

Meditation - Look at the Birds

Welcome to this meditation, which can last for as long or short a time as you need.

Preparation

Gather some colouring pens together if you have them; or some paper; or a colouring book with a picture of birds – one is provided for you here, but if you prefer to find your own, please do. A notebook might be handy if you like to jot down your thoughts. And although the Bible verses are written out for you, you might find yourself reminded of other passages, and wish to look them up, so bring a Bible too. Now find a comfortable place to sit where you will be able to access your Wi-Fi and also look outside at your garden or other open space.

Take a few minutes just to sit in the quiet, to feel the chair underneath you, to settle into the place where you are. If thoughts or plans intrude, just acknowledge the thought and hand it over to God, so that you can become quiet inside as well as outside, and become more open to the Spirit within you. When you are ready, move on to the next page.



How Great Thou Art

In 1885, Carl Boberg, a Swedish editor, was walking home from church with friends one Sunday afternoon when a sudden storm blew up. As he later explained, “It was that time of year when everything seemed to be in its richest colouring; the birds were singing in trees and everywhere. It was very warm; a thunderstorm appeared on the horizon and soon thunder and lightning. We had to hurry to shelter. But the storm was soon over and the clear sky appeared.

“When I came home I opened my window toward the sea. There evidently had been a funeral and the bells were playing the tune of ‘When eternity’s clock calling my saved soul to its Sabbath rest.’ That evening, I wrote the song, ‘*O Store Gud.*’”

The poem became matched to an old Swedish folk tune and was sung in public for the first time in a church in the Swedish province of Värmland in 1888. However, it took almost sixty years and translations through both German and Russian before the English version we know and love as “*How Great Thou Art*” was published by Stuart H. Kine, an English missionary to the Ukraine.

Listen to the hymn and note how we are drawn closer to God through close observation of his natural world. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PLJs1zni6UY>

Did you notice the reference to birds singing sweetly in the trees?

Let's turn next to the Bible, to that famous passage about looking at birds.

Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life? (Matthew 6:26-27 New International Version – NIV)

Sit, look and reflect

In your comfortable place, look out over your garden or open space. Sit quietly and relax. Notice the variety of colours and forms, the songs and calls of the different bird species. Perhaps complete this RSPB bird survey for an hour, quietly reflecting on those bible verses.

Bird Survey Form http://ww2.rspb.org.uk/images/bgbw_sheet_2012_tcm9-259825.pdf

Prayer

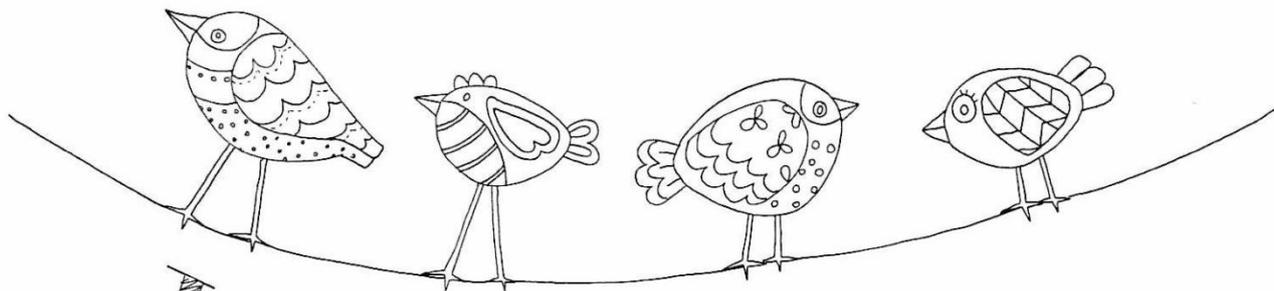
Keeping in mind all you have observed, read the following verses, then bring your thoughts and feelings to your Father God in prayer, confident that he hears you.

Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground outside your Father's care. And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. So don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows. (Matthew 10:29-31 New International Version – NIV)

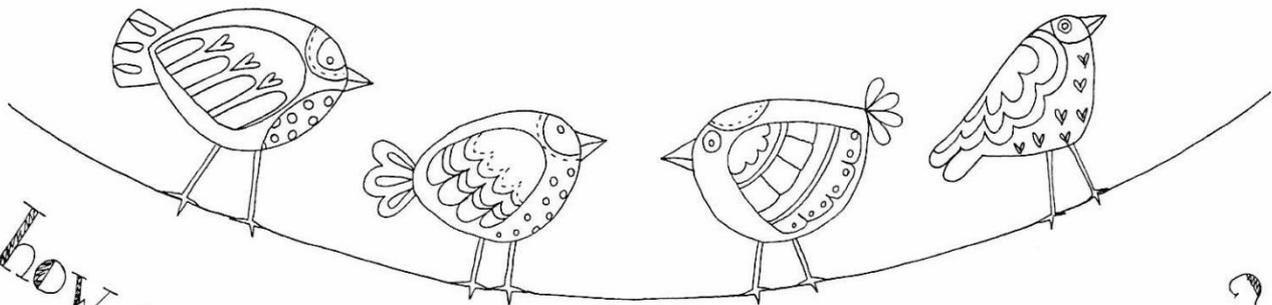
You may wish to conclude your time of reflection by printing and colouring in the image that follows – or by drawing your own! Or you may prefer to just rest a while in God's presence, listening to birdsong.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kszagPaTOBA>

(This video runs for about 11 hours, so you can listen as long as you choose, within your data allowance!)



If God cares for the Birds,



how much more will He care for you?

Closing prayer

At the end of this time, having praised God for his creation and thought about his care for you personally in the midst of that creation, bring this time to a close with a prayer:

Lord, my worries are many and my head is always full of thoughts and strategies.

Thank you for this time looking at your world and seeing your care for all you have made.

Thank you for the sound of birdsong, the variety of their plumage, their fragility and their tenacity. Thank you that they bring beauty into our lives. Thank you that you care for them, and know when a sparrow falls to the ground (Matthew 10:29, NIV), and in the same way you care for us, and will give all that we need.

Thank you that in hard times, we can know the truth of the verse: “Cast all your anxiety on him, for he cares for you.” (1 Peter 5:7, NIV) Help us to give our worries over to you and leave them there, for you who care for the birds care for us too. Whatever comes next for us, you are with us always, and will face it with us. Thank you for being our tower of strength. Amen.