

LOOK AT THE BIRDS



LOOK AT
THE BIRDS

5



Read

²⁵"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? ²⁶Look 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? ²⁷And 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.'"¹⁹ 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."²⁰

¹⁹ Barclay, W. (Ed.). (1976). The Gospel of Matthew (Vol. 1, p. 256). Philadelphia, PA: The Westminster John Knox Press.
²⁰ 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, ²⁶ *“Look at the 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?”* ²⁷ *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.

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

EVERY good AND perfect gift IS FROM ABOVE...
JAMES 1:17

Psalm 104:27 says, “All creatures look to you (God) to give them their food at the proper time.” If all creatures look to God to give them what they need, why would we be any different? The Heavenly Father feeds the birds, the cattle, the plants and the wild goats. He will feed us too. But do we actually believe that? I think there are moments when it’s easy to sit in creation and believe there is a Creator. When you are watching a sunset and a bluebird lands on the park bench next to you, you might be able to sense something Bigger than yourself even looking at something so small. But can you believe there’s a Creator who takes care of those same birds that will also take care of you when you sit on that same park bench worried like crazy about your kids, your bills and your future? Trusting we have a God who will provide, sustain, take care of, and hold us up is challenged daily by all that worries us.

Reflect

We see that God gives the birds what they need, but why do we not trust the same for ourselves?

Think about things you have seen around you in creation, in the last week, that point to a God who is sustaining our world, earth, animals, plants and people. What have you personally seen that points to a Sustainer?



What are you most worried that God won't sustain?

Look at your hands. No really, look at them. Your hand has 27 bones, 29 joints and at least 123 named ligaments. Our opposable thumbs are what set us apart from other animals, except for the koala bear. Apparently you cannot get a tan on your palm no matter what beautiful shade of color your skin is. Your fingerprint is 100% unique. No other person in all the world has a similar fingerprint as you. Think about what human hands can do. They can play the harp, knead bread, shake on a deal, paint the Mona Lisa, hug, write love letters, start fires, sculpt pottery, build the Eiffel tower, throw a Super Bowl touchdown, and perform heart surgery. Just your hands point to a God who intricately made you.

Reflect

Go back to your hand drawing on page 44 and ponder how intricately you have been made by looking at your own hands. Write truths that you can infer knowing God made you over the top in big writing. (Example: I am unique. I am unlike any other. etc.)

INTRICATELY MADE YOU.

JUST YOUR HANDS
point to a God
WHO



If God intricately made you, is He also able to care for you? Why do you think you can say yes to this question and yet doubt it all at the same time?

How have you seen God sustain or provide for other people in ways that have amazed you?

I think it's so easy to believe in God for others and struggle in believing in God for ourselves. We can see how God has provided for other people but when our deadline is fast approaching, we are pacing the halls like crazy. We can see how God serendipitously moved the chess pieces to make something happen so this person could meet that person to meet their "person," but when we are single and wanting not to be, it's hard to believe God will provide the desires of our heart. It's often hard to believe for ourselves what we believe for others.

So often the enemies of our belief in a God who sustains us
are just stronger beliefs in something else.

We believe God is too busy to *see* what's going on in our lives.

We believe God wants us to *learn* a lesson.

We believe God *cares* about people unlike us.

We believe God *thinks* we deserve this.

We believe God won't *answer* our prayers because we haven't done enough for Him.

We believe God isn't *capable*.

We believe God has *bigger* fish to fry.

Reflect

Go back to the statements on the previous page and circle the enemies of your belief that God can sustain you, provide for you, and take care of you.

What other beliefs do you often hold onto about God that keep you from believing He will meet you in your need?

Ruminare

As you battle the enemies of your belief in your personal Sustainer, meditate on these Scriptures:

- I lie down and sleep; I wake again, because the Lord sustains me. Psalm 3:5*
- You make your saving help my shield, and your right hand sustains me; your help has made me great. Psalm 18:35*
- The Lord sustains them on their sickbed and restores them from their bed of illness. Psalm 41:3*
- Surely God is my help; the Lord is the one who sustains me. Psalm 54:4*
- He makes grass grow for the cattle, and plants for people to cultivate— bringing forth food from the earth: wine that gladdens human hearts, oil to make their faces shine, and bread that sustains their hearts. Psalm 104:14-15*
- The Lord watches over the foreigner and sustains the fatherless and the widow, but he frustrates the ways of the wicked. Psalm 146:9*
- The Lord sustains the humble but casts the wicked to the ground. Psalm 147:6*



Put one of these verses in your pocket for the day. What I mean is, memorize it, hold onto it, write it down or keep it near in some way. As you go about your day, as soon as worry creeps in, pull the verse you chose out. Pull it out of your memory, your heart or your jean pocket and speak to what you worry about, these words, "No, you big stress ball, My God is a Sustainer."

Trusting in God to sustain us is an everyday battle. Worry and anxiety want to get you to a place of trusting no one. If they can isolate you to believe that you are the only one who can get you what you need, then you will be one big stresscase and guess who wins? Worry and anxiety win. We have to begin to be women who go outside, who look around, who remind ourselves of what is true. And what is true is that we have a God who promises to sustain who and what He has made. So in our cubicles and our carpools, let us look at the birds. In our need and in our want, let us look at the birds. In our desperation and our darkness, let us look at the birds. In our kitchens and in the corporate world, let us look at the birds. In our old age, our middle age and our college age years, let us look at the birds.

Worry finds us, so we must, in its midst, go finding God. We must look for God, claim God, trust God, talk to God, point to God, reflect on God, praise God, count on God, meditate on God, and find our peace in God. Worry has a way of convincing us that all of our worst fears will become a reality. Worry will find you. Go finding God. That's what Jesus is suggesting- shift what you look at. Don't just let your fear boss you around. Don't let stress overcome you. Don't let your anxiety get you pacing down some hypothetical bunny trail that might not end up being your reality. No, you go looking for what is real - your God. You go find Him. God is nearer to you than the worry that stops by to visit. Don't give your worry more power than you give your God. As soon as you start to get anxious, making up stories, pacing, biting your nails, drinking to self soothe, gossiping to take out an enemy, overworking to keep your worry from becoming a reality, or writing the next chapter before it's even begun, go finding God.

When you go finding something, you look for it with intensity. When you go finding something, you think about where you last saw it, and you return there. When you go finding something, you call its name. When you go finding something, you turn over everything it might be under. Find God with the same ferocity that worry finds you and I promise you, One shall overcome the other. And when it does, His peace shall surpass your understanding, His presence shall kick out your fear, and His promises shall be your hope.

*When worry finds you,
you go finding God.*

Respond

Here is a fun homework assignment for you! It is so hard as women to find time and space to just “be.” We rarely have time to spend wandering, hiking, or look for shooting stars. Challenge yourself in the next week to spend time outside looking for God- even if for 5 minutes, 5 hours or 5 days. I give you permission. Blame me. Go walk by the ocean and pay attention to the sound of the waves. Who tells the tide to come in and go out? Build a campfire and sit under the stars. They are the work of Whose fingers? Sit on a park bench and look at that bird. The same God who feeds the bluebird promises to be all that we need. Sit in His sufficiency and His sustenance. Make time and go looking for the sparrows. It is there you will find your God.

SIT IN HIS *sufficiency*
AND HIS *sustenance.*