

July 17, 2016

Transformed from the Inside Out

"Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food and the body more important than clothes?...Are you not so much more valuable...But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own."

Matthew 6:25-34

As a believer being transformed by my relationship with a loving Father my attitudes and my actions will be changed from the inside out. One of the signs of that change will be my level of anxiety. When Jesus, and later the Apostle Paul, tell us not to worry and not to be anxious, they are not giving us a good piece of advice. No, these words are commandments for believers to obey and that makes worry a sin.

So, why are we so consumed with anxiety and let's be honest here; all of us struggle with this. I believe that there are three major struggles in play that cause us to worry. These are a correct view of personal value, a clear view of treasure and solid personal understanding of our relationship with our Father. All of us struggle with these issues and because we do we are filled with fear and anxiety.



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We struggle with a clear understanding of our personal value for a number of reasons. First, let's understand that having a strong sense of personal value is humanity's greatest need. All of us need to know that we are valued by at least one other person which is one of the reasons that being all alone is so hard on us. All of us long to be valued.

The thing that makes this so difficult and painful for us is that we are trained from an early age to believe that our value and our performance are intertwined. I am only valuable when I am doing good things and being a good person. Of course the problem that this teaching creates is the belief that the reality of my own failures means I have no value.

This message makes it nearly impossible for us to understand grasp the true meaning of grace and to accept the true gift from God that is grace. Our Father shows us how valuable we are to him constantly even when we are useless, and we insist that somehow we must create a performance-based relationship with him in order to be saved. We come to believe that we are only valuable to God when we are performing perfectly. God's clear message in the death and resurrection of Jesus is the overwhelming value we have in his eyes and in his heart even while we are sinners.

Because we don't understand our value in God's eyes and heart and because we have created a performance-based measure of value we are confused about what really matters and what doesn't. Because we measure our value through the eyes of the world we come to believe that our worldly things make us valuable. Thus, any threat to those worldly treasures is met with violent opposition, because losing them or failing to protect them we mark us as useless failures.

Finally, we live with overwhelming fear and anxiety because we don't really personally and intimately know God. Faced with something uncontrollable that threatens our perceived value we are crippled by fear and anxiety. If we understood that the God who loves us as his children will always protect us and always provide for us our fears would evaporate. Too often our limited personal

relationship with our Father leaves us with crushing doubts that he will protect; that he will provide and so we worry.

When Jesus says, "*...do not worry...*" he uses birds and wild flowers as examples of God's gentle care, and then he reminds us, "*Are you not much more valuable than they?*" You and I are so valuable to our Father that he would let his most precious Son die on the cross to rescue us when we were still sinners. There is no louder message of value in the world, and what God values he protects. What do we have to worry about?