



Figure 1: Lilies of the field (Matt 6:28)

Living Beyond Work Loss ***(Unemployed Support Group)*** ***Anaheim Vineyard Fellowship***

*Seek first the kingdom and His righteousness,
and all these things will be added to you.” Matt 6:33*

Kathleen E. High, M.Ed., Education and Career Consultant, Counselor, and Professor

Biblical Reflections #1: Surrendering to God (Matt 6:25-34)

1. Introduction:

In today’s world, being unemployed puts people in a position where they are forced to learn how to depend on God. While we are working, if we live within our means, we generally do not need to depend on God for our everyday existence because instead, we depend on the “predictable paycheck” to get our needs met. However, when that predictable paycheck upon which we get our physical needs met is suddenly taken away, we become acutely aware of how much we need God’s grace just to get through everyday life.

Have you heard of the cliché, “There is always a silver lining in a gray cloud”? Well, this transition period the unemployed face provides an opportunity for them to find what God has called them to be and do – how he wants to use them to impact the world. Yet, people will ask, “How do I find out what that is?”

My answer is, “It STARTS by learning how to surrender every part of your life to God.” See “Purposeful Living” document for a visual of how our different life roles can distract us from what God wants to do in us and through us.

As an education and career counselor and professor, my job involves helping people to find and achieve their dreams. However, there are many different variables that affect the journey. Helping individuals to identify and address those variables is part of my job. Based on my years of experience, I can see that the journey of achieving education and career success is very similar to the process of finding and achieving one’s God-given calling.

Surrendering to God
By: Kathleen E. High

So, when people understand what I do for a living, they often ask me how they can figure out what they should be doing with their lives and how they can find their calling. However, many people who are unemployed are so stressed over their employment status in today's tight job market, they are at risk of becoming distracted by worrying about looking for a job or meeting their own personal needs. The following passage explains this and what I mean by surrendering to God.

2. Primary Passage:

(Note: All passages were taken from NASB¹ translation unless otherwise noted.)

Matt 6:25 - For this reason I say to you, do not worry about your life, as to what you will eat or what you will drink; nor for your body, as to what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing?

Cross References:

Prov 23:4: Do not weary yourself to gain wealth

1Tim 6:9-10 But those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a snare and many foolish and harmful desires which plunge men into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil, and some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.

Matt 6:21: for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

Luke 12:34: For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

Matt 6:26 - Look at the birds of the air, that they do not sow, nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not worth much more than they?

Matt 6:27 - And who of you by being worried can add a single hour to his life?

Matt 6:28 - And why are you worried about clothing? **Observe how the lilies of the field grow; they do not toil nor do they spin,**

Matt 6:29 - yet I say to you that not even Solomon in all his glory clothed himself like one of these.

Matt 6:30 - But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the furnace, will he not much more clothe you? You of little faith!

Matt 6:31 - Do not worry then, saying, "What will we eat?" or "What will we drink?" or "What will we wear for clothing?"

¹ Scripture taken from the NEW AMERICAN STANDARD BIBLE®, Copyright ©1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1995 by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission.

Surrendering to God
By: Kathleen E. High

Matt 6:32 - for the Gentiles eagerly seek all these things; **for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things.**

Cross References:

Matt 6:8 - So do not be like them; for your Father knows what you need before you ask Him.

Matt 6:33 - But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.

Matt 6:30 - So do not worry about tomorrow; for tomorrow will care for itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

a. Note the common theme in the cross references for this passage:

Phil 4:6: Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.

1Pet 5:7: casting all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you.

3. Other Relevant Passages:

a. There is a difference between idleness and trusting God to provide:

2 Thes 3:10 – “For even when we were with you, we used to give you this order: if anyone is **not willing** to work, then he is not to eat, either.”

Many people tend to misread or project their own expectations onto this scripture, and assume it says, “does not work” rather than “not willing to work”. By misreading this scripture, they are misunderstanding what the Apostle Paul was saying: Don’t tolerate undisciplined people who get involved in unproductive activities. (2 Thes 3:11).

There are times, such as during the Great Depression, when countless people would have willingly done very menial work for minimal wages, but because jobs were just not out there, they weren’t able to get work. This is why this scripture says, “not willing”. God is a good God, who will provide for people whose hearts are right by him.

Also, many people do not realize it, but there are seasons in life when God calls us to do something other than work for wages. There are several reasons why this may be the case, so this should be its own study topic. The important point is that if you are in one of these seasons, the most important thing you can do is to trust him to provide for your needs while you are doing what he has called you to do.

