

GOD'S THIRD STRESSBUSTER

Psalm 23:3

July 29, 2007 Sunday a.m.

INTRODUCTION

- A. According to an article appearing in the Harvard Business Review (11-12-94), "Sixty to ninety percent of all medical office visits are directly related to symptoms of stress."
- B. Today we continue our series called, "God's Stressbusters". They are found in Psalm 23 along with God's antidotes for each.
 - 1. In verse one we examined "worry" as a source of stress. God's antidote is to believe he will take care of us like a shepherd takes care of his sheep
 - 2. In verse two we examined "busyness" as another source of stress. God's antidote involves realizing our worth isn't related to our work, enjoying what we already have, adjusting our values and exchanging our daily pressure for God's peace.
 - 3. Today we look at a third source of stress found in verse three-emotional distress ("He restores my soul").
 - 4. Life is tough.
 - a. We all get beat up by discouragement, depression, and despair.
 - b. The good news is that God can and will restore our soul, our spirit, our emotions.
 - c. God does this by removing the sources of our emotional distress. What are they?

I. FIRST, GOD REMOVES OUR GUILT.

- A. Guilt can destroy our emotional well being very quickly-Psalms 38:4.
 - 1. And because we are imperfect people, there is much to feel guilty about.
 - 2. We can't hide from our guilt either-Prov. 20:27.
- B. What can we do with it?
 - 1. We can deny it—"I'm really a good person".
 - 2. We can minimize it—"Its no big deal".
 - 3. We can compromise it—"I don't believe its wrong anyway".
 - 4. We can rationalize it—"Everybody is doing it".
 - 5. We can blame it on others—"You made me do it".
 - 6. We can beat ourselves up about it—"I'm just no good".
 - 7. We can even call an apology hotline about it.

Jesse Jacobs has made it possible to apologize without actually talking to the person you've wronged.

Jacobs created an apology hotline. People unable or unwilling to unburden their conscience in person call the hot line and leave a message of apology on an answering machine. Each week, 30-50 calls are logged, as people apologize for things from adultery to embezzlement.

"The hot line offers participants a chance to alleviate their guilt and, to some degree, to own up to their misdeeds," said Jacobs. "I'm just hoping that these people will feel better themselves, just by getting whatever's been bothering them off their chest." One caller to the hot line remarked, "I hope this apology will cleanse me and basically purify my soul...God knows, I need it."

Samantha Gross, "Hot Line Offers 'Sorry' Service," www.WashingtonTimes.com (5-31-04)

- C. None of these things work, though, to alleviate our guilt, not even calling an apology hotline.
 - 1. The only antidote that really works is to give our guilt to God—Romans 3:23-24.
 - 2. But what if you've already done that but you still feel guilty?
 - a. This means you didn't really believe that God would forgive you the first time you asked him.
 - b. According to Paul, God forgives us completely—Col.2:13- 14.
 - c. God not only forgives, he forgets—Jeremiah 31:34.

II. SECOND, GOD REMOVES OUR GRIEF.

- A. Where does grief come from?
 1. Sometimes we cause our own grief by our stupid actions and mistakes.
 2. Sometimes we grieve for someone else who is hurting.
 3. Sometimes we grieve because of what someone else has done to us.
- B. What can we do when we're grieving?
 1. We can throw ourselves a "pity party".
 2. We can play the "if only" game.
 3. We can withdraw from life and vow never to let anyone hurt us again.
- C. Or we can let God restore our soul.
 1. David was well acquainted with grief-Psalms 31:9.
 2. He offers some helpful tips on how to deal with grief in 2 Samuel 12.
 - a. First, accept what can't be changed—12:22-23.

If you have been hurt by parents, partners, or peers, all the grieving in the world isn't going to change the past.

In a recent sermon, Bill Hybels shared this story: A friend of mine has a brain-damaged daughter. Sometimes the sadness she feels over her daughter's condition overwhelms her, as it did recently. She wrote me this letter and gave me permission to quote from it:

" . . . I can hardly bear it sometimes. My most recent wave of grief came just last year before her sixteenth birthday. As the day approached, I found myself brooding over all the things that she would never be able to do. What did I do? What I've learned to do again and again: I did what I believe is the only thing to do to conquer grief, and that is to embrace it. . . I cried and cried and cried, and faced the truth of my grief head on."

People who face their feelings and express them freely begin the journey toward hope.

- b. Second, approach God—12:20 "worshipped".
- c. Third, affirm the future-12:24.

III. THIRD, GOD REMOVES OUR GRUDGES.

- A. Grudges are the result of what other people have done for us or haven't done for us.
 1. We're all going to be hurt in life by others.
 2. Sometimes unintentionally and sometimes intentionally.
- B. Grudges and resentments seldom hurt the person who caused them.
 1. They only hurt us when we keep rehearsing them in our minds.
 2. The offender may even be dead, but we allow them to keep hurting us from the grave.
- C. What can we do with our grudges? Paul offers two suggestions.
 1. First, refuse to get even-Romans 12:19b.
 2. Second, realize only God can settle the score-Romans 12:19b.

CONCLUSION

- A. In Psalms 42:5a, David uses a shepherd metaphor—"downcast". It refers to a sheep being tipped over on their backs and unable to get up on their own. In this state they can die in a few hours because of predators, breathing problems or lack of circulation.
- B. This is the picture of what God does for us whenever we are "cast down" emotionally—"He restores my soul".