

Newsletter September 2020

From Heaven's Heart

“Stress, Stress and More Stress”

I can just say the word...STRESS...and I can feel the muscles in my shoulders and neck begin to tighten up.

Stress! It's something we all experience at least a few times. For some, it's constant. When something unexpected comes our way. Sickness. Death. Covid. College and we've not saved. The car broke down. The air conditioning needs replacing. I can go on and you can too. Any of these things can bring on stress.

Our emotional and physical response to the pressures of life is what can cause stress and often does, but stress is not part of God's plan for your life. So why am I on stress overload?

1 Peter 5:6-7 Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt (hold something or someone in very high regard, raise to a higher rank or position of greater power) God will exalt you in due time, casting all your cares upon Him, for He cares for you.

Peter gives us a valuable insight regarding stress. He cites obedience as a stress reducer. He knew that there is no rest living outside God's moral and ethical boundaries. The farther we go outside God's protective guidelines, the closer we edge toward a life of frustration, anxiety, fear and unrest. Our faith in God and our obedience are the key components in two aspects of reducing stress. We either believe what God said in 1 Peter or we don't. And we either cast our worries on God or we hold on to them.

Holding on to them is disobeying God and disobedience is sin. I know you hate that word but when we live outside of God's directions, meant for good, there's no other word for this. Sin. Let me try and show you what I mean.

When husbands don't love their wives as Christ loved the church or wives don't treat their husbands with respect, stress fills the home. An air of tension seeps in when kids don't obey their parents and parents ignore scriptural principles of discipline. As we humble ourselves, this means we trust God with life's avoidable and unavoidable

pressures. We could have planned better for the avoidable. We knew the kids would most likely go to college. We should have set aside money each month in a tax free account for college. But the Covid 19 Virus was not avoidable for us. Both occurrences can cause stress.

The bible has a simple solution. *Cast all your cares on the Lord*. To do this is a sign of whom you believe in and what God can do when you need help. To cast means to give the things we are stressed over to God. It becomes His responsibility for the things we have no control over. Like Covid. But even the things we are responsible for, we are to cast those cares upon Him also. Then and only then do we have the assurance as Believers that our Father in Heaven will help us out of the jam we are in. And the moment He responds to us with the direction we need and we act upon His direction, we begin to feel the release from the stress.

The more demanding life becomes, the more stressful life can become. The source of stress is everywhere. And the effects of stress results in alarming rates of burnout, physical and emotional damage. But stress is not a circumstance; it is our reaction to our circumstance.

God doesn't intend for us to lead a stress-filled life. Jesus was under incredible pressure. Luke notes that His response was to go away and pray. You would do well to follow the Savior's lead. When you've tried everything and nothing is working, go away and spend time with your Heavenly Father. If you have made the mess, He will offer you His grace and His guidance. If someone or something else caused the mess, you most likely can't do anything about that so why not hand it over to someone who can. God can!

Someone just knocked on my office door. God knew I'd be working on this and I'd be stopped for a minute with the knock on the door. I'm back. It was the wife of a good friend. She's been stressed out over a situation her husband has been dealing with. You know the drill. There are signs there's a problem. Tests and more tests. Waiting! That's stressful. Knowing what could be. That's stressful. Then today's news. Great news. My first comment was. "You see, there was no need to be worried". My second comment, "God is good."

Stress can be managed when we realize God's intimate care for the details of your life. He is willing to bear our burdens, and He assumes complete responsibility for the person committed to Him. Don't miss this part! For the person committed to Him. Make a list of each area of concern that adds stress. Take time to thoughtfully pray about

each one. Take ownership of God's promised help and His provision. Then take personal ownership of what you can do to help. He has equipped you to handle life's loads with a standing offer for Him to bear the emotional weight.

Things can be very difficult for us, but nothing is too hard or too big for God. Believing and resting in that truth will protect your mind, heart and spirit from the overload of stress. We are all going to face stressful situations. Some we cause. Some we don't. We can learn some valuable lessons from allowing stress to enter in. I know you've said this, "I worried for nothing. Everything worked out just fine. Thank you Father." Even when death comes, as believers, Heaven is one heck of a good outcome. So why do we allow ourselves to get so stressed out?

With a personal prayer that you and I will begin to practice what we know God says and offers us about worry and stress,

Pastor Steve