

**Russell Kelfer**

# **Consider the Lilies**

**# 985-B**

**Series: Let God Be God**

**dtm** DISCIPLESHIP TAPE MINISTRIES, INC.  
INTO HIS LIKENESS RADIO

10602 Mossbank, San Antonio, TX 78230 • (210) 226-0000 / 1-800-375-7778 • [www.dtm.org](http://www.dtm.org) • [dtm@dtm.org](mailto:dtm@dtm.org)

# Consider the Lilies

It has been said by men of old  
That to worry is part of life,  
That anxiety and frustration  
Are the natural fruit of strife,  
That God expects His children  
To struggle deep within  
And carry life's great burdens  
Because of their great sin.

But, oh, Beloved, listen!  
That's not what God has said.  
Burdens can't be carried  
By someone who is dead!

The weight of life's been lifted!  
The Christian's been set free!  
There is no load to carry,  
No worry left for me.

Consider the lilies, Beloved,  
They neither toil nor spin;  
Consider the lilies, Beloved,  
And start to live again.

We live in a world that is enslaved by worry. We live in a world that takes more pills for more frustrations than any generation in history. We worry about our children. We worry about our jobs. We worry about making our payments. We worry about our health. We worry about the future. We worry about our ministries. We worry about our disciples. We worry about our safety as we walk the streets. We want to live by faith; yet we know that we have certain responsibilities...responsibilities to pay our bills, to earn a living, to care for our children, to set a godly example. We want to rest in Christ, but we see all about us people who are using faith as a spiritual cop-out for being responsible Christians, and we deplore that kind of misuse of the

## Consider the Lilies

Scriptures. So the evangelical church of today seems to vacillate between a “God is depending on you” philosophy, and a “leave it all to God” philosophy — two philosophies that appear to be so far removed from one another that there is literally no similarity.

We read books on resting in Christ, and we rest for a while. Then we hear a sermon on slothfulness, and we work for a while. And all the while, we are wondering just what is the “normal Christian life”? Well, the normal Christian life is the life Jesus lived, the same life Jesus lives today in you. The normal Christian life is the life Jesus taught. His Spirit is teaching the same truths today. The problem is that we are caught in a whirlpool of worldliness that is trying to harmonize the precepts of Scripture with the concepts of a humanistic society, and it won't work. The only thing that will work is perfect, total obedience to God's incredibly different way of life; and that will only work if you don't do it, but God does. Therein lies the key to most of our confusion.

In today's study we are going to look at how God looks at worry, and we are going to try to overlay those principles on the hectic, frantic, desperate world we live in.

Our Outline:

- I- An unfailing law
- II- An unbelievable commandment
- III- An extraordinary illustration
- IV- An acceptable alternative

As we take up where we left off in our last study, Jesus is still teaching his disciples about that “other kingdom,” a kingdom so different than what they had been expecting that they were not even sure He could be the Messiah. They could have handled a political revolution that righted all of life's wrongs by government intervention. They could have handled that. And that is what they expected. They expected King Jesus to ascend to the throne and do away with injustice and lawlessness and to rule and to reign with a mighty arm. One day He will. But they missed the vital link between that kingdom and the one they lived in, where they suffered at the hands of foreign invaders and lived in the shadow of religious hypocrisy. That missing link was to be the Kingdom of God in the hearts of men, men who lived in this rotten world without bearing the taint and the stench of it in their lives. Men and women who lived alongside graft and

## Consider the Lilies

corruption and hypocrisy and immorality without falling victims to its grasp because they had something...no, they had *Someone* within them who made the difference.

Jesus was saying, "I'm not going to take you out of this world, and I'm not going to so insulate you that this world can't get at you, either. Your camel is just as likely to have a dead battery as that pagan who lives next door to you. Your tent-making shop can have the same labor shortages and inventory problems as the one owned by that unbeliever up the street. Your body may be subject to the same hurts and pains as those who have never met the Messiah. And your loved ones will die just like theirs. The world you will live in will be just like theirs...with one exception."

