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**OPEN THE CONVERSATION**

In his book the Ruthless Elimination of Hurry, John Mark Comer says our culture is “built around the twin gods of accumulation and accomplishment.” Americans satisfy these cravings by hustling. People make decisions based on what will get the most status and money. We find security in these things. People who move here from other places in the world find the pace we keep startling and exhausting.

What things do you think we do without realizing it to serve the idols of accumulation and accomplishment?

**INTRODUCTION**

It’s estimated that Americans hear or see about 5000 ads per day. When your parents were your age, the number was maybe 500 at most. The message encouraging us to buy more, want more, only be content with more… is absolutely everywhere. It’s in the streaming services we use, on the backs of receipts, all over social media feeds, signs, billboards, stadiums, marketing that targets our eyes and attention, and even in the way news and captions are worded. Think of the most creative ad you’ve seen recently. Our brains are clogged with input that demands our attention—our service. All this input shapes the way we think and builds a picture of what we “should” be in our minds.

**Most of us would say we serve Christ rather than money (or the world). Compared to how we think of and interact with the world, how are we relating to and interacting with Jesus? We want to obey Him. But what does it mean to serve Him as Master?**

Jesus challenges His followers (then and now) in these passages to take stock of where their attention is, and to pay attention to what is driving their decisions.

***READ Matthew 6:19-34***

1. **What do you think most people put their trust in? What are people seeking? What drives them? Where are you prone to this also?**
2. **Why should our priorities be different as believers?**
3. **What does it mean to store up treasure in heaven? How do the things we value reveal the state of our hearts? How can we tell what we value the most? (This is different from what we believe—we DO the things we value.)**
4. **How have you experienced the truth that we can’t serve both God and money? What do you think Jesus meant by saying, “Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”?**
5. **How are you tempted to trust the things money provides?**
6. **Worry can show up in our thoughts in unexpected ways. What’s one worry you could surrender to God today?**
7. **What does it mean practically to “seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness”? What times in your day could you shift your thoughts away from what the world offers, toward spending time sharing your thoughts with Jesus and in worship of Him?**

**WRAP UP**

Isn’t it amazing that thousands of years later, Jesus’ words remain so relevant and applicable for life today? Of all of Jesus’ teaching in Matthew 6 He spent the most time on anxiety and worry. Human nature hasn’t changed, or solved anything with worry. It’s crazy to realize the lengths we go to in order to feel like we are in control! Jesus is trustworthy. We can give our worries to Him knowing He will carry our burdens and bring purpose and beauty to even our hardest days. Kingdom living is worth anything it might temporarily “cost” us to serve Jesus.

**Pray for one another to seek first His Kingdom and serve Jesus with joy and abandon.**

**EXTENDED CUT**

The first teaching of Jesus we will look at today is on money. Jesus taught that we shouldn’t be worried about accumulating money (or the things money can buy), and status(what people think of us). These things may make our own lives easier temporarily, but in the long run, it doesn’t matter. This life and the things we accumulate in it are temporary, but treasures in heaven are eternal (like ways we love and spend time with God, the quality of our relationship with Him, and people we disciple, etc.) Jesus gave a strong challenge to the people then and to us now by pointing out clearly that we can’t prioritize both money and God One will be our ultimate master, and what we choose to prioritize shines a light on the state of our hearts.

In Middle Eastern culture, generous hospitality was and still is highly valued. A person who has a “good eye” is generous, but someone with a “bad eye” is stingy. Jesus teaching presents an important question: Where are we training our eyes? When our eyes are trained on Jesus, we are generous, but when our eyes are trained on earthly prizes, we often adopt stingy attitudes and get ourselves into situations where we are unable to be as generous.

Notice Jesus didn’t say money is bad. He didn’t say that we shouldn’t make money. Money is a tool that can be used for good or evil. The stewarding of money is an important spiritual discipline and the way God primarily used to fund the work of taking care of His people and spreading the gospel around the world. But this first takes surrender and a prioritization of Christlike living. Beware—the enemy likes to takes God’s good gifts or even morally neutral things like money and present them as worthy of worship. Only God is worthy of our worship.

Jesus also taught that we shouldn’t worry. It simply doesn’t do any good. Our inability to do this often really is about trust and control. When we worry, we are trying to control our own life and failing to trust God’s ability to take care of us. Instead, we can trust Him to take care of us. When we feel worried we can go to Him in prayer and ask for His help and the rest and peace only He can provide.

Just like in Jesus’ day, people struggle with anxiety and worry. We are only amplifying this for ourselves by chasing idols of accumulation, accomplishment, and self-sufficiency. I think we often are trying to achieve qualities that only God has. By living within the limits God has set for us and trusting Him more we can thrive like the birds and the flowers He references as He teaches. Jesus wasn’t advocating for recklessness here. We should make wise decisions, but surrender anxiety over outcomes and the illusion that we are in control at Jesus’ feet. He is in control, not us.

The issue of excessive worry and anxiety really are about trust and control. We will likely need to repeat our surrender of worry to Him daily—He delights in our turning to Him for help. He will always receive us with kindness and love. Remember Matthew 11:28: “Come to me, all of you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.” One thing I need reminding about frequently is that I need not fear the future. There are valid concerns, but worrying brings no healing or help. He will give me the strength I need and never leave me alone on hard days. We can’t avoid hard things, but we can choose the Master who can carry us through them.

The Master you follow determines the place you end up. Jesus is the Master who offers Kingdom living--peace, purpose, meaning, and the strength we need to thrive with joy.