

Right or Wrong? Be not anxious

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Jesus' command to "be not anxious" (Matthew 6) sounds good in the abstract. But how does it help contemporary Christians make decisions?

Terrorist attacks continually disrupt life in our world. They remind us of the terror and violence that can operate in our world. Worries about personal safety and security seem to be ever present in the news. Even with these kind of events happening around us, everyday worries tend to abound—making ends meet, health concerns, pleasing our bosses, getting everything done on schedule, taking care of our families and so forth.

Jesus seemed to expect these daily needs would bring us the most worry. So he asked, "Why do you worry?" He reminded us, "Your heavenly Father knows what you need." Was Jesus prescribing a flippant attitude toward taking care of our daily affairs? I don't think so. But Jesus seemed to be saying worry won't do anything to help, and it just might cause harm. This isn't news in our modern society, where stress-related disease brought on by our tendency to worry is yet another of the daily concerns many of us face.

Perhaps we are tempted toward two opposite responses to difficulties in our lives. We either wring our hands in worry, or we try to rely completely on our own strength, wisdom or money to fix things. Jesus warned self-reliance isn't the solution to all our problems, either. Just before he told us not to be anxious, he warned relying on money to save us could leave us as slaves to our finances.

What is the answer? Instead of falling into either the temptation toward self-reliance or the temptation toward anxiety, Jesus asked us to trust our

heavenly Father. The Apostle Paul clarified this teaching in Philippians 4, where he wrote we should, rather than being anxious or worried, present our requests to God. Paul explained the result of our prayerfulness is peace rather than anxiety.

So, we don't throw up our hands in defeat or throw out our backs trying to take care of every concern on our own. Instead, we continue to seek God's kingdom and prayerfully trust God to take care of those things we cannot.

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