



groups

Introduction to the *Margins* Sermon Series

In the month of September, we will take a look at margins. Margins has been defined by some as “the difference between our current pace and our limits.” Imagine working 30 minutes from your house and you have a meeting at 9am. You leave at 8:15am, so you have 15 minutes of ‘margin’ to get there on time. When that margin narrows (because of traffic, a late school bus, or hitting the Snooze button too many times), you feel anxious or angry. You get distracted from things that are important because you’re focused on the narrowing margin. Sometimes we cram so much into our days that our margin is automatically narrowed. Over the next weeks, we’ll take an in-depth look at margins, worry, and how we can reorganize our lives so we can focus on Christ and His Kingdom.

Each week, we’ll look at a passage from the Bible related to the topic of the weekend sermon. Our goal in reading the Bible is not only to know more about God, but also to have a relationship with Him through Jesus Christ and do what He teaches in His Word.

How to Use This Discussion Guide

- Use the summary statement for each week to quickly understand the text’s theme. You can use that as a reference point to help guide your discussion or bring it back if your group begins to get off topic.
- Use the prayer prompt at the end of each guide to help you close in prayer.

Additionally, here are some tips and guidelines to help you lead these discussions:

1. **Choose the questions that best fit your group and your time constraints.** There are a lot of questions in this guide and your group may not be able to discuss them all. That’s okay! You don’t have to ask all of them. Before your group begins, choose the questions that are most likely to help your group understand what God is saying in the text and how to apply it to their lives.
2. **Prepare for your group time by reading the passages and the notes in a study Bible.** A good study Bible can give you some insights into the passages and how they connect to the whole book or the whole story of the Bible.
3. **Begin every group meeting with prayer.** We can only understand and apply God’s Word with the help of the Holy Spirit. So, invite the Spirit to open your hearts and minds to what He says to His people.
4. **Keep the conversation focused on Scripture as much as possible.** Some people may want to bring in their opinions or continually refer to what the teaching pastor said during his message. This is helpful in small doses, but the goal of this discussion guide is to help you determine what God is saying in His Word. Encourage the group to continue to return to the Scripture. One way to do that is by saying, “That’s a great insight! Where do you see that in the Scripture we’re studying?”
5. **Encourage participation, but don’t let anyone dominate.** Encourage everyone to share insights, ask questions, and read aloud. But don’t allow any one person – even yourself, the leader – to monopolize the time. Some people are just unaware of themselves and how much they speak, so gently encourage them to listen and make space for others to talk.
6. **Help your group members to be specific in the application of Scripture.** It is easy to generalize when we talk about the Bible and how to apply it. So ask your group members specific questions – for example, “What part of the world do you sense God wants you to pray for? How will you do that? How will you make that a habit?”

We pray that you will hear God speak through His Word and that His Spirit will move you to obey Him. The Word of God – the Bible – lets us know the God who loves us and saves us. May this discussion guide help you and your Life Group to become more immersed in His story.

Main Bible Passage: Matthew 6:25-34

Sermon Date: September 7-8, 2019

Theme: Followers of Jesus can fight against worry by making trust in God and the kingdom of God a chief priority.

- **Do you consider yourself a worrier?**
- **What are you most likely to stress about and why?**
- **What negative effects have worries had on your health? Your thoughts? Your productivity? Your relationships with others?**

Leader's Note: The presence or absence of worry measures our trust in God. As believers, we aspire to a single focus on God and a loyalty toward Him. In this passage, Jesus taught that worry is unproductive. Not only is it unproductive, it's the opposite of trust in God.

Ask for volunteers to read Matthew 6:25-27.

- **According to these verses, what are three specific reasons Jesus gives us for not worrying about the basic needs of life?**
- **What's required for us to take seriously Jesus' instruction not to worry about the necessities of life?**
Leader's Note: In verse 25, Jesus asked rhetorically, "Isn't life more than food and the body more than clothing?" Is the only source for fulfillment and meaning to our lives what we eat and what we wear? Of course not. Jesus is establishing the fact that worry is illogical for the child of God. If God is the Creator of the world, including us, then will He not also provide for our needs?
- **When we worry, what are we saying about our view of God and our relationship with Him?**
- **How has worry hindered your faith and negatively impacted your relationship with God? What – if anything – eventually helped you overcome that worry?**

Ask for volunteers to read Matthew 6:28-32.

- **What additional reasons for not worrying do you take away from these verses?**
- **What is main problem with worry in the life of a Christian?**
Leader's Note: Faith calls for trust in a loving and personal God at work in the world. Worry shows a lack of trust. Jesus' teaching by no means ignores the reality of poverty and hunger among the people of the earth. However, Jesus' clear teaching for believers is to trust God above all. If the Lord faithfully provides for the needs of mere creatures, how much more will He provide for us—His children?
- **Is it practical to depend on God for vital necessities like food and clothing? Why do you think He expects us to?**
- **Trusting God with everything is easier said than done. What spiritual disciplines—such as prayer, worship, study, fasting, and so forth—have you found helpful for fighting worry?**
- **Why do praising God and giving thanks undermine worry?**
- **Read Psalm 55:22 and 1 Peter 5:7. What are some practical ways we can cast our anxieties on God?**



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Ask for volunteers to read **Matthew 6:33-34**.

- **Practically speaking, what does it mean to “seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness”?**
- **How have you seen Jesus’ statement in verse 33 proven true in your life?**
Leader’s Note: Jesus encourages us to rest in our positions in God’s kingdom (vv. 31-34) instead of being consumed by worry and fear. First, remember that God loves as a Father loves. We should not think of God as far away and unapproachable or even as a king who is not accessible. As our Father, God loves and cares for us. Second, God is personal; we have a personal relationship with Him. Finally, as both God and Father, He knows that we need the basics of life. Christians never have to worry about whether God knows or cares about their needs. Instead of worrying, believers can seek the kingdom of God and trust Him. We can focus on living out His mission. If His will is our priority, we will be less concerned about material matters and more committed to eternal relationships.
- **What does your current daily routine reveal about who you believe Jesus to be and to have done for you?**
- **How would your life be different if you lived the way Jesus sets forth in this passage?**
- **What are some examples of actions that show a person is seeking first God’s kingdom?**
- **What are some ways to keep the work of Christ central to your thinking as you try to seek His kingdom first?**
- **Spend a few minutes describing the ways Jesus is worthy and better than anyone and anything else.**

Close in prayer, asking that the work of Christ would overwhelm all lesser concerns, and that joy and abundant life would define the lives of those in the church.