

## Week 8: Matthew 6:19–34

### Hook



**Main Point: Trust God; don't worry! Seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and He will provide what you need.**

Jessica Long is a Paralympic athlete who has set more than 18 world records in swimming. When she was 18 months old, both of her legs were amputated below the knee due to fibular hemimelia, which means that she did not have the majority of the bones in her lower legs, ankles, heels, and feet. She has participated in many sports including “gymnastics, basketball, cheerleading, ice skating, biking, running, and rock climbing.”<sup>i</sup> And at the age of 12, she competed on the U.S. Paralympic Team in Athens and won three gold medals. She has won many since, and has been featured in *Sports Illustrated*, several commercials, and has had several sponsors including Nike.<sup>ii</sup> But no matter how many gold medals she has won, or sponsors she has garnered, she never felt like she was enough, that she was worthy. She had placed her identity in swimming and her worth in winning. She pursued gold medals and fame. Then, one Friday night at her youth group Bible study she recognized that she “couldn't do it alone anymore” and decided to give her whole heart to the Lord and immediately felt that she belonged and was a part of God's family.<sup>iii</sup> She recognized that He was the One who gives her worth.

**Q: Have you ever pursued sports, money, fame, positions or things as a means to be fulfilled?**

**Q: Has your pursuit of those things ever made you anxious?**

## Week 8: Matthew 6:19–34

### Book

**Main Point: Trust God; don't worry! Seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and He will provide what you need.**

#### Matthew 6:19–24 [Read]

**Talking Point 1:** You cannot serve both God and money.

**Q: What does it mean to “serve money”? What would that look like in someone's life?**

**Q: How can we store up treasures in heaven? What does that mean practically?**

We include verses 19 and 20 from last week's study because they act as a connection between the two sections. The beginning of Matthew 6 is about not doing things “to be seen by man.” Those who do will “have their reward in full” but will not be rewarded in heaven. Jesus directs us to not waste our lives storing up treasures on earth but to focus on storing up treasures in heaven. This next section tells us how to do that.

Overall, Jesus exhorts His followers not to value possessions. He tells them not to focus on acquiring material things (vv. 19–24) and then not to worry about what they *don't* have (vv. 25–34). In this way, Jesus “strikes at the core of human selfishness, challenging both the well-to-do who have possessions to guard and the poor who wish they could acquire them.”<sup>iv</sup> We might think materialism is only a problem for the rich, but worrying about not having enough is also a form of materialism. Love of money can be a problem whether you are rich or poor or anywhere in between!

Jesus' words strike us in the gut – am I really serving God or am I serving money? None of us is exempt from that question. Pastor, theologian and author Tim Keller wrote that Americans tend to have a blind spot when it comes to greed. “Over the years as a pastor, people have come to me many times and said, ‘I have a problem with lust.’ Never, ever has anyone come to me and said, ‘Pastor, I have a problem with greed.’ Yet the Bible warns against greed at least 10–20 times more than it warns against lust, which means greed must be a bigger danger than lust, yet we must be many times less aware of it in ourselves.”<sup>v</sup>

Without understanding historical context, the saying about the eye being the lamp of the body (v. 22) may seem out of place here. In their culture, a “good” eye meant, literally, a healthy eye, but figuratively, it also meant an eye that looked generously on others. A good eye was generous, looking to give, and an “evil eye” was greedy, always looking with jealousy at what others have.<sup>vi</sup> In the Greek, it literally says, “if your eye is single.” That word can mean either

“perfect” or “single-minded,” as in wholly devoted to God, so it was a play on words. A disciple is both generous to others and devoted completely to God. Those two things go hand in hand, don’t they? The two greatest commandments – love God and love others.