In our North American culture, many people get their sense of pride and identity from the type of work they do. Consequently, they may be inclined to think that having to do certain types of jobs is “beneath them,” and therefore they may not in a hurry to

Surrendering to God
By: Kathleen E. High

get such jobs. However, this is NOT an appropriate attitude for Christians to take (2 Thes. 3:11) So, be sure to check your own motives to be sure you are not doing what Paul describes these people were doing.

b. No one can serve to masters:

Matt 6:19-24 - “Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal; for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. The eye is the lamp of the body; so then if your eye is clear, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light that is in you is darkness, how great is the darkness! No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth.

If you want to find your God-given calling, be prepared to make sacrifices because God will expect you to surrender anything in your life that is a distraction from his purposes.

c. God knows what you need before you ask:

Remember Matt 6:8 - So do not be like them; for your Father knows what you need before you ask Him.

During my own journey, there were so many times when God provided for my various needs I had long before I knew I would need them. One example stands out in my mind: My father had provided me with a re-built computer because mine had become obsolete and could no longer meet my needs. It turns out just a few months later, I was laid off from my job, and to my surprise, and God had instructed me to respond by becoming a full-time college student so I could finish my Bachelor’s degree. The computer that my father provided was good enough to get me through those two years of school. I would have had a problem completing my most course work without it. Then, I was able to upgrade again as needed when I entered grad school due to my financial aid package. This is one of hundreds of examples of how God has been providing for my various needs. I have so many examples, that I have difficulty remembering them all.

Therefore, I can speak from personal experience: if you seek him first, he WILL be faithful to meet ALL of your needs – but not necessarily all your wants.

4. Surrendering to God Can Clear the Way for You to Discover God’s Plan For Your Life:

a. Your reason for existence must come from God. It will be to fulfill his purposes:

Prov. 29:18 - “Where there is no vision, the people are unrestrained, but happy is he who keeps the law.”

Surrendering to God
By: Kathleen E. High

Without a vision for why you are here on this earth, it is hard to not let your other life roles and temptations distract you from how you should be living your life. (*See "Purposeful Living" document*)

Isaiah. 55:8-9 - "For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways," declares the LORD. "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways and My thoughts than your thoughts.

I am constantly amazed at how often I see well-intentioned individuals project their own personal thoughts, feelings and expectations onto God and then expect him to bless what they proclaim. However, this passage reminds us not to do that. What God is doing in the world will likely be something you are not expecting. So in order to be included in his plans, the agenda must come from him – not you.

When the time is right, he will reveal to you how he wants to use you to fulfill his grand plans for this world. However, you need to be ready to hear it, receive it, and respond to it. The story of Exodus shows how, even though Moses knew he had been destined for greatness. Yet he didn't receive his call from God until he was 80 years old. On that day, he was busy tending to his business. Then when God reached out to him, he stopped what he was doing to pay attention, then respond. (Exod. 3:3-4)

b. Trust God to give you the vision, and then the wisdom to know how to fulfill his purposes:

Psalms 37:4 - Delight yourself in the LORD; And He will give you the desires of your heart.

Yes, God is that good. Your God-given calling WILL be something you will WANT to do. My experience has been that most people who are receiving that "nudge" assume it is a ridiculous fantasy that should be ignored. Therefore they are inclined to try to ignore that 'voice'. – I know I did – until I had my own 'burning bush' experience.

Prov. 3:5-6 - Trust in the LORD with all your heart, And do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He will make your paths straight.

There are many things that affect a person's ability to correctly hear God and to respond to him. There are also many things God may use to speak to you about what he is doing in your life. To understand these can be best described as a journey rather than a destination. Unpacking these topics should be reserved for when there is time to devote exclusively to each topic. But suffice it to say for now, "If you are asking for his guidance, responding to his step-by-step instructions in faith, you will in time, understand that you are doing what you should be doing at that time.

2 Cor 5:7 - for we walk by faith, not by sight

These three scriptures have been the life verses that have guided my 15-year journey from a line of work which I hated to one which I love that positively impacts the lives of others.

5. Reflection:

To help you fully process this lesson, you are encouraged to take the time to answer the following questions. Follow-up reflection is a necessary part of the learning process. Feel free to write on additional sheets of paper if necessary.

How does this topic relate to your life?

How do you spend most of your mental, physical, and emotional energy during this season of your life?

How is God speaking to you right now during this lesson?

What can you do to make sure you are “seeking first the Kingdom of God?”

What is the next step you should be taking right now?
