry? And the text that precedes this says that we shouldn't store up for ourselves, treasures on earth where moth and rust destroy and thieves break in and steal, but rather lay up for ourselves treasures in heaven where neither moth nor rust to destroy nor thieves break in and steal, for where your treasure is there where your heart be also.

You cannot serve two masters. You cannot serve both God and money. And so he's using this, therefore, he's contrasting these two ways of living and really the first way of living is the ethnos. It's the word pagan. It's the word gentiles or nations, it's translated all of those ways. It's really the choice of the orphan. It's the man who is trying to do this on his own. The man who thinks, "If I'm going to make it through this coronavirus, COVID-19 crisis, if it's going to be, it's up to me." And so he really is tackling this on his own as an orphan. It doesn't mean he doesn't have a father, it just means he's doing it as an orphan. And so the work that he's doing during the COVID-19 crisis is like the work of a little child who's drawing with crayons. Very primitive, not doing very well at all actually.

The other way, the second way we see is the way this is being described here and in this text, and it's the way of a son. The first way is the way of an orphan, the second way is the way of his son. So seek first or make God's kingdom the center of your life, his righteousness, his way of life, the center of your

life and then all these things that we need, they'll be given to you as well. So the idea of putting God first. I've taught this before, it's the difference between striving for God or striving for Christ and abiding in Christ. So one man is striving, he may even be a believer. You may even be a believer, but you're living like an orphan. You're striving to make this work rather than abiding in Christ, seeking first his kingdom and his righteousness and then allowing him to add these things to your life. These things that we need. The funding that we need, the time that we need, the hope that we need, the encouragement that we need.

I remember my own first economic crisis and being my first one, I was obviously a much younger man and I've had a number of economic crises that I've been through. But that first one I remember so well, just the panic, the terror, the fear, the anxiety, just all of that. The cluster of words that all revolve around this concept that Jesus is addressing in this text. The concept of worry and so sleepless nights. I was in real estate development. I was borrowing money, I couldn't make the payments. The banks were clamoring, the tenants were not paying, my staff, they were in turmoil. It was just utter chaos and I couldn't handle it. I was doing the best that I could do, but the problem was it was I doing it. I was not at that point yet of understanding this difference between striving for Christ and abiding in Christ.

But one morning I was reading my Bible, I read Proverbs chapter 3, verses 25 and 26 and that text says, "Have no fear of sudden disaster or of the ruin that overtakes the wicked, for the Lord will be your confidence and he will keep your foot from being snared." And it just clicked, just like that and transformed my life. I share it with you now, Proverbs 3:25 and 26. Maybe it might be of a help to you as well and it helped me to enter into a deeper understanding of this tender care that my father, our father, your father and my father and the father of Jesus has for us. And so during this season, I've been doing reflecting like you and the questions that come up, "Why this? Why now? Why us?" Or, "Why me?" But the Bible doesn't answer these questions for us. What the Bible does is it gives us a template for how we can live our lives and understand how God will strengthen us and take care of us in a time like this.

So the Big Idea today is: **Our Father already knows what you need and he wants to give it to you.** The final thing I want us to take a look at this morning and you can write in the third circle, "How do you want to respond?" How do you want to respond to this? So I see three possibilities. There probably are more, but we'll talk about three. First, you are seeking God first, his kingdom and his righteousness. You're not a little faith. You are encouraged, you have hope and so really for those of us who have strong faith right now, really the message for us is to get on Zoom, to get on social media, to get on other platforms to get on our phones and text. I sent 60 texts on Easter Sunday along with a song to different friends just to be an encourager. 60, and so do something like that. Find somebody.

A really great idea is to send someone the link to this message, maybe more than one, download the questions, get on a Zoom call, watch the message before you get on the Zoom call individually and then get on the Zoom call and discuss these questions that are on this handout. And so if you're strong then reach out to some other people. That would be the first way to respond. The second way to respond is if you realize, this coronavirus crisis, has made you realize maybe through the way that you've been responding to it, that you have really been living more like a cultural Christian. Maybe this has made you aware that you have adopted the values that Francis Schaeffer once referred to as the two impoverished values of our culture, personal peace and affluence. And so your peace and your affluence has been disrupted and you realize that your foundation maybe isn't as strong as you thought it was and that you've been living more like a cultural Christian.

Maybe like Peter, you were walking on the water, but now you saw the storm, you've seen the waves and you've been starting to sink. And so the message for those of us in that situation, the way to respond is to cry out like Peter did and say, "Lord save me. Lord saved me. I haven't been putting my full faith and trust in you." And then the third way you might want to respond this morning is if you realize

that you've been running after all these things that really you have been seeking, not God and his kingdom, but you've been seeking these things as your first priority. And so really the message for you this morning is that if you will change direction, if you will seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, that 80% of the things that you're worried about are going to resolve. And so how can you actually do that?

Well, you can do that by praying words like this. Just pray to Jesus and you can pray after me. Jesus, I believe in you. And with the faith that I'm able to muster. I want to tell you that I'm sorry, and you should be praying this now if you feel like this is the desire of your heart. Jesus, with all the faith that I can muster, I'm asking you to forgive me and to allow me to have a relationship with you both here in this life and hereafter. I want to seek you first and your kingdom and I want you to be my Father, Lord. And so Jesus come into my life, forgive me of my sins and take control of my life. Shape me now. Use this crisis to shape me into the man that you want me to be. And this I ask in your name. And so when you are a son and not an orphan, you are under the father's care. And the Big Idea today is: **Our Father already knows what you need and he wants to give it to you.**

So I hope this has been helpful. Next week we'll move into the area of courage in the face of pandemic and give you some thoughts from the Bible on how to be more of a man of courage. Let's pray now and then we'll conclude. I, dearest Father, first of all thank you for our older brother Jesus, taking the way of the cross and coming to earth to give us the words of the Holy God, our most Holy God through he himself who is one with the Father. The exact representation of his being, the full expression of his radiance and glory, the image of the invisible God who has told us how much you care for us. And Lord, we do believe that you know already what we need and that you do want to give it to us. And so we do put our faith in you.

Some of us reaffirming our faith, some of us realizing that we've gotten off track but now want to get back on track, and for some of us who've been living as orphans altogether and have now put our faith in you, Jesus, to put us into a relationship with you and the Father. Lord, I pray that you would bless every man and their family and who sees now or later this message and that you would make a distinction between them and those who are running after the other things and create for them a spiritual Goshen, if you will. And I ask this in Jesus' name. Amen. Thank you, men.