



## “When Life Doesn’t Turn Out Like We Planned”

### Scripture based Bible Study

([www.mensgroup.org](http://www.mensgroup.org) –“Original Study”)

**PRAY:** A one or two sentence opening prayer to invite God to connect with members of a Small Group in seeking Him thru his Word.

*Lord, our prayer is that you help us to have an eternal perspective about life and what matters most. We realize our tendencies toward focusing on “me, my, mine.” We need your help to see both the forest and the trees.*

**READ:** Scripture Reference (Mathew 6:19-34)

**Key Verse** (21 *“For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”*)

You were diligent. You planned your work, and worked your plan. Then it happened, the bottom fell out! And now your disappointment is turning to discouragement or depression. Or perhaps the scenario you feared most has now appeared on the horizon, and your anxiety levels are off the chart. Worry, followed by fear, or anger and accompanied by the question: “Why is this happening to me?”

When life doesn’t turn out like we planned, it’s only natural to ask the “WHY” question. In Matthew 6:27, Jesus asks a question of His own as He confronts our worry: “Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life?” We all know the answer to this question, but that does little to deter our anxiety. In posing the question, Jesus draws our attention to two fallacies that often weave themselves into how we order our lives: 1) the mistake of thinking that we are in control, and 2) the mistake of thinking that we are self-sufficient. When we’re honest with ourselves, we must acknowledge there are things we can’t control, and circumstances in life for which we are completely unprepared. When we finally come to grips with this reality, we’re then ready to consider the most important question of all, which is the “WHO” question. WHO is in control?

**QUESTION #1:** Why do we fret and worry about the challenges or difficulties in life over which we have no control?

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**QUESTION #2:** When prioritizing what matters most in life, what resources are at the top of your list for helping you navigate the challenges and difficulties of life?

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Paul David Tripp, in his wonderful Devotional *New Morning Mercies*, draws our attention to the reality that as humans, our hearts are ruled by a set of desires. He writes “*This is important because the desires that rule your heart determine how you evaluate your life, how you make small and large decisions, and, most importantly, how you think about the goodness and faithfulness of God.*” Christ draws our attention to this in Matthew 6: 21 when He connects the dots between our heart and our treasure. The most powerful desires of our heart will always reveal what we treasure most.

**REFLECT:** A couple of questions for Small Group Members to pause and consider, regarding how the passage applies to their own life:

1. In commentary on Matthew 6, Dr. F. Dale Bruner observes that “*we want treasures because they give us security. But because of decay (moth, rust, decay, etc.) treasures lead us to security’s opposite, anxiety. Because our riches bring us into a constant war with decay, they do not bring us rest.*”

What fuels mankind’s universal passion and drive to store up treasure on earth, while all the time knowing that earthly treasure 1) always ends up in a state of decay, and 2) you can’t take it with you?

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2. Christ admonishes us in Matthew 6:19 - 20 to NOT store up for ourselves treasure on earth, but rather to store up for ourselves treasure in heaven.

What does this look like? What does He mean by heavenly treasure?

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**RESPOND:** *An “application challenge” for the reader to put into practice today and in the days ahead:*

Confess to God in prayer whatever things He has revealed to you that may be taking His rightful place as “LORD of your life,” and then consider some practical ways by which you can surrender those idols as you begin to rely on His strength to live each day. For example, if having a “demanding” mindset with others is a way in which you seek to control your life, you might commit to memory Scripture verses like I Peter 5:7, or Philippians 4:13 & 19, to help you confront and release your tendency to “control.”

**A Closing Prayer:** *Dear Heavenly Father, please make me aware of those things that I am substituting for Your Lordship in my life, and grant Your grace and strength to help me surrender to Your authority. Especially when I am inclined to go my own way, and rely on my own strength, please help me to go Your way and rely on Your strength.*

### **Additional Discipleship Study Questions:**

Living a “successful life” is not about acquiring power, or position, or possessions. It begins by acknowledging our dependence on God, and seeking his rule and authority (His Kingdom) first in all of life’s circumstances. It continues by living in a state of dependence on God for all of our needs. Jeremiah, the Old Testament prophet, is a great example of someone who experienced a lot of disappointment and tragedy in life, and yet he was used mightily by God because he placed himself under God’s authority and lived in a state of dependence on Him. In doing so, he found that God was always faithful to His promises. In Lamentations 3:19-24, he provides a frank assessment of his disappointment with the way his life was going, but also proclaimed a steadfast reliance upon God.

Which of God’s character traits does this passage highlight?

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For those of us who claim Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, what response should these character traits evoke in us?

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In First Peter, Chapter 4, the Apostle Peter describes Jesus as our great example. John Peterson's paraphrase of First Peter 4:1-8 (*The Message*) reads as follows:

*4<sup>1-2</sup> Since Jesus went through everything you're going through and more, learn to think like him. Think of your sufferings as a weaning from that old sinful habit of always expecting to get your own way. Then you'll be able to live out your days free to pursue what God wants instead of being tyrannized by what you want.<sup>3-5</sup> You've already put in your time in that God-ignorant way of life, partying night after night, a drunken and profligate life. Now it's time to be done with it for good. Of course, your old friends don't understand why you don't join in with the old gang anymore. But you don't have to give an account to them. They're the ones who will be called on the carpet—and before God himself.<sup>6</sup> Listen to the Message. It was preached to those believers who are now dead, and yet even though they died (just as all people must), they will still get in on the life that God has given in Jesus.<sup>7-11</sup> Everything in the world is about to be wrapped up, so take nothing for granted. Stay wide-awake in prayer. Most of all, love each other as if your life depended on it. Love makes up for practically anything."*

What are some practical ways by which you can incorporate the Apostle Peter's encouragement to "Listen to the Message"?

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Finally, if you've never responded to the claims of Jesus Christ upon your life, you will find helpful information about what it means to be a Christ follower at the following website:

<http://www.wikihow.com/Be-Saved-Through-Jesus-Christ>

For additional free studies go to: <http://www.mensgroup.org/bible-studies/>