That one exception would prove to be the difference between just being alive and really living, between existing and overcoming. The difference would be God living in you responding to life 180 degrees from the way the world responds. "Now to do that," Jesus goes on, "you're going to have to allow an internal revolution to take place in your spirit. You're going to have to view life through the mind of God."

In our last study we looked at one of the Master's incredible laws of the New Kingdom. It might be called "the law of the vanishing treasure", because it had to do with the two kinds of treasures we can lay up for the future, treasure on this earth, or treasure in heaven. Most of the people Jesus was talking to, and most of the people you and I are talking to, are literally giving their lives away to lay up treasures on this earth. Jesus said, "You've got a problem. Two things are going to happen; it's predictable. Your treasures will get stolen or taken away from you, and what doesn't get stolen will gradually deteriorate or disintegrate right before your eyes. One day you will leave this earth where you may well have been a prince, and enter eternity a pauper. For you will have made all your investments in the wrong Kingdom." On the other hand, Jesus said, "You may live your entire life on this earth and have little or no tangible treasure to show for your stay here. You may leave this earth a pauper and enter heaven a rich man, because you invested your time and your talents and your money while you were here, laying up treasures for when you get there." And more important than that, Jesus went on, "You can look at what you are doing with your treasures, and tell exactly how deep your commitment to Me really is... for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."

## I- AN UNFAILING LAW

Jesus doesn't end his discourse on treasures, though, where we left off. He only pauses, then ties in the matter of treasures with the matter of masters. Listen to Matthew 6:24 from the Amplified New Testament:

No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will stand by and be devoted to the one and despise and be against the other. You cannot serve God and mammon [deceitful riches, money, possessions, or whatever is trusted in]. (Matthew 6:24 Amplified Bible)

The King of Glory has just passed a moral law that cannot be broken. We might call it the "One Lord Law". For what it says is this: "Every child of God must make a decision about what and for whom he is going to give his life. Satan will tell you that's not necessary. Satan will tell you that you can combine your love for God with your love for things and they can coexist. He will tell you that you can lay up treasures in both worlds at the same time. Jesus said, "Don't you believe it. Either you will hate God and love things or despise the quest for things and cling to your devotion to God... one or the other, but you can't have both."

Now my friend, the ramifications of that divine law go far beyond what we can discuss today. Suffice it to say, however, that there is a depth there that we cannot totally fathom without humbling ourselves before a Sovereign God and seeking wisdom from His Word. Should we take it on a surface level, we would all go out and quit our jobs, sell our homes, and spend our time in a monastery loving God. But the Scripture is so filled with clear-cut admonitions to live in this world, to labor in this world, and to earn money in this world to give away for eternity that we know the "sell it and go hide" philosophy is not what the Master meant. As we progress, I trust we shall see that divine law unfold. But one thing is for certain. It is an irrevocable law. You cannot serve two masters. You cannot lay up treasures in two kingdoms at the same time. True spirituality and a life characterized by an intense hunger for things are not compatible. They cannot be merged, and they cannot be mixed. Either you will cling to God and despise greed, or you will become enslaved by your lust for things and lose the intensity of your quest for godliness. You cannot have both.

You may be saying, "But I don't believe that. It's too hard." My friend, the truth of the Word of God is not related to whether or

## Consider the Lilies

not you believe it. It is truth because God said it. If you choose not to believe it, it does not cease being truth; you simply cease being obedient. That is God's unfailing law. You cannot love and/or serve both God and money at the same time. And if our God said it, Beloved, it simply is true.

### II- AN UNBELIEVABLE COMMANDMENT

Next, God follows His unfailing law with an unbelievable commandment; I say unbelievable, because without the Spirit of God living in you interpreting truth, there's no way you can obey this one. Listen. It is the next stage in the unfolding of the truth of treasures:

Therefore I tell you, stop being perpetually uneasy [anxious and worried] about your life, what you shall eat or what you shall drink; or about your body, what you shall put on. Is not life greater [in quality] than food, and the body [far above and more excellent] than clothing?

