Look at the Birds

MATTHEW 6:25-34 (BSB) · SMALL-GROUP LESSON · DIGDEEPER.AI

The Big Idea

Worry is really an argument with God about whether he's actually your Father, and Jesus settles it by pointing at a sparrow that never earned a thing and still got fed.

Opening Lines

Everybody in this room is carrying one thing they'd give anything to stop thinking about. Jesus knows that, and instead of telling you to try harder to relax, he points out the window at a bird.

Before You Teach

- Goal: Move the room's eyes off the food, drink, and clothing they're anxious about and onto the Father who already feeds the birds and dresses the grass. They should leave trusting a Person, not managing a feeling.
- If you're short on time, cut: Cut the Solomon-and-the-lilies word study if time is short. The load-bearing image is the birds being fed without sowing, so protect that one.
- Where the moment lives: It lives in the naming — when a person says out loud the specific tomorrow they keep rehearsing, and then names one thing already provided this week. Guard that pair-share.
- Your prep: Come able to name your own current worry and one thing God provided this week before you ask them to. If they hear you name a real one, they'll name a real one.

Run It In Your Setting

The same lesson, sequenced three ways. Pick the one that fits your group and your clock.

CLASSROOM · ~20 PEOPLE · 45 MINUTES

Bird-picture opening (3 min). Read the passage aloud (3 min). Teach the birds/lilies argument and the word 'anxious' with the divided-arms image, landing on the Solomon line with silence (12 min). Write-then-speak: everyone fills the worry line and the provision line on the handout (5 min). Questions 1-3 as a whole room (14 min). Table question and out-loud commitments (6 min). Close in prayer (2 min). Transformation happens in the handout writing plus question 3 — protect those. If short, cut the word study.

SMALL GROUP · ~8 PEOPLE · 60 MINUTES

Number-around-the-circle opening (5 min). Read the passage (3 min). Teach the birds argument and the word 'anxious' (12 min). Handout: worry line and provision line, then share both in pairs (10 min). Questions 1-4 open in the circle (20 min). Table question with

named check-in partners and commitments (8 min). Close by praying their actual words back (2 min). Transformation lives in the pair-share and question 3 — don't let discussion run long enough to steal the commitments. If short, drop question 4.

COFFEE · 2-3 FRIENDS · 30 MINUTES

Coffee opening — 'what's the thing you keep checking your phone about' (4 min). Read the passage together (3 min). You share your one worry and one provision first, then they share theirs (10 min). One question: 'what would seeking the Kingdom first change about your tomorrow?' (8 min). Each name one thing to start and agree to text each other about it (3 min). Short prayer over each other's actual words (2 min). Transformation is in the mutual naming — that IS the lesson here, so don't over-teach; get to the honest exchange fast.

The Follow-Up Text

The follow-up text is a habit for every lesson you'll ever teach — this week we drill it deliberately. You've run it before (remember weeks 5 and 10, where you sent one person a check-in after class). Level three asks for a harder rep: this week, don't send a warm generic 'how are you doing.' Send a text that quotes back the EXACT thing that person committed to at the table — their actual words, the specific worry or the specific action. 'You said you were going to close the laptop at 9 and let tomorrow be tomorrow. Did you?' That precision is the whole point. A generic check-in feels like a form letter; quoting their own commitment back tells them you were actually listening when they were vulnerable. Pick two people from tonight, write their exact words in your phone before you leave the room, and send both texts within 48 hours while it's still real to them.

Why This Passage Matters

Nobody in your room needs convincing that worry is a problem. They live inside it. What they've never had done for them is what Jesus does here: he refuses to treat anxiety as a scheduling problem or a mindset problem and treats it instead as a theology problem. Worry, at its root, is a quarrel with the fatherhood of God. That reframe is a gift, because it means the cure isn't gritting your teeth harder. The cure is a Person. Three times Jesus says 'do not worry,' and three times the ground under the command is one word: Father. Your heavenly Father feeds them. Your heavenly Father knows what you need. And the people who first heard this weren't worrying in the abstract — most of them lived a bad harvest away from real hunger, and Jesus still pointed them at wildflowers. That's the weight of it. If God dresses grass that's alive today and burned tomorrow, he has not forgotten the children he bought with his own Son. You get to hand your room the reason they can sleep tonight. Very few things you teach will land closer to where people actually live than this one.

