



# God Cares for All

**Goal:** To trust in God's abounding care for us.

## RECOGNIZING GOD'S GRACE . . .

### . . . In Matthew 6:25-33

The Greek word for “worry” (vv. 25, 27, 31) means “to be preoccupied with,” such as with food and appearance. Birds are an example of a proper attitude toward food (v. 26): they work hard to find it, but they do not store it for future shortages. If God cares for such birds, how much more will God provide for, feed, and clothe those who are faithful to him? So do not be preoccupied with your physical needs (v. 31).

Not worrying about life does not mean that we don't work or that we can't own property. It certainly doesn't mean that we should not plan for the future, but that planning takes place while being aware of God's providence—and God's kingdom. Seeking God's kingdom “first” (v. 33) is a matter of remembering that, every day, in every action, God's kingdom is our priority.

### . . . In Your Children's Experiences

Many children seem to live in the present, without an ounce of concern about the future. They know that, if Mom and Dad have the means, they will take care of the necessary stuff (like food and clothes and a place to live), so they don't have to worry about physical needs. However, children worry about being liked and/or accepted. They worry about being laughed at, about being different, and about a variety of day-to-day concerns. The good news is that eventually they will outgrow most of these worries. The bad news is that, for the present and foreseeable future, these worries are at the heart of their world.

### . . . In Your Relationships with the Children

Be aware of children and families in your church who don't have the means to meet basic necessities. In such circumstances, telling the children not to worry because God understands their needs seems unhelpful. It might be better to say, for example, “Jesus' words inspire me to show my gratitude to God by taking care of people who need food and clothes.” Then, offer the example of generosity in Christ's name as one way to put the kingdom of God first in our lives.

*Gracious God, thank you for caring for us even when we worry.  
Amen.*



## Supplies

### Music & Melodies

[bit.ly/GGGMusicMelodies](http://bit.ly/GGGMusicMelodies)

### Stories, Colors & More (SCM) i–iv, 11, 20, 23

basic supplies  
(see p. vii)

audio stories (optional)  
(see p. vii)

internet-connected  
device

candle

green cloth

mountain mural from  
Winter 9

copies of **Grace Notes (GN) 1, GN 2**

small scraps (1" or so)  
of colorful papers such  
as scrapbook paper,  
wrapping paper, tissue  
paper, greeting cards,  
and so forth

## Responding

### Claiming

two sturdy bags with  
handles; large rock,  
brick, or heavy book for  
each child; pictures of  
birds; pictures of flowers

### Celebrating GN 3

### Praying

copies of **GN 4**

## GATHERING IN GOD’S GRACE

Post **SCM i–ii**, “Your Visual Schedule,” to provide clear expectations and a visual cue for the group.

See **SCM iii–iv** for the key to icons (for example, **LG T**) and ways to adapt for children who have special needs or disabilities.

“Claiming God’s Grace” requires more prep.

### Welcoming and Preparing

**LG A C**

Welcome each child with, “Grace and peace be with you, (Name).” Prompt children to respond, “And also with you.” Invite children to help prepare the worship space. Provide a candle, a Bible, and a green cloth. Invite the children to write or draw on scraps of paper things that children their age worry about, one worry per piece of paper. Tell them that these may be things they worry about or that their friends or children in general worry about. Encourage them to scatter the pieces of paper on the worship table. Hang the mountain mural in the worship space.

As children prepare the space, engage in discussion over what they are identifying as worries for children their age. Notice what they write or draw; ask questions that provide space for open conversation. Listen.

Ask some children to help prepare today’s “Responding in Gratitude” activities. Suggest that one or two prepare to lead today’s singing. Ask for a volunteer to practice today’s Scripture reading.

### Singing

**D M**

Sing “Thank You, God, for Loving Me”—**SCM 23**. Encourage the children to sing with you. Add simple movements as they sing.