(Matthew 6:25 Amp)

So Jesus follows His sermon on treasures and His explanation of the One Lord Law with a new commandment, a commandment so revolutionary it angers the natural mind to consider it. Jesus calls worry sin. He orders His followers to stop worrying, to stop being anxious, to stop being fretful. It is the preamble to Paul's memorable instructions in Philippians 4:6,7.

He doesn't stop to list all the things we worry about. He simply takes the two things we would be most likely to justify and blows our logic to smithereens, assuming that will take care of any lesser anxieties as well. He says, "How dare you worry about whether or not you're going to have enough to eat! Stop it! That's sin. How dare you worry about whether or not you're going to have enough clothes to wear. Stop it! That's sin. Is food all you think about? Or what you have to wear? Wrong treasures, Beloved." And if you have the audacity to be anxious over those things, you've missed God's best. You have broken the "worry commandment". God says don't and you did. Stop it.

### III- AN EXTRAORDINARY ILLUSTRATION

Jesus goes on. He follows His unfailing law and His unbelievable commandment with an extraordinary illustration. He was well aware that the human mind does not learn well from books without pictures, so the Master always stopped once He

## Consider the Lilies

had written something indelibly on the tablets of eternity and drew a word picture to illustrate what He had just said, using the fabric of everyday living as a backdrop for His painting. This passage is no exception. He has told us that we cannot serve God and things at the same time, and followed that by simply stating that worry is sin. Now He paints an illustration to etch the principle in our hearts.

Look at the birds of the air; they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father keeps feeding them. Are you not worth more than they?

And who of you by worrying and being anxious can add one unit of measure [cubit] to his stature or to the span of his life?

And why should you be anxious about clothes? Consider the lilies of the field and learn thoroughly how they grow; they neither toil nor spin.

Yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his magnificence [excellence, dignity, and grace] was not arrayed like one of these. (I Kings 10:4-7)

But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and green and tomorrow is tossed into the furnace, will He not much more surely clothe you, O you of little faith? (Matthew 6:26-30 Amp)

The Son of God takes the truth of God and with big, bold brush strokes, explodes with color on the canvas of life a vivid reminder of the provisions of God. He says, “Are you worried about having enough food to eat? Why? Look up in the sky. What do you see? See that little bird? He’s not worried. You know why? The God who made him plans to feed him. Sure, he has to fly to where it is, and he may get more some days than others; but a sovereign, loving God doesn’t plan to let him starve. Not one of his own. They don’t work at the office; they don’t plant in the fields; they don’t even work on the loading dock. But their God sees that they have just what they need to eat. Surely you don’t believe that He’s more concerned about that little bird than He is about you? Then what right do you have to worry?”

“And by the way,” Jesus goes on, “just what did you ever get from worrying anyway? Are you any taller because you fretted? Will you live a day longer because you’ve worried? Of course not. You can’t name one single benefit you’ve ever received from being anxious. Not one. So stop it.”

## Consider the Lilies

Then comes illustration number two. Jesus says, “I’ll bet you’re worried about having enough clothes to be presentable in your world, aren’t you? Presentable? Look over there. See that gorgeous field of lilies? Now stop what you’re doing. I want you to think about them. I want you to *consider the lilies!* I want you to focus your attention on those tiny, beautiful flowers. Have you ever seen a lily work for his supper? Have you ever seen a field of flowers anxious about tomorrow? No, and you never will. Now consider just how well your God has clothed them. Have you ever been that pretty in your life? That dignified? That graceful? No, you haven’t. In fact, the most beautifully arrayed human in history, King Solomon, the man who had more clothes in his closet than Sears has in its warehouse, never looked as nice as those lilies. Now think about it. If you belong to a God who is that concerned about a flower, a flower that will, in a season, be dead and gone and cast into the furnace...how dare you be anxious about whether or not He will clothe you...oh, you of little faith!”

