

Overcoming Stress: The Biblical Way

01 - Overcoming Stress: The Biblical Way

Sunday, 15 Sept 2013 | Church on the Park

Text: Phil. 4:6-7

Theme: Stress is something that every human being experiences everyday. How can you overcome stress in a biblical way?

Intro: Three Facts about Stress: 1) Everyone experiences stress, and sometimes it's overwhelming; 2) If stress is not handled correctly it will damage you and may even kill you; 3) Stress can strengthen you if you do things God's way.

1) Stress is a fact of life. How you respond to it makes all the difference in its affect on you and others.

- How can we handle stress in a **Biblical way**? The **world** offers it's way—some of their ways are **harmless** and some **harmful**.
 - Deep breathing is harmless; but Yoga is harmful because it's based in false spirituality (worshipping idols). Exercise is harmless, but drunkenness or taking illegal drugs to forget the pain is harmful.
- One time a Christian couple asked me **how I handled stress**.
 - Do I scream or lash out at people? What's my way of coping?
 - I said, "Prayer." They looked at me in a demeaning way, ridiculing what I said. "No, No, No, give us a real way to handle stress...that's not real." I've prayed and it doesn't help. My answer after seven years of pondering what they said is still the same, "prayer is the chief way I handle stress—real authentic prayer that brings you into God's presence, prayer that is you pouring out your heart to God. Not religious praying, but actually encountering and connecting with God."
- How did stress affect the **first people** on planet earth?
 - Even in **the Garden** there was stress and pressure. Eve was tempted by the serpent, stress was put on her to disobey God. Adam and Eve did not overcome the pressure and so death was introduced into the world.
 - **Stress tests us**
 - During a time of stress we either cave in or call on God for strength.
 - **Cain** chose to handle stress wrongly. He was upset because God didn't accept his sacrifice, but accepted his brother's. So what did he do? To deal with the stress and personal anguish, he killed his brother.
 - It may be said that all the **sins** of the world are motivated by some sort of stress.
 - The Jews built a **Golden Calf** and wildly partied around it. Why? They were stressed that Moses was away so long, they thought they were forsaken by God and Moses, they became impatient and wanted to release the tension.
 - **Unbiblical ways** to deal with stress: False spirituality - psychics, mediums, spiritualists are all ways that people deal with stress; Wild Parties and getting

drunk are often because people are trying to release tension. Adultery is caused by someone looking for stress relief. Stress relief does not mean it's not sin.

2) There are many biblical ways to respond to stress. Prayer is one of the chief biblical ways that men and women of God respond to stress.

- “Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 4:6-7)
- First, who said this? What is the **context**?
 - It's Paul in prison. Paul who experience more stress than us all. Beaten. Rejected. Persecuted. Stoned. Whipped. Hated. Single.
 - Paul's list of troubles: 2 Cor 11:23-29.
 - Prayer was tried and tested by Paul and proved powerful and effective in handling the worst situations.
- “Do not be **anxious** about anything.” It's the anxiety which stress can produce that causes the damage to our inner well-being. Anxiety, fear and worry.
 - We will all experience anxiety, but it's what we do with it that counts.
- “in **every** situation”
 - This does not just apply to Sunday church. This isn't confined to religious meetings. It's for every situation.
- “by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.”

3) It's a certain kind of praying that enables us to overcome stress—it's genuine and effective prayer.

- In our passage God is telling us to be specific in our prayers: “present your requests to God.”
 - Be **specific** about the things that are bothering you and what you would like God to do.
 - Cancer free declaration for my mom.
- Be **persistent** and **consistent** with your praying.
 - Matt. 7:7-8: “Ask and keep on asking until you receive. Seek and keep on seeking until you find...”
- Also remember, prayer is much deeper than asking God for things. It involves that, but is multi-layered and multi-faceted. Prayer means getting real with God. Pouring out our hearts to him. Confessing our sins. Repenting. Seeking the face of Jesus. Coming into God's presence. Worshipping. Praising. Thanking God. Hearing from God. Welcoming his Holy Spirit. Praying for others. Crying. Laughing. Groaning. Discovering God's ways. Humbling yourself.
- Be **thankful** when you are praying
 - Remember what God has done and thank him for it. See what God is doing and thank him for it. Even thank him in advance for what he is going to do.
- Be **pure**. “If I had cherished sin in my heart, the Lord would not have listened; but God has surely listened and has heard my prayer” (Psa. 66:18-19).

