

Escaping The Cage Of Stress

Escaping The Cage | Week 1 | Matthew 11:28; Psalm 3-4

INTRODUCTION

J. Vernon McGee says, "Distress indicates pressure." And the truth is, the pressures of this life are great. What we need when life gets stressful is the encouragement of the Lord. Psalm 50:15 says, "Call on me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you will honor me." Are you feeling stressed? Has your stress turned into a chronic, "lifestyle" type of stress? If so, I have good news for you. The same promise God gave in Psalm 50 is accessible to you today. In this message, we'll dive deeper into the truth that if you will call on Him, give Him your stress, give Him your worries, He will deliver you as only He can.

KEY POINTS

1. Jesus Will Give You Rest

Jesus said in Matthew 11:28, "Come to me, all who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest." In other words, you can't just stay where you are and expect to experience relief in your life. You can't just keep doing what you are doing and expect a different result.

Jesus said, "The solution to your stress is going to begin with a step of faith." He said, COME TO ME. And what will be the result? Jesus will give you rest. When you find yourself in this situation, God wants you to take a step of faith. His invitation is for you to rest. He offers a way out, even when it looks as if you'll be imprisoned forever; He gives you what you need in order to escape the cage of stress.

2. God's Remedy For Stress Is God Himself

David said in Psalm 3:5-6, "I lie down and sleep; I wake again because the Lord sustains me. I will not fear though tens of thousands assail me on every side." See, David was in a crazy time, with his life in danger, being hunted by an entire army of men, and yet somehow, he's taking a cat nap.

Then in Psalm 4, he's getting ready to go to bed! How can that be? David had a choice to make that night. He could stay up and worry and fret, fearing the worst, or he could believe the promises of God. He could choose to be imprisoned by the cage of stress or he could choose God.

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All In with Jordan Easley

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He concluded the psalm with this verse, "In peace I will lie down and sleep, for you alone, Lord, make me dwell in safety." David discovered God's remedy for stress. The remedy wasn't a massage or prescription medicine. The remedy wasn't breathing or aerobic exercises. God's remedy for stress was God, Himself.

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QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. What are some things (circumstances, relationships, decisions) you are stressed about right now?
2. Have you asked the Lord to give you rest amidst your stress, or have you been trying to take care of everything and keep pushing forward in your own strength?
3. What is one thing that's causing you to stress that you can hand over to the Lord today in prayer?

Escaping The Cage Of Worry

Escaping The Cage | Week 2 | Philippians 4

INTRODUCTION

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Do you worry? If you answered yes to that question, let me ask you another question, has your worry ever done any good? Someone once said, “worry is like a treadmill...it’s something that wears you out and doesn’t take you anywhere.” Worry is something that freezes you in life and prevents you from being free. Paul said in 1 Corinthians 7:32. “I would like you to be free from concern.” Are you free from concern? If not, then listen closely. When you trust God fully, you do not have to worry, and you do not have to be robbed of the life He wants you to live. In this message, we’re going to dive deeper into the topic of worry, learn how to escape the cage of worry, and instead live life fully trusting God.

KEY POINTS

1. When We Worry, We Choose To Forfeit Peace In Our Lives.

The Apostle Paul says in Philippians 4:6-7, “Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”

He is saying exactly what you and I need to hear, “do not be anxious about anything.” In other words, do not worry about anything. We all know that is easier said than done. But if we’re being honest with ourselves, so much of what we worry about never happens or cannot be changed. It really does become a waste of time.

2. Worry Produces An Unstable Person.

Worry will tear you apart. It is the same thing James was referring to in James 1:8 when he talks about being “double-minded and unstable in all ways.” When you are double-minded, you are divided emotionally, mentally, and spiritually. And when you are double-minded, you are going to be unstable in all your ways — unstable emotionally, unstable mentally, unstable spiritually. Do not miss what this verse in James is saying: worry produces an unstable person in all our ways.

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Additionally, the Bible says that worry is just another step toward depression. Proverbs 12:25 tells us, “Anxiety in the heart of man causes depression, but a good word makes it glad.”

Has worry ever caused you to be double-minded? Has it ever pulled you in two different directions? Friend, God never intended for you to be pulled apart like this. He wants you to have clarity so that you can live out His perfect plan for your life.

3. Worry Is A Sin Against God.

If God works all things together for our good as He promises in Scripture, why do you worry? Worry is not only foolish, but worry is a sin against God. And the reason it is sinful is that when you worry, you are calling God a liar. Do you know what worry says to Romans 8:28? It says, “Untrue...Untrue...That’s not right...That’s a lie.” Worry is us telling God, “I don’t trust you, and I don’t believe you are capable of being in control.”

So do you believe God is a liar? You might say, “Of course not. I know God’s Word is true.” But if it is really true, and you know that, why do you worry? God promises us that if we love Him and are called according to His purpose, He will work all things for our good.

