

ANXIETY

(μεριμνᾶ)

(to be drawn in different directions, a stressful distraction)

Matthew 6:25, “*Therefore, I say to you, do not worry (be anxious) about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; not about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing?*” Jesus starts off by saying, “do not worry!” The Greek word used here and translated “worry” is derived from another ancient Greek word that means, “to divide into parts.” This word implies or suggests that “worry” is a preoccupation with things that cause ‘anxiety, stress, unease, pressure and torment’. Notice how the use of this word proposes that “worry” breaks up our lives - it is life shattering!

Therefore, Jesus is saying that “worry” is a ‘distraction’, something that ‘divides our focus’, something that causes us to be preoccupied with things that add stress and pressure to our lives. But what have we been divided or distracted from? And what have we become preoccupied with? Quite simply - we have been *distracted* from looking at our source (our Heavenly Father), and we have become *preoccupied* with worldly affairs. To be specific, Jesus is telling us to take no thought (not to worry) where our basic needs are coming from. For, “**life is more than food and the body more than clothing.**” It’s interesting to note that ‘psuche’ and not ‘zoe’ is used and translated “life.” The Lord is not referring to “*spiritual or perfect life*” (the *God kind of life*), but to “*natural life.*” Generally speaking, ‘psuche’ is the individual life, the living being, the own self, whereas ‘zoe’ is the life that we receive from God. Accordingly, “...*There is more to life (psuche) than food and more to the body than that which covers it.*”

In **Philippians 4:6** Paul recommends that we, “**Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God.**” Paul urges his readers to break an established pattern - anxiety! The ancient Greek word used here has a very negative connotation, namely, ‘an anxious harassing care that causes unreasonable pressure’. However, it may also be used to describe ‘someone attempting to carry the burden of the future (the unknown) all alone’; or ‘someone who has unreasonable anxiety, especially about things over which no-one has any control’. In fact, Paul is probably speaking of imaginary troubles or phantom anxieties. Hence, he tells his readers to stop worrying, and not to be overtly anxious over anything - leaving them no exceptions! Note also, the language is as comprehensive as it can be: “**not... about anything, but in everything...**” No anxiety, real or potential, is excluded! From personal experience Paul had learned that “*the way to be anxious about nothing was to be prayerful about everything.*”