**M** *Sitting quietly for a prayer may be difficult for some children. Consider having them hold something, such as the Bible, that may be needed soon. This provides a focus as well as an important role.*

### Praying

**L M**

Have the children sit in a circle. Turn on the candle as a reminder of the light in the world that Jesus brings. Lead them in this body prayer, inviting them to follow the actions you suggest.

Gracious God, sometimes I worry.  
My heart feels heavy. (*sigh and slouch*)  
My teeth clench. (*tighten jaw and clench teeth*)  
My hands ball up (*make tight fists*)  
and my shoulders tense. (*tighten shoulders*)  
Lead me, God, in your peace.  
Release my tense muscles. (*loosen shoulders and jaw*)



Open my hands in peaceful praise, (*loosen fists*)  
and let worry leave my heart. (*take a deep breath in, hold, and exhale*)

Right now, I will just sit and be still in your presence. (*allow a few moments of peaceful silence*)

Amen.

### Preparing to Hear the Story

M C L T

Show the children the YouTube video “Okaidi & Playing for Change 2014 : ‘Don’t Worry, Be Happy’” ([bit.ly/22h7eyz](http://bit.ly/22h7eyz)). Engage the children in conversation, using the following questions:

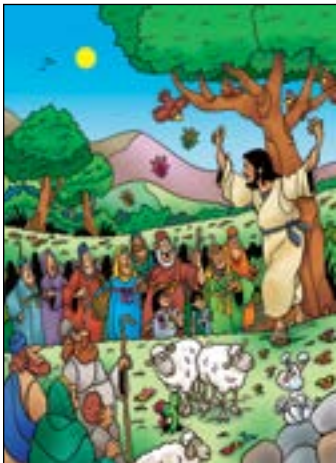
- ▼ What is the main message of the song?
- ▼ What is *worry*? How would you describe it? What are some of people’s worries?
- ▼ How do you think someone cannot worry and just be happy?

### Hearing the Story

L

Have a child find Matthew 6 in the Bible. Have a volunteer read aloud Matthew 6:25–33. Conclude by saying, “Word of wisdom, Word of grace,” and prompt children to say, “Thanks be to God.” Place the open Bible on the worship table.

Allow children to choose a copy of **GN 1** or **GN 2**. Provide glue sticks and colorful bits of scrap papers. Invite them to fill in the flowers or birds with the scrap papers as they listen to the story read again from **SCM 11** or the story audio. They may choose to use multiple colors or one or different shades of one color—there is no wrong way to be creative! Add the birds and flowers to the mountain mural.



Today’s story can be found in *Growing in God’s Love: A Story Bible*, edited by Elizabeth F. Caldwell and Carol A. Wehrheim (Louisville, KY: Flyaway Books, 2018), [www.pcusastore.com](http://www.pcusastore.com).

### Reflecting on God’s Grace

Invite children to share their flower and bird pictures with the group. As they display what they have made, praise their creativity by commenting on color choices, the way the flowers and birds turned out, and how they show God’s colorful “clothing” of flowers and birds.

Reflect on what they heard Jesus say in the story, about the flowers in the fields, with the following questions:

- ▼ What was surprising in this story?
- ▼ What did it leave you wondering about?
- ▼ What does this story tell us about God?
- ▼ What does Jesus want us to know?
- ▼ What does Jesus want us to do?



### Singing

L

Play and listen to “Why Should I Feel Discouraged?” Show **SCM 20** and help the children learn the lyrics. Sing the song together.

Turn off the candle.

## RESPONDING IN GRATITUDE

Select activities appropriate for your group and for the time available.



### Claiming God’s Grace

B MS C L

*Before the session, set up a simple obstacle course for two teams, such as crawl under a table, climb over a chair, go around an object, and so forth. Place a picture of birds and/or flowers at each obstacle.*

Tell the children they will play a game to consider things that we worry about and how worry can weigh us down and be a burden. Give each child a large rock, brick, or heavy book. Tell them that this item represents a worry they carry with them. Elicit suggestions as to what their worries may be. Suggest that having a worry, or many worries, is like carrying a burden around throughout their day.

