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The Courage to Let Go of Fear and Worry

by Scott Stoner

Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil; for you are with me; your rod and your staff—they comfort me.

—Psalm 23:4

Every time I preach a sermon about worry, people come to me and say, “I struggle with worry so much—you wrote that sermon just for me, didn’t you?” My response is always something like, “Actually I wrote it for me out of my ongoing struggle with worry, but clearly I am not the only one for whom this is a daily issue.”

On a good day I can let go of worry, I can “let go and let God.” On other days I let it go and then take it right back. The author of Psalm 23 also knows about worry and fear. “Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil.” What is comforting to me is that the author is not consumed by fear and worry, but instead focuses on the comfort that God’s presence offers. The confidence in God’s comfort, so beautifully described in this psalm, is why it is so often read at funerals, and why so many of us seek solace in it when we are walking through a valley of loss and grief.

The root meaning of the word *worry* means *to strangle*. That seems appropriate given how worry can constrict our spiritual and emotional well-being. And while it is probably impossible to choose never to worry, we do have the choice to become aware when our worry is excessive, and to make choices that will help us to let go of perhaps not all of it, but most of it. For me, that choice is always a spiritual choice, some version of “letting go and letting God.”

Making It Personal: “Let go and let God,” may seem like an overused cliché, but do you find comfort or wisdom in these words? Does Psalm 23 provide comfort for you in times of worry? Is there a particular line from the psalm that gives you comfort? Have you ever felt that worry was constricting your emotional and/or spiritual well-being?