

## “*How Can I Cope with Stress?*”

Jesus Christ was constantly under pressure. There were grueling demands on His time; He rarely had any personal privacy; He was constantly interrupted; people repeatedly misunderstood Him, criticized Him, and ridiculed Him. He had enormous stress which would have caused any of us to cave in.

But as we look at the life of Christ we quickly discover that He remained at peace under pressure. He was never in a hurry. He was always at ease. He had a calmness about His life that enabled Him to handle enormous amounts of stress. How did He do this so successfully? He based His life on sound principles of stress management. If we understand and apply these principles in our lives, we'll experience less pressure and more peace of mind.

### **IDENTIFICATION: KNOW WHO YOU ARE**

Jesus said, "I am the Light of the world. Whoever follows Me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of the world. Whoever follows Me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life" (John 8:12). "I am the Door" (10:9, KJV); "I am the Way and the Truth and the Life" (14:6); "I am the Good Shepherd" (10:11); "I am God's Son" (10:36). Christ knew who He was!

The first principle for handling stress in your life is this: *Know who you are*. It is the principle of identification. Jesus said, "I know who I am. I testify to Myself." This is critically important in stress management because if you don't know who you are, somebody else may try to tell you who *he* thinks you are. If you don't know who you are, you will let other people manipulate you and pressure you into being somebody you aren't.

A lot of stress in life results from our wearing masks, being unreal with others, living double lives, or trying to be somebody we're not. Insecurity always produces pressure in our lives, and when we're insecure we feel pressured to perform and conform. We set unrealistic standards for our lives, and even though we work, work, work, we can't meet those unrealistic standards. Tension and pressure naturally occur as a result.

The first way to balance stress in my life is to get an internal balance of who I am. And I know *who I am* by knowing *whose I am*. I am a child of God. I was put on earth not by accident but for a purpose. I am deeply loved by God. I am accepted by Him. He has a plan for my life, and because He put me here I am significant. And because He put *you* here, *you* are significant. To handle stress you must know who you are. Until you handle this issue, you'll be pressured by insecurity.

### **DEDICATION: KNOW WHOM YOU'RE TRYING TO PLEASE**

The second principle of stress management in the life of Christ is found in John 5:30: "By Myself I can do nothing; I judge only as I hear, and My judgment is just, for I seek not to please Myself, but Him who sent Me."

The principle is this: *Know whom you're trying to please*. You know you can't please everybody, because just about the time you get one group pleased, another group gets mad at you. Even God doesn't please everybody, so it's foolish to try to do something that even God doesn't do!

Jesus knew whom He was trying to please; it was a settled issue with Him: "I'm going to please God the Father." And the Father replied, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matt. 3:17, KJV).

When you don't know whom you're trying to please, you cave in to three things: *criticism* (because you are concerned about what others will think about you), *competition* (because you worry about whether somebody else is getting ahead of you), and *conflict* (because you're threatened when anyone disagrees with you).

If I seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, then all the other necessary things of life will be added unto me (Matt. 6:33). This means that if I focus on pleasing God, it will simplify my life. I will always be doing the right thing, the thing that pleases God, regardless of what anybody else thinks.

We love to blame our stress on other people: "You *made* me ... I *have* to ... I've *got* to." Actually there are few things in life (outside of our employment) that we *must* do. When we say, "I have to, I must, I've got to," we are actually saying, "I choose to, because I don't want to pay the consequences." Hardly anybody *makes* us do anything, so usually we can't blame other people for our stress. When we get under pressure we are *choosing* to allow other people to put us under pressure. We are not victims unless we *allow* ourselves to be pressured by other people's demands.

### **ORGANIZATION: KNOW WHAT YOU'RE TRYING TO ACCOMPLISH**

Here is Christ's third principle for dealing with stress: "Even if I testify on My own behalf, My testimony is valid, for I know where I came from and where I am going" (John 8:14). The principle is this: *Know what you want to accomplish*. Christ said, "I know where I came from and I know where I'm going." Unless you plan your life, and set priorities, you'll be pressured by what other people think is important.

Every day you either live by priorities or you live by pressures. There is no other option. You either decide what is important in your life or else you let other people tell you what is most important in your life. You set priorities or you live by pressures.

It's so easy to operate under the tyranny of the urgent, to come to the end of your day and think, "Have I really accomplished anything? I used a lot of energy and did a lot of things, but did I accomplish anything important?" Busyness is not necessarily productivity. You may be spinning in circles without accomplishing anything.

Preparation causes you to be at ease. To put it another way, "Preparation prevents pressure but procrastination produces it." Good organization and good preparation reduce stress because you know who you are, whom you're trying to please, and what you want to accomplish. Having clear goals greatly simplifies life. Spend a few minutes each day in prayer talking with God. Look at your schedule for the day and decide, "Is this really the way I want to spend a day of my life? Am I willing to exchange twenty-four hours of my life for these activities?"

### **CONCENTRATION: FOCUS ON ONE THING AT A TIME**

At least some people tried to get Jesus detoured from His planned schedule. They tried to distract Him from His goal in life. At daybreak Jesus went out to a solitary place to be alone. But the people went looking for Him even there, and when they found Him "they tried to keep Him from leaving them" (Luke 4:42). He was going to leave but they tried to make Him stay.

Here is how Jesus responded: "I must preach the Good News of the kingdom of God to the other towns also, because that is why I was sent" (v. 43). He refused to be distracted by less important matters. Principle number four for stress management is this: *Focus on one thing at a time*. It is the principle of concentration. Jesus was a master at this. It seemed that everybody tried to interrupt Him; everyone had a Plan B for Him. But Jesus responded, "Sorry, I must keep on moving toward My goal." He kept right on doing what He knew God had told Him to do: preach about the kingdom of God. He was determined. He was persistent. He

concentrated His efforts. When I've got thirty things to do on my desk, I clear my desk and work on one thing. When I finish that I pick up something else. You can't catch two jackrabbits at once. You've got to focus on one.

When we diffuse our efforts, we are ineffective. When we concentrate our efforts, we are more effective. Light diffused produces a hazy glow, but light concentrated produces fire. Use a magnifying glass to concentrate light on a dry leaf, and that leaf will catch fire. Light without a magnifying glass will have no effect, but the glass concentrates it to produce power. Jesus Christ did not let interruptions prevent Him from concentrating on His goal; He did not let others make Him tense or stressed or irritated.

### **DELEGATION: DON'T DO IT ALL YOURSELF**

One day "Jesus went up into the hills and called to Him those He wanted, and they came to Him" (Mark 3:13). He appointed twelve men whom He designated as apostles, so they might be with Him and He could send them out to preach. In other words, He delegated His authority. This is the fifth principle: *Don't try to do it all yourself* Use the principle of delegation.

Do you know why we get uptight and tense? Because we think everything depends on us. Here I am, Atlas, holding up the cares of the world-they're all on my shoulders. If I happen to let go, the world will fall apart. But when I really do let go, the world doesn't fall apart! Jesus enlisted and trained twelve disciples so that they could share the load. He delegated His work. He got other people involved.

Why don't we delegate? Why don't we get other people involved? Why do we try to do it all ourselves? For two reasons. The first reason is *perfectionism*. We think, "If I want a job well done, I'll do it myself." That's a nice idea, but often it doesn't work well because there are just too many things to be done. We simply don't have time to do everything. It's really an egotistical attitude that says, "Nobody, but nobody, can do it like I can." Do you think Jesus would have done a better job than these disciples? Of course He would have. But He let them do the work even though He would have done it better. We need to let other people make some of the mistakes. Don't rob others of an education!

The other reason we don't delegate is because of personal *insecurity*. "What if I turn over this responsibility to someone and he does a better job at it?" That thought is kind of threatening to us. But you won't be threatened by that possibility if you know who you are, whom you're trying to please, what you want to accomplish, and what one thing you want to focus on. In order to be effective *you must* get other people involved, because you can't focus on more than one thing at a time and do it effectively.

### **MEDITATION: MAKE A HABIT OF PERSONAL PRAYER**

Jesus often got up "very early in the morning, while it was still dark ... and went off to a solitary place" to pray (Mark 1:35). The sixth principle of stress management is to *make a habit of personal prayer*. This is the principle of meditation. Prayer is a gigantic stress-reliever. It is a God-given tool for letting off your anxieties. No matter how busy Jesus got, He made it a practice to spend time alone with God. If *Jesus* made time for prayer when He was busy, how much more do you and I need prayer! A quiet time, getting alone with God, can be a decompression chamber for life's stresses. We talk with God in prayer, tell Him what's on our minds, and let Him talk to us as we read the Bible. Then we look at our schedules, evaluate our priorities, and wait for instructions. (In my book *Personal Bible Study Methods [Encouraging Word]* there is a detailed explanation of how to develop and continue the habit of a daily devotional time with God.)

Many of our problems come from our inability to sit still. We just don't know how to be quiet. Most of us cannot sit in a car for five minutes without turning the radio on. If you walk into your house and find that you're all alone, what's the first thing you do? (Probably turn on the TV.) Silence makes us uncomfortable. But God says, "Be still and know that I am God" (Ps. 46:10). One reason many people don't know God personally is that they can't be still. They're too busy to be quiet and think.

Someone said, "It seems to be an ironic habit of man that when he loses his way he doubles his speed" -like an Air Force pilot in World War II who flew out over the Pacific. When he radioed in, the controller asked, "Where are you?" The pilot replied, "I don't know, but I'm making record time!" A lot of people are like that: they are speeding through life but they don't know where they are headed. We need to start our morning with prayer, as Jesus did, and then periodically through the day stop and pray again, to recharge our spiritual batteries.