Catch the Fire First

Before you teach this, do the exercise yourself. Sit down with paper and write the one

worry you keep rehearsing this week — the test result, the bill, the conversation you can't control. Write it specifically. Then, underneath it, write one thing God actually provided you THIS week: food on the table, a roof, a friend who called. Say out loud, alone, 'tomorrow will worry about itself.' Notice what happens in your chest when you do it. That felt difference — from spinning to steadying — is the exact thing you're trying to give the room. You cannot hand them a door you haven't walked through. If it moved you, you'll teach it like it's real. If you skipped it, they'll hear that too.

Bring Your Own Story

- Prompt: a night you lay awake running tomorrow's worst case, and what it actually cost you the next day.
- Prompt: a time money fear drove a decision you later regretted — the moment worry, not wisdom, held the wheel.
- Prompt: a specific provision you almost missed because you were scanning the horizon for the next threat.
- Polished-vs-real SAMPLE — Polished: 'God taught me to trust him with my finances.' Real: 'I checked my bank balance eleven times one Tuesday and got nothing done, and the money was there the whole time.'
- Guardrail: keep it raw and one moment long, not a testimony with a tidy bow — the full storytelling coaching is back in week 1.

Three Ways to Open

CLASSROOM: "Hold up a picture of a bird — pull one on your phone if you have to. 'This thing has no job, no savings, no plan for winter. It's fed. Jesus says look at it. That's his entire argument against your worry, and we're going to find out why it works.'"

Start with a shared physical object so an abstract topic gets a concrete anchor everyone can see.

SMALL GROUP: "'One question to start, no explanation needed: on a scale of one to ten, how much did worry run your week? Just say your number.' Let the numbers land around the circle. Then: 'Jesus has something to say to every number in this room.'"

Open with a low-cost admission everyone can make, so the vulnerable ground is broken before the discussion.

COFFEE: "'Be honest — what's the thing you keep checking your phone about? The thing you keep waiting to hear back on?' Then let them answer before you open the passage. Jesus meets that specific thing, not a general one."

Name the thing you're both avoiding to make honesty the default posture.

Teaching the Word

Teach the word 'anxious' — Greek *merimnaō*. It carries the picture of a mind pulled in

different directions at once, divided, torn. Do this physically: hold both arms out and pretend two people are yanking you in opposite directions, one arm toward 'what will I eat' and the other toward 'what will I wear.' That's the word. Worry isn't just fear; it's a self being split. And notice Jesus' fix isn't to calm both pulls — it's to give the mind one direction: 'seek first God's Kingdom.' One thing to pull toward instead of ten. The divided self gets a single center. Then read the line slowly and stop talking: 'Consider how the lilies of the field grow: They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his glory was adorned like one of these.' Let it sit.

Discussion Questions

1. What's one thing you found yourself worrying about this week — as specific as you're willing to get?

Coaching note: Do not rush to fix or comfort. Your only job is to receive it and let the next person speak. If you problem-solve the first answer, everyone after will give you a safe generic one.

If it stalls: Easier version: 'What's the last thing you checked your phone hoping to hear about?' A yes/no or one-word answer counts.

2. Jesus points at birds and flowers instead of giving a pep talk. Why do you think that argument is supposed to work on us?

Coaching note: Steer them toward the logic in the text — the lesser and the greater. If God feeds what can't pray, how much more the children he bought. Don't let it drift into nature appreciation.

If it stalls: Concrete version: 'The birds never worked for their food and they still eat. What is Jesus trying to get us to believe about God with that?'

3. Jesus calls worry the mark of someone who doesn't know God has him — 'the Gentiles strive after all these things.' What does that tell you worry actually IS underneath?

Coaching note: This is the pivot from feeling to theology. Aim to land the phrase 'worry is an argument with God about whether he's really your Father.' Let someone else say it if they can.

If it stalls: Personal version: 'When you're up at 2am worrying, what are you secretly afraid God isn't going to do?'

4. 'Seek first God's Kingdom' — what would it actually change about your tomorrow if you took that one instruction seriously?