Form two groups. Line the teams up and show them the obstacle course you have set up. Tell them that they must take turns carrying their “worry” in a bag through the course and back again. When they arrive back at their team, they take their “worry” out of the bag and say loudly, “God, I know you will take care of me. I’m giving my worry to you!” Then they hand the bag to the next person in line, who repeats the action. Have the children place their “worry” at the base of the mountain mural.

After the game, engage the children in conversation, using the following questions:

- What does *worry* mean?
- What can we learn from looking at the birds of the sky?
- How does God take care of the flowers of the field?
- Can we add time to our lives by worrying?
- What can we do instead of worrying?
- When we seek God’s kingdom, what are we really doing?

### Celebrating God’s Grace

B MS C L LG

*Before the session, cut apart the strips on **GN 3** and place them in a bag.*

Tell the children they will celebrate God’s love and care by making up cheers and chants, shouting out this message. Form groups of two or three children. Invite each group to draw a strip of paper from the bag. Explain that the strips have instructions for their group’s cheer. Assist with reading as necessary. Encourage the children to be creative

If there are more than 10 children, consider forming three teams and adjust supplies and obstacle course accordingly.

and have fun! Allow several minutes for practicing and then invite the groups to perform their cheers.

Options:

- ▼ Have the children guess in what “style” the cheer was performed.
- ▼ After each group performs, invite all the children to repeat the cheer in the style of that group.

Suggest to the children that by repeating the phrase several times in a variety of ways, they will be able to recall it next time they feel worried, and maybe even giggle at the memory of their friends being silly.

**M** *Some children need to move more than others, which makes sitting still a difficult task. Consider selecting an active option after a quiet activity. Set clear expectations with boundaries for appropriate movement to meet the needs of the child while not disrupting the rest of the group.*

### Praying God’s Grace **M**

Ask the children if there are any worries that they can pray about. Explain that, when we are worried, we can pray and tell God all our problems. We can trust that God hears us when we tell God what we need.

Give the children a copy of **GN 4** and explain that a *labyrinth* is a path in to the center and back out again. Tell them that this is a slow exercise, and they should take their time moving through the labyrinth. Ask them to be silent when they have finished so that others may not be distracted.

Begin with centering breaths. Invite the children to take a deep breath in, count to three, and exhale. Do this breathing exercise three times.

Invite them to use a finger or crayon to follow the path in toward the center of the labyrinth. Point out that the beginning of the labyrinth says, “Let go.” Encourage them to offer silent prayers as they follow the path in toward the center, telling God their worries and letting go of them. Suggest that they hold their finger or crayon in the center for a few moments and focus on the words, “Let God.” Assure them that God hears their prayers. Suggest that, on the path out, they thank God for loving and caring for them.

As you notice the children have completed the labyrinth, invite them to do the breathing exercise one more time and then say, “Amen.”

Labyrinths are often used as a tool for prayer. They are not mazes or meant to trick or lead astray.



### Extra Activity



Play a follow-the-leader game. Have a volunteer be the first leader, doing an action or moving in a direction while you play and sing “Thank You, God, for Loving Me”—SCM 23. Play the song several times, selecting new leaders to choose and change the motion at random times during the song. You may want to offer suggestions such as: marching, doing jumping jacks, reaching for the sky, giving yourself a hug, or pointing in different directions.

Keep the mountain mural for use in the next two sessions.



Ask parents and caregivers for their email addresses so that you can provide them with the link to [www.pcusastore.com/GGGdownloads](http://www.pcusastore.com/GGGdownloads), where they can download coloring pages, *Grace Sightings*, audio stories, and songs (see p. vii).

## LOVING AND SERVING GOD

Lead children in cleaning up the worship space.

Ask the children to consider ways they can worry less and live in the trust of God’s care.

Lead the children in the following litany, inviting them to respond to each line with, “And you care for us.”

