

new summer design!



connecting a personal and small group study with Sunday's sermon



part one of a five part sermon series

Psalm 23

"Everyone's Favorite"

July 22, 2007

personal and small group study

storyline *Author: Kevin Baker, small group pastor*

When my first born was nearly two years old, I would pull her in a wagon to a park a few blocks from our house. Most evenings, it was the center of entertainment for neighborhood children under the eyes of watchful parents, young couples throwing Frisbees, dogs fetching tennis balls. It was a nice little refuge in an area that bordered some of the more notorious sections of town.

One summer evening, my daughter was about her usual climbing along the playground equipment when something bounced near her in the wood chips. I dismissed it as a falling acorn from one of the surrounding oaks. She didn't notice and continued her adventure. Within seconds something again struck the wood chips near her feet. Again I figured something was falling from the trees and looked up expecting to find a squirrel. Finding nothing, I dismissed it again and continued to watch my little girl who remained oblivious. Then, again something hit the wood chips. This time the force created a little crater where the object made impact. This was no acorn falling from the tree. This was something bigger and forceful. And I discovered this was something intentional.

Up to this point, I never really looked around the park. With incoming objects landing precariously close to my little one, I turned my gazing from up to around. It was then that I realized the park was strangely absent of other children, families, couples and dogs. The only others in the park was a group of six young men huddled together a couple of hundred feet away. I moved my daughter to a swing where I could simultaneously push her and watch these guys with my peripheral vision. I turned away from them and looked back just in time to see one of them in full throwing motion. In came a rock about the size of a golf ball hitting again within a few feet of my baby girl. I took a stance placing myself directly between my daughter and the rock throwers. I asked them what their problem was to which they replied by cursing me. I had no reply. I simply stood there facing them with my daughter still on the swing behind me and still clueless to the potential harm that had come her way. They took a few steps toward me, huddled together again, cursed me some more and left.

To say I wasn't scared would be a lie. I always thought of the park as a safe place. But understand, we'd recently had a major drug bust and a local convenience store clerk murdered in our neighborhood. I was once told to go inside my house by a police officer who was in pursuit of an armed robber. I didn't think of those things in this moment. It didn't occur to me that these guys could be dealing drugs or carrying weapons. All that mattered was protecting my daughter. Love had cast out all fear.

This week, we'll explore Psalm 23 in which David describes God as his protector and remover of fears. Learn from David, who was in far more danger than most of us will ever be. His words can help us trust God and fear nothing of this world.

digdeep

Read 1 Samuel 17.12-15

How do you think David feels about being a shepherd while his brothers are engaged in a war?

Describe a time when you felt your work or calling seemed useless, pointless or made no difference to a greater good. How long did it last and how did you endure?

Read 1 Samuel 17.17-24, 32-37

David, young and untrained as a soldier, answers the call to engage a battle that older and experienced fighters are running from. Is David simply young and foolish? How do you explain his actions?

Describe a time you felt inspired to do something in which you either felt afraid of or were told by those with more experience, "That will never work." How did you respond?

What are you afraid of? What do you fear the most in life? (Don't think spiders and public speaking...think rejection, security, aloneness, future, past, death.) How do you respond to the anxieties and trials of life?

Of the 150 psalms in the Bible, Psalm 23 is arguably the most well known and oft quoted, perhaps because it is so personal. It is believed David wrote it while running for his life from a king determined to murder him.

Read Psalm 23

List the provisions David found in God. How does God want you to respond to the anxieties and trials of life?

Is it possible the very difficulties you face today, and how you handle them, are preparing you for something in the future?

Prayer

Tell God what it is that you fear the very most. Lay out all of your insecurities and anxieties before Him. Tell Him your deepest fears. Then claim His promise that He will never abandon you and will never fail you. Release your fears in knowing God is personal, He knows your situation and He is in control.

notes

coreverse

*"And be sure of this: I am with you always,
even to the end of the age."*

Jesus quoted in Matthew 28.20b

