**Changed Into His Image**

***Lesson Seventeen: Basics for Pressured Believers – Matt. 11:28-30***

**Introduction**: The people of Jesus’ day were weighed down with many pressures. They carried the load of family life and making a living. In addition to these normal pressures, they were burdened with the advancement of the Roman Empire into their daily lives. Add to this the undue pressure from the religious leaders of the day. They placed a yoke upon the people that they themselves were not able to carry (Acts 15:10). Jesus invited the people to a different life. He did not invite them to a life that was free from pressure. Rather, He invited them into a relationship with Himself as their Creator and Redeemer that would enable them to experience peace through the pressures of life. We need to learn the same lesson today.

1. **Looking at Pressure Biblically**
   1. Pressure can come from the relationships and activities of our lives. You will experience pressure as a spouse, a parent, an employee, and as someone involved in the Lord’s work.
   2. There can be added pressure from fear, anger, and unresolved guilt. We will look at the sources of these three forms of pressure so as to find God-given relief.
   3. Pressure first “weighs” upon the mind.
   4. When the mind is not thinking biblically about pressures, some of the following may result: Depression, boredom, listlessness, dullness, lack of interest, irritability, irrational fears, anxiety-problems, compulsive behavior, and change in personal and social habits.
   5. Whatever “weight” is not handled adequately in the mind is borne by the body: Muscular tensions and headaches, insomnia and fatigue, increased or decreased appetite, heart palpitation, itching, ulcers, cramps, and other stomach disorders.
   6. While disciplines of the mind and body are helpful in withstanding the pressures of life, God never intended for man to be able to handle the pressures of life on his own. (John 15:4-6; II Cor. 3:5; 4:7)
2. **Pressure may come from being overcome by sin.** 
   1. There is no greater pressure than the pressure of a guilty conscience.
   2. Look at the pressure David felt from God while he covered his sin. (Ps. 32)
   3. Relief comes from confessing and forsaking sin. (Prov. 28:13; Heb. 12:1; 1 John 1:9; Psa. 139:23-24).
3. **Pressure may come as a result of being overcommitted.**
   1. Remove any responsibilities you have assumed outside the will of God.
   2. We may have activities and responsibilities that are not harmful in themselves, but take up too much time and energy: Hobbies, sports, clubs, second jobs, and additional ministries.
   3. List your God-given roles and responsibilities. Can you say with confidence that God gave these to you? If not, eliminate them from your schedule.
4. **Pressure may come as a result of being overdrawn.**
   1. When a pressure comes, it is first evaluated by the mind.
   2. If the mind believes it is possible to handle the pressure, there is peace.
   3. However, if the mind believes the pressure cannot be handled, the mind becomes anxious.
   4. This is similar to the process of paying your bills. When bills come, you are at peace if there are sufficient funds in the bank to pay the bills. If the bill will overdraw your checking account, you feel pressured.
   5. A believer with a renewed mind sees every pressure and resource from God’s perspective.
      1. He understands God’s love, grace, and sustaining power.
      2. He knows that God’s resources cannot be depleted (2 Pet.

1:3; 2 Cor. 12:9-10).

* + 1. This perspective adds an extra quality of endurance to life that sustains any load God places upon you.

1. **How to Develop a Renewed Mind**
   1. A carnal mind evaluates problems and pressures from a purely human perspective.
      1. “That’s one more crummy thing I have to do this week. I’ll never make it.”
      2. “I think this requirement is stupid, but if that’s the only way I can get what I want, I’ll put up with it.”
      3. “This kind of stuff always happens to me! Doesn’t anybody care?”
      4. “I’ve got enough to worry about already. I don’t need this!”
      5. “I don’t have to take this from anybody.”
   2. James describes the process of the renewed mind. (James 1:21-22).
      1. Stop the old practice – “Lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness.”
      2. Humbly recognize you cannot handle this by yourself – “with meekness,”
      3. Meditate seriously on the Word – “receive…the engrafted word,”
      4. Do what the Word says – “by ye doers of the word.”
2. **The Test of Joy**
   1. If a believer has a renewed mind about his pressures, he can consider them a source of joy. (James 1:2-3)
   2. The recipients of I Peter were persecuted and harassed because they were believers. He urged them to remember God’s purpose for the pressure. (I Pet. 1:7)
   3. They were to think according to God’s perspective (I Pet. 1:13) and the result would be joy.
   4. Any believer can experience that same joy if he handles his pressures God’s way. (Isa. 26:3).