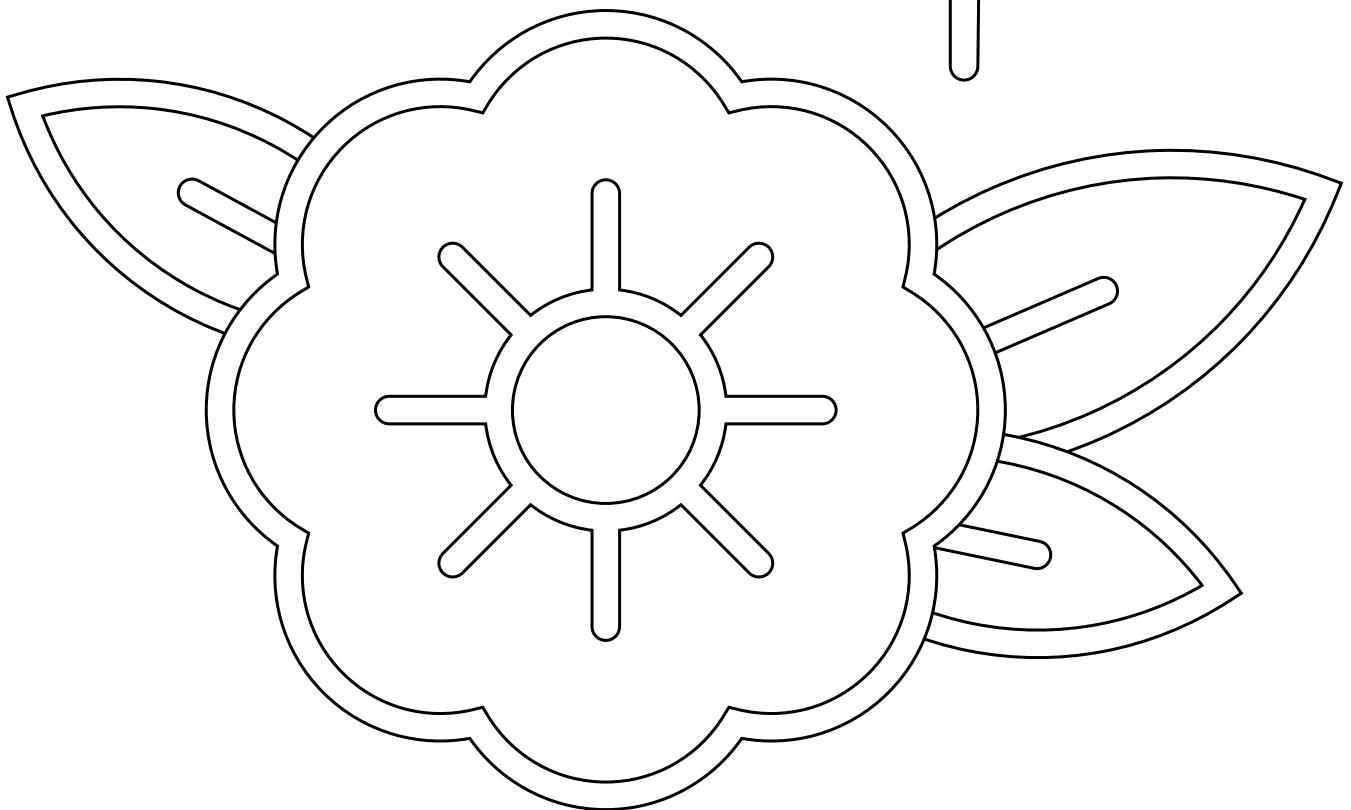
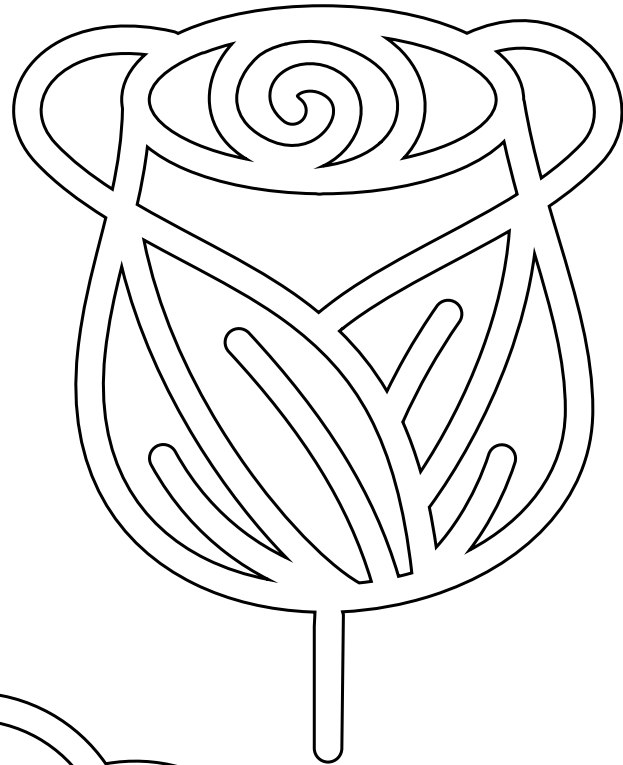
