READY TO USE ALL-AGE SERVICE

# Worry

MEETING AIM

To discover how much God cares for us, and how we don’t need to worry.

BIBLE PASSAGE

Matthew 6:25-34

BACKGROUND

This service is designed to be used with a congregation in a church building. However, with some adaptation, you should be able to use it on Zoom or other video-conferencing software.

These days, our worries seem to be mounting up against us. There are very real worries for us all about inflation, income, work and energy prices. We might have individual struggles around illness and bereavement, or wider worries about the climate crisis or the war. On the face of it, this passage about worry might seem glib. Merely being told that we shouldn’t worry doesn’t really do anything to help.

However, this is not what Jesus is doing here. He is reminding us of who’s in charge. God loves us and knows what we’re feeling. He understands our feelings of insecurity, but calls us to trust him.

People might raise serious issues during this service that worry them. Make sure that you can point them in the direction of professional help, as well as praying for them. It might be worth researching the help available for different problems that people might be experiencing.

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## WELCOME – 5 mins

As people arrive at the service, welcome them warmly! You might want to serve refreshments at the start, as this will ease people who don’t come regularly into an environment they may feel unsure about.

## OPENING ACTIVITIES – 10 mins

**OPTION ONE: Book of worries**

**You will need:** children’s picture book about worry, such as [*The Huge Bag of Worries*](https://www.hachette.co.uk/titles/virginia-ironside-2/the-huge-bag-of-worries/9780340903179/) by Virginia Ironside and Frank Rodgers (Hodder Children’s Books) or [*Ruby’s Worry*](https://www.bloomsbury.com/uk/rubys-worry-9781408892152/) by Tom Percival (Bloomsbury Children’s Books)

Read out the story and show the pictures as you do so (if you can find some way of projecting the pictures so that everyone can see them, that would be beneficial). Enjoy the story together and introduce the theme of worry. Ask the congregation if they feel like they have worries – if you read *Ruby’s Worry*, ask if they feel like they have a yellow squiggly worry sitting next to them, like Ruby does. Explain that you’re going to discover what Jesus says about worry.

**OPTION TWO:** Beauty of the world

**You will need:** photos of beautiful places in the world, as well as photos of mundane beauty from your neighbourhood

Before the session, find photos of beautiful places across the world. Also, go out into your neighbourhood and find the beauty in your surroundings. This could be ‘traditional’ beauty, such as a well-tended garden, or more mundane beauty, such as the colours of rust on a garage door, or the pattern of brickwork. Put these together on a PowerPoint.

Show the congregation the pictures and ask them how these pictures make them feel. In smaller groups – this could be family groups or just people sitting near each other – ask everyone to discuss where they see God at work in these pictures. Say that if people don’t want to be part of a group, they can think about this on their own! After a few minutes, get some feedback.

## BIBLE STORY – 10 mins

**You will need:** [this animated retelling](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PG1LjFO99dA) of the Bible passage and the means to play it

Introduce the theme of the Bible story and then show the animation. After this has finished, read out Matthew 6:25-34.

## SMALL GROUPS – 10 mins

**You will need:** copies of the questions below; Bibles

Encourage people to discuss these questions in smaller groups. Give each group a copy of these questions:

* What’s your favourite part of this story?
* What is important about what Jesus is teaching?
* Do you think the worries of those listening to Jesus 2,000 years ago are the same as our worries now? Why? Why not?
* What do you think Jesus means by what he says in verse 33? How can we seek “his kingdom and his righteousness”?
* Has exploring the Bible passage made any difference to the way you view the things that worry you?

Give the groups time to chat about these questions, referring to the Bible passage if they need to.

## REVIEW – 5 mins

**You will need:** roving mic (if needed)

Get some feedback on the questions from ‘Small groups’, using a microphone to hear people’s contributions if your meeting space is large.

## RESPONSE ACTIVITIES – 10 mins

Set these three activities up in different parts of your meeting space or in different breakout rooms.

**OPTION ONE:** Creative prayer

**You will need:** slips of paper; pens; a shredder, or a way to burn paper safely

Give everyone some slips of paper and a pen. Encourage them to write or draw on the papers the things that are worrying them. If appropriate, give some space for people talk a little about what they have written down and why. However, don’t force anyone to speak if they don’t want to. When you’re ready, invite people to shred their worries or burn them. As they do so, ask them to chat with God about them, and thank him for caring for them.

**OPTION TWO:** Discussion

Ask a couple of people to lead a discussion about the story today and people’s response to it. You could review the questions from ‘Small groups’ as well as any questions that the people in the group may have.

**OPTION THREE:** Creative response

**You will need:** paper; art materials; Bibles

Give out the Bibles and invite people to find Psalm 139. Read out the passage and ask the group what this psalm has to say about God and his care for us. Give out the paper and art materials and encourage people to take a verse from the psalm or from Matthew 6:25-34 and to illustrate the words. As you work, you can carry on discussions about what Jesus says about worry and how much God cares for us.

## CLOSING – 5 mins

Bring everyone back together and ask if anyone would like to share anything from the response time. Thank everyone for taking part and say an appropriate blessing to close the service.

**ALEX TAYLOR**

is resources editor for *Premier Youth and Children’s Work*.