BIBLE CONNECTIONS WITH JOSEPH

# Matthew 6:25–33 (read in 6:19–34)

*A companion study from the set Bible Verses for Anxiety, Through the Six Steps · Bible Connections with Joseph*

> This study walks Matthew 6:25–33 (read in 6:19–34) through the six steps: 1 Read It — the passage and what's around it · 2 Cross Over — who wrote it, to whom, and what was happening · 3 Stand in Their World — hear it the way they heard it · 4 Verify It — hold it up against the fullness of Scripture · 5 Come Back — put what you found into today's language · 6 Carry It Home — what it asks of you, and how it points to Jesus.
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> If it's heavy, pray about it and talk to someone you trust (or the friend who gave you this sheet). If you don't have anyone yet, a local church is a good place to ask.
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> Keep your own Bible open; this page sends you into the passage rather than printing it. It quotes the Christian Standard Bible (CSB); where you see LORD in capital letters, that is how the CSB prints God's personal name. A reference like 4:6 means chapter 4, verse 6; 'v.' means verse.

## 1 · Read It — the passage and what's around it

Verse 33 is the line people know: "seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be provided for you." It sits in one stretch of Jesus' teaching that runs from Matthew 6:19 to 6:34, so read all sixteen verses in your own Bible before you come back to it. Read them as one thought in four movements, because each one leads into the next. Keep one line in hand as you go, because every step of this study comes back to it: your heavenly Father knows what you need, so you can trust Him and seek His kingdom first.

First, treasure (verses 19–21). Jesus tells His listeners to store up treasure in heaven, where it can't rot or be stolen, instead of on earth, where it can, and He gives the reason: "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." Second, the eye (verses 22–23). Jesus calls the eye the body's lamp: a good eye fills the whole body with light, and a bad eye fills it with darkness. Third, two masters (verse 24), which ends, "You cannot serve both God and money." Fourth, worry (verses 25–34), and it opens, "Therefore I tell you: Don't worry about your life." That "Therefore" hangs the whole worry paragraph on verse 24. Because you can't serve both God and money, Jesus tells His listeners not to let worry over what money buys (food, drink, clothes) become their master.

Now look inside the worry paragraph. Three times Jesus says not to worry (verses 25, 31 and 34), and each time He gives reasons. Life is more than food, and the body more than clothing (v. 25). The birds don't sow or reap, "yet your heavenly Father feeds them," and He asks, "Aren't you worth more than they?" (v. 26). Worry can't "add one moment to his life span" (v. 27). God clothes the wildflowers better than King Solomon was dressed (vv. 28–30). The Gentiles chase these things, and "your heavenly Father knows that you need them" (v. 32). Then comes the one thing He tells them to seek (v. 33), and a last word about tomorrow: "Each day has enough trouble of its own" (v. 34). "All these things" in verse 33 points back to what you will eat, drink and wear.

◆ **Write down each reason Jesus gives not to worry, verse by verse, from 25 to 34. Then read verses 19–24 again: what do treasure, the eye and the two masters have to do with the "Therefore" in verse 25?**

## 2 · Cross Over — who wrote it, to whom, and what was happening

This is Jesus speaking, in the middle of the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5–7), the longest stretch of His teaching that Matthew records, given on a mountainside. Read Matthew 5:1–2 and 7:28–29 to see who He was teaching and who else was listening: His disciples came to Him, and the crowds heard it too. Just before our passage, in 6:1–18, He has warned them against doing good to be seen by people, and taught them to pray to "Our Father in heaven" (6:9). So by the time He tells them "your heavenly Father knows," the Sermon has already taught them to call God Father.

Two phrases in verse 33 carry the passage. The kingdom of God is God's rule in your life, and His righteousness means living His way. Both run all through the Sermon: it opens by promising the kingdom of heaven to the poor in spirit (5:3). Matthew usually says "kingdom of heaven" where the other Gospels say "kingdom of God," but here in 6:33 he says "kingdom of God"; both name the same reign. Righteousness is the Sermon's word for the life God asks of His people (read 5:6, 5:20 and 6:1). "Seek first" means put these at the top, ahead of everything else, and the rest of life follows in its place below them.

