

“Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful.” Colossians 3:15



PEACE IN THE MIDST OF STRESS

In my 62 years, I have never seen so many people so stressed out. To be sure, there are plenty of pressures. Banks are foreclosing on houses in record numbers. The value of retirement assets has been dropping dramatically. The majority of our political leaders have led us, our children and grand children deeper into debt.

This stress is in addition to the normal everyday stress of family conflicts, work issues, sickness, accidents, driving in traffic, etc.

Stress is so prevalent today that many businesses are trying to help relieve it. Just the other day, I heard a radio advertisement saying that a great way to escape stress was to eat, drink, and party at their downtown bar and grill.

Stress has been around from the creation of man and so have the worldly methods of handling it. A favorite way to cope with stress has been through addictions such as over-drinking, over-partying, over-eating, over-shopping, over-spending, over-accumulating, over-working, etc.

Around 538 BC, Belshazzar, the leader of Babylon (Iraq), tried to handle stress the same way. When an army was knocking down his door to kill him, he and his friends tried to escape the stress by choosing to eat, drink, and party.

In 1969, Peggy Lee sang a similar message in her song, “Is That All There Is?” Her chorus went like this, “If this is all there is, then let’s keep dancing, let’s break out the booze and have a ball.”

Addictions only provide a temporary escape from stress. An addiction, whatever it is, becomes all-important to the individual and results in more dissatisfaction, frustration and stress.

Another worldly way to cope with stress is through self-discipline. In 1988, Bobby McFerrin sang a number one hit song about handling stress when he sang, “Don’t Worry, Be Happy”. Here are a few of his lyrics:

In every life we have some trouble
When you worry you make it double
Don’t worry, be happy.....

Bobby’s advice was to just stop choosing to worry and start choosing to be happy. Discipline yourself! Through self-discipline, one can have a



Peace in the Midst of Stress...

semblance of peace; however, one's insides will still churn with bouts of worry, anxiety and fear. Self-discipline never produces true peace.

“These **WORLDLY WAYS** of **HANDLING STRESS** didn't **WORK** for the **WORLD** before **CHRIST**. **THEY** didn't **WORK** for the **WORLD** while **CHRIST** was **HERE**. And, **THEY STILL** do not **WORK** for the **WORLD TODAY**.”

Then there are others who can't seem to get a handle on managing stress. They give into stress by surrendering to thoughts of worthlessness, hopelessness, and/or suicide. (Three weeks ago, a friend's neighbor committed suicide. He didn't leave a note, but my friend said he thought he committed suicide because he just lost his retirement funds. Please, if you are having thoughts of harming yourself, talk to someone. If we can help, call us at 770-502-8050.)

These worldly ways of handling stress didn't work for the world before Christ. They didn't work for

the world while Christ was here. And, they still do not work for the world today.

Jesus told his disciples how to handle stress when He said, “These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have trouble, but take courage; I have overcome the world.”

When Jesus said, “...in Me you may have peace,” He taught believers that peace in the midst of stress is experienced by living in and through Him. Jesus stated the same thing when He said, “I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me, and I in him, he bears much fruit; for apart from Me you can do nothing.” Part of the fruit that Jesus is speaking of here is the peace that passes all understanding that only comes from abiding in Him.

So what is abiding? The Apostle John wrote, “By this we know that we abide in Jesus and He in us, because of the Spirit He has given us.” Abiding in Jesus is not keeping a set of Christian rules or performing some self-disciplined Christian religious activities, it is a believer having the Holy Spirit



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living within him or her. When we *believe* the Spirit who lives within (and not just know about Him), we will experience His peace in the midst of stress.

This is how Jesus handled stress. He said, “When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am He, and I do nothing on My own initiative....” He also stated, “For I did not speak on My own initiative, but the Father Himself who sent Me has given Me commandment, what to say, and what to speak.” Wow! Jesus handled stress by never taking the initiative and doing only what Father said.

Here is an example of how Jesus handled severe stress. When He was lifted up on that cross, His head was crowned with thorns, His hands and feet pierced with spikes, His face bruised, His beard plucked, His back shredded, and His body bloodied. People hurled insults at Him. To top it all off, He carried the sin of the world. The Man’s stress was not only severe, but it was also hellish. Yet, stress was not Jesus’ issue. His issue was how to respond to the stress.

His response flowed from His faith in the Father. The Father told Him through the Spirit to “forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.” He believed the Spirit by faith and yielded His thoughts to the Spirit’s thoughts. Then, He chose to obey and say, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.” Jesus handled the stress He was under by the Spirit’s empowering and enabling.

We are to handle stress the same way. When we believe the Holy Spirit within, we will be enabled to naturally experience Christ’s peace. This is how we “let the peace of Christ rule in our hearts.” This is what the Apostle Paul calls “walking after the Spirit.” This is how believers take “every thought captive to the obedience of Christ....” This is how we believe “God causes all things to work together for good.” This is how we experience Christ’s victory in the midst of stress.

Love ya,

CALENDAR

January 2009

13 Advanced Discipleship Training Begins
CFT Office - Newnan, GA CFT Staff
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February

27-28 Grow In Grace Seminar
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6-7 Christian Couple’s Seminar
Newnan, GA Greg & Connie Brezina
Orchard Hills Church
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For a complete and updated listing of seminars, please check our website at www.ChristianFamiliesToday.org

DON'T WORRY

A Joyful 'toon by Mike Waters



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“FOR THIS REASON I SAY TO YOU, DO NOT BE ANXIOUS FOR YOUR LIFE, AS TO WHAT YOU SHALL EAT, OR WHAT YOU SHALL DRINK; NOR FOR YOUR BODY, AS TO WHAT YOU SHALL PUT ON. IS NOT LIFE MORE THAN FOOD, AND THE BODY THAN CLOTHING? LOOK AT THE BIRDS OF THE AIR, THAT THEY DO NOT SOW, NEITHER DO THEY REAP, NOR GATHER INTO BARNES, AND YET YOUR HEAVENLY FATHER FEEDS THEM. ARE YOU NOT WORTH MUCH MORE THAN THEY?”

Jesus



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