4. Worry About Nothing. Pray About Everything.

Philippians 4:6 tells us, “Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.” With that verse, Paul gives us the answer. He says that the way to escape the cage of worry is to pray about everything.

He says to worry about nothing and pray about everything. That’s it. Some of us hear that and think, “Surely, Paul didn’t mean ‘anything’ here. Surely he wasn’t saying that we should worry about nothing,” because the reality is, we have some things in our lives that are naturally worrisome.

Maybe you are wondering today, “does God really expect us to worry about nothing?” And the answer is YES. He does. Listen, Paul knew that we would have problems and issues and sins to deal with. After all, he did too! But he tells us, “We are to worry about NOTHING because God expects us to pray about everything.” You cannot do both. You can’t give a burden to God and also keep that burden for yourself. You’ll either do one or the other.

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QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. What are you worried about right now?
2. Have you struggled to feel at peace in the midst of your worrying? Why do you think that is?
3. Have you taken the time to pray about what you're worried about? If not, what is keeping you from offering your worries to God in prayer?

Escaping The Cage Of Fear

Escaping The Cage | Week 3 | Isaiah 41

INTRODUCTION

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Fear is something that we all deal with no matter who you are or what stage of life you are in. There’s always something to be afraid of, worried about, or anxious over. But if you are a follower of Jesus, you don’t have to be a slave to your fear. Instead, you can find freedom and escape the cage of fear. Paul tells us that Christ didn’t give us a spirit of fear. God does not desire that you live your life in fear; that is against His will. Whatever it is that you are fearful of, God wants to rescue you from your fear today! In this message, we’re going to take a closer look at the steps we need to take if we want to escape the cage of fear.

KEY POINTS

1. Face Your Fears

The people’s sins in Isaiah 41 had driven them far away from God. They were now in a position where they were exposed to enemy attacks, and they knew it. As their enemies approached them and threatened them, they were left with all sorts of feelings of fear.

If you read our key passage, you’ll see that in the midst of their fear, God looks at His children and says, “You have enemies rising up against you? Of course, you do. But guess what? Those enemies don’t take me by surprise at all. In fact, I am prepared to deal with them myself.” When you are a child of the King and you are walking in the will of God, you do not have to be afraid when others rise up against you. He promises He will help you face your fears.

2. Actively Pursue Courage

Deuteronomy 31:6 tells, “Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or terrified because of them, for the Lord your God goes with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you.” This tells us that God isn’t only our source of courage, but His presence is the reason we can be courageous!

So the Bible tells us we are to be active in our pursuit of the Lord. We are to be active in our pursuit of courage. You cannot just sit around waiting for courage. If you do, you will probably experience the opposite effect. The longer you let your mind play tricks on you, the more time you give fear the opportunity to overwhelm you. As you find yourself actively pursuing courage through Christ, you will find yourself walking away from your fears!

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3. Don't Cling To The Illusion Of Safety

We ask God for safety every day. We want to feel safe and at ease. That's why we sleep better when our home alarms are set and our doors are locked. But the truth is, safety is a superstition. And it is dangerous when we cling to "safety" as if safety is God. Safety is something we create in our minds to make us feel better about our circumstances, but truth be told, there really is no such thing as safety. Life is uncertain and unknown.

Don't get me wrong, it is okay to want to be safe. It is okay to pursue wisdom in your decisions in order to put you and your family in a better situation in life, but don't cling to safety as if safety is the Savior of the world. The true Savior is your only hope, and nothing on this earth can give you the peace and comfort He can.

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All In with Jordan Easley

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QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. When was a time you faced your fears with the Lord's help and experienced victory? What did you learn from that experience?
2. Are you actively pursuing Jesus right now? If not, what is keeping you from doing so?
3. Where else are you often tempted to seek out security or safety besides Jesus?

Escaping The Cage Of Pride

Escaping The Cage | Week 4 | Jeremiah 9

INTRODUCTION

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Andrew Murray said, “Pride must die in you, or nothing of heaven can live in you.” That was true in the days of Jeremiah as we see in our key passage of Scripture, and the same is true for us today. If you want to live the life God intended for you, if you want to chase your divine destiny, you must let your pride die. God cannot bless those who are prideful, and you cannot go on this journey alone. God has plans for you greater than anything you could possibly imagine. But first, you must let your pride die. In this message, we’re going to be answering some tough questions about pride, and, as we do, we will learn how to overcome our pride with the help of Jesus so that we might live lives marked by humility.

KEY POINTS

1. Where Does Pride Come From?

Pride is like a weed in our life. You didn’t plant it to be there. You never planted a seed for pride...but for some reason, it is there. And the Bible shows us that pride, like a weed, will consume you if it is not addressed.

We may not realize it, but this weed called pride actually came from a tiny seed. You didn’t plant it, the devil did. And it is a seed that says, “I care more about myself and my preferences than I care about other people. I care more about me and my will than I care about the will of God.”

