

Sermon-Based Small Group Bible Study

World Upside Down: Addressing Anxiety (Matthew 6:25–34)

Open

Select one of these “ice breakers” to get the conversation going toward the study.

- It’s 3 a.m. and you’re awake. What’s on your mind?
- What’s the hungriest you’ve ever been, or the coldest you’ve ever been?
- What’s your favorite meal, or what’s your favorite clothing to wear?

Dig

After reading Matthew 6:25–34 together, discuss these questions.

1. The text begins with “do not be anxious.” This could also be translated “worried” or “preoccupied.” What is it about food, drink, and clothing, which Jesus mentions, that can cause reactions like that?
2. Jesus says life and the body are about more than food and clothing. Why do you think he says that? What do you see elsewhere in the passage that helps you understand what Jesus might mean?
3. Birds and wildflowers were common in Jesus’ world, and so they were seen as having no value. What point does Jesus make by comparing God’s provision for them to his provision for his people (verses 26–30)?
4. Verse 27 says we can’t add anything to the length of our lives by worry. In the context, what or who does provide the span of our lives and the provision for it?
5. Verse 32 says “Gentiles,” people who don’t know God, seek food, drink, and clothing. How does that contrast fit into Jesus’ point? What does it say to a follower of Jesus about worry?
6. Verse 33 says in seeking the kingdom “all these things will be added to you.” Who does the adding? How does that fit with other things Jesus has said here?

Summary: We need the essential provisions of life if we are to survive. From our vantage point, survival seems to depend entirely on us. Because we are weak, we worry about provision, knowing we aren’t always able to get what we need. But Jesus reminds his followers that God provides for them always, and especially because God’s kingdom, his promised rule over the world, is breaking in. In God’s kingdom God’s subjects rely on God’s provision, utterly confident in his goodness, love, and power. Difficult times provoke doubt and worry, but the assurance God is on our side can bring confidence as we continually learn to rely on our heavenly king.

Reflect

Use any of these prompts to encourage group members to apply the text to their own experiences.

- What makes you worry these days? How can focusing on greater in God potentially help alleviate your worry?
- What experiences have heightened your worry about provision? What experiences have reminded you of God’s faithful provision?

- In itself, worry is not a sign of lack of faith. But our response to worry can be a catalyst to grow our faith. How have you found that to be true in your experience?
- Pastor Bryan suggested Sabbath and silence as disciplines for removing worry, Sabbath taking us away from production and approval, silence taking us from making ourselves known and fixing things. Have you practiced either deliberately? If so, what did you discover? If not, what do you think these practices might offer?

Pray

Invite the group to pray together using any of these suggestions.

- What needs have you heard from others in the group that we can pray about? Given the subject of the study, there may be many.
- In what ways has God provided for you lately? Let's give thanks for those.
- What do you believe need right now to strengthen your faith in God's provision in the face of worry? Let's ask for that, and for whatever God in his wisdom knows to provide for us.