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Ask the bigger questions

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Being rich towards God

A cost benefit analysis of following Jesus:

What does Jesus require of me? Is it worth it?

- Session 3

The words of Jesus

Luke 12:13-34

13 Someone in the crowd said to him, "Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me." 14 Jesus replied, "Man, who appointed me a judge or an arbiter between you?" 15 Then he said to them, "Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; life does not consist in an abundance of possessions."

16 And he told them this parable: "The ground of a certain rich man yielded an abundant harvest. 17 He thought to himself, 'What shall I do? I have no place to store my crops.'

18 "Then he said, 'This is what I'll do. I will tear down my barns and build bigger ones, and there I will store my surplus grain. 19 And I'll say to myself, "You have plenty of grain laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry."' 20 "But God said to him, 'You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?' 21 "This is how it will be with whoever stores up things for themselves but is not rich toward God."

22 Then Jesus said to his disciples: "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat; or about your body, what you will wear. 23 For life is more than food, and the body more than clothes. 24 Consider the ravens: They do not sow or reap, they have no storeroom or barn; yet God feeds them. And how much more valuable you are than birds! 25 Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to your life? 26 Since you cannot do this very little thing, why do you worry about the rest?"

27 "Consider how the wild flowers grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you, not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. 28 If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today, and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, how much more will he clothe you—you of little faith! 29 And do not set your heart on what you will eat or drink; do not worry about it. 30 For the pagan world runs after all such things, and your Father knows that you need them. 31 But seek his kingdom, and these things will be given to you as well.

32 "Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom. 33 Sell your possessions and give to the poor. Provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out, a treasure in heaven that will never fail, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys. 34 For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

Q1. Why does God call the rich man a fool? Isn't he being financially savvy and it is good to save and plan?

Q2. Does being rich toward God mean giving away all our money and possessions?

Q3. What causes us to be anxious?

Q4. Is Jesus saying it is wrong to be anxious?

Q5. What is the link between the two passages – why does Jesus talk about greed, and then turns to tell his disciples not to worry?

Q6. What can we do about our worries?

Grace's story

Grace is a ministry apprentice at City Bible Forum. She works part-time as a paralegal.

From a young age, my family called me a "master worrier". I was anxious about whether people liked me, whether I would do well in exams, and I was even anxious about how we were going financially as a family.

When I was around 11 years old, my father gave me a book called, "How to Stop Worrying and Start Living". Unfortunately, while it is said to be very helpful for many people, it didn't work for me but only caused me more stress. All I remembered from it was "prepare to accept the worst" (which just gave me more feelings of impending doom) and fill your mind with good thoughts (which made me very tired after a few weeks of trying). I didn't get up to the point where it said

the perfect way to conquer worry was to pray – and even so I certainly wouldn't have trusted that God would respond or look after my best interests.

As I entered university, I worried because everyone else seemed to do much better than I did, and everyone appeared much more confident than I felt. I had joined a Bible study group to make friends and understand more about what I proclaimed to be my faith. But towards the end of my first semester I was thinking of giving that up, as I planned to put all my efforts into studying harder even though I was already studying pretty hard.

Thankfully, a Christian girl who was meeting with me encouraged me to keep finding out more about the God that would take care of me. Although I didn't quite believe her, I respected her and kept going. As I got to learn more and more about God's character and that he cared so much for me that he sent his only son Jesus to die for me – taking the punishment that I deserved for turning away from him so that I could live in right relationship with him – I slowly came to trust that God genuinely had my best interests at heart.

Did my worry then simply disappear? I wish. But it is a constant struggle. When it came to looking for a job after university, I was anxious to the point of tears for fear of not getting what I wanted, even when I told myself it would be ok because God would look after me. Now that I'm working part-time at City Bible Forum and part-time at a legal office, I'm already worrying about the next step and whether I will make the "right choice". I don't think my worry will ever completely go away, but I have learnt to take my worries to God, to ask him to help me overcome my doubt of him, and I find my anxiety becoming lesser and lesser as I learn to trust him more and more.

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