This concept leads Jesus to His thesis statement for this whole section – you cannot serve both God and money (*mammon* was a common Aramaic term for money<sup>vii</sup>). Those who say they love God but live as if money is their master are not really followers of Jesus. Those who really follow Jesus see their wealth simply as a tool to be used for God’s kingdom, to share His Gospel and help those in need. True disciples see everything they have as belonging to God and themselves as only stewards of it (Matthew 25:14–30). Keller wrote, “Jesus gave up all his treasure in heaven to make you his treasure. When you see him dying to make you his treasure, that will make him yours. Money will cease to be the currency of your significance and security, and you will want to bless others with what you have. To the degree that you grasp the gospel, money will have no dominion over you.”<sup>viii</sup>

It is not money itself that is the root of all evil, but the *love* of money (1 Timothy 6:10). The problem is living as if money is your master. According to evangelical scholar and author D. A. Carson, “This verse does not prohibit ‘being *provident* (making sensible provision for the future) but being *covetous* (like misers who hoard and materialists who always want more)’ But it is folly to put oneself in the former category while *acting* and *thinking* in the latter.”<sup>ix</sup> Many scholars and church leaders believe that money is a much bigger idol in modern American culture than most of us care to admit.

New Testament scholar and author Craig Keener writes that Jesus’s views on money were much more countercultural than we realize. “Jesus lived simply, and most inhabitants of the Roman Empire would have considered this call to abandon valuing possessions as unduly radical.”<sup>x</sup> Pastor and author David Platt says we have twisted the Jesus of the Bible into a version of Him that we are more comfortable with – “a nice, middle-class, American Jesus. A Jesus who doesn’t mind materialism and who would never call us to give away everything we have.”<sup>xi</sup> Platt encourages us to come to Jesus on His terms. He teaches that when Jesus told the rich man to give up his wealth, “Jesus was not trying to strip this man of all his pleasure. Instead he was offering him satisfaction.”<sup>xii</sup> He promised it would be better *for him* when he let go of all the stuff he was holding on to, because only then could he focus on building up treasure in heaven.

We have to take a good, hard look at ourselves and what our lives really say about us. What do our lives revolve around? What do we spend our time thinking about, talking about, and pursuing – the things of this world or the things of God? What really *rules* our lives – wealth or Jesus?

**Q: How can letting go of the need to pursue wealth be freeing for us?**

**Q: Be honest. In what ways do we live as if wealth were our master rather than God?**

**Q: How can we re-orient our lives to give total leadership of our lives to Jesus?**

**Matthew 6:25–32 [Read]**

**Talking Point 2:** Don't worry; trust God.

**Q: Why does Jesus say that worrying doesn't accomplish anything?**

**Q: How can we stop ourselves from worrying?**

Worrying is the flip side of materialism, another way of making money your master instead of God. Those who really trust God as their master don't worry. They know God will take care of them. Twice in this passage, Jesus uses a Jewish rhetorical device, "how much more?" If God cares for the birds and the flowers and the grass, "how much more" will He feed and clothe you who as His children are of so much more value to Him? (vv. 26–30) This is similar to what He says in the next chapter of the Sermon on the Mount. "If you [humans], then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him!" (Matthew 7:11).

God promises to provide for His people at least the basic, genuine needs of life. Keener writes, "Jesus's culture, of course, defined *need* quite differently from modern Western society. If God sustains life and protects the bodies of those who serve Him, they should not complain if he provides without honoring the symbols of status their culture values."<sup>xiii</sup> There is a stark contrast in this section – wealth and treasures (vv. 19–24) versus basic needs (vv. 25–34). The truth here is that pursuing wealth brings anxiety and worry, but serving God means letting go of worry because you can trust Him to provide. A life of service to God as your master means freedom from worry, freedom from the need to have more than your neighbor or more than you had last year.

Jesus refers to Solomon "in all of his glory." It was Solomon who said, "Whoever loves money never has enough" (Ecclesiastes 5:10). It was Solomon who concluded at the end of his life that all his pursuit of worldly wealth was meaningless, like chasing after the wind. If we put our hope in material things, we will always be disappointed. No matter how wealthy we are, we could always lose everything. The stock market could crash. We could lose that great job. We never know what might happen. But when we put our trust in the Lord, we will never be disappointed. Jesus shames His hearers by saying that Gentiles chase after material things (v. 32). This is not how God's people live. God's people have experienced manna and quail raining down from heaven and water coming out of a rock (Exodus 16). They have no need to worry. Worry does no good anyway (vv. 27, 34). It can't add even one day to your life. In fact, research

shows that it makes your life shorter.<sup>xiv</sup> Worrying doesn't fix anything about tomorrow; it only steals the joy from today.

