

OVERCOMING STRESS

A **MANNAHOUSE** RESOURCE



INTRODUCTION

Stress is one of the prevailing characteristics of the twentieth century. We live in a tension-charged, fast-paced, "pressure cooker" world. The complexities of modern life have caused stress to reach epidemic proportions.

Feelings of stress affect everyone. Even Christians are subject to it's affects. The ever-increasing frequencies of stress-related problems presents a serious challenge to the church to offer scriptural guidelines for overcoming this problem.

In this booklet we will examine the subject of stress and will present some constructive steps for successfully confronting this common dilemma.

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WHAT IS 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 persons life.” It is a broad term which includes many factors which contribute to stress.

Though we may have difficulty defining stress, we are all familiar with its effects. It 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*”** (II Cor. 1:8, KJV)

WHAT ARE THE EFFECTS OF STRESS?

Stress can breed a host of destructive symptoms which can effect us mentally, emotionally, physically, and spiritually.

These can include:

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

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.

As we can see, stress is a potentially deadly condition. It has many detrimental side effects which can gradually undermine our well-being if not handled properly.

COMMON SOURCES OF STRESS

A multitude of factors contribute to stress. These can include positive and negative circumstances, unexpected adversities, or stressful situations and encounters. **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 also create stress.**

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

THE POTENTIAL DANGER OF UNRESOLVED STRESS

Unresolved stress, regardless of the source, can become an extremely destructive condition. The accumulating effect of long-standing stress can eventually lead to a condition which is commonly referred to as **“BURN-OUT SYNDROME.”**

Burn-out syndrome strikes people in all walks of life. **Burn-out syndrome is a “state of disillusionment arising from a sense of utter mental, emotional, physical, or even spiritual exhaustion.”** But it is not a condition which is inevitable or incurable. **Stress, in any form, can be overcome** through the spiritual guidelines which God provides.

On the following pages we will examine ten steps for successfully combating stress in our lives.

1. VIEW

Life is filled with a wide variety of circumstances. Some situations are positive, some are negative. However, the circumstances we encounter, regardless of 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 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.

One of the greatest truths a Christian can embrace is the scriptural revelation that **"ALL THINGS WORK TOGETHER FOR GOOD TO THOSE WHO LOVE GOD"** (Rom. 8:28). This is a liberating revelation which can free us from much of the self-imposed stress we experience by seeing our circumstances in negative light.

2. PACE YOURSELF

“...and let us RUN WITH PATIENCE the race that is set before us.” (Heb. 12:1, KJV). A wise athlete learns to set a proper pace for his life if he, or she, expects to finish the race.

Too many believers have not learned to regulate the tempo of their life. They have fallen in step with the “rush hour” spirit of this age. They sprint through life, racing from one stoplight, deadline, and appointment to the next without taking their time.

This “get there yesterday” mentality is a significant contributing factor to stress. It exerts internal pressure upon our nervous system and produces a tension charged environment for us. Christians must respond to the warning, “Slow down, you move too fast”, or they will suffer the consequences of stress.

3. REDEEM THE TIME

“See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, REDEEMING THE TIME...” (Eph. 5:15-16). A wise use of our time is an important ingredient in relieving potential stress.

The daily schedule of some people is so chronically cluttered, cramped, and congested that they suffer stress. **Many people waste time and manage it poorly.** The inevitable result is a stress filled consciousness.

Each of us must periodically examine our use of time and carefully consider our priorities, commitments, and timetables. Our time must be structured wisely. **We must budget our time and spend it in the most beneficial manner.** This may require eliminating activities, re-evaluating priorities, saying “no”, and restructuring our time.

4. REST AND RELAXATION

*“for in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, and **on the seventh day HE RESTED AND WAS REFRESHED**”* (Ex. 31:17).
God set an excellent example by creating a day for rest and refreshing.

Rest and relaxation are strong antidotes for stress. But the problem with many stress-prone people is that they have never learned the value of rest and relaxation. **Some Christians seldom rest or cannot enjoy relaxation because of a false spirituality which mistakenly assumes rest is somehow worldly or a sign of slothfulness.** They embrace an “I’ll burn out for Jesus” mentality. However, without an occasional break from our busy schedules, we subject ourselves to increasing stress. We burn the candles at both ends and eventually burn out.