### IV- AN ACCEPTABLE ALTERNATIVE

Having graphically sketched an illustration to crystallize the practicality of the commandment, now the Master turns and offers a creative alternative. The Word of God, you see, is not a book of negatives, though some would try to paint it that way. The Scriptures are an ocean of divine alternatives. They say of themselves that they are “profitable for doctrine, for rebuke, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness”. That means that the Word of God not only points out where we have gone astray, but it lovingly slows us down so we will not get hurt, quietly points us in the right direction, and helps us begin to move according to the will of God. It is not a wicked headmaster scolding us for our errors; it is the word of a gentle parent protecting us from harm and directing us to safety. So the Word does not just tell us to stop lying, it leads us to tell the truth. It does not just tell us not to get angry; it teaches us to turn anger into love. It does not just tell us not to steal; it shows us how to labor instead. The Word of God is a beacon of creative alternatives. And this passage is no exception.

God doesn’t just tell us to stop worrying. He has a plan that makes worrying ridiculous. Listen! It is found in the next verse.

Therefore do not worry and be anxious, saying, What are we going to have to eat? or, What are we going to have to drink?



## Consider the Lilies

or, What are we going to have to wear?

For the Gentiles [heathen] wish for and crave and diligently seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows well that you need them all.

But seek [aim at and strive after] first of all His kingdom and His righteousness [His way of doing and being right], and then all these things taken together will be given you besides.

So do not worry or be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will have worries and anxieties of its own. Sufficient for each day is its own trouble.” (Matthew 6:31-34 Amp)

Now if that isn't a positive alternative to anxiety, there isn't one. God's answer to worry is a step-by-step walk into the sunlight of peace. Step one is to recognize that no one can serve two masters. You cannot put your trust in eternal treasures and the riches of earth at the same time. So you have to make a deliberate choice. Step two, once that choice has been made, is to go outside and take a look at the birds that are flying around and ask yourself whether or not the God who made them made them to starve. He didn't. And you are of much greater value than they. Step three is to look in the mirror and ask yourself if, by worrying, you can become tall enough to play basketball or live two minutes longer. The answer is no. Step four is to consider the lilies. By that, Jesus asks us to study the beauty of His earthly creations that are destined for the scrap heap after perhaps but a season of loveliness, and ask yourself if you've ever, in your best moments, looked that good. If not, then stop worrying about whether or not the God who clothes them can clothe you. Step five is God's creative alternative. Once you have studied the issue on God's terms and realized the sheer foolishness of worrying, then purpose to stop it...immediately. Every time you would normally worry, you stop and begin to seek the Kingdom instead.

To seek the Kingdom means to commit yourself to God's perspective. It means to view all of the temporal in the light of the spiritual. If you do that, nothing anyone does can be a cause for either worry or fear. From man's perspective, the worst thing that can happen is death. So the whole world dreads death. But from God's perspective, the best thing that can happen is death. Death means the end of sin. Death means the end of sorrow. Death means the end of pain. From man's perspective,

## Consider the Lilies

poverty is unthinkable. From God's perspective, it is a blessing, if it uncovers spiritual treasures you never would have found otherwise. From man's perspective, to be wrongfully imprisoned is unthinkable. From God's perspective, it is a way to spread the Gospel to the whole world and pen the epistles that would one day transform mankind.

The end result is living life in victory, one day at a time. There's no reason to borrow from tomorrow; tomorrow may never come. Jesus may come instead. And a sovereign God owns tomorrow anyway. So the godly answer to worry is to take every incident and every circumstance that would normally cause us to fret and use those very incidents as stepping stones to seeing life from God's perspective. That's seeking the Kingdom first. God says, "Do that, and I'll be responsible for feeding you, clothing you, and caring for your tomorrows." How can you beat a deal like that? You can't. And it is written indelibly in the fabric of God's promises to you and to me as His born-again, blood-bought children.

