

November 14, 2004  
A.M. Service  
Patchogue Church of the Nazarene

I'm Stressed Out! What Should I Do? (part 5)

Phil 4:1-9 NLT

4:1 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, Euodia and Syntyche. 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.

Today I conclude my series on dealing with stress (that statement alone may relieve stress for some of you). Stress is relieved when we handle the pressures of life according to Biblical principles. Paul says (v1), "Please stay true to the Lord, my dear friends." Then he mentions these things that will help you reduce stress in your life:

**1. (Be a) Peacemaker (vs 2-3)**

Settle *your* disagreements with others and help others settle *their* disagreements.

**2. Praise (vs 4-5)**

"Always be full of joy in the Lord. I say it again--rejoice!" This indicates that joy is a choice. It does not depend on our circumstances or our emotions but on our will (then our emotions will follow along). It helps to know and trust that God is in control, He uses all situations for the good, He is always near and He is coming back to this world again...soon. So choose joy.

**3. Pray (vs 6-7)**

"Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything."

Turn anxiety into prayer. Whenever you feel anxious let that be a reminder to pray. Prayer allows us to unload our stress onto God. Speak to God out of your sense of need, thanking Him for listening, and for all He has already given you, tell Him how you feel and ask Him to help you regarding the specific need you have. *“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 (emotions) and minds (thoughts) as you live in Christ Jesus.”*

And that brings us to the next point ...our thoughts.

#### **4. Ponder (v8)**

“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.”

Prayer will help you to get your thoughts going in the right direction, but you must continue to keep your thoughts on the right track. In Rom 12:2 Paul wrote: “be transformed by the renewing of your mind.” Your thoughts will determine who you are, your attitude and how you will act. Someone has said that “we are not what we think we are, but what we *think* we are.” What do you spend time thinking about? What do you fill your mind with? What we put into our minds determines what comes out in our words and actions. Notice that this verse says, “Fix your thoughts...” that is a command that requires a response of your will. You are to fix your thoughts or set your mind on things that are true, honorable, right, pure, lovely and admirable. Things that are excellent and worthy of praise. Program your mind with these kinds of thoughts. Do you have problems with impure thoughts and daydreams? Examine what you are putting into your mind through television, books, music, conversations, movies, and magazines. Replace harmful input with wholesome material. If you put garbage in that’s what will come out of you. If you want good to come out of you put in good things. Above all, read God's Word and pray. Ask God to help you focus your mind on what is good and pure. It takes practice, but it can be done. So you have a problem with anxious thoughts? Well, what are you telling yourself? Whether you realize it or not you are always telling yourself something. When you are feeling any negative emotion stop and think about what it is you are saying to yourself. What “tape” are playing in your head. Is it a tape that is saying things like, “What if I don’t get that raise?” or “How dare that guy cut me off.” Or “I’m no good.” or “No one respects me or cares about me” or “I’m never going to be able to do it.” Or “What if I fail?” What you need to do is to change the tape. Are you thinking about things that are true, honorable, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent and worthy of praise? If not then switch your thoughts to what is true, honorable, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent or worthy of praise.

**[First]** believers should think about what is **true**. “True” can mean many things. Truth includes facts and statements that are:

**(a)** in accordance with reality (Don’t dwell on lies, rumors, or exaggerations). But also realize that although the thing you are thinking about is real and true it may not be honorable, right, pure, lovely, or admirable. Don’t dwell it.

- (b) “True” can also mean dwelling on facts and statements that are “sincere” (not deceitful or with evil motives) and
- (c) “True” can also mean loyal, faithful, proper, reliable, and genuine. Remember Jesus *is* truth. Truth is a characteristic of God. Fix your thoughts on what is true and ...

**[Second]** Believers should think about what is *honorable*. This means matters that are worthy of respect, dignified, and exalted in character or excellence - things that inspire reverence.

**[Third]** Believers are told to think about whatever is *right*. This includes thoughts and plans that are right or "just" that meet God's standards of rightness. They are in keeping with the truth; they are righteous.

**[Fourth]** Whatever is *pure*. Pure means free from contamination; these thoughts are unmixed; they are wholesome. Paul probably was speaking of moral purity, often very difficult to maintain in thoughts, but seek to have wholesome thoughts.

**[Fifth]** Whatever is *lovely*. (This is the only place in the NT where this word is used.) Here Paul was referring to thoughts of great moral and spiritual beauty, not of evil. He refers to thoughts that are pleasing and agreeable.

**[Sixth]** Think about things that are *admirable*. This refers to things that speak well of the thinker - thoughts that would be given approval or praise. Thoughts that would reveal positive and constructive thinking. A believer's thoughts, if heard by others, should be commendable, not condemned.

**[Seventh]** *Excellent and worthy of praise*. Here Paul is summing up what could have been a long list of qualities that should describe a believer's thought life. So after giving some specifics he sums it up by saying, “In other words your thoughts should be on things that are excellent and worthy of praise.”

## 5. Practice

(v9) “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.”

It's not enough to hear or read the Word of God, or even to know it well. We must also put it into practice. If Christians - believers in Christ - would keep on doing or practicing these things that Paul has said, they would experience the God of peace. Notice what the Bible says, if you practice these things not only can you experience peace, but “the God of peace (Who) will be with you.” God is the source of peace for all believers. Many people today seek to have the peace of God without having to deal with God, which is impossible – it can't be done, because God is the author of true peace. To know peace, we must know God.