Coaching note: Push for concrete, not spiritual-sounding. 'I'd pray more' is a dodge. Ask 'what would you DO differently at 7am?' until it gets specific.

If it stalls: Concrete version: 'Name one thing on tomorrow's list. If you actually believed your Father had you, would you handle it differently?'

5. 'Seek first the kingdom.' What is one thing you will do differently tomorrow because your Father knows what you need, and who at this table will ask you about it?

Coaching note: This is the table question and the whole point of the series landing. Make them commit to a person here — ask each one who at this table is going to check in on them.

If it stalls: Easier version: 'Finish this sentence out loud — this week I'm going to start ___, and I want you to ask me about it.'

Questions You May Hear

"Isn't Jesus telling us not to plan ahead or save money at all?"

No — he's not condemning work or preparation, he's condemning the divided, fearful mind. Note the birds still go out and find the food God provides; what they don't do is store up in barns or scan the horizon in terror. The target is anxiety, not prudence.

"But Christians do go hungry and lack clothing sometimes. Is Jesus overpromising?"

He's naming the character of the Father, not guaranteeing every believer avoids hardship. Psalm 37:25 gives a lifetime's testimony that God doesn't abandon his children, and the ultimate proof is that he 'did not spare his own Son' — he's already given the greater gift.

"Why does he keep saying 'your heavenly Father' instead of just 'God'?"

Because that word is the whole argument. Worry is really a quarrel with the fatherhood of God, so Jesus keeps pressing the relationship — a Father who counts sparrows has already counted you.

"What did 'daily bread' and worrying about clothing really mean to the original crowd?"

Most of them lived on about a day's wage that bought about a day's food, with no savings and no safety net. Clothing was handmade over weeks and often the most valuable thing a poor person owned, so Jesus is speaking straight into their loudest daily fear.

For Experienced Leaders

- When someone confesses a heavy worry, resist the room's urge to instantly fix it. Sit in it two seconds longer than is comfortable. The comfort is in the passage, not in your reassurance.
- If you're running on empty this week, this is a mercy of a lesson — cut yourself to twenty tight minutes on the birds, then hand the room the pair-share. Say plainly, 'It's been a heavy week, so I'm going to lean on you all more today.' That honesty models the exact trust you're teaching.
- Don't moralize the phone-checking. Everyone does it. Name it as a shared reflex, not a sin to scold, and they'll stay open long enough to hear the cure.

Landing the Lesson

Commitments: Go around and have each person finish this out loud: 'This week I'm going to start ___, and ___ is going to ask me about it.' Make them name the person, not just the action.

Close by praying out loud over the specific things people just named — the actual worry someone confessed, the actual thing they committed to start. Don't reach for a written prayer; say their real words back to God as their Father, because that's the exact truth this passage is fighting for.

If you run out of time: If the room only gets through question three because people are being honest, stay there. A room that actually names its worries and hears 'that's a quarrel with the fatherhood of God' has received the lesson, even without the application questions.

Midweek follow-up: This is a follow-up-text week — pick two people, write their exact commitment words in your phone before you leave, and text them within 48 hours quoting their own words back and asking how it went.

Free at digdeeper.ai/devotionals/matthew/6-25-34/lesson

Handout

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During the lesson:

- On a scale of 1 to 10, how much did worry run your week? Write your number here:
- The one worry you keep rehearsing this week, as specific as you can name it:
- One thing God actually provided you THIS week (food, a roof, a person, clothes you didn't have to make):
- Fill in the blank: 'Seek first God's Kingdom' — one thing I'd do differently tomorrow morning if I really believed my Father had me:
- One thing I'll do differently tomorrow because my Father knows what I need — and who at this table will check on me:

Take-home actions:

- When you catch your mind spinning the worst case today, say out loud 'tomorrow will worry about itself,' and put your attention back on the one task in front of you right now.
- Before you check a balance or spend, pause and name one specific thing God already provided this week, and let that memory shape the money decision instead of fear.
- Tonight, stop working when the work can wait. Set a time to close the laptop, and when it comes, close it — sleep is an act of trust that God runs the world while you rest.

The One who counts the sparrows has already counted you. Matthew 6:25-34