It is like there is a battle taking place in our souls. And the tug-of-war we experience is oftentimes our personal preferences vs. the progress of God. It is “I’m going to focus on the Kingdom of God vs. I’m going to focus on the kingdom of me.” This is a battle we have to fight hard to win, and we can only win it by the power of the Holy Spirit living within us as believers.

2. What Are The Consequences Of Pride?

There are many consequences you’ll face if you have pride in your heart. First, pride prevents momentum in your relationship with the Lord. It’s impossible for you to have a great relationship with God if you have pride in your heart because God hates pride & God wants to be the Lord of your life. And God can’t be the Lord of your life if everything revolves around you.

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Second, pride hinders your relationships with other people. Nobody wants to be around a prideful, egotistical person. If you believe the world is all about you, then you'll quickly discover that most people don't want to live in that world.

Third, pride prevents the work of the Holy Spirit in your life. Once pride enters our life, we stop praying because we don't think we need God anymore. And even if we do pray, we pray with a spirit of entitlement instead of praying with a spirit of humility. A spirit of entitlement is a great indicator that pride is a problem in your life.

Fourth, pride compromises your work in heaven. The Bible says God will judge our hearts & He will judge our motives. If pride has motivated our actions, those actions will not lead to heavenly rewards. God will not bless arrogance.

Finally, pride keeps the unbeliever out of heaven. Pride is one of the main things that keeps people from accepting Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. I wonder how many times the Holy Spirit has prompted someone to take a step of faith, but the devil convinced that person to stay put and do nothing. Failing to believe and trust in God and failing to obey Him and respond to His leadership is an act of pride that will keep you from an eternity in Heaven.

3. How Do We Escape The Cage Of Pride?

There are four steps we need to take if we want to escape the cage of pride. They are:

- **Recognize it.** We first must recognize it and confess our sin to God.
- **Repent.** When we repent of our sin, we take ground from the enemy.
- **Recall the life God has saved you from.** Remember you are a sinner saved by grace.
- **Refocus your identity in Christ.** Rather than living your life for the approval/acceptance of others, follow the advice of Colossians 3:23 which says, "Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord."

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QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. In what areas of your life have you stopped trusting God or stopped asking for God's help?
2. When was a time in your past when your pride got the best of you? What can you learn from that experience and apply to your life moving forward?
3. Which of the five consequences of pride have you experienced? How so?

Escaping The Cage Of Anger And Bitterness

Escaping The Cage | Week 5 | Ephesians 4

INTRODUCTION

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Rarely does an angry person realize that their anger is based on an irrational perception of the world. Think about that...at the root of our anger is a skewed perception of reality. And when anger distorts our reality, we can't rationalize, comprehend, or make good decisions because our emotions take control of our actions. And when you live your life like that, with that kind of anger in your heart, you find yourself in a cage, unable to experience freedom and unable to live the life God designed you to live. But there is hope. There is a way to escape the cage of anger and bitterness, and that's exactly what we're going to talk about today.

KEY POINTS

1. Bitterness Is The Unharvested Fruit Of Anger

If you let anger sit there and never address it, it's going to lead you into the cage of bitterness. And when you get stuck in that cage, it can get really ugly, really quickly. Don't be like Simon the Sorcerer that Luke described in Acts 8.23, "For I see you are poisoned by bitterness and bound by wickedness."

His bitterness was something that Peter could see! He could see it in his attitude. He could see it in his response to others and even in the expression on his face. When your life becomes poisoned by bitterness, you become bound by iniquity.

2. Bitterness Destroys Us

When bitterness goes unaddressed, it leads to many different consequences in our lives:

- Physical illness: Many physical problems are attributed to bitterness—ulcers, high blood pressure, and cardiac problems.
- Relational Issues: When you're trapped in the past and are allowing bitterness from past relationships to linger, it makes it impossible to move toward the future in your current relationships.
- Spiritual Stumbling Blocks: When your bitterness is towards God, it causes you to see Him in an incorrect way. You can't enjoy His blessings if you're continually dwelling on your pain.

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3. Bitterness Is A Cage

I do believe there are a few steps to getting out of the cage of bitterness, but they're not easy.

- Make a list of ways a person has offended you. Be specific.
- Make a list of your own faults.
- Ask God to allow you to see your offender the way He sees them.
- Ask God to forgive the bitterness you had against them.
- Assume responsibility for your own attitude.
- If appropriate: Arrange a time to confess and ask for forgiveness from your offender. And remember, their response isn't your responsibility, but your willingness to address the problem is a freeing experience.

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Escaping The Cage Of Anger And Bitterness

Escaping The Cage | Week 5 | Ephesians 4

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. What are you angry or bitter about right now?
2. Who is someone you need to forgive and extend grace to?
3. Which steps do you need to take to escape the cage of anger and bitterness?