### **RECREATION: TAKE TIME OFF TO ENJOY LIFE**

Once Jesus' twelve men gathered around Him and reported all that they had done and taught. Because so many people were coming and going they hadn't even been able to eat. So Jesus said to them, "Come with Me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest" (Mark 6:31). Principle number seven for stress management is to *take time off to enjoy life*. It's the principle of relaxation and recreation. Jesus looked at these men who had been working hard without relief and said, "You deserve a break today. Let's get some rest. Let's take some time off." So they got in a boat, rowed to the other side of the lake, and went out to the desert to rest.

One reason why Jesus could handle stress is that He knew when to relax. He frequently went either to the mountains or the desert just to unwind. Rest and recreation in life are not optional. In fact, rest is so important that God included it in the Ten Commandments. The Sabbath was made for man because God knows that our physical, emotional, and spiritual constitutions demand periodic breaks. Jesus survived stress because He enjoyed life. One of my favorite verses, Matthew 11:19 in the Phillips paraphrase, says that Jesus came "enjoying life." Paul wrote that God has provided everything richly for our enjoyment (1 Tim. 6:17). Balance in life is a key to stress management.

### **TRANSFORMATION: GIVE YOUR STRESS TO CHRIST**

The eighth principle of stress management is one that Jesus didn't need because He is the Son of God, but we need it because we're merely human. Jesus says, "Come to Me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light" (Matt. 11:28-30). So this final principle of stress management is: *Give your stress to Christ*. You will never enjoy complete peace of mind until you have a relationship with the Prince of Peace.

Christ did *not say*, "Come to Me and I will give you more guilt, more burdens, more stress, and more worries" -even though that's what a lot of people seem to teach! Some churches tend to create pressure rather than relieve it. But Jesus said, "I want to give you rest. I am the Stress-Reliever. When you get in harmony with Me, I will give you inner strength." Christ can transform your lifestyle from stressful to satisfied. The greatest source of stress comes from trying to live our lives apart from the One who made us, trying to go our own ways, and be our own gods.

What do you need? Pray to Jesus Christ for a transformation. Give your life with all its stresses to Him and say, "Lord, please give me a new life. Replace the pressure I feel with the peace You offer. Help me follow Your principles of stress management. Amen"

Your Pastor Jim



# For March 2016 Walk through the Bible

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
		1 Bible Class @ 1 & 7 PM	2	3	4	5
6	7	8 Bible Class @ 1 & 7 PM	9	10	11	12
13	14	15 Bible Class @ 1 & 7 PM	16	17	18	19
20	21	22 Bible Class @ 1 & 7 PM	23	24 M-Thursday Service 7 PM	25 Good Friday Service 7 PM	26 Easter Satur- day 5 PM
27 Easter Sun- day 10 AM	28	29 NO Bible Class	30	31		

In March, we continue our study of the New Testament Books, particularly the Book of Acts. Our Walk through the Bible Class will meet most Tuesdays in March at 1 or 7 PM. **There will be no class on March 26<sup>th</sup>, as Pastor Jim will be in Virginia, weather permitting.**

If you have not been involved so far, I would personally ask you to think about joining our study.

If you decide to join us for the first time, simply let Pastor Jim know, so that ample amount of materials can be prepared. Thank you.

## Could You Help Supervising our Rentals?

We are in need of additional volunteers to help supervise the gym rentals. This is not hard work. All one needs to do make sure doors are open for the rental, remain on site should any questions come up and close up after the rental is over. If you can help out, simply give Kim Koepf a call (440) 387-2132 and get your name on the list. Thank You!

## Could You Help Being a Counter for the Church?

We are in need of additional volunteers to help with counting our offerings. This is not hard work and it means usually once a month that a person would be on a counting team. If you can help, please give the Church Office a call (440) 324-4070 and let our secretary Chris know. Thank You!

## HOLY WEEK



## WORSHIP SCHEDULE

- Maundy Thursday – March 24<sup>th</sup> at 7 pm
- Good Friday – March 25<sup>th</sup> at 7 pm
- Easter Sunday Weekend with Holy Communion
  - Saturday Easter Vigil – March 26<sup>th</sup> at 5 pm
  - Sunday Easter Service – March 27<sup>th</sup> at 10 am

**Coming Winter Weather:** If you are ever in doubt if our worship service is on or off, simply call the Church Office. If you hear the “normal”



greeting, services are on as scheduled. If there is a cancellation, the first thing you hear will be Pastor Jim saying that the service has been cancelled.

## **Next Teaching Event in March**

**Jewish Roots of Believers in Yeshua (Jesus)**

# **FEASTS & HOLIDAYS *of the* BIBLE**

**On Sunday, March 20<sup>th</sup> at 7 PM, Pastor Jim will lead you to an understanding of the Jewish Feasts and Holidays and how Jesus fulfilled each one of them, especially through His Death and Resurrection.**