What does that look like on an ordinary day? Jesus has already shown His listeners, a few verses back, in the prayer He taught them. It asks first for God's name to be honored, then "Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven" (6:10), and only after that for daily bread (6:11). The prayer runs in the same order as verse 33: God's rule and God's way first, and then the needs of the day. So seeking first can start with the first thoughts of the morning, given to God in prayer before the day's worries arrive. It goes on through the day in ordinary places: doing your work honestly and well, as work done for Him; giving and serving where money pulls the other way (6:1–4, 6:19–24); choosing His way when a shortcut would be easier; and bringing each new worry back to Him as it comes. Seeking is a direction you keep turning back to. God welcomes sincere seeking, even from people who still fall short in many things.

◆ **Who is Jesus teaching, and who else is listening? Then write in your own words what it would mean to seek God's rule and His way first, this week, in the place where you keep running out of time or money.**

## 3 · Stand in Their World — hear it the way they heard it

Hear it the way His listeners heard it. In their world a family's wealth was often kept as goods: stores of grain, or fine clothing, which a moth could eat through and a thief could carry off. So treasure on earth was

something you could watch go to waste. Jesus then points them to things they could see from the hillside: the birds, which their heavenly Father feeds (verse 26), and "the wildflowers of the field" (verse 28). The grass and wildflowers that were alive today were cut and dried and burned to heat an oven tomorrow (verse 30); that was ordinary fuel. If God dresses something that short-lived better than Solomon, Israel's richest king, was dressed, how much more will He clothe the people He calls His own? Verse 27 works the same way. The CSB reads it as a single moment added to your life span; older English Bibles read it as a cubit, the length of a forearm, added to your height. Either way, worry adds nothing. The eye in verses 22–23 is the same kind of picture. In Jesus' day a bad eye (literally an "evil eye") was a way of speaking about a stingy, grasping person, and a good eye was one that looked straight at one thing; read either way, the picture lands on a heart that isn't split between God and money, which is where verse 24 goes next.

Then He calls them "you of little faith" (verse 30). But He doesn't leave them there. Verse 32 tells them, "your heavenly Father knows that you need them," and sets them beside "the Gentiles" (the nations outside Israel; here, people who don't know God as their Father), who "eagerly seek all these things." People who don't know a Father in heaven chase food and clothes as if everything hangs on them. Jesus' listeners have a Father who already knows.

◆ **Write what "you of little faith" would have sounded like from the same teacher who, two verses later, tells them their heavenly Father knows what they need.**

## 4 · Verify It — hold it up against the fullness of Scripture

Here is the reading so far: Jesus tells His followers not to worry, gives them reasons that rest on their heavenly Father's care, ties it to the master they serve, and tells them what to seek first. Hold that reading up against the fullness of Scripture; where another passage sharpens it, follow where it leads.

Start with the same teaching told another way. Luke 12:22–34 gives it too; compare it with Matthew's, and notice what Luke adds in verse 32. Then read what Luke puts just before it (Luke 12:13–21): a man who builds bigger barns for his treasure, and loses his life that night. Matthew 8:26 and 14:31 are two other places Jesus speaks of "little faith": read who He says it to, and what He does next. Both times He is speaking to His own disciples, and both times He acts to save them. In Matthew 8:23–27 they are caught in a storm on the lake and wake Him, sure they are about to drown. He names their little faith, and then He gets up, rebukes the winds and the sea, and everything goes completely calm (v. 26).

Then test the hard edge. Does "don't worry" mean don't plan or don't work? Read Proverbs 6:6–8, where the ant stores up food in summer and is held up as wise, and 2 Thessalonians 3:6–12, where Paul says the one who refuses to work should not eat (v. 10). Paul is writing about people who would not work; if you can't work right now, the line isn't aimed at you, and its point is diligence, not shame. Scripture holds together here. The birds don't sow, but you are told to; what Jesus answers is the care that doubts the Father, and the diligent work God gives you stays.

