

Are You Blessed – or Stressed??

Philippians 4:4-9

We all deal with STRESS in different ways. There is GOOD STRESS and there is BAD STRESS! Good stress, also called “eustress”, is very beneficial to our life. It means we stretch ourselves to be our very best. We’ve been taught that stress is a bad thing – but it has a good side.

There is Good Stress and Bad Stress, and it is important that we know the difference. It is obvious that we live in a STRESSFUL WORLD. It’s also obvious that folks in our society don’t know how to deal with stress.

We Can See Stress in The Work Place.

Many jobs can become very stressful. In the military I worked with class A explosives. They are very dangerous. Someone might say that must be an extremely stressful job. What about the person in the human resources office that has 200 employees to keep up with their benefits and deadlines? Any less stressful? No – just a different source for the stress.

We Can See Stress in Marriages.

I have taught many couples that marriage is one of life’s great adventures. One part of the adventure that is a source of strength to both husband and wife is going through all the difficulties that come at you – together. As the stress comes and you work on it together you are made stronger for the effort. Couples who thrive in marriage don’t have LESS stress, they just work on that stress together believing that trials make us stronger and in so doing make the marriage stronger too. Marriages that end are most often to one or both parties not wanting to do the work.

We See Stress in The Doctor’s Office.

Stress can contribute to heart disease, high blood pressure, strokes, depression, and other harmful things. One fourth of all the drugs prescribed in the United States go to the treatment of stress. Yet I remember a time in my life when we did NOT discuss taking pills for stress or depression. Today that is a common conversation.

The Cause of Stress

Think about STRESS as a rubber band. If stretched, it will return to its normal, relaxed position when the external force is removed. The body's stress response is also stretched whenever it is subjected to any emergency or demand. It ought to return to a normal, relaxed state when the demand is removed. If stretched for a long time and held, it loses its elastic properties and will eventually snap.

Stress comes into our life when we feel we have no control over the situation we are facing in life. If we live our life **focusing** on problems, we are going to have stress.

Living can be like going to a restaurant that has a buffet. You see all that food, so you get a little of this and little of that and soon your plate is filled. It is impossible to get anymore on their plate, but you keep trying.

Life is like that. We see all the things we would like to do with our life, and we keep loading our schedule down with all these nice things we would like to do. When we lay down to sleep at night we cannot sleep because we are trying to figure out a way that we can do it all. Many folks could get rid of a lot of stress in their life if they would just be willing to clear their day planners. All the good things we want to accomplish don't have to be done today!

If we insist on living a stress filled life by squeezing more and more things into our schedule, we can look for two things happening:

- (1) We are going to physically collapse under this self-imposed load.
- (2) We are going to fail in our service to God because Satan will see this as an opportunity to not have time for Jesus.

"Is it true", the woman wanted to know, "That the medication you prescribed has to be taken for the rest of my life?" "Yes, I'm afraid so." The doctor told her. There was a moment of silence before the woman continued, "I'm wondering, then, just how serious my condition is. This prescription is marked 'NO REFILLS.'"

What is the number one cause of stress? Focusing **ONLY** on your problems. If we get to the point where we see life as a problem that we have no control over, we are going to have stress.

The Cure for Stress

Most people I know that have lots of stress have a common problem. They have a list of things to do that they consider to be important, and they expect everyone else to consider these things to be as important as they do. There are people who have burdened themselves down with problems, and if you let them, they will burden you down also. There is an old saying; “your failure to plan does **NOT** create an emergency for me.”

Stress is our body’s alarm clock saying, “Watch out! When we find ourselves getting stressed, it is time to cast our cares upon the Lord before we crumble under the load! He can and will handle it.

The routine of life has a way of piling things on us. For example, some folks watch the News every day, but that is not always the best thing to do if you do not want to live under stress. You see, the news media tries to find all the bad news they can find and then when we turn on the news, they want to take all the bad things they have found and **DUMP THEM IN OUR LAPS!** The news media is not concerned about our health, all it is concerned about is ratings. **BAD NEWS INCREASES RATINGS!**

I hate that 49 people died in New Zealand this past week! I hate that. But what in the world am I going to do about it? I could find a way to send some money or aid in some way. But in reality – if I did not know anything about the event, my life would not be changed one bit. Here’s the thing, my knowing about the event – does not change one thing!

It is dangerous when we live under stress every day, seven days a week. If our bodies are held in a constant state of alarm, they will show damaging consequences. So, what should we do to alleviate all this stress in our life?

Remember the story of Mary and Martha hosting Jesus in their home in Luke 10? Martha was fussing and stressing about getting things ready for Jesus. So, focused on this was she that in frustration she complained to Jesus that Mary was not helping her with all these important things. Mary was sitting at Jesus' feet listening to Him teach. In response to Martha's complaint Jesus said, *“Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things, but one thing is necessary. Mary has chosen the good portion, which will not be taken away from her.”*

The answer to avoiding stress is to be like Mary. Look at Luke 10:42 we read, *“but one thing is necessary. Mary has chosen the good portion, which will not be taken away from her.”* WHAT A CONTRAST! Martha thought many things were important, but Mary thought only one thing was important. We must never get so busy with the outward things that we neglect the quiet and peaceful worship of our Lord.

As we close, let me share some things with you that will help cure the stress problems in your life.

LEARN TO PRIORITIZE. Is the thing that is getting you all stressed out really that important? Maybe you can do it later or perhaps not at all.

LEARN TO LEAN ON THE LORD. “leaning on Jesus” that we sing sometimes is so important, But don't just sing about it, do it!

PRAY WITHOUT CEASING. If it is important to you it is important to the Lord. Talk to Him about it.

LIVE ONE DAY AT A TIME. Many folks are carrying today's burdens, past burdens and future burdens. Jesus said, in Mt 6:34 “Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.”

LEARN NOT TO TAKE LIFE TOO SERIOUSLY. Art Linkletter used to have a television program called “People are funny!” Life is to be taken seriously, but sometimes people take things too seriously. Learn to laugh at yourself.

QUIT LISTENING TO THE DEVIL. Stress is mostly a mental condition. Our Father constantly whispers truth, but the enemy constantly whispers lies to us. We decide who we are going to listen to.

Conclusion

Six very simple steps to overcoming stress in your life. Paul had every reason and opportunity to be stressed out in life. Yet what we see in him is an attitude of gratitude for the blessing he enjoyed – even in difficult times. While in Rome under arrest, Paul wrote Philippians 4:8, *“Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.”*