4) Prayer is about fellowship with God and exchanging our stressful life with his shalom.

- Phil. 4:7 - “And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus”
- The **end goal** of effective praying is peace guarding your heart and soul.
 - **God’s peace** means his well-being, wholeness, tranquility, inner-harmony, prosperity and every kind of good.
- This is God’s **tangible peace** which can be felt on the inside—it’s **strong** and acts like a **fortress**.
 - The lady in the grocery with the four kids. Her anxiety and stress was like a cloud to all around her.
 - Possessing God’s tangible shalom in your life—peace, wholeness, well-being and prosperity.
- We need peace inside us if we are going to minister peace to our families and children.

Conclusion: You can overcome stress by genuinely and effectively praying—by exchanging your anxiety for God’s peace.

END NOTES

Since stress is a reality, what are Biblical ways to overcome stress? In this new series I want to look at different godly ways to cope with stress—it will take more than one teaching because it’s such a big subject.

μεριμνάω *merimnáō*; contracted *merimnṓ*, fut. *merimnésō*, from *mérimna* (3308), anxious care. To care, be anxious, troubled, to take thought, used in an absolute sense (Matt. 6:27, 31; Luke 12:25; Phil. 4:6), followed by the dat. (Matt. 6:25; Luke 12:22); by “unto tomorrow” (a.t. [Matt. 6:34]); by *perí* (4012), concerning, with a gen. (Matt. 6:28; Luke 12:26), with the acc. (Luke 10:41); by *hupér* (5228), regarding, with the gen. (1 Cor. 12:25); by *pōs* (4459), how (Matt. 10:19; Luke 12:11). By implication it means to care for or take care of (Matt. 6:34; 1 Cor. 7:32–34; Phil. 2:20).

Deriv.: *promerimnáo* (4305), to be anxious ahead of time.

Syn.: *mélō* (3199), to be concerned; *epimeléomai* (1959), and *phrontízō* (5431), to take care of; *phronéō* (5426), to take thought; *episkopéō* (1983), to oversee; *pronoéō* (4306), to provide for or exercise providence.

Ant.: *ameléō* (272), to neglect; *paratheōréō* (3865), to overlook; *oligōréō* (3643), to have little regard for, despise.¹

προσευχή *proseuché*; gen. *proseuchés*, fem. noun from *proseúchomai* (4336), to offer prayer (James 5:17). Prayer, prayer to God.

¹ Zodhiates, S. (2000). *The complete word study dictionary: New Testament* (electronic ed.). Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers.

(I) Particularly: *proseuché prós tón Theón* (*prós* [4314], to; *Theós* [2316] God), prayer to God (Acts 12:5; Rom. 15:30); *proseuché tou Theou*, literally, prayer of God, but since God does not pray, it is prayer to God (Luke 6:12). Generally and in an absolute sense (Matt. 17:21; 21:13, *oikos proseuchés* [*oikos* {3624}, house], house of prayer, 21:22; Mark 9:29; 11:17; Luke 19:46; 22:45; Acts 1:14; 3:1; 6:4; 10:31; Rom. 12:12; 1 Cor. 7:5; Eph. 6:18; Phil. 4:6; Col. 4:2; James 5:17). In the pl. (Acts 2:42; 10:4; Rom. 1:9; Eph. 1:16; Col. 4:12; 1 Thess. 1:2; 1 Tim. 2:1; 5:5; Phile. 1:4, 22; 1 Pet. 3:7; 4:7; Rev. 5:8; 8:3, 4; Sept.: 2 Chr. 6:19, in the sing.; Ps. 4:1).

(II) Metonymically for a house or a place of prayer (Acts 16:13, 16). Such places for social prayer and devotion were in the outskirts of those towns where the Jews were unable or not permitted to have a synagogue, and were usually near a river or the seashore for the convenience of ablution (to which the Jews were dedicated).

Syn.: *paráklēsis* (3874), entreaty; *déēsis* (1162), supplication.

