

January 8, 2023

How To Stress Less (#5)

by Ken Weliever

“The truth is that stress doesn’t come from your boss, your kids, your spouse, traffic jams, health challenges, or other circumstances. It comes from your thoughts about your circumstances,” opines Andrew Bernstein, author of “The Myth of Stress.”

While you may find that assertion unsettling, exaggerated, or inaccurate, stay with me.

Today’s post concludes a five lesson series dealing with a Biblical approach to managing stress based on Philippians 4:4-9. In the previous four posts we have explored the value of...

- Rejoicing Continually
- Trusting Completely
- Praying Ceaselessly
- Giving Thanks Continually

Today we conclude with the most important element found in verse 8.

Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy — meditate on these things.

THINKING CORRECTLY

Correct thinking is the most important because it affects, regulates and impacts the other four areas we studied. When our thinking is on the wrong track it will diminish the joy of our faith, lessen our trust in God, impede our prayer life, and erode the attitude of gratitude.

While there are external events and circumstances that can cause stress in our lives, the ability with which we manage and control stress is dependent on the way we react. How we respond. On how we choose to think.

Health professionals agree that stress can be greatly reduced by changing the way we think. Writing on behalf of IU Health Plans, Michelle Martin wrote a piece in the Indianapolis Star with the headline “Negative thoughts can lead to harmful stress.”

“Many people don’t realize that their thoughts, beliefs and feelings can raise their stress levels,” Martin wrote. “This type of stress is harmful, leading to issues such as depression, anxiety, high blood pressure and heart disease.”

In the article Martin offered “some ways to cope with stress that arises from negative thoughts or feelings.” Among them were, “Let it Go...Forgive and Forget...Listen to Yourself...Be a Problem Solver...Shift Your Outlook.”

There’s a wonderful article found on the Mayo Clinic web page that specifically addresses the importance of controlling our thoughts to reduce and manage stress. The specific suggestions by these highly respected health care professionals will serve you well.

The post concludes with this observation “When your state of mind is generally optimistic, you’re better able to handle everyday stress in a more constructive way. That ability may contribute to the widely observed health benefits of positive thinking.”

Psychologist Karen Young concurs with these conclusions in a post on her web page. “Rethinking Stress: How Changing Your Thinking Could Save Your Life.” She offers insight on how to view stress positively rather than negatively.

For the Christian, following the spiritual directives of God’s Word will help you implement the advice of mental health professionals. Briefly consider these 6 questions from the text about your thoughts.

Welcome!

When you visit our assemblies, you will be received friendly, kindly and courteously. We believe this to be the natural attitude of those who truly love God and mankind. Though you may at first be among strangers, we hope that you will come to know us well and count us as your friends.

We offer Bible studies as well as correspondence courses for those interested in learning more about what God expects of us.

Important Dates

Our Gospel Meeting with Bubba Garner - April 2-5

If you know of upcoming events, please inform Darrell so they can be included here.

They will not only help you evaluate your thinking, but provide some insight on how you are managing stress.

(1) Is it True?

Proper thinking rests itself on things that are true. Think on things that are true about yourself, your family, your brethren, your friends, and your fellow-man. Too often we manufacture unnecessary stress in our lives by imagining something that's not based on fact. By listening to rumors. Believing gossip. Or worrying about internet misinformation.

(2) Is it Honorable?

Honorable means noble, serious and dignified. It is thinking that is neither flippant, cheap, or tawdry. Honorable thinking rids itself of little, petty thoughts. If we are to engage our lives in noble deeds, we must begin with noble thoughts. Noble thinking will help us rise above circumstances that are often stress producing.

(3) Is it Just?

The word "just" refers to that which is fair and right both to God and to man. Certainly life is filled with injustices and inequities. But there's no value or virtue in dwelling on them.

We would also do well to focus our minds on dealing justly with others. Revenge, evil scheming and plotting to get even will soon fill our minds with unjust thoughts, consume our souls, and leave us feeling stressed.

(4) Is it Pure?

The word "pure" means clean or free from defilement. It is from the same root word translated "saint."

Paul admonished Timothy, "keep yourself pure" (I Tim. 5:22). Purity of life begins in the heart by thinking pure thoughts. Conversely, by thinking impure thoughts, we will produce a defiled character, ungodly actions, and stress spawned by a nagging conscience.

Avoid reading salacious literature, watching sexually explicit movies and pouring over internet porn which will defile the heart and fill the mind with impurity.

(5) Is it Lovely?

This word means "attractive, winsome, pleasing and amiable." The Christian's character should reflect loveliness. An old expression that is lost on today's culture says, "pretty is as pretty does." More important than physical beauty is spiritual beauty. Such loveliness of character originates in the mind.

Lovely thinking dwells on kindness,

forgiveness, sympathy, forbearance, tenderness and love. These qualities are stress reducers in our lives.

(6) Is it Commendable?

Other versions translate this word "good report," "good repute," and "admirable." In other words, think on the things that are well-sounding, appealing, and gracious. Look for the good in life. Think about the good in life. And share the good that you see with others.

Paul concluded by adding that anything else that is virtuous and praiseworthy, think on it, too.

Note that in this series, we have not claimed the Christian can totally eliminate stress. That won't happen in this life. But we can manage, control and reduce stress.

Dr. William James, the Harvard educated philosopher and leading thinker of the 19th century, often called "the father of modern psychology" offered this simple advice which will serve you well. "The greatest weapon against stress is our ability to choose one thought over another."

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Prayer Requests

Jack Wilson is still struggling with pain and limited mobility.

Jerry Richardson is still undergoing treatments to strengthen his immune system. He is having some tests run for his lungs.

Karen Hallmark has improved but continues to struggle and could use our prayers.

Dinah Williams continues to have mobility issues.

Don Simmons is home and still struggling with his breathing; he is on oxygen at all times. **Alene** is having hip issues.

Randall Vanaman is having difficulties with his feet.

Baby Valor went home but will require more care.

Dorothy Steadman is staying with Hank in Seguin.

Elaine Kersch is recovering from a fall.

Doug Adair is suffering from back pain.

If you know of someone that needs to be on this list, please tell Darrell (email preferred) and provide updates so names stay on the list as long as needed.

"praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end, keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints," (Ephesians 6:18 ESV)

The Oaks West church of Christ is a group of individual Christians who have been added to the Lord's body through baptism (Acts 2:38, 47; Gal 3:26, 27), and have joined themselves together (Acts 2:42ff) in an effort to do the Lord's will.

We are not a part of any larger organization - we do not follow any man-made creeds and we do not answer to anyone other than the Lord.

Our standard of faith and practice is the Word of God. We believe in the God of revelation (Eph 3:1-7; 2 Tim 3:16-17) and follow his instructions in an effort to have an ongoing relationship with him (1 John 4:7-11; 5:3).

Our times of study and worship are open to all, and our members are happy to meet with interested individuals or families for study.

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