

STRESS Management 101

It seems that stress is the disease of the century. Products and programs to manage stress are a multi-billion dollar business, whether the “cure” is medicine, counseling, books, seminars or classes. But I’ve discovered that God’s way of managing stress is the most effective way to live.

Jesus says in John 14:27 (AMP): *“Peace I leave with you; My [perfect] peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Do not let your heart be troubled, nor let it be afraid. [Let My perfect peace calm you in every circumstance and give you courage and strength for every challenge.]”*

I know what it’s like to live under the burden and pressure of stress, and I know what it’s like to have God’s peace. I can honestly say that I will do whatever I have to do to have God’s peace in my life, because it is not God’s will for us to live with stress all the time.

It’s easy for us to feel like we can’t avoid being stressed-out because it’s just the way the world is today. But the truth is just because stress is a disease of our culture doesn’t mean we have to adopt the ways of our culture and live the same way.

We have two options: We can continue to be stressed-out until we fall apart, or we can learn how to receive the peace Christ gives in every circumstance, rather than letting stress get into us.

THE CURE FOR STRESS

For many years, I lived with constant stress. I was sexually abused by my father throughout my childhood. Then when I left home at the age of 18, I married the first man who came along because I was afraid no one else would want me, and that led to five years of misery. He ended up abandoning me. By the time I was 23 and met Dave Meyer, I was a mess! I was worried, full of fear, insecure and had a poor self-image. So I tried to find value in what I did and became a workaholic.

Over time, I developed physical problems, like frequent headaches and backaches, and I created problems in many of my relationships because I was unhappy and hard to get along with. I finally came to the place where I decided that I would not live that way any longer. Whatever it took, I was going to have God’s peace and live a peaceful life. James 1:21 (AMPC) says, *“...In a humble (gentle, modest) spirit receive and welcome the Word which implanted and rooted [in your hearts] contains the power to save your souls.”* Although I was a Christian during this time of my life, I needed to “get saved” in my soul—my mind, will and emotions. I needed to renew my mind with the Word of God so I could know the Truth and be set free from the root issues of my stress.

This is how it works: When we study God’s Word—reading it, meditating on it, getting it deep down in our hearts—it changes the way we think. This causes us to change the way we talk, which changes our attitudes, and then our behavior changes. At this point, the things around us—our circumstances—can’t control us anymore.

GET TO THE ROOT OF YOUR STRESS

Being set free from the pressure of stress begins with God’s Word, but we also have to understand that if things are going to change in our lives, we will have to take responsibility to change them with God’s help. So the first thing we need to do is pray and be willing to hear what He has to say about the real root of our problem. If you’re already doing your part, then be determined to trust God to fix things. But if you’re not walking in wisdom or you’re doing things a certain way just because that’s the way everybody else is doing it, then follow the direction He is speaking to your heart to make a change.

We must pray and obey! This means we make a commitment not to live based on the culture around us but by the leading of the Holy Spirit, who lives in us as born-again believers in

Christ. Our mind-set should be: With God’s help, I’m ready to make a change. Then as we do what He shows us to do (or what He shows us *not* to do), we’ll be able to live in peace.

Pursue the peace Jesus is offering you today. It’s not the kind the world gives—the kind you have as long as your circumstances are the way you want them to be. The peace Jesus gives makes you calm and undisturbed on the inside, in your soul, no matter what’s going on around you. Study other scriptures about peace, like Philippians 4:6-7, Colossians 3:15 and 1 Peter 3:11. Put your trust in God completely and enjoy the life Jesus died to give you. Through Christ, you can learn how to manage the stress of this world, instead of letting stress manage you! ❖

CHANGE YOUR APPROACH AND GIVE YOUR SOUL A VACATION!

One of the most comforting scriptures in the Bible is Matthew 11:28. In this verse, Jesus tells us, *“Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy-laden and overburdened, and I will cause you to rest. [I will ease and relieve and refresh your souls.]”* I think it’s interesting to note here that Jesus said He would “ease and relieve and refresh” our souls, not our bodies. It sounds like He’s saying we need to give our souls a vacation.

THE INNER AND OUTER LIVES

We all have two lives: an inner life and an outer life. Your inner life is your soul life, which includes your mind, will and emotions. Your outer life is your physical life. And while God cares about every detail of your life, He is more concerned with your inner life than your outer life.

I have found that it’s possible to give your body rest but not your soul. For example, have you ever had trouble going to sleep because you were worrying about a problem and couldn’t stop thinking about it? This kind of activity just

wears us out inwardly. We can also wear our souls out with too many thoughts running on, too many decisions to make, too much talking, and too much multitasking. Worry, fear, excessive concern about what other people think and insecurity are also common reasons people are worn-out and don't have any peace.

I remember when I used to be jealous of Dave and the peace he had. I was worn-out most of the time, worrying about problems but he wasn't. Now, we had the same problems, but while they wore me out, Dave was still peaceful and happy because he would cast his cares on God. One of his favorite scriptures is 1 Peter 5:7, which says, "Cast all your anxiety on [God] because he cares for you" (NIV). And even now, anytime someone goes to Dave with a problem, he'll encourage them to "cast your care" and give them that scripture.

It used to make me so mad when he wouldn't get upset when I was upset, but eventually, I got to the place where I was desperate to have what he had. So I prayed and told God I would do whatever I had to do to be peaceful, and He taught me how to change my approach to life.

THE REVELATION THAT CHANGED MY LIFE

I came to realize that the world is not going to change, the devil is not going to change, and all of the people who bother me probably aren't going to change, so I have to decide to change.

In John 14:27 (AMP), Jesus said, "Peace I leave with you; My [own] peace I now give...to you. ...Do not let your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid. [Stop allowing yourselves to be agitated and disturbed; and do not permit yourselves to be fearful and intimidated and cowardly and unsettled.]" So we can be peaceful and make the decision not to be troubled, afraid, agitated and disturbed, but it won't just happen automatically.

The truth is, we won't have peace if we don't pursue it on purpose, because there will always be opportunities to get upset or offended about something. For example, you lose your car keys when you're running late, or you get caught in a traffic jam, or someone at work gets the promotion you wanted, or



the electric bill is higher than you expected it to be...and on and on. There can be an endless cycle of stuff that happens that we can get upset about.

We also have to remember that we have an enemy who wants to keep us worn-out. The devil is a peace stealer and he works hard to set us up to get upset. But we can learn how to change our approach so we don't live upset all of the time. And Jesus gives us the best example to follow.

THE KEY TO LIVING IN PEACE

Jesus didn't conform to the world—He walked in the Spirit. When He felt tired and pressured from the crowds who wanted Him to help them, He took time to walk away and get rest. He spent time in prayer, alone with the Father,

because He knew He wouldn't be any good to anybody if He didn't get refreshed.

It's so easy to let other people's needs and emergencies control and manipulate us. And when we let others run our lives, we can get to the point that we're falling apart! It's not wrong to want to help or please people, but we need to take care of ourselves, calm down and stop getting upset about things that usually don't really matter anyway.

Make the decision today to commit your ways to the Lord and rest in Him. Cast your cares on Him, knowing He loves and cares about you all the time, in every situation of your life. He'll meet you where you are and ease, relieve and refresh your soul! 📌

For more on this topic, order Joyce's four-CD series *Unplug, Unwind and De-stress!* For more information, visit www.joycemeyer.org.

Joyce Meyer is a *New York Times* bestselling author and founder of Joyce Meyer Ministries, Inc. She has authored 100 books, including *Battlefield of the Mind and Overload: How to Unplug, Unwind and Unleash Yourself from the Pressure of Stress* (Hachette). She hosts the *Enjoying Everyday Life* radio and TV programs, which air on hundreds of stations worldwide.