Jesus never condemns people for having these basic needs. He doesn't say they need to deprive themselves of food or shelter like the ascetics who eschewed *all* material things. God *knows* you need these things (v. 32). He simply says we don't need to worry about them. God will provide what we need. If God doesn't provide it, then we don't need it. To serve God rather than money means to trust God to provide what we need. When we feel ourselves starting to worry, we give it up to God in prayer, casting our cares on Him (Philippians 4:6–7; 1 Peter 5:7).

These passages address two of the greatest issues facing Americans today – materialism and anxiety. Anxiety is the most common mental illness in the United States today, and it's continually on the rise.<sup>xv</sup> Even though we are one of the wealthiest nations in the world, we are only 19<sup>th</sup> in “happiness” and falling every year.<sup>xvi</sup> Pursuing wealth doesn't make us happy. Ironically, it only causes more anxiety. As Solomon said, it is chasing after the wind. This is exactly what Jesus was warning about 2,000 years ago, and yet here we are, living it out anyway.

**Q: What things do you find yourself worrying about? Why?**

**Q: How can you stop yourself from worrying?**

**Q: How can you learn to trust that whatever God provides is what you need and nothing more? How can you be OK with it if God doesn't give you something you ask for?**

**Matthew 6:33–34 [Read]**

**Talking Point 3:** True disciples seek first God's kingdom and His righteousness.

**Q: What does it mean to seek God's kingdom? How does this relate to living with God as our master, serving Him instead of money?**

**Q: How can seeking God's kingdom relieve us of worry?**

The solution to worry and materialism is to seek God's kingdom first. This is what it means to serve God as your master rather than money. When we spend our lives seeking our own happiness, prosperity, comfort or wealth, we are letting money “rule” us, control our decisions and our priorities. But in all honesty, it's not money that is on the throne of our lives, it's ourselves. It's no wonder our culture suffers from materialism and anxiety since we are so hyper self-focused. Instead of seeking God's kingdom, we have sought what we think is best for ourselves. We have pursued our own happiness. We have looked out for “number one.” We have pursued our own pleasure over the kingdom of God.

True disciples take up their crosses and *deny themselves* and follow Jesus (Matthew 16:24–26). British New Testament scholar N. T. Wright wrote, “Following Jesus is [the Gospels’] definition of what being a Christian means; and Jesus is not leading us on a pleasant afternoon hike, but on a walk into danger and risk. Or did we suppose that the kingdom of God would mean merely a few minor adjustments in our ordinary lives?”<sup>xvii</sup> Following Jesus means making His mission and His kingdom our life’s purpose. That’s what it means to store up treasures in heaven!

This is a complete and total change of your goals, priorities, and purpose in life. Your life is no longer your own (1 Corinthians 6:19–20). Your life *belongs* to Christ. Everything you do will be for His glory and His kingdom (1 Corinthians 10:31; Colossians 3:17). This is what it means to take up your cross and follow Him. It means to change your entire life. Everything about it. From being focused on yourself and what you want to do with your life to being focused on Jesus – on what He teaches and what He wants for your life. Nothing less than that. To the world, that looks like “losing your life,” but it’s how you find real life (Matthew 16:25).

Jesus says to seek His kingdom and His righteousness. It’s not just about growing His kingdom, but pursuing righteousness, both in your own life and in the world around you. In Romans, Paul writes that the kingdom of God is righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit. Following Jesus, pursuing the things of God, setting our mind on things above, abiding in Christ, seeking first His kingdom will grow the Fruit of the Spirit in you. When you seek first His kingdom, He will grow His righteousness in you. Seeking His kingdom and His righteousness also means seeking what He says is right in the world. We will fight for justice (Isaiah 1:17; Micah 6:8) and against evil (Ephesians 6:10–18). Our lives are no longer about what we want for our lives but what God wants, His will. Our desires become His desires for us (Psalm 37:4). Like Jesus, we will pray, “Not my will, but yours be done” (Luke 22:42).