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δέησις déēsis; gen. *deēseōs*, fem. noun from *déomai* (1189), to make known one's particular need. Want, need. In the NT, supplication or prayer for particular benefits, petition for oneself (Luke 1:13; Phil. 4:6; Heb. 5:7; 1 Pet. 3:12; Sept.: Job 27:9; Ps. 39:12; 40:2; 1 Kgs. 8:28, 30); in behalf of others (Phil. 1:19; James 5:16); with *hupér* (5228), on behalf of (Rom. 10:1; 2 Cor. 1:11; 9:14; Phil. 1:4; 2 Tim. 2:1); with *perí* (4012), concerning (Eph. 6:18); generally spoken of any prayer (Luke 2:37; 5:33; Acts 1:14; Eph. 6:18; Phil. 1:4; 1 Tim. 5:5; 2 Tim. 1:3; Sept.: 1 Kgs. 8:45; 2 Chr. 6:40).

Syn.: *proseuché* (4335), a more general word for prayer to God in particular which is a more sacred word than *déēsis*; *euché* (2171), translated "prayer," but in reality meaning a vow or wish; *énteuxis* (1783), intercession, a petition to a superior; *aitēma* (155), something asked for, request as if it were from an inferior to a superior; *hiketēria* (2428), originally an olive branch carried by a suppliant.

Ant.: *autárkeia* (841), self-sufficiency.³

εὐχαριστία eucharistía; gen. *eucharistías*, fem. noun from *eucháristos* (2170), thankful, grateful, well-pleasing. Gratitude, thankfulness, thanksgiving (Acts 24:3). In Paul's writings and in the Book of the Revelation, it means thanksgiving, thanks, i.e., the expression of gratitude to God. Followed by the dat. *tō Theō*, to God (2 Cor. 9:11, 12; Rev. 7:12). Generally (1 Cor. 14:16; 2 Cor. 4:15; Phil. 4:6; Col. 2:7; 4:2; 1 Thess. 3:9; 1 Tim. 2:1; 4:3, 4). In Eph. 5:4, grateful speech or discourse. See Amos 4:5. Eucharist is used in modern language for Holy Communion, embodying the highest act of thanksgiving for the greatest gift received from God, the sacrifice of Jesus. It is the grateful acknowledgement of past mercies.

Syn.: *eulogía* (2129), praise; *makarismós* (3108), the ascription of the blessed state and recognition of it.

² Zodhiates, S. (2000). *The complete word study dictionary: New Testament* (electronic ed.). Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers.

³ Zodhiates, S. (2000). *The complete word study dictionary: New Testament* (electronic ed.). Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers.

Ant.: *katára* (2671), curse.⁴

αἴτημα *aitēma*; gen. *aitēmatos*, neut. noun from *aitéō* (154), to ask. Petition, request, a thing asked or an asking. Occurs twice in the NT (Phil. 4:6; 1 John 5:15) in the sense of a petition of men to God, both times in the pl. They are particular requests of which prayer (*proseuché* [4335]) may consist, e.g., in the Lord's Prayer there are seven *aitēmata*, petitions, although some have regarded the first three as *euchaí* (2171), wishes. *Aitēma* is used in Luke 23:24 in the sense of petition by the Jews for releasing Barabbas.

Syn.: *déēsis* (1162), supplication or prayer for particular benefits; *énteuxis* (1783), intercession; *eucharistía* (2169), thanksgiving; *hiketēría* (2428), entreaty, supplication; *boulēma* (1013), will, purpose; *boulé* (1012) will; *epithumía* (1939), a longing; *thélēma* (2307), volition, determination; *paráklēsis* (3874), request, imploration.⁵

εἰρήνη *eirēnē*; gen. *eirēnēs*, fem. noun. Peace.

(I) Particularly in a single sense, **the opposite of war and dissension** (Luke 14:32; Acts 12:20; Rev. 6:4). Among individuals, peace, harmony (Matt. 10:34; Luke 12:51; Acts 7:26; Rom. 14:19). In Heb. 7:2, "King of peace," means a peaceful king.

Metaphorically peace of mind, tranquility, arising from reconciliation with God and a sense of a divine favor (Rom. 5:1; 15:13; Phil. 4:7 [cf. Is. 53:5]).

(II) By implication, **a state of peace, tranquility** (Luke 2:29; 11:21; John 16:33; Acts 9:31; 1 Cor. 14:33; 1 Thess. 5:3; Sept.: Judg. 6:23; Is. 14:30; Ezek. 38:8, 11).

