

## GOD'S ANTIDOTE TO WORRY

### PSALM 23:1

We begin a new series I'm calling Stressbusters. We're going to look at the seven greatest sources of stress. They are all found in Psalm 23. And the antidotes are also found in Psalm 23. Psalm 23 is the most beloved psalm of the Bible. And it tells us what God is really like. It's a picture of God. My goal for the next six weeks is when we get through with the series you'll know what God is like and you'll know how much He really loves you and how much you matter to Him. The more you understand God, the easier it is to trust Him.

The first cause of stress we'll look at is Worry. We all have pet worries: finances, jobs, relationships, marriage, kids, health... How many of you here worry, raise your hand. How many of you worry a lot, raise both hands.

There are three problems with worry. Worry is unhelpful, it's unreasonable and it's unhealthy. It's unhelpful because it never accomplishes anything, it never solves anything. It is stewing without doing. It's like racing your car engine -- you create a lot of smoke and noise but you don't go anywhere. Worry has never solved a problem. Worry cannot change the past if you worry about it. Worry cannot control the future. It only makes us miserable today. It's unhelpful, it doesn't work.

It is unreasonable. It exaggerates your problems, makes mountains out of molehills. It just makes problems seem bigger and bigger. The more you review something when you're worried about it, the bigger it gets. To worry about something you can't change is useless. To worry about something you can change is crazy – just change it. Either way, don't worry!

It is unhealthy. The body was not made to worry; it's unnatural. When you worry you get ulcers, backaches, headaches, insomnia. Our bodies were not made to worry. Plants and animals don't worry.

The only thing that worries in all God's creation is people. We worry and we weren't made to worry. It makes us unhappy and unhealthy. The old English word for worry is the word "to strangle" or "to choke". That's what worry does -- it strangles the life out of you. But it's not natural.

You weren't born worrying. You have to learn to worry. You have to practice to be good at it. The good news is that if worry is learned it can also be unlearned.

WHAT IS THE ANTIDOTE TO WORRY?

**BELIEVE GOD WILL TAKE CARE OF ME**

**Ps. 23:1 "The Lord is my shepherd; I have everything I need."**

If I believe that God is going to take care of me, I'm not going to worry. How does making God my shepherd show the antidote to stress in my life? If I let the Lord be my Shepherd how is that an antidote to worry? You have to know what shepherds do.

- A. **A shepherd provides.** He provides food, shelter, the basic necessities for his sheep.
- B. **A shepherd protects.** He defends against enemies, harm.
- C. **A shepherd guides.** He leads sheep when they're confused and don't know which way to go.
- D. **A shepherd corrects.** Any problem that comes along, he corrects it.

The amazing thing is this: God has promised to do these four things in your life if you'll trust Him, if you'll let Him be your shepherd. He says "I'll provide for you. I will protect you. I will guide you. I will correct the problems in your life for you. If you will let Me be your Shepherd."

**Isaiah 40:11 "God takes care of his people like a shepherd."**

God says, I'll take care of you, I'll guide, protect, correct. I will help you, if you'll let me be your shepherd. He even gets more specific in **Phil. 4:19 "My God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus."**

This doesn't say, God will meet all of your greed. There's a difference between needs and wants. If God met all of your wants you'd be the biggest spoiled brat in the universe. You'd be spoiled and self-centered. He's not going to give you everything you want. It would be like the Midas touch. Soon you'd be miserable. But He has said, "I will meet all of your needs."

God says "I will...". He doesn't say, I might, I'll think about it, possibly. He says I will. That means God's character is on the line. He's either going to do it or He's a liar. When God makes a promise His character is on the line. He's either got to do what He says or He's a liar.

God says "I will meet all ..." What does "all" include? Doctor payments? Mortgage payments? Spiritual needs? Financial needs? Health needs? Relational needs? Yes. Everything. If God has promised to provide all of your needs, to protect you, to guide you when you're confused, and to correct the problems in your life, what does that leave left to worry about? Nothing.