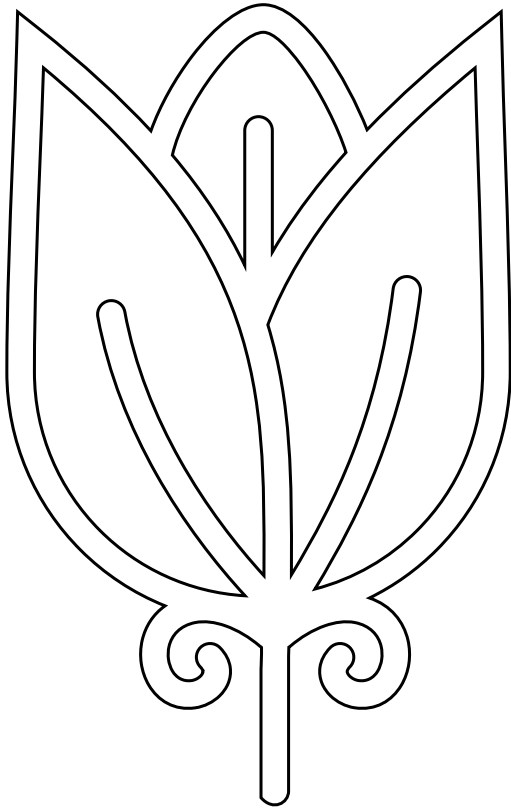
God, you care for the birds of the air,  
**and you care for us.**