(III) Peace, meaning health, welfare, prosperity, every kind of good. In Luke 1:79, "the way of peace" means the way of happiness; 2:14; 10:6, "son of peace" means son of happiness, i.e., one worthy of it; 19:42; Rom. 8:6; Eph. 6:15, "gospel of peace" means gospel of bliss, i.e., which leads to bliss; 2 Thess. 3:16. "The God of peace" means the author and giver of blessedness (Rom. 15:33; 16:20; Phil. 4:9; 1 Thess. 5:23; Heb. 13:20 [cf. Sept.: Is. 9:6, "the Prince of Peace"]). "Your peace" means the good or blessing which you have in Christ and share through salutation and benediction (Matt. 10:13; Luke 10:6; John 14:27). The expression "with peace" means with good wishes, benediction, kindness (Acts 15:33; Heb. 11:31). Simply "in peace" (1 Cor. 16:11; Sept.: Gen. 26:29; Ex. 18:23). As used in formulas of salutation, either at meeting or parting, see *aspázomai* (782), to embrace, to greet. Thus on meeting, the salutation is "Peace be unto you [*eirēnē humín*]," meaning every good wish (Luke 24:36; John 20:19, 21, 26; Dan. 10:19). Also in letters (Rom. 1:7; 2:10; 1 Cor. 1:3; 2 Cor. 1:2; Gal. 1:3). In Luke 10:5, "Peace unto this house" (a.t.) means every good wish for this house; Sept.: Judg. 19:20; 1 Chr. 12:18. At parting, *húpage* (5217), go, meaning to go away in peace (Mark 5:34; James 2:16). The same with the verb *poreúou* from *poreúomai* (4198), to go in peace (Luke 7:50; 8:48; Acts 16:36; Sept.: Judg. 18:6; 1 Sam. 1:17; 20:42).

⁴ Zodhiates, S. (2000). *The complete word study dictionary: New Testament* (electronic ed.). Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers.

⁵ Zodhiates, S. (2000). *The complete word study dictionary: New Testament* (electronic ed.). Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers.

(IV) In the OT the equivalent word *shalom* (7965) meant wholeness, soundness, hence health, well-being, prosperity; more particularly, peace as opposed to war (Judg. 4:17; 1 Sam. 7:14; Eccl. 3:8 [cf. Luke 14:32; Acts 12:20; Rev. 6:4]), or concord as opposed to strife (Ps. 28:3; Jer. 9:8; Obad. 1:7 [cf. Matt. 10:34; 1 Cor. 7:15; Eph. 4:3 {see also Acts 24:2; 1 Thess. 5:3; Ps. 122:7; Is. 52:7; Jer. 29:7}]).

(V) God is said to be a God of peace, not as one who needs peace, but one who dispenses peace. He expects peace of His people, meaning **the absence of confusion** (Rom. 14:17; 1 Cor. 7:15; 14:33; Eph. 4:3; Heb. 12:14; Ps. 34:14; 35:20; Zech. 8:16). He rewards those who practice this peace (James 3:18 [cf. Matt. 5:9]), but those who disregard it are punished (Rom. 3:17 [cf. Is. 59:8, 9]). Peace is a blessing of which God alone is the author (Job 25:2; Ps. 147:14; Is. 45:7). He, being the author of peace, is the only one who can bestow it upon the righteous (Gen. 15:15, upon Abraham; 2 Kgs. 22:20, upon Josiah; Ps. 37:37, upon the perfect man; 119:165, upon those who love God's law; Prov. 3:2, upon those who follow divine wisdom [cf. James 3:18; Ps. 4:8; Job 5:23; Is. 32:17]). It is a gift which God desires to impart to all His people (Jer. 29:11), but which He is often unable to grant because of their sins (Sept.: Is. 48:18; Jer. 4:10 [cf. Jer. 4:14]). There can be no peace to the wicked (Sept.: Is. 57:19 [cf. Is. 57:20, 21; 48:22]). Those who hope for it, while continuing in their iniquity, are self-deceived (Sept.: Jer. 6:14; 8:15 [cf. Jer. 8:11; Ezek. 13:10, 16]).

