

Living Stress Free In Today's World

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I. Introductory Remarks.

Is it possible to live stress free in today's world? That's a good question we should all ask ourselves, because stress is one of the prevailing characteristics in today's world. We live in a tension-charged, fast-paced world that is full of demands and complexities that have caused the stress level of the people of our society to reach epidemic proportions.

A couple of questions we must ask ourselves are, "Does Jesus offer us a stress free life?" And does the Bible offer us solutions to living a stress free life? I believe the answer to both of these questions is yes and that's what I want to look at in this message. We will be looking at the subject of stress and the constructive solutions we can apply for living successfully in an environment that fosters stressful living.

1. A Biblical Picture Of Stress Free Living.

Let's begin by looking at a portion of scripture found in Matthew's Gospel that shows us very clearly that Jesus intended for us to have a stress free lifestyle.

Matthew 6:25-33 ...do not worry about your life... Look at the birds of the air... why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field... if God so clothes the grass of the field... will He not much more clothe you... but seek first the kingdom of God... do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.

This passage of scripture offers us some real hope in today's tension-charged, fast-paced world that is full of the many complexities of modern life.

2. Defining Stress.

Stress is simply defined as "a factor that creates a mental, emotional, or physical strain." It is "a state of unresolved tension arising from the pressures, irritations, and demands of life.

In biblical terms, the word "affliction" is the closest equivalent. Affliction can also be defined as "the pressure which affects a person's life." It is a broad term which includes many factors which contribute to stress. Affliction in the Greek means anguish, burdened, persecution, tribulations, and trouble.

Keep in mind that God did not promise us that we would be exempt from the things that cause stress and anxiety, but rather He would enable us to live in such a way that these things would not affect us.

John 16:33 *"These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."*

Stress is a universal problem which periodically troubles Christians and unbelievers alike. Even Paul referred to the stress he experienced when he wrote: "We were pressed out of measure".

2 Corinthians 1:8 *For we do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, of our trouble which came to us in Asia: that we were burdened beyond measure, above strength, so that we despaired even of life.*

II. Common Symptoms Of Stress.

How do you know whether you are experiencing stress or not. Maybe you are and you are not even aware of it. You may think that what you are experiencing is the normal function of life. Stress can breed a host of destructive symptoms which affect us mentally, emotionally, physically, and spiritually. Here are some of the symptoms:

- ▶ mental and emotional fatigue
- ▶ drug and alcohol dependency
- ▶ loss of appetite
- ▶ physical weariness
- ▶ high blood pressure
- ▶ frequent headaches
- ▶ stomach problems
- ▶ heart problems
- ▶ migraines
- ▶ ulcers
- ▶ insomnia
- ▶ hypertension

Stress often produces a sense of anxiety, irritability, frustration, restlessness, and depression. It creates a feeling of hopelessness and disillusionment which undermines a person's sense of purpose, direction, and meaning in life. Stress can keep you from fulfilling God's purpose for your life.

III. Common Causes of Stress.

What are some of the common causes of stress in our lives? There are a number of things that contribute to stressful living, especially in our society today. The unrelenting pressures of contemporary life, the constant challenges and deadlines of our fast-paced society, the ever-changing state of our unstable

world, and the pressures of fear and uncertainties concerning the future all contribute to stressful living.

- the tempo of life the strain of demands and responsibilities
- a failure to seek adequate rest and relaxation
- a poor use of time
- a poor diet
- vitamin deficiencies
- wrong priorities
- spiritual conflicts
- a tendency to overextend ourselves
- lack of exercise
- insufficient communion with God
- unresolved inter-personal conflicts
- emotional problems
- procrastination
- unresolved sins

How to Join the Coronary Club: Membership Requirements

1. Never say No to a request - always say YES.
2. Your job comes first; personal considerations are secondary.
3. Accept all invitations to meetings, banquets, committees, etc.
4. Go to the office evenings, Saturdays, Sundays and holidays.
5. Golf, bowling and hobbies are a waste of time.
6. It is a poor policy to take all the vacation time which is provided to you.
7. Never delegate responsibility to others; carry the whole load at all times.
8. Do not eat a restful, relaxing meal - always plan a conference for the dinner hour.
9. If your work calls for traveling - work all day and drive all night to make your appointment for the next morning.
10. Fishing and hunting are a waste of time and money - you never bring back enough fish or game to justify the expense.
11. Take the briefcase home on the evenings when you do not go to the office. This provides an opportunity to review completely all the troubles and worries of the day.

