

October 10, 2004
A.M. Service
Patchogue Church of the Nazarene

“I’m Stressed Out, What Should I Do?” (Part 2)
Philippians 4: 1-9 NLT

Dear brothers and sisters, I love you and long to see you, for you are my joy and the reward for my work. So please stay true to the Lord, my dear friends.

2 And now I want to plead with those two women, Eu-o-di-a [you OH dih uh] and Syn-ty-che [SIN tih keh]. Please, because you belong to the Lord, settle your disagreement. 3 And I ask you, my true teammate, to help these women, for they worked hard with me in telling others the Good News. And they worked with Clement and the rest of my co-workers, whose names are written in the Book of Life.

4 Always be full of joy in the Lord. I say it again--rejoice! 5 Let everyone see that you are considerate in all you do. Remember, the Lord is coming soon.

6 Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done. 7 If you do this, you will experience God's peace, which is far more wonderful than the human mind can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus.

8 And now, dear brothers and sisters, let me say one more thing as I close this letter. Fix your thoughts on what is true and honorable and right. Think about things that are pure and lovely and admirable. Think about things that are excellent and worthy of praise. 9 Keep putting into practice all you learned from me and heard from me and saw me doing, and the God of peace will be with you.

I’ve been feeling stressed out and tired lately. I've been blaming it on lack of sleep or too much pressure from my job, but now I've found out the real reason that I am stressed out and tired. I'm overworked and here's how I figured that out:

The population of this country is 237 million. 104 million are retired. That leaves 133 million to do the work.

There are 85 million in school, which leaves 48 million to do the work.

Of this there are 29 million employed by the federal government, leaving 19 million to do the work.

2.8 million are in the Armed Forces, which leaves 16.2 million to do the work.

14,800,000 people work for State and City Governments. That leaves 1.4 million to do the work.

At any given time there are 188,000 people in hospitals, leaving 1,212,000 to do the work.

Given that there are 1,211,998 people in prisons, that leaves just two people to do the work, you and me.

And you're sitting out there watching me work!

The truth is stress that leads to exhaustion comes because we deal with the pressures of life in our own way instead of God's way. We attempt to handle things in our own strength rather than in the strength of the Lord. We don't think we need God. The temptation to this delusion of self-sufficiency is the same temptation that the serpent used on Eve, when in Gen. 3: 5 he said to Eve, (listen for the lie):

The Lie

"God knows that your eyes will be opened when you eat (fruit from the tree at the center of the garden). ***You will become just like God, knowing everything***, both good and evil."

The lie here is, "you don't need God." So we try to handle life on our own, with our own resources and ingenuity and the result is exhaustion and stress.

After spending three and a half hours enduring the long lines, snippy clerks and insane regulations at the Department of Motor Vehicles, a man stopped at a toy store to pick up a gift for his son.

He brought his selection -- a baseball bat -- to the cash register. "Cash or charge?" the clerk asked. "Cash," he snapped. Then apologizing for his rudeness, he explained, "I've spent the afternoon at the motor-vehicle bureau." "Shall I gift wrap the bat?" the clerk asked sweetly. "Or are you going back there?" (It could be a dangerous thing to others and ourselves when we take things into our own hands rather than handling them God's way. In other words, when we believe the lie that we don't need God.

The Truth

In Phil 4:1 Paul says, "Dear brothers and sisters, I love you ... you are my joy...so please ***stay true to the Lord***, my dear friends." Paul loved these people and wanted what was best for them. And he knew that what was best for them to do, especially when faced with the pressures of life, would be to stay true to the Lord. When pressure comes into our life and we stay true to the Lord, God will transform exhaustion into endurance. He will use pressure to develop strength of character. This is what Paul said (Rom 5:3-5 NLT) "We can rejoice, too, when we run into problems and trials, for we know that they are good for us--they help us learn to endure. 4 And endurance develops strength of character in us, and character strengthens our confident expectation of salvation. 5 And this expectation will not disappoint us. For we know how dearly God loves us, because he has given us the Holy Spirit to fill our hearts with his love."

[Mini-sub illustration]

Today I want to look at what the Bible has to say about dealing with the pressures of life. Or as I ask in the title of this message: "I'm Stressed Out, What Should I Do?"

1. (Be a) Peacemaker

(v) 2b - "Please, because you belong to the Lord, settle your disagreement."

In another place Paul says (Rom 12:18), "If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone." **Settle *your* disagreements.** Conflict and broken relationships causes stress. I know confrontation is hard and not many like to confront those they are having a problem with. But to not confront keeps an underlining or sometimes not so underlining and ongoing stress. God wants reconciliation, especially to other believers because you and they belong to the Lord. In regard for Him and because we share a common faith in Jesus and because He is the object of our affections and because He commands us to love one another and to be reconciled to one another, settle your disagreements. Paul doesn't correct one of the woman here, which means that one isn't completely wrong and the other completely right. The issue was not who was right and who was wrong, the issue for Paul was that they be reconciled..

Jesus never said you should wait for the other party that you are in disagreement with to come to you first. Jesus said it is always your responsibility to go to the other party for the purpose of reconciliation. **Confronting (in love) is always your responsibility.**

Matt 5:21-26 NLT

21 "You have heard that the law of Moses says, 'Do not murder. If you commit murder, you are subject to judgment.' 22 But I say, if you are angry with someone, you are subject to judgment! If you call someone an idiot, you are in danger of being brought before the high council. And if you curse someone, you are in danger of the fires of hell.

23 "So if you are standing before the altar in the Temple, offering a sacrifice to God, and you suddenly remember that someone has something against you, 24 leave your sacrifice there beside the altar. Go and be reconciled to that person. Then come and offer your sacrifice to God. 25 Come to terms quickly with your enemy before it is too late and you are dragged into court, handed over to an officer, and thrown in jail. 26 I assure you that you won't be free again until you have paid the last penny.

Matt 18:15-17a NLT

15 "If another believer sins against you, go privately and point out the fault. If the other person listens and confesses it, you have won that person back. 16 But if you are unsuccessful, take one or two others with you and go back again, so that everything you say may be confirmed by two or three witnesses. 17 If that person still refuses to listen, take your case to the church.

[Notice that in Matt 5:23&24 Jesus says if someone has something against you it is your responsibility to go and be reconciled to that person. Here Jesus says if you have something against someone else go to them for the purpose of reconciliation. So Jesus made confrontation for reconciliation your responsibility whether you have sinned against someone or someone has sinned against you. Take the initiative to reach agreement. Ask God to forgive you for your part in the dispute and seek to renew friendship.]

Not only are we to settle our own disagreements, we are to help others settle theirs. **Help others settle *their* disagreements.** Be a peacemaker. (v3) “And I ask you, my true teammate, to help these women, for they worked hard with me in telling others the Good News. And they worked with Clement and the rest of my co-workers, whose names are written in the Book of Life.”

We are to help bring reconciliation to believers in disagreement. Don’t gossip about the problem, or be judgmental; don’t pretend the dispute hasn’t happen; don’t add stress to the situation. Help people to be reconciled.

“Some disputes and misunderstandings require a sympathetic third party, a good listener, an honest evaluator...If you're facing a conflict you can't resolve, don't let the tension build into an explosion. Don't withdraw or resort to cruel power plays. Don't stand idly by and wait for the dispute to resolve itself. Seek the help of those known for peacemaking.” (from The Life Application Commentary Series copyright (C) 1997, 1998, 1999 and 2000 by the Livingstone Corporation. Produced with permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc. All rights reserved.)

These ladies had been telling others the Good News about Jesus. Their disagreement could destroy the faith of others and disrupt the unity in the church. Our names are written in the Book of Life. We are going to spend eternity together, settle disagreements. There will be rewards for good deeds, be peacemakers.

Be true to the Lord standing firm in His principles of handling pressure. Nicky Gumble says that when the Bible tells us to stand firm it is using military language. Ancient military formation of infantry would prepare for battle by standing shoulder to shoulder in close ranks with shields overlapping eight men deep. The front row would have their spears extended. As long as they did not break rank they were virtually invincible. The enemy is always looking for cracks and divisions in the church (or a marriage or other relationships) to exploit, to get a foothold to take advantage of to bring stress and destruction.

In verse 5 Paul says, ‘Let everyone see that you are considerate in all you do. Remember, the Lord is coming soon.’ The word for “considerate” also means mildness, patience, yieldingness, gentleness, graciousness, clemency, moderation, unwillingness to litigate or contend; "Moderation," (which is gentleness & self-control) says Dr. Macknight, "means meekness under provocation, readiness to forgive injuries....” Do this and you will reduce stress and do it because, as Paul says, “The Lord is coming soon.” How does it

change things if we believed that Jesus could come back at any moment? Other versions say, "The Lord is near." Which can mean not only can we expect Him at any moment but He is always near in His Spirit. That is a reason to make peace and to be at peace.

Please for the sake of eliminating stress and because you belong to the Lord, settle your disagreement and help others to do so too.