

Peace of Mind: The Art of Indifference

Session 3

Introduction: We care about too much! The world often tells us to care about unimportant, irrelevant things. Our technological society screams for our attention through social media, news, etc. Everyone wants us to care about everything. And it's all too much!

Draw the anxious-care flow chart:

Idea: Learn the discipline of indifference to things that don't matter. In Matthew 6 Jesus said some things don't matter enough to warrant our concern. What are those things?

- I. Uncontrollable Things (Matt. 6:27—"Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature?")
 - A. Learn to focus on *actions you can actually control*.
 1. Example: You can't really control the rate of your weight loss. You can control food choices and exercise.
 2. Example: You can't control another person's response in a given situation; you can always control yours.
 3. NOTE: Always focus on controllable actions, not potential outcomes. Outcomes are not always within our control.
 - B. Dismiss concern/thought about things beyond your control:
 1. PAST—Quit obsessing over it. It cannot change. Regret and remorse are a waste of time. Only repentance has value.
 2. PEOPLE—You can't change people. You can influence. You can pray. But after you've done your part, leave the rest to God. (Many people experience severe anxiety because they seek to *control* others. Stop it!)
 3. EXTERNALS—Examples include the weather, the stock market, the Whitehouse, etc.
 4. HEALTH—You can and should do your best to make healthy choices, but having made good choices, understand that there are aspects of health we cannot control.
 - C. Ask yourself, "Do I control this?" If the answer is "no," then REFUSE to think about it. Rumination has no power to change what you cannot control.

- II. Temporary Things (Matt. 6:19, 28-30)
 - A. Everything in this life is temporary. Recognize this. Deal with it. Things change; get over it.
 - 1. Practice “negative visualization” to help you to value the moment.
 - 2. Be present where your feet are! (Not thinking about past/future; not in the other world of your cell phone)
 - 3. Use things; enjoy things; hold things loosely; eventually let things go.
 - B. We spend too much time on things; not enough time on personal tranquility. Hedonic Adaptation (desire, fulfilment, dissatisfaction, heightened desire) is a major source of anxiety. Remember, “the eyes of man are never satisfied” (Prov. 27:20b).
 - C. The world conspires to get you to care about the latest cause or fad. Retailers work overtime at this. Even friends adopt causes (usually represented as #’s on social media) and seek to rope you into them. Do not allow people to make their concerns your responsibility. It’s all temporary; you shouldn’t care!
 - D. Reject a “nothing but the best” attitude.
 - 1. Don’t be a critic. Don’t be a connoisseur. Your perfectionism causes you nothing but anxiety! Good enough is good enough!
 - 2. Keep your expectations low, and life will be filled with pleasant surprises.
- III. Necessary Things (Matt. 6:31-32, 25)
 - A. This is HARD CORE thought discipline. Even things necessary to life do not deserve our obsessive rumination. Because modern American life is awash in choices, we frequently create anxiety by seeking the optimal choice. (Example: choosing peanut butter shouldn’t take so much mental effort!)
 - B. “Life is more than food” and “the body is more than raiment” (clothing).
 - 1. Eat to live; don’t live to eat. Quit caring so much about where you eat and what you eat. Become indifferent to it!
 - 2. You wear clothes; they don’t wear you. Don’t be a slave to fashion and the opinions of metro-sexual fashion weirdos.
 - C. Reject a “nothing but the best” attitude.
 - 1. Don’t be a critic. Don’t be a connoisseur. Your perfectionism causes you nothing but anxiety! Good enough is good enough!
 - 2. Keep your expectations low, and life will be filled with pleasant surprises.
 - D. God knows the things we need. Therefore, don’t obsess over them; trust Him!
- IV. Future Things (Matt. 6:34)
 - A. You cannot determine the future. You have NO control over it.
 - B. You can only do your best NOT! Don’t waste today on the potential troubles of tomorrow. Today has plenty of negatives to focus upon.
 - C. Be present where your feet are!
 - D. Key to the future: Prioritize God’s priorities (Matt. 6:33). If you’re bound and determined to worry, worry about the fact that God’s priorities may not be yours. Obsess over fixing that!