God, you care for the flowers of the field,  
**and you care for us.**

You ask us not to worry,  
**and you care for us.**

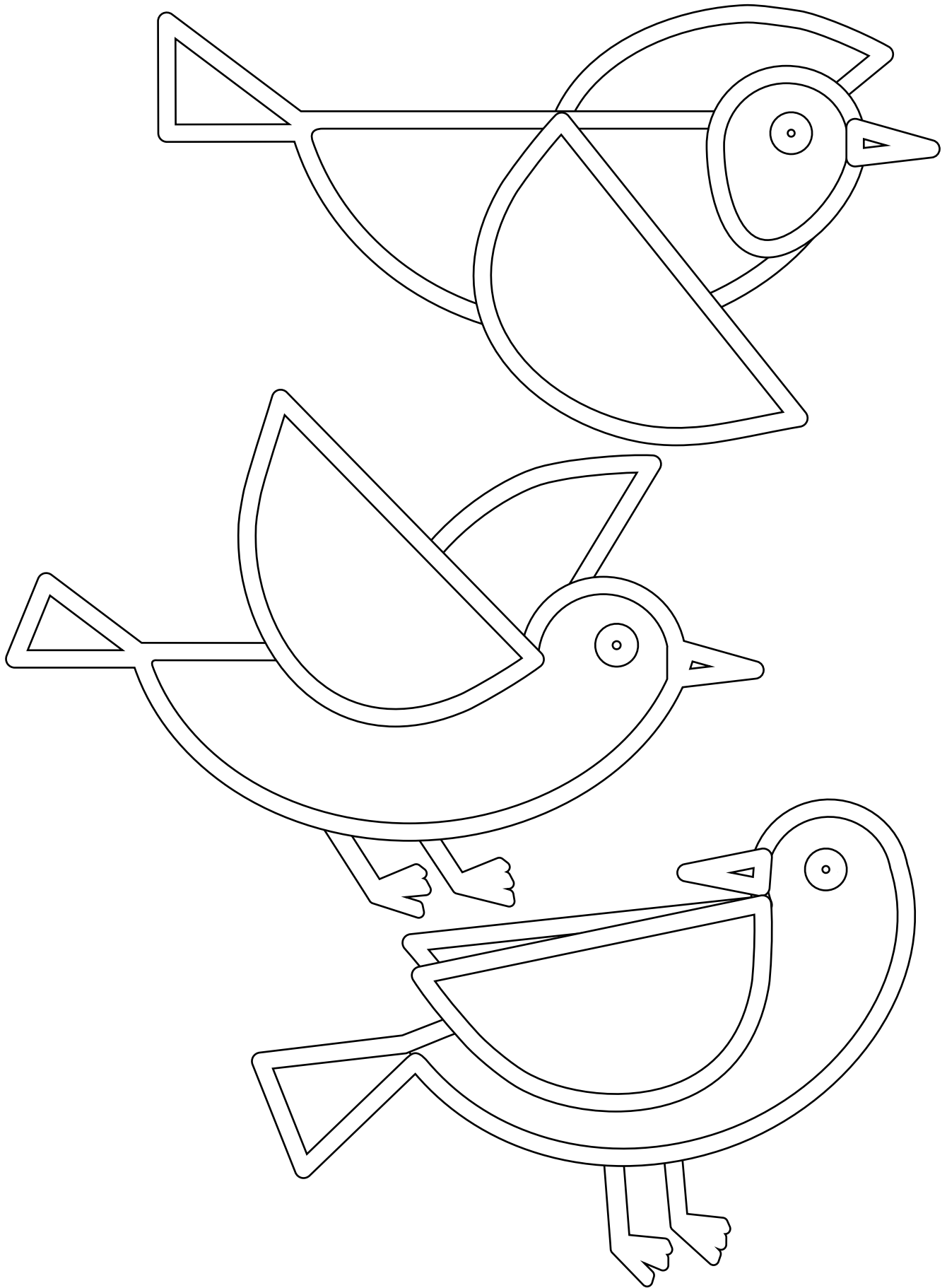
**Amen.**

As the children leave, bless the children, saying, “Remember that God watches over the sparrow and watches over us. Go in God’s grace.”











Use the words “Do Not Worry, God Cares for You” in a chant or cheer “Movie Star Style.” Blow movie-star kisses and bow dramatically at the end.

Use the words “Do Not Worry, God Cares for You” in a chant or cheer “Rapper Style.” Create a beat and end with “Yo!”

Use the words “Do Not Worry, God Cares for You” in a chant or cheer “Cowboy Style.” Find ways to use “howdy, partner” and “giddy-up” in your chant.

Use the words “Do Not Worry, God Cares for You” in a chant or cheer “Kung-Fu Style.” Make sure to incorporate side kicks, chops, and “hi-yas!”

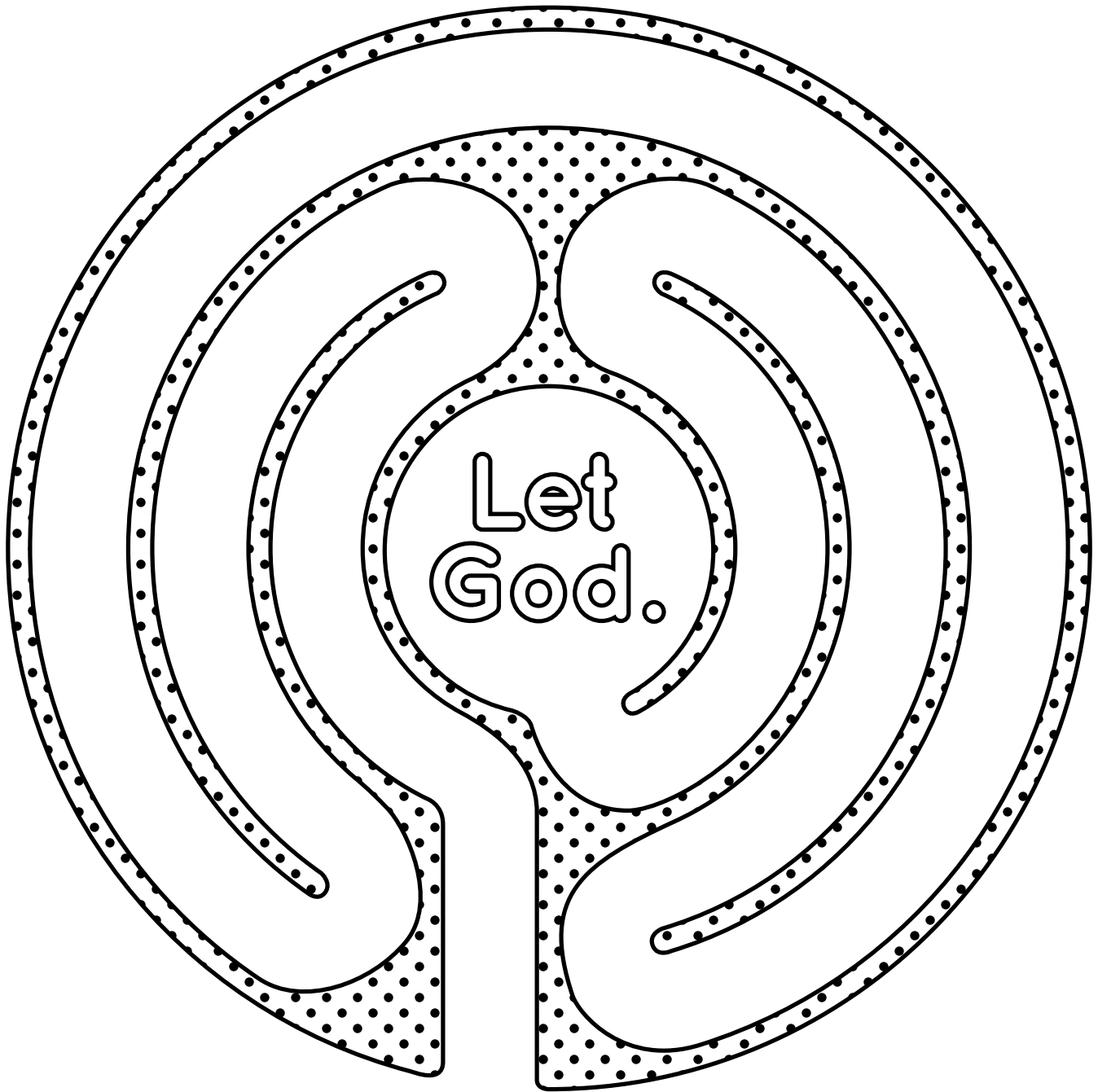
Use the words “Do Not Worry, God Cares for You” in a chant or cheer “Opera Singer Style.” Sing the words in a high-pitched, drawn-out way.

Use the words “Do Not Worry, God Cares for You” in a chant or cheer “Pirate Style.” Find ways to use “Aarrgh,” “matey,” and “yo, ho, ho!”

Use the words “Do Not Worry, God Cares for You” in a chant or cheer “Surfer Dude Style.” Find ways to use “dude,” “gnarly,” and “totally tubular!”

Use the words “Do Not Worry, God Cares for You” in a chant or cheer “Cheerleader Style.” Use the words “Go, team!” and movements.





Let  
go.

