

# LOOK AT THE BIRDS





## Read

<sup>25</sup>"Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? <sup>26</sup>Look at the birds of the air; they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? <sup>27</sup>And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life?" **Matthew 6:25-27 (ESV)**

## Reflect

When Jesus says, "Don't worry," I think we often go the place of assuming He means something He doesn't. Check the boxes that describe what you hear when someone says to you the phrase, "Don't worry!"

- ☐ Get over it.
- ☐ The things I worry about aren't important.
- ☐ Don't do anything, just wait on God.
- ☐ I'm dumb for stressing out.
- ☐ I shouldn't tell other people what I'm worried about because they just dismiss my concerns.
- ☐ I don't have enough faith.

*When Jesus says, "Do not worry"* He means something much different than we often hear when others use this same phrase. Jesus isn't saying, "Be lackadaisical. Don't plan for the future or work hard. Be careless about your bills. Pay no attention to the relational issues around you. Say 'whatevs' about war and politics and the current turmoil of our world."



William Barclay suggests that Jesus' teaching here aligned with the rabbis of His time. "The Jews themselves were very familiar with this attitude to life. It was the teaching of the great rabbis that a man ought to meet life with a combination of prudence and serenity. They insisted, for instance, that every man must teach his son a trade, for, they said, not to teach him a trade was to teach him to steal. That is to say, they believed in taking all the necessary steps for the prudent handling of life. But at the same time, they said, 'He who has a loaf in his basket, and who says, 'What will I eat tomorrow?' is a man of little faith.'"<sup>19</sup> Not worrying ought to come with "prudence and serenity," not one or the other, but both.

I love what Barclay says...

"It is not ordinary,  
prudent foresight,  
such as becomes a man,  
that Jesus forbids; it is worry.  
Jesus is not advocating a shiftless,  
thrifless, reckless, thoughtless,  
improvident attitude to life;  
he is forbidding a care-worn,  
worried fear,  
which takes all the  
joy out of life."<sup>20</sup>

<sup>19</sup> Barclay, W. (Ed.). (1976). The Gospel of Matthew (Vol. 1, p. 256). Philadelphia, PA: The Westminster John Knox Press.  
<sup>20</sup> Barclay, W. (Ed.). (1976). The Gospel of Matthew (Vol. 1, p. 255). Philadelphia, PA: The Westminster John Knox Press.



This is where some of us are at. We are “care-worn,” worried with fear, and the joy is being sucked out of our lives. Jesus is not discouraging hard work, being smart, and preparing for what’s ahead, but He is encouraging something else. I love that we have a God who cares so much about us not living a tired, worn out, exhausting worry-full life that He makes sure to meet us here and preach His heart out because this is not where He wants us to stay.

And while preaching, He says, <sup>26</sup>“*Look at the birds of the air; neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?*” <sup>27</sup>And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life?” **Matthew 6:26-27 (ESV)**

Jesus shifts us from looking at all these worries to looking at the birds. What is He doing here? My friend Michelle joked after reading this, “Did Jesus join the Audubon Society?” It feels like Jesus got sucked in at REI, bought a Patagonia coat and a hammock and now He’s inviting us to join Him on a nature hike. But that’s not the case. Jesus is pointing to something we can look at on the daily that will remind us of what is true when our worry begins to lie. Even birds rely on God without worrying. They don’t get degrees, have resumes or work their way up the corporate ladder. They don’t have pantries, gardens or Costco memberships. Birds rely on

God for what they need. And what they need, He provides. When we look at the birds, we are reminded that God sustains the world around us. I wonder if when we look at a bird, it is like God reminding us...

Instead of looking at

what you worry about,  
look around.

Can't you *see* that

I will take care of you?

Look at what I *sustain*.

I support

the moon  
and the stars.

I hold the *Earth* on its axis.

I bear up the seasons in their times.

I make the apple tree  
*put forth fruit*

and the carrots pop out of the ground.

I make the groundhog push its way out of the dirt

and the bear go into hibernation.

I sustain these,  
can I not sustain you?



# Ruminate

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Read this portion of **Psalm 104** which echoes Jesus' point that God sustains us. Then answer the question below.

*<sup>10</sup>He makes springs pour water into the ravines; it flows between the mountains. <sup>11</sup>They give water to all the beasts of the field, the wild donkeys quench their thirst. <sup>12</sup>The birds of the sky nest by the waters; they sing among the branches. <sup>13</sup>He waters the mountains from his upper chambers; the land is satisfied by the fruit of his work. <sup>14</sup>He makes grass grow for the cattle, and plants for people to cultivate—bringing forth food from the earth, <sup>15</sup>wine that gladdens human hearts, oil to make their faces shine, and bread that sustains their hearts. <sup>16</sup>The trees of the Lord are well watered, the cedars of Lebanon that he planted. <sup>17</sup>There the birds make their nests; the stork has its home in the junipers. <sup>18</sup>The high mountains belong to the wild goats; the crags are a refuge for the hyrax. <sup>19</sup>He made the moon to mark the seasons, and the sun knows when to go down. <sup>20</sup>You bring darkness, it becomes night, and all the beasts of the forest prowl. <sup>21</sup>The lions roar for their prey and seek their food from God. <sup>22</sup>The sun rises, and they steal away; they return and lie down in their dens. <sup>23</sup>Then people go out to their work, to their labor until evening...<sup>27</sup> All creatures look to you (God) to give them their food at the proper time. <sup>28</sup>When you give it to them, they gather it up; when you open your hand, they are satisfied with good things. **Psalm 104:10-23, 27-28***

Read verse 28 again. When God “opens” His hand, what does Scripture say happens?

*When God opens* His hand, we are satisfied with good things: sunshine on the beach, labradoodles, a promising rainbow, a powerful waterfall after a long hike, and a good glass of rosé that couldn't have been possible without the provision of God's good grapevines. God sustains all things and all satisfaction comes from His Hand. Good things are all around us, even when we are surrounded by some not so great things. I love what **James 1:17** says, “Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows.”