

# COVENANT

## “WHAT & WHOM”

### - Week 2 -

Last week we began our conversation about the covenant relationship we have with God, the contract, or agreement, that has a requirement on our part and then what God promises us in return. Spoiler alert, we get the good end of the deal... and our side doesn't usually require us to do much more than simply trust a good and loving God. But that's easier said than done, right? We like to have control of our own lives, because the alternative, being out of control, leaves us feeling helpless, anxious, and scared. But as we talked about last week, we surrender our need to control our lives by trusting God with the outcome. And when we gradually learn to trust God with the outcomes of whatever we're facing, we can find a sense of peace on the journey.

Today and for the next 4 weeks, we're going to look at the specific areas in life that cause us this kind of anxiety, the problems we face in trusting God with them, and what God promises from God's side of the Covenant.

**Question 1: To get us going today, answer this hypothetical: you come home one day to find the Stuff Police taking away everything you own. To calm you down, they concede to letting you keep one item. What one possession do you keep and why?**

To help us understand this covenant relationship better, we've been praying an historic prayer written by the founder of the Methodist movement in the 1700s, John Wesley. (You've been praying it every day, right?) Each line of this prayer is a beautiful reminder for us of that Covenant we have with God. The first line was the basis of this whole deal, that our lives aren't ours to control anyway. We are God's.

**I am no longer my own, but thine.**

The prayer then begins to get more focused, addressing the specific areas in life where we need to trust God. The second line is this...

**Put me to what thou wilt,  
rank me with whom thou wilt.**

Yeah, we don't talk like that anymore. (Though, maybe we should. Your challenge this week is to order a meal at restaurant saying, "Wilt thou be so kind as to serve to me mine tacos?") So, here's what this line of the prayer means, "God, in whatever job you'd have me do, in whatever station in life I find myself, I will trust you."

Now, this line could cover a lot of bases, but for our purposes today, we're going to talk about it in terms of our professional and financial lives. (Everyone take a deep breath. We'll get through this together.) This is one of the most difficult areas for us to relinquish control, and one of the greatest causes of anxiety and stress in our lives. We cling onto every dollar we receive, and we bust our butts to keep the boss happy so those dollars keep rolling in. A recent study by the American Institute of Stress found that work-related stress was far and away the greatest cause of stress for most Americans, and that 40% of all workers describe their jobs as very or extremely stressful. A study by online financial consulting firm, Freedom Debt Relief, found that 20% of Americans reported that they would rather go to the dentist or the DMV than talk about their finances. Soooo.... here we are.

**Question 2: Scale of 1 to 10, how stressed out are you about work or finance? Are those two things different? What specifically stresses you out about them? (If you're one the 20% who'd rather be at the DMV right now, feel free to pass or simply not be specific. Just know you're in a judgment-free zone.)**

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**W**e scratch and claw for any semblance of control in this area of our lives because, in so many ways, it's an area that by nature is the most *out* of our control. Our debt is owned by lenders or banks. Our job security is in the hands of our boss or supervisor. Our entire security in this area is one crisis away from being completely out of our control. No wonder we're stressed about it! So, what do we do?

Well, practically speaking, you can take positive steps to be more secure... like eliminating debt, living within your means, and setting up emergency funds for the future. (Attend Dave Ramsey's "Financial Peace University." It'll change your life.) But that's a different series for a different time.

For today, spiritually speaking, when it comes to this area of our Covenant with God, Jesus has some words of wisdom for us.

**<sup>25</sup> "Therefore, I say to you, don't worry about your life, what you'll eat or what you'll drink, or about your body, what you'll wear. Isn't life more than food and the body more than clothes? <sup>26</sup> Look at the birds in the sky. They don't sow seed or harvest grain or gather crops into barns. Yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Aren't you worth much more than they are? <sup>27</sup> Who among you by worrying can add a single moment to your life?**

**<sup>28</sup> And why do you worry about clothes? Notice how the lilies in the field grow. They don't wear themselves out with work, and they don't spin cloth. <sup>29</sup> But I say to you that even Solomon in all of his splendor wasn't dressed like one of these. <sup>30</sup> If God dresses grass in the**

**field so beautifully, even though it's alive today and tomorrow it's thrown into the furnace, won't God do much more for you, you people of weak faith?**

<sup>31</sup> Therefore, don't worry and say, 'What are we going to eat?' or 'What are we going to drink?' or 'What are we going to wear?' <sup>32</sup> Gentiles long for all these things. Your heavenly Father knows that you need them. <sup>33</sup> Instead, desire first and foremost God's kingdom and God's righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

<sup>34</sup> Therefore, stop worrying about tomorrow, because tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

**Matthew 6:25-34 CEB**

Jesus said this to a large crowd in first-century Israel because *they* were feeling job and financial stress. Isn't it fascinating how 2000 years later, we still have the same problems? Jesus's words ring as true today as they did then. And in typical Jesus fashion, he beautifully describes the two sides of our covenant relationship with God in this area of life.

First, our side... look through the scripture and list the commands. Go ahead, we'll wait.

That's right. What are we supposed to do? What's our side of the covenant? Umm... don't worry (verse 25.) Don't worry, (verse 28.) Don't worry, (verse 31.) Desire God's kingdom and righteousness, (verse 33.) And in case you hadn't gotten the message yet, in verse 34, Jesus closes with... you guessed it... don't worry. Our side of the covenant seems pretty simple, right? Don't worry.

**Question 3: When it comes to our jobs and budgets, having security in the necessities of life, what makes it hard to "not worry"?**

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**N**ow God's side... look back through the scripture and list what God promises to do for God's side of the Covenant. 60 seconds on the clock... ready, go.

Jesus points out that God takes care of the birds of the air and flowers in the field, and you mean vastly more to God than these things. So why wouldn't God provide for us, too? Verse 32 says that God already knows what we need, and promises to take care of us.

Seems like a pretty unfair deal. God does all the work, and all we have to do is not worry. Here's the even better news, and what Jesus was trying to get across to the people then and to us today... even if you can't help but worry, God's still going to take care of you. That's just the amazing God we have!

As we said last week, giving up control of our lives means trusting God with the outcome. And in this arena of life, the outcome is that God will take care of us, no matter what station of life we find ourselves in. Therefore, we don't have to worry.

**Question 4: Has there been a time in your life when God provided for you just enough at just the right time? Share with the group.**

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**A**s we pray the Wesley Covenant Prayer to close today, we'll spend some time thinking about this area of our lives, and what it would take to heed Jesus's advice, and not worry. What are we afraid of losing? What are we holding onto so tightly? What would it mean to surrender our job and financial security over to a God who has promised to provide for us better than the birds of the air and the lilies of the field? When you get to the second line of the prayer, think about that very thing, saying to God,

"God, in whatever job you have me doing,  
in whatever station in life I find myself...  
I'm not going to worry because you promise to take care of me.  
God, I let go of my worry."

Let us pray:

**I am no longer my own but thine.  
Put me to what thou wilt,  
rank me with whom thou wilt.  
Put me to doing, put me to suffering.  
Let me be employed for thee,  
or laid aside for thee.  
Let me be exalted for thee,  
or brought low for thee.  
Let me have all things,  
let me have nothing.  
Let me be full,  
let me be empty.  
I freely and humbly yield all things  
to thy pleasure and thy disposal.  
And now, sweet Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,  
I am thine and thou art mine.  
And may this covenant made on Earth,  
be ratified in heaven.  
So be it.**