

Matthew 6:27

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature?

Analysis

Jesus highlights anxiety's futility: 'Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature?' (Greek: τίς δὲ ἐξ ὑμῶν μεριμνῶν δύναται προσθεῖναι ἐπὶ τὴν ἡλικίαν αὐτοῦ πῆχυν ἓνα, 'who of you by being anxious is able to add to his lifespan one cubit?'). The word ἡλικία can mean 'stature' or 'lifespan'; both interpretations work. A 'cubit' (πῆχυν) is roughly 18 inches - adding this to height would be dramatic, adding to lifespan would be significant time. The point is anxiety's powerlessness - worrying accomplishes nothing. This is practical wisdom: anxiety doesn't solve problems, it multiplies misery without productive outcome.

Historical Context

Ancient people understood human limitation over life circumstances. Medical science was primitive; life expectancy short; disease, famine, and violence threatened constantly. Yet Jesus argues anxiety doesn't help - it's futile response to real threats. His teaching anticipates modern psychology's findings on anxiety's destructive ineffectiveness. The rhetorical question expects obvious negative answer - no one extends life or grows taller by worrying. This would resonate with anxious audiences facing real threats beyond their control.

Related Passages

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Study Questions

1. How does recognizing anxiety's futility motivate us to replace it with trust?
2. What current worries are you holding that accomplish nothing but rob present peace?
3. How can we channel energy spent on anxiety into prayer and productive action?

Interlinear Text

τίς	δὲ	ἐξ	ὑμῶν	μεριμνῶν	δύναται	προσθεῖναι	ἐπὶ
G5101	G1161	Which	of you	by taking thought	can	add	unto
		G1537	G5216	G3309	G1410	G4369	G1909
τὴν	ἡλικίαν	αὐτοῦ	πῆχυν	ἓνα;			
G3588	stature	G846	cubit	one			
	G2244		G4083	G1520			

Additional Cross-References

Ecclesiastes 3:14 (Parallel theme): I know that, whatsoever God doeth, it shall be for ever: nothing can be put to it, nor any thing taken from it: and God doeth it, that men should fear before him.

Matthew 5:36 (Parallel theme): Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black.

1 Corinthians 12:18 (Parallel theme): But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him.