How anxious are you? How fretful? How much of your idle time is spent in answering "what if" questions in your mind to a make-believe stranger? How tense do you get when life empties its clouds of doom over your house, and the world has no answers? Beloved, *consider the lilies*. They toil not; neither do they spin. Yet King Solomon, in all his glory, was not arrayed like one of these. If our precious God, who clothes the grass of the field, which is present today and gone tomorrow, how much more concerned will He be for your welfare...you who are eternal? Oh, Beloved, do not be of little faith.

Get up tomorrow morning and surrender that one day into the hands of the Great I AM. And when the storm clouds threaten, and the fears begin to well up inside of you, stop whatever you are doing and take at least a make-believe trip into the meadows of your mind, to the great outdoors. Say to yourself. "Look at the little bird. He has no way to make a living, no way to provide for his future, no way to store up for the long winter ahead. But he's not worried. Could that little bird be smarter than I am?"

Then consider the lilies. Whatever you do, Beloved, consider the lilies. And relax. In fact, maybe that ought to become our byword in the days to come. When danger threatens and our hearts begin to pound within us, we ought to consider the lilies.

## Consider the Lilies

When the future looks uncertain, and there are no simple answers for life's complicated questions, we ought to consider the lilies. When our security is threatened, and there is no guarantee that tomorrow will hold in store enough income or enough prosperity to guarantee the standard of living we have become accustomed to, consider the lilies. And rest. The same God who designed them with such grace and majesty, who made them each slightly different, yet each with its own unique color and beauty...*that same God made you*. He is much more concerned about you than He is about that flower. You are eternal. That flower is not.

Consider the lilies, and change the way you look at life. Your God never designed you to worry. In fact, He calls worry a sin. He has designed for His children a better way. Every time we would be prone to worry, He calls us to consider the lilies, take a deep breath, and begin to seek the perspective of the Kingdom instead.

The clouds will open up, and the most radiant sunlight you have ever witnessed will flood your soul with peace. The load you have been carrying will vanish as your loving God lifts it from your shoulders and takes it as His own. And you will face those crises life seems destined to hand you with a burst of energy unknown to you before. All of life will be at rest...simply because, instead of worrying, you chose to consider the lilies. The lilies will blossom before your eyes, and so will the love of your God.

Consider the Lilies

For Further Study and Application

1- Spend as much time as you can on Monday meditating on Matthew 6:24. Ask God to reveal to you how the lust for things can become the master of your time; your energies; your priorities. Why can't you be devoted to accumulating riches and serving God at the same time? Can you find a verse in the Bible to substantiate your answer?

2- In verse 25, Jesus equates worry with disobedience. He commands us to stop being anxious or worried about life. For Tuesday, meditate on Philippians 4:6-7, and then merge that verse with this one to get the full impact of how God feels about worry.

3- Wednesday, make a list of all the things you worry about. By each thing, list the worst possible thing that could happen. Now write by that thing, how God might use even that if you are seeking first the Kingdom.

4- On another page, make a list of all the things you have accomplished by worrying. Have you added a day to your life? Have you added an inch to your stature: Have you added anything spiritually fruitful to your life through being anxious? Then, on another page, list the negative things worry has brought to your life.

5- On Thursday, do a study of the way God feeds the birds. Do some research on the care God gives for the least of His creation. Then fall to your knees in worship at His love.

6- For the rest of the week, consider the lilies! Take a walk, either out in a field, or a least through you neighborhood, and see how God clothes the flowers He has so graciously designed. Every time you are tempted to worry try considering the lilies... then take a deep breath, and rest!

**dtm** DISCIPLESHIP TAPE MINISTRIES, INC.

10602 Mossbank, San Antonio, TX 78230

210-226-0000 or 1-800-375-7778

www.dtm.org • dtm@dtm.org • © Russell Kelfer