



PRESSURE POINTS

An in depth look at the 23rd Psalm (part 2)

How To Use This Life Group Study Guide

1. Review your message notes from Greg's sermon.
2. Write out your answers to the questions below.
3. Discuss your answers with your Life Group.

Relieving the Pressure of My Anxiety

"He makes me to lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside still waters."
- Psalm 23:2 (NKJV)

If anyone had stuff to worry about it was certainly King David. Now, I wouldn't say he NEVER worried; there are actually plenty of entries from David's personal diary we call the Psalms to know that he went through some serious bouts of worry. However, in the 23rd Psalm that we are studying, it is obvious that David discovered a prescription that worked for him in his battle with anxiety and worry. Have you?

Jesus actually talked about worry during His teaching ministry on earth. The root word for 'worry' used by Jesus means "a part". So when Jesus tells us not to worry, He is warning us not to fall apart. He is saying "don't go to pieces." That is what worry does. It distracts us. It divides us. The pressure of worry builds up in us until we explode.

I'm not telling you anything you don't know though, am I? We are all too familiar with the consequences of worry and anxiety in our life, including being the source of some pretty serious health issues. The issue is how do we stop! I think it is important to identify the underlying cause of worry. This is it. Whatever you are worrying about – **it is a control issue.** The root behind all worry is fear that we are not in control. Worry is most often an attempt to control the uncontrollable. Worry is assuming responsibility God never meant for you to have. Whenever you try to control what's beyond your control you are going to worry. Worry then is a warning light. It is indicating that you are trying to control too much. That of course is where God comes in, and

that is where David found a prescription that worked for him. He said, "The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want." He let God be in control! Who is in control of your life? We all know what the right answer to that question is, but is it true? Is God really in control of your life? If you are in control of your life then you are playing God. Playing God is the root of worry and that is why anxiety is a sin.

Jerry Bridges recently published a book entitled, "**RESPECTABLE SINS**". In his book he challenges believers to confront the sins we tolerate, suggesting that we have become so preoccupied with the major sins of our society that we have lost sight of our need to deal with our own more subtle sins. He points out that anxiety is a sin for two reasons. First, anxiety is a distrust of God. Second, anxiety is a sin because it is a denial of the providence of God in our lives.

So, in your study this week as you discuss anxiety and worry, call it what it is. It is sin. As sin, it should be repented of, confessed, and prompting us to ask God to forgive us.

For Further Study and Personal Reflection and Discussion:

1. In spite of the fact that worry doesn't change anything, and we are well aware of the serious consequences of anxiety in our lives, why do you suppose we still battle so frequently with this sin?

2. Anxiety is caused by a lack of trust in God. Read Matthew 6: 25-34. This is the most prominent passage in which Jesus spoke directly about worry/anxiety, using the word 'anxious' six times. Summarize what Jesus is saying to us in this passage. After reading His words make a list of reasons why Jesus would consider worry a sin.

3. Our anxiety is at times triggered not so much by a distrust in God as by an unwillingness to submit to and accept his agenda for me. Carefully read Psalm 139:16: ***“All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be.”*** Discuss what that means. How can these words be of comfort to you when you are tempted to worry?

4. Now turn your discussion to the biblical comparison of men as sheep. It is not a very flattering comparison is it? However, there are plenty of examples that reveals it is accurate. Itemize ways you see human nature and the nature of sheep as being similar.

5. Now turn to the primary text for this week, Psalm 23:2 (printed at the top of these notes). Discuss what the phrase, “He makes me lie down” means to you personally. Why is this important? What are some ways God makes us lie down?

6. David said the Lord led him beside “still waters”. We talked about why that was important for the shepherd to bring the sheep to water that wasn’t rushing by, but how does God do that for us? What does it mean for God to lead you by still waters? What are some ways He does that in your life? Why is it important?

7. One final thought; a shepherd ‘LEADS’ sheep. He doesn’t herd them. This is important to us because it means we must follow. Talk about what it really means to follow Jesus.π