(VI) Peace is the paramount blessing that Israel was looking for in the messianic kingdom (Num. 25:12; Lev. 26:6; Is. 54:10; Ezek. 34:25; 37:26; Mal. 2:5, 6). The messenger who brings tidings of the coming salvation is one who publishes peace (Is. 52:7; Nah. 1:15). The Messiah Himself is the Prince of Peace (Is. 9:6 [cf. Mic. 5:5; Zech. 6:13]). Of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end (Is. 9:7). See Ps. 29:11; 37:11; 72:3, 7, "In his days the righteous shall flourish; and abundance of peace so long as the moon endureth"; 122:7; Is. 54:13; 60:17; 66:12; Jer. 4:10; 6:14; 8:15; 14:13; 23:17; 28:9; 33:6; Hag. 2:9. The NT shares with the OT the view of peace as a characteristic of the messianic time (Luke 1:79; 2:14; 19:38; Acts 10:36). The identification of the coming of the Lord Jesus with the coming of the Messiah is often what the disciples meant with their greetings on their missionary journeys (Matt. 10:13; Luke 10:5, 6). In His farewell words to His disciples, Jesus names peace as a gift to them from Himself (John 14:27; 16:33, "My peace I give unto you . . . these things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace").

(VII) Characteristic of the NT is the view of peace as the present possession of the believer. In a single case it is used by Paul of that future blessedness which is to be expected by the righteous and the *Parousía* or Second Coming (Rom. 2:10), but in general it denotes the state of the Christian in this present life. It is so used by Jesus in His farewell promise, "My peace I give unto you" (John 14:27). It is thus represented by Paul (Rom. 5:1; 8:6; 15:13; 2 Thess. 3:16; Col. 3:15), in which case peace acquires the technical meaning of the tranquil state of a soul assured of its salvation through Christ, fearing nothing from God and consequently content with its earthly lot, whatever it is. This is the direct result of redemption by Christ (Eph. 2:15, 17) and **consists primarily of a state of conscious reconciliation with God (Rom. 5:1), although it is often used in a broader sense to denote all the blessings which accompany and flow from that reconciliation (Rom. 1:7; 1 Cor. 1:3; 2 Thess. 3:16).**

(VIII) Words with which *eirēnē* are associated in the NT are as follows: *agápē* (26), love (2 Cor. 13:11; Eph. 6:23, “Peace . . . and love with faith”); *cháris* (5485), grace (Rom. 1:7; 1 Cor. 1:3; 2 Cor. 1:2; Gal. 1:3; Eph. 1:2; Phil. 1:2; Col. 1:2; 1 Thess. 1:1; 2 Thess. 1:2; 2 Tim. 1:2; Titus 1:4; Phile. 1:3; 1 Pet. 1:2; 2 Pet. 1:2; 2 John 1:3; Rev. 1:4); *dóxa* (1391), glory, and *timé* (5092), honor as the eschatological reward for working well (Rom. 2:10); *dikaíosúnē* (1343), righteousness; *chará* (5479), joy (Rom. 14:17); hope and joy (Rom. 15:13); peace and mercy (Gal. 6:16) *aspháleia* (803), safety, security, as the opposite of eschatological peril (1 Thess. 5:3). The NT concept of peace has nothing to do with the Stoic concept of *apátheia* (n.f.), indifference or apathy, and the Epicurean *ataraxía* (n.f.), selfish nondisturbance. The peace which God gives is never to be identified with selfish unconcern (cf. 1 Cor. 7:15; Phil. 4:7; Col. 3:15). God’s peace is independent of outside conditions and is the fruit of an objective, real salvation with God.

Deriv.: *eirēneúō* (1514), to bring peace, reconcile; *eirēnikós* (1516), peaceful; *eirēnopoíēō* (1517), to make peace without necessarily effecting a change in the person or persons involved.

Syn.: *hēsuchia* (2271), quietness; *galénē* (1055), tranquility, calm.

Ant.: *pólemos* (4171), war; *agón* (73), fight, conflict; *stenochōría* (4730), narrowness of room, anguish, distress; *sunoché* (4928), restrained anxiety; *mérimna* (3308), distraction, anxiety; *phóbos* (5401), fear; *taraché* (5016), disturbance; *súgchusis* (4799), confusion; *thórubos* (2351), disturbance, tumult, uproar; *schísma* (4978), split, division, schism; *máchē* (3163), fight, strife.⁶

⁶ Zodhiates, S. (2000). *The complete word study dictionary: New Testament* (electronic ed.). Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers.