

Dealing with Stress

Preview

We live in a fast-paced world in which we are constantly dealing with mountains of homework, complicated relationships, family members, work issues, and the list goes on. It is easy to allow all of these factors to overwhelm us and cause stress in our lives, but when we take a step back and look at the goodness of God, we can see there are many more reasons to feel blessed than to feel stressed.

Praise

Invite each person to give an example of how he or she is blessed by God.

Parable

The Bible gives us a telling example of a stressed-out woman in Luke 10:40-42 (NKJV). Jesus entered the village of Bethany and was greeted by a woman named Martha, who invited Him into her home to eat and rest. Martha had a sister named Mary who was so eager to hear Jesus' teaching that she ignored her responsibilities as one of the hostesses and instead sat at Jesus' feet. That left all the work of feeding Jesus and His disciples to Martha. Feeling overwhelmed, Martha finally snapped, "Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Therefore, tell her to help me" (v. 40).

Martha was clearly stressed at this point; the Lord and His disciples were crowded into her house, and it was up to her to fix and serve food and drinks to nearly twenty people. However, Jesus replied, "Martha, Martha, you are worried and troubled about many things. But one thing is needed, and Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her" (vv. 41-42). Martha was all in a dither, but Mary was cool. What was the difference? Which sister enjoyed Jesus' presence more? How does this example relate to us as teenagers in the twenty-first century? Part of the answer revolves around knowing the best way to deal with stress.

Present

Stress is a fact of life. Things that stress out some people don't cause others to be troubled. In other words, everyone has their own stressors, and everyone tries to cope in their own way, whether healthy or unhealthy. Some people turn to binge eating, compulsive spending, or taking drugs, while others just let the stress build and build until they eventually lash out in anger at someone. These are unhealthy ways to deal with stress. What is the best and healthiest way? The answer is in the Bible.

I Peter 5:6-7 says, "Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time: casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you."

We see in this verse that we are to cast all of our cares on the Lord because He cares about us.

Philippians 4:6 says, "Be anxious for nothing, but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God."

This verse teaches us that it's okay to let God know we're feeling stressful. In fact, this verse encourages us to tell Him! When we cast our cares on the Lord and bring our requests to Him, it relieves our anxiety knowing that the Creator of all things can take care of our problem.

Jesus said in John 14:27, "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."

Jesus is the Prince of Peace, and He gives peace in ways no one else can. This is how we know that turning to unhealthy coping mechanisms are not of God. Jesus tells us to not be afraid and troubled, and we can accomplish this by trusting in the Lord with all of our hearts, knowing He is always with us and will continue to bless us through every season of life. Placing our entire lives into His care includes the stressful times.

The Lord will not be shocked by our confession of stress. He knows it is a common human condition. That's why He

included teachings about it in His Word. When we look to the Bible, we can see the framework for dealing with stress: basically, we are called to give it all to God. By surrendering our stress to God, we are placing the situation in His hands, and there is no better person for the job than our great Creator.

Practice

- A good stress reliever is to simply divide a paper into two sections, with one side labeled "Reason I'm Stressed."
- This is where you can go crazy. Write down everything that stresses you out. Label the other side "Reasons I'm Blessed." Go equally as crazy on this side, writing things such as having a home, having food, having clothes, having a school to go to, having breath in your lungs, having eyes to see, and so on. When we put these two lists side by side, we begin to see that we have so much to be thankful for.
- We may be stressed at the present time, but we are blessed to such a high degree that our stressful situations are dwarfed by the goodness of God.

Pray

- Lord, I give You all of my worries, all of my doubt, and all of my fears. I place my life in Your capable hands and rely on You to take care of my anxieties. Thank You for all of the countless blessings You have given to me in my life, and I pray that I may be able to turn to You in my times of stress. Thank You for all that You do in my life.

Plus

- Throughout this week, when you feel stressed, sit down and say a small prayer, giving your stress back to God. Think of how blessed you really are and encourage others around you to do the same.