**Q: In what areas of your life are you seeking your own will instead of God’s will?**

**Q: How can we seek first His kingdom? How do we know what that means in our lives?**

**Q: What would it look like for you to pursue righteousness? What things would need to change?**

**Q: What would it look like for you to fight for justice in your community? In the world?**

## **Week 8: Matthew 6:19–34**

### **Took**

**Main Point: Trust God; don't worry! Seek first His kingdom and His righteousness and He will provide what you need.**

It's OK to have questions and talk to God. There is not a need to have it all together. Jessica Long had to learn to give every moment to God and to seek Him for her worth and value. She underwent 25 surgeries and has gone on to win 23 Paralympic medals,<sup>xviii</sup> and she still suffers pain in her legs. Jessica has to give that to the Lord as well.

God is big enough to handle all things that life throws our way. The Bible tells us over and over not to worry, and not to be afraid. In Isaiah 26:3 it says, "He will keep him in perfect peace whose mind is fixed on Him, because he trusts in Him." When we seek the Lord, His kingdom and righteousness, He will provide all we need, including peace from what troubles us.

### **CHALLENGES**

**THINK about how God is calling you to seek His kingdom in your life.** In what ways does He want you to submit to His authority? What material things might you need to give up to Him to truly make him Lord of your life? How can you eschew materialism? How can you let go of worry and trust God to provide?

**PRAY for complete trust in God as the Lord of your life.** Pray that you would let go of any idols you are holding onto and submit completely to His lordship. Pray that God would guide you as you take up your cross, deny yourself, and follow Him.

**ACT: Choose one specific way that you need to reject money's hold over your life.** It may be letting go of worry about some issue of provision, then praying and trusting God to provide. Or, it may be letting go of some material thing you are pursuing, something that consumes your thoughts, time and heart. It may be letting go of the need for status or security in the things of this world and focusing on the things of God. Choose one specific thing and act on it this week.

## Hook, Took & Editing by Shelley Reeves

---

i

▣ “Jessica Long” *Team USA*- <https://www.teamusa.org/para-swimming/athletes/Jessica-Long>

ii

▣ “Jessica Long” *I Am Second*-<https://www.iamsecond.com/film/jessica-long/>

iii

▣ “Jessica Long” *Team USA*- <https://www.teamusa.org/para-swimming/athletes/Jessica-Long>

iv

▣ Craig Keener, *A Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2009).

v

▣ Tim Keller, Sermon “Christian Hope and Money,” from *The Timothy Keller Sermon Archive*. New York City: Redeemer Presbyterian Church, 2013.

vi

▣ W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to Matthew, International Critical Commentary, Vol 1* (Edinburgh: T& T Clark, 1988).

vii

▣ W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to Matthew, International Critical Commentary, Vol 1* (Edinburgh: T& T Clark, 1988).

viii

▣ Timothy J. Keller, *Counterfeit Gods: The Empty Promises of Money, Sex, and Power, and the Only Hope That Matters* (New York, NY: Dutton, 2009), 67-68.

ix

▣ D. A. Carson, “Matthew,” *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary, Vol. 8* (Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 1984),

177.

x

▣ Keener

xi

▣ David Platt, *Radical: Taking Back your Faith from the American Dream* (Colorado Springs, CO: Multnomah Books, 2010).

xii

▣ David Platt, *Radical: Taking Back your Faith from the American Dream* (Colorado Springs, CO: Multnomah Books, 2010).

xiii

▣ Craig Keener, *A Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2009).

xiv

▣ “How Worrying Affects the Body” WebMD - <https://www.webmd.com/balance/guide/how-worrying-affects-your-body#1>

xv

▣ “Facts and Statistics,” *Anxiety and Depression Association of America* - <https://adaa.org/about-adaa/press-room/facts-statistics>

xvi

▣ Duncan Madden, “Ranked: The 10 Happiest Countries in the World” *Forbes*, Mar 28, 2019 - <https://www.forbes.com/sites/duncanmadden/2019/03/28/ranked-the-10-happiest-countries-in-the-world-in-2019/#25ec941b48a5>

xvii



---

112.  
xviii

▫ N. T. Wright, *Mark for Everyone* (London, UK: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 2001), 110–

▫ “Jessica Long” *Team USA*- <https://www.teamusa.org/para-swimming/athletes/Jessica-Long>