

SMALL GROUPS

This week's message explored what it means to stop carrying weight that God never designed us to bear. Through the lens of Matthew 11:28-30, we examined how to come to Jesus first, release what we cannot control, exchange pressure for peace, walk in the yoke Jesus provides, and leave our burdens at his feet. The goal is not a life without problems, but a life where we have learned the difference between what God has asked us to carry and what he has asked us to surrender.

Key Takeaways

- Functioning under pressure is not the same thing as being free from it.
- God never asked you to carry what Jesus already came to carry.
- Worrying does not add anything to your life — it only drains the strength you need for today.
- Peace is not the absence of pressure. It is the presence of Jesus in the middle of the pressure.
- You were created to trust God, not replace him.
- Surrender is not always a one-time emotional moment. It is a daily, sometimes hourly, decision.
- You do not honor the cross by continuing to carry what Jesus died to remove.

Icebreaker

Think about a time you overpacked for a trip or watched someone else do it. What was the result? How does that image connect to the way we carry the weight of life?

Discussion Questions

Coming to Jesus First

1. Pastor Mack said that many of us use Jesus as a last resort rather than a first response. How do you personally see this pattern show up in your own life? What do you tend to try before you pray?
2. In Matthew 11:28, Jesus extends an invitation — "come to me." What does it look like practically in your daily routine to respond to that invitation before you respond to everything else pressing for your attention?
3. Pastor Mack made a distinction between prayer changing the situation and prayer changing how we carry the situation. Have you ever experienced that shift — where the circumstances stayed the same but something on the inside of you changed? Share what that was like.

Releasing What You Cannot Control

4. Pastor Mack identified three categories: things we can control, things we can influence, and things we must entrust entirely to God. Take a moment and think about the main pressure in your life right now. Which category does it fall into? Are you trying to control something that belongs in a different category?
5. In Matthew 6:25-34, Jesus asks what worry has ever added to anyone's life. What has worry actually cost you — in sleep, in relationships, in energy, in peace? Be honest with the group.
6. Pastor Mack said, "Some of us are so exhausted today because we are already trying to live Thursday's day out." How does living ahead of the present moment affect your ability to experience God's grace and provision for today?

Exchanging Pressure for Peace

7. Philippians 4:6-7 lays out a pattern: prayer, petition, thanksgiving, and then presenting your request to God. The pastor emphasized that thanksgiving is especially important under pressure because it reminds us of God's past faithfulness. What is one specific thing God has done for you in the past that you need to remind yourself of right now?
8. Pastor Mack described the peace of God as a soldier standing guard at the door of your heart and mind. What are the most common things that try to push past that guard in your life — fear, anxiety, comparison, regret? How does that image change the way you think about receiving God's peace?
9. Pastor Mack contrasted two kinds of peace: the world's peace, which depends on circumstances being resolved, and God's peace, which depends on his presence. Which version of peace are you currently chasing? What would it look like to pursue the other one?

Wearing the Yoke Jesus Gives

10. A yoke was designed for two animals to carry a load together. Jesus says his yoke is easy and his burden is light. What does it look like to actually walk at Jesus' pace rather than the pace set by comparison, expectation, or insecurity?
11. Pastor Mack said, "Not every good opportunity is a God assignment." How do you currently decide what to say yes to and what to say no to? Is that process driven more by what God has called you to or by what others expect of you?
12. Pastor Mack gave the group permission to say no to things that fall outside of their God-given purpose and assignment. Is there something in your life right now that you need to say no to? What is making it difficult to do so?

Leaving the Weight at Jesus' Feet

13. First Peter 5:7 says to cast all your anxiety on God because he cares for you. The pastor pointed out that we often cast our burdens and then take them right back. What causes you to reach back for something you have already surrendered to God? What would help you leave it there?

14. Pastor Mack addressed guilt, shame, and regret specifically, saying that some people are not only carrying stress but carrying the weight of their past. He said, "You do not honor the cross by continuing to carry what Jesus died to remove." Is there something from your past that you have asked God to forgive but have not yet forgiven yourself for? What would it mean to truly receive his grace in that area?

Practical Applications

Choose one or more of the following to put into practice this week:

Pray First. Identify one area of your life where you typically exhaust every other option before praying. This week, commit to making prayer your first response in that area, not your last resort.

Make a Surrender List. Write down the specific things you are currently carrying. Next to each one, note whether it is something you can control, something you can influence, or something only God can control. Spend time in prayer intentionally placing the third category in God's hands.

Practice Thanksgiving Under Pressure. Each day this week, before you bring a request to God, name three specific things he has already done for you. Let gratitude reframe the way you approach your current circumstances.

Set One Boundary. Identify one commitment, expectation, or responsibility that you have taken on that God never assigned to you. Take one step this week toward saying no to it or releasing it.

Memorize the Promise. Commit Philippians 4:6-7 to memory this week. When anxiety or pressure rises, speak it out loud as a declaration of trust.

Closing Reflection

Pastor Mack closed the message with this question: What are you carrying today that Jesus is inviting you to lay down?

Take a few minutes as a group to answer that question honestly. You do not have to share every detail, but consider naming the weight — out loud, with people who will pray with you. Close your group time by praying together, agreeing in faith for one another's specific needs, and trusting that God is working even in the things you cannot yet see.

Key Verse for the Week

Matthew 11:28-30 — Jesus extends an invitation to all who are weary and burdened, promising rest, describing his yoke as easy and his burden as light, and calling his followers to learn from his gentleness and humility.