5. REST IN GOD

Not only do our bodies and minds require regular periods of rest and relaxation, but **our spirits need to be regularly refreshed in the presence of God.**

Many Christians have become so involved in the business of serving God and fulfilling spiritual responsibilities that they overlook a vital dimension in their relationship and experience in Christ. A lack of spiritual communion is a common cause of tension and stress in the Christian life.

Christians cannot function well without a vital communion with God. God has provided some helpful means for finding rest in Him. **An important way to achieve this is through regular worship, devotion, and prayer.** This is an essential source of spiritual refreshing and renewal through meaningful contact with the person and presence of God.

*** Martha versus Mary** (read Luke 10:38-42)

Many Christians have fallen into the “Martha syndrome.” They scurry frantically about the kingdom doing this and doing that without ever taking quality time to sit at Christ’s feet and commune with Him.

It is good to be actively involved in serving Christ, but we must give attention to what Jesus referred to as “that good part” (Luke 19:42). ***If we fail to seek rest and refreshing through a vital and intimate communion with God, we will eventually become “worried and troubled about many things” like Martha*** (Luke 10:41).

When our lives become cluttered, overtaxed, and overburdened, we become subject to stress. **Quality time spent with God is never wasted time.** It is a powerful ingredient for alleviating stress.

6. PRAYER

“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 in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 4:6-7).

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.

The scriptures speak of “*casting all your care upon Him; for He cares for you*” (1 Pet 5:7). 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.

7. TRUST IN GOD'S WORD

*"For whatever things that were written before, were written for our learning, **that we THROUGH THE PATIENCE AND COMFORT OF THE SCRIPTURES might have hope"** (Rom. 15:4).*

The promise 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, dilemma's, and uncertainties with the reality of God's Word, we can effectively overcome a great deal of stress that we suffer from. When we firmly fix our confidence and faith on God's answers to life's problems, we have an effective safeguard against stress.

8. FELLOWSHIP

*“And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, **NOT FORSAKING THE ASSEMBLING OF OURSELVES TOGETHER**, as is the manner of some...” (Heb. 10:24-25).*

Fellowship can often provide a potent remedy for stress. Studies have proven that interaction with loved ones and friends help 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, counsel, and encouragement. Therefore, we should endeavor to spend regular time with friends and loved ones, doing things together, sharing with each other, having fun, and enjoying rest and relaxation.

9. DEAL WITH ANY UNRESOLVED SINS

If we ignore sin or fail to deal with it properly, we can gradually pay the price in increasing feelings of stress. **Sin generates inner tensions and conflicts.**

Occasionally, sin is the root problem of a person's stress. If we have any unresolved sin's in our life, whether public or private, we must sincerely seek Christ's cleansing power and forgiveness.

This may involve a healing of some inter-personal conflict with another person. **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.

10. WE MUST WATCH OUR HEALTH

Physical factors often play an important role in stress. Stress can often be attributed to a failure to execute sound principles of good health in an individual's life.

If we neglect or unconsciously abuse our bodies, we can suffer the consequences of stress. We can help prevent stress if we follow the basic rules of good health.

We must exercise regularly, get a proper amount of sleep, and maintain a balanced diet. We should minimize the intake of caffeine drinks, sugar products, salt, and "junk foods". We should also take vitamin supplements which help relieve stress, such as "C" and "B" complex. If we will take heed to this area, a great deal of stress will be prevented.

CONCLUSION

We have briefly reviewed the subject of stress and have offered some helpful steps for overcoming this problem:

- 1. View circumstances from a Godly perspective.**
- 2. Pace yourself.**
- 3. Redeem the time.**
- 4. Rest and relaxation.**
- 5. Rest in God.**
- 6. Prayer.**
- 7. Trust in God's Word.**
- 8. Fellowship.**
- 9. Deal with unresolved sins.**
- 10. Watch your health.**

We would also suggest a review of the Mannahouse's counseling booklets on "Affliction", "Depression", and "Offense". **For a brief overview of the main points of this booklet, please re-read the boldly printed words on each page.**



CAMPUS LOCATIONS

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