When you have an insurance policy, once you know what's covered in that policy, you don't worry about it anymore. If something happens, whatever is covered, you don't worry about it. In the Bible are over 7,000 promises -- the coverage God puts on your life. When you understand them, what is left to worry about?

Worry is not only unhelpful, unreasonable, unhealthy -- it's unnecessary if Jesus Christ is your Shepherd. Any time you worry you're acting like an atheist. In essence you are saying: God is not going to keep His promises; God's not going to take care of my needs. If it's to be, it's up to me. You're acting like an atheist every time you worry. Worry is simply practical atheism. It says, I don't believe God will do what He says He will do.

## How Can I Let God be My Shepherd?

One thing we need to know is that God is not the Shepherd of everybody. He's only the Shepherd of those who let Him be their Shepherd. How do I make him my Shepherd?

### A. Accept Jesus as my Lord

"The Lord is my Shepherd." -- The Lord can't be your Shepherd until the Shepherd is your Lord. The two go together. You can't ask Him to be the Shepherd without allowing Him to be your Lord. I have to stop playing God and let God be God.

What does it mean to be Lord? It means to be in control. Lord simply means whoever is in charge. Today we might say boss, manager, CEO, chairman of the board. Lord means under control, the person who is on top, in control, calling the shots.

Jesus Christ is Lord in your life if He's calling the shots in your life. If He's not calling the shots, He's not Lord. And if He's not Lord, He's not Shepherd. Because the Lord is my Shepherd.

To accept Jesus as Lord means three things. *John 10:14, 27 "Jesus said, 'I am the good shepherd... my sheep know me ... they listen to my voice, and they follow me.'" These three words is what it means to have Jesus as Lord: You know Jesus, you listen to Jesus, you follow Jesus. You put Him in control.*

All the worry that you're worrying about -- whatever it is -- worry is the control issue. The root behind all of your worry is a fear that you are not in control. Worry is always an attempt to control the uncontrollable. Worry is assuming responsibility God never meant for you to have. Whenever you try to control the uncontrollable (kids, U.S., economy, environment...) you're going to worry. Worry is a warning light. Whenever you start to worry the light should go off: Warning!-- you're trying to control too much. That is the root behind all worry.

Every time you start to worry, you're trying to control something that you shouldn't be trying to control in the first place.

Who's in control of your life? God gives you the option. He doesn't force Himself on anybody's life. You have two options -- either you can be in control of your life or you can let God be in control of your life. God doesn't co-pilot. You'd crash and He'd get blamed. God is not going to force it on you, but either you can be in control of your life or you can let Him be in control of your life. He made you. He knows what will make you happy more than you do. He has the power to bring those things to pass. But He's still going to give you the option.

If you are in control of your life you're playing God. Playing God is the root of worry. Every time you start playing God, you're going to worry. When you start trying to control things and make them work... and force yourself to try to control many things that are out of your control then inside there's a little voice that says "Who are you kidding  
You know you're not God and you and God know that you don't have it all together." It's an issue of control.

If you're running your own life without God's direction, you ought to be worried. Most of the things in your life you can't control. Then you have every reason to worry.

But if God is running your life and He's your Lord and your Shepherd you know He can control anything so you don't sweat it. I make Jesus the Lord of my life.

## **B. Begin Praying About Everything**

Pray about all the stuff you usually worry about. Just talk to God. He wants your friendship, your relationship. You don't have time to pray? Do you have time to worry? If we prayed about all the things we worry about we would have an awfully lot less to worry about. Worry doesn't change anything; prayer does.

Worry is stewing without doing. Prayer gets in touch with God who can change it. Whenever I'm worried I have two options -- I can panic or I can pray.

*Phil. 4:6 "Don't worry about anything; instead pray about everything; tell God your needs... if you do this, you will experience God's peace, which is far more wonderful than the human mind can understand."*

Everything. Don't just pray about religious things. Most people, when they pray, pray prayers they think God wants to hear. Pray about everything. If it's big enough to worry about, it's big enough to pray about. God's ability is greater than your anxiety.

*"Cast all of your anxiety on him because he cares for you." I Peter 5:7*

Cast means to unload, let it go. The Greek word literally means to drop. Unload it. Prayer is an incredible stress reliever. Cast it all on Him. Dump it on Him. Unload. The problem is, most of us do the casting like we do in fishing. We cast our worries out and then we reel them back in.

Eleven years ago I was working for a big Japanese firm in New York called Nomura Securities. I moved to this company from Morgan Stanley two years before because they offered me a higher pay plus the fact that it was stable. Or so I thought. Because one-and-a-half years after I joined, the company downsized and I was one of those who was unfortunately asked to resign. Actually, the economy was not really good at the time and my biggest worry was whether I can get another job quickly enough. I was still single but I was like a family man because I supported my siblings in the Philippines, paying for their rent and utilities and food, providing tuition for two of them, and so on. At the time, I was in Bible school, trying to finish my master's degree. However, I still didn't have clear direction where the Lord wanted me as a minister. Was I going to be a missionary? An evangelist? A pastor? A teacher? A worship leader?

I was given a month's notice of my termination from the company.

In the weeks that followed, I prayed for guidance. I thought that God might be calling me to a full-time ministry as a pastor. But I still worried because I might not have enough salary as a pastor to carry me through. I knew God would provide, of course. The real issue is whether my being out of job is God calling me full-time to ministry. There was a sign, however, that that might be the case. I had two interviews and in both I failed miserably. Afterwards, there was like this still, small voice whispering in my ear, “You can have all the interviews you want but you will always fail.” I became afraid and didn't seek for another interview.

During this time I had a girlfriend. Our relationship was in the rocks, however. She was a girl who, many said, wasn't a pastor's wife material. Even her family said so. She was nice and pretty and I was really attracted to her. But we had lots of fights. And now, I just realized that if I married her I would always come to church with a black-eye. Just kidding, it wasn't that bad. But I couldn't end our relationship. And, of course, I had been praying whether I was in the right relationship.

Then, on my birthday, August 30<sup>th</sup>, a Wednesday, and the day before my last day at work, she called just before lunch. She said that she was breaking up with me. The amazing thing was that I was more relieved than hurt. It didn't sting like it should. And then I suddenly realized that maybe this was also God's way of letting me know that he's paving the way for my entering the ministry full-time.

But I had to be sure. So, after we talked, I went outside and decided to fast and pray. As I walked along the side of the Hudson River, I asked God to tell me in no uncertain terms whether I should really enter the ministry full-time. I went back to my office at 1 pm. Then, 10 minutes later, the phone rang. It was her again. Just kidding. This time, it was Pastor Jerry Lepasana of Bible Church International in New Jersey. He was also the interim pastor of Brooklyn Evangelical Church in Brooklyn, New York.

He said, “Rolly, would you consider applying as pastor of Brooklyn Evangelical Church?” I was speechless but managed to say, “Pastor Jerry, I’ll let you know tomorrow.” However, that afternoon I called him back and said yes. It was clear God was calling me to become a full-time pastor.

Cast your cares on him. He knows your every need. He will not fail to respond to you. If you need to fast, do it. And speaking of fasting, I believe we need to fast as a church once again. We said we need to change our name. We said we need to find a more permanent place. But what we need to do is to seek God once more regarding our direction. Things are happening quickly, we see more people coming. What should we do next? So, on Saturday, May 21<sup>st</sup>, join me in another prayer and fasting event. Most likely it will be at one of the trailers again. From 10 am to 12 noon but fasting begins at 6 am and ends at 6 pm. Please mark your calendars. Let's pray as a church and hear what God has to say to us as a church. Are you with me?

Now, there is a third thing you do if you want to deal with worry.

### C. CONSIDER ONE DAY AT A TIME.

Focus, concentrate and consider one day at a time. *Matthew 6:34 "So don't be anxious about tomorrow. God will take care of your tomorrow too. Live one day at a time."*

Jesus is saying, Don't open your umbrella until it starts raining. Today is the tomorrow that you worried about yesterday. When you worry you don't do anything about yesterday, you can't control tomorrow, you just mess up today. The future can seem overwhelming. Therefore, God has put it in little bite-size pieces. He just gives it to us in one little 24 hour increment at a time. Live one day at a time.



**Matthew 6:11 "Give us today our daily bread."** Overcoming worry is a day to day choice. There is no pill that will make you stop worrying. There is no seminar, tape, or book that will make you stop worrying. There is no one spiritual experience you can have and you will never worry again. Worry, and the antidote to it, is going to be a daily choice, sometimes hourly, sometimes moment by moment choice in which you say, Am I going to believe the Lord is my Shepherd or am I going to believe I am my own Lord? Who is in control of my life? Who's calling the shots? If I'm in control, I have a lot to worry about. But if God's in control, it's His problem and He can handle it.

Go home and read Ps. 23. You will find that seventeen times in six verses, the words "I", "my" or "me" are used. This is an intensely personal psalm. The word "You" -- talking about God -- is used five times, "He" or "His" is used about 7 or 10 times. This psalm is about a relationship to God. That's the antidote to your stress. Religion will not get rid of your stress. Religion will not help you stop worrying. You don't need religion. You need a relationship. You need a Shepherd - - somebody who provides, protects, guides and corrects. God says "That's what I made you for. I didn't make you for religion. I made you to know Me." He knows all about you, He wants you to know Him. That's why He sent Jesus Christ. I invite you to take the first step by opening your life to Jesus Christ if you've never done so. Ask Jesus Christ to become your Lord -- your boss, manager -- and Shepherd, as He's promised to do.

Wilbur Chapman was asked to come cheer up a little 10 year old boy who was dying of cancer. He went to the home of the little boy. The little boy was worried about dying and Chapman said, "I want to teach you something. Let me have your hand. The Bible says, 'The Lord is my my Shepherd.'

Everytime you start to get worried about what's going to happen to you, you think, 'The Lord is my Shepherd' and you hold onto your index finger."

Two weeks later the little boy died in his sleep.

The next morning his mother found him holding his index finger.

I don't know what you're worried about or stressed out about today, but I do know this: God loves you, He cares about your stress, and He can help you.

Let me tell you one more story before I end.

I remember the time many years ago when I went home feeling hurt and depressed because of what someone said to me. I worried about it so much that I literally developed a headache. I went outside my apartment to get some air but the worries and headache persisted. Much as I tried I just couldn't get it off my mind. I prayed but it didn't work. So, I went back inside and tried to sleep. I had a hard time sleeping but I finally did. At around 2 in the morning, I woke up with these worries still bothering me. I cried to the Lord and begged him to take them away. Suddenly, these words were impressed on my mind, "Be a warrior, not a worrier." Then, the verses from Ephesians 6 also came to my mind, "Be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on all of God's armor so that you will be able to stand firm against all strategies of the devil. For we are not fighting against flesh-and-blood enemies, but against evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against mighty powers in this dark world, and against evil spirits in the heavenly places. Therefore, put on every piece of God's armor so you will be able to resist the enemy in the time of evil. Then after the battle you will still be standing firm. Stand your ground, putting on the belt of truth and the body armor of God's righteousness. For shoes, put on the peace that comes from the Good News so that you will be fully prepared. In addition to all of these, hold up the shield of faith to stop the fiery arrows of the devil. Put on salvation as your helmet, and take the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. Pray in the Spirit at all times and on every occasion. Stay alert and be persistent in your prayers for all believers everywhere.

As those words came to me, my worries started to go away. My burden was lifted away that night. God's peace came over me.

I have no doubt that it was the Lord who spoke to my mind that night. It is an experience that is still alive for me today because through it I realized that truly as the psalmist declares "The Lord is my Shepherd. I have everything I need."