Verse 34 fits the same way. Jesus says "tomorrow will worry about itself," and each day has enough trouble of its own. It leaves room for wise foresight and getting ready, the way the ant gets ready; what it lifts off

you is carrying tomorrow's troubles today, many of which may never come. Planning is part of today's work: you make the plan, set aside what is wise, do what is in front of you, and hand the outcome to your Father. That is what one day at a time means here: do today's work in its day, and let tomorrow bring its own work when it comes. Tomorrow brings its own help too. His mercies are new every morning (Lamentations 3:22–23), and the same Father who provides today will be your Father tomorrow, which is why Jesus teaches His followers to ask for bread one day at a time (6:11).

Now an honest word about worry itself. Feeling anxious is not itself the sin. But worry may be sin when it grows out of distrusting the Father, and Jesus takes it seriously by setting it right beside serving money (v. 24). And whether your worry has grown into that distrust or is simply the weight you're carrying, the Word is clear on what to do with it. Jesus doesn't leave His listeners holding a verdict. He points them to a Father who knows what they need (v. 32) and tells them to seek His kingdom first (v. 33). Peter says to cast all your cares on Him (1 Peter 5:7), and Paul says to bring everything to God in prayer (Philippians 4:6).

Then take two checks. First, Jesus' own words to Peter in Matthew 14:31. When Jesus speaks of little faith there, He has already reached out His hand and caught Peter. Peter had stepped out of the boat to come to Him on the water, then seen the wind, begun to sink and cried out to the Lord to save him (vv. 28–30). The hand comes first, and the word about little faith comes after. Matthew 6:30 has long been heard the same way: "little faith" is a gentle word from the Teacher, aimed at a doubt that comes naturally even to His closest followers, spoken to draw them to trust Him more; and the Father still feeds and clothes those whose faith is little.

Second, the Westminster Confession of Faith (a 1640s summary of Bible teaching used by Reformed churches; a tool, not an authority over the Bible). It says that God's adopted children, those He has welcomed into His family as His own, are "provided for, and chastened by him, as by a father: yet never cast off" (chapter 12, section 1). ("Chastened" means corrected, the way a good father disciplines.) Little faith is still faith, and the Father who corrects it doesn't cast His children off.

◆ **Does the reading square with all of Scripture? Write what Luke adds, what the other "little faith" passages show about how Jesus treats weak faith, and how Proverbs 6 and this passage fit together.**

## 5 · Come Back — put what you found into today's language

Put together, verses 32 and 33 say: your heavenly Father knows what you need, and He provides it, as He sees good. The things in view are food, drink and clothing, and the need is measured by what the Father knows. So verse 33 is not a promise of wealth, and it is not a deal where seeking buys the things. The whole passage works as one move. Whatever you treasure gets your heart, and whatever gets your heart becomes your master; worry is what it looks like when the things money buys start running you. Jesus answers it by pointing His listeners to their Father and telling them what to seek first. Then verse 34 brings it down to size: today's work, planning included, is yours to do, and tomorrow is in your Father's hands. Trust your Father, and seek His kingdom first.

◆ **Write verses 31–34 in one or two plain sentences of your own, the way you'd say them to a friend who has only ever been handed verse 33.**

## 6 · Carry It Home — what it asks of you, and how it points to Jesus

Think of the need you keep running over in your mind this week. Then ask where your treasure is, the way verse 21 asks it: what you think about first in the morning, and what you worry about losing. Seeking first can start in those same first minutes tomorrow: give them to God in prayer, in the order Jesus taught (His name, His kingdom, His will, and then your daily bread), and bring that need to Him there. Through the day, do the work in front of you, and leave tomorrow with Him. Then hear Jesus once more:

"your heavenly Father knows that you need them," so "seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness" (vv. 32–33). That's step six in Jesus' own words: trust your Father, and seek His kingdom first.

◆ **What does this passage ask of you this week? And how does it point you to Jesus? Start with who is speaking, and with the Father He keeps calling "your heavenly Father." Then read Matthew 11:27, where Jesus says that no one knows the Father except the Son and those the Son chooses to reveal Him to, and John 14:8–9, where Philip asks Jesus to show them the Father, and Jesus answers that whoever has seen Him has seen the Father.**

> This study is one of eight in Bible Verses for Anxiety, Through the Six Steps. The full set: bibleconnectionswithjoseph.com/companions/anxiety-verses/

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