Unresolved stress can become an extremely destructive condition. The accumulated effect of longstanding stress can eventually lead to a condition which is commonly referred to as "Burn-Out Syndrome."

IV. Principles For Stress Free Living.

Let's keep in mind that God desires for each one of us as His precious people to live a stress free life that is rich in God's fulfillment.

Psalms 66:12 ...*We went through fire and through water; but You brought us*

out to rich fulfillment.

When we look to God's solution in any matter that has the tendency to bring stress in our lives, He will bring us into a rich fulfillment. The key is learning to trust Him and His way rather than our poorly devised plans. Let's look at some of God's principles for stress free living.

1. We Must See Things From God's Perspective.

Life is filled with a wide variety of circumstances. Some situations are positive, some are negative. However, the circumstances we encounter, regardless of the nature, often produce feelings of stress. This is especially true of the adverse situations which suddenly affect or alter the course of our lives.

A great deal of stress can be alleviated or minimized by viewing our circumstances from a godly perspective. If we fail to perceive our life situations, at any point, as God perceives them, then we become susceptible to stress.

Romans 8:28 And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.

This can be a real liberating revelation which has the potential of freeing us from much of the self-imposed stress we experience by seeing our circumstances in a negative light.

In one of Germany's famous art galleries, a painting called "Cloud Lane" hangs at the end of a long dark hall. It appears at first to be a huge, ugly mass of confused color -- unattractive and foreboding. Upon closer examination, however, you see an innumerable company of angels. Theodore Cuyler writes, "How often the soul that is frightened by a trial sees nothing but a conglomeration of broken expectations. But if he analyzes the situation from a position of faith -- he will soon discover that the cloud is God's wonderful chariot of providence, full of angels of mercy."

2. Deal With Unresolved Sins & Conflicts.

Hebrews 12:1-2 *Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.*

Sin generates inner tensions and conflicts and if it's unresolved, whether public or private, we must sincerely seek Christ's cleansing power and forgiveness.

Whatever your conflicts may be, learn to deal with them as they come up. The more you put them off, and the more they pile on top of one another, the more stress you will experience. If you are experiencing irritations in your marriage or whatever, deal with them.

Conflicts with others create incredible amounts of stress. If we are harboring hostility, hatred, resentments, or offense, we should seek genuine reconciliation, healing, and forgiveness through the scriptural steps God provides.

Matthew 5:23-24 *"Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, "leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.*

3. We Must Redeem Our Time.

Many people waste time and manage it poorly. The inevitable result is a stress-filled consciousness.

Ephesians 5:15-16 *See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil.*

This also involves pacing ourselves in such a way that we do not take on too much in a given time, but we understand our limitations. This also involves taking time for rest and relaxation.

4. Give Everything To God In Prayer.

Philippians 4:6-7 *Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.*

A great deal of stress is the direct result of shouldering the burdens of life without turning to The Lord in prayer. We have access to "the peace of God" when we release our burdens to The Lord.

1 Peter 5:7...*casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you.*

When we fail to release our problems and cares to Christ, we begin to

experience increasing tension, anxiety, and fear. Prayer is one of the most powerful remedies for stress.

5. Trust In God's Word.

Romans 15:4 *For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.*

The promises and counsel of scripture provides us with a rich storehouse of stress-relieving comfort and peace. Stress often results from failing to stand upon the absolute reality of God's Word, in spite of our circumstances.

When we confront life's problems, dilemmas, and uncertainties with the reality of God's Word, we can effectively overcome a great deal of stress we suffer.

6. Fellowship With One Another.

Romans 15:32 *that I may come to you with joy by the will of God, and may be refreshed together with you.*

2 Corinthians 7:13 *Therefore we have been comforted in your comfort. And we rejoiced exceedingly more for the joy of Titus, because his spirit has been refreshed by you all.*

Fellowship can often provide a potent remedy for stress. Studies have proven that interaction with loved ones and friends helps relieve the pressures of stress.

Those who isolate themselves and withdraw from people and relationships suffer a greater degree of stress-related problems. Companionship with others provides access to warmth, love, understanding, comfort, counsel, and encouragement.