

# Dealing with Stress God's Way

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Experiencing stress once in a while is normal and even helpful because it hones our abilities, and pushes us to our limits much as trainers push athletes to their limits. However, stress is not normal and not helpful if it occurs frequently, because it tends to reduce quality of life, and has adverse health consequences as well.

Stress may be defined as "a state of mental or emotional strain or tension resulting from adverse or very demanding circumstances." Stress can be very disabling but, according to Scripture, we need not have it. In Matthew 11, verses 28 to 30 we read Yeshua saying:

*"Come to me, all of you who are struggling and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, because I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."*

The Scripture does not employ the word "stress," but clearly the heaviness of stress is that of which it is speaking. Pursuing relief by merely asking God for it might seem simple and obvious but often, even believers do not do it. People who profess belief in God often do not look to Him as their first recourse, and sometimes do not look to Him except as a last resort. How often do we hear a "television program" doctor say: "I have done all I can; there is nothing left to do but pray."? Why is this? It is because it is one thing to believe in God intellectually, and it is another thing to believe that He is our God who has power, loves us, and is willing and able to help us with all of our needs, including ridding us of stress.

If we only believe in God intellectually and do not know or believe what is in the Bible, we don't have information about who God is, what He is like, and what he can and wants to do for us. It is then no wonder that we don't pray to Him as a first resort and have confidence that He will respond by giving us relief! And then if we do decide pray for relief, there is sometimes no power in our prayer because, while we believe in God, we don't have faith that God is willing and able to intervene in our lives.

Even without initial faith, if we take the trouble to read the Scriptures, two beneficial things will happen: (1) We will become acquainted with who our Heavenly father is, and (2) our faith in Him will build, for Romans 10:17 says:

*"So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."* (NKJ).

It is a promise that is supernatural, and therefore our logic cannot grab hold of it. If we hear God's words, we will acquire faith to believe in what He says; and how do we go about hearing God's words? By exposing ourselves to what is in the Scriptures through either reading them, or hearing them preached.

This is one of those messages that, in the midst of preparing it, and reading the Scriptures that pertain to it, I became impatient with my own words because the words of the Scriptures were so

powerful. So, at the risk of being considered uncreative, I am going to read you a lot of the Scriptures that I came across. Sit back and listen, and don't try to look them up or write down their chapter and verse addresses; they will all be posted on Ohev's web site, along with the text of this message in a day or two. Don't lose track of the subject though, which is "Dealing with Stress God's Way." Okay? Here we go.

Isaiah 55:25-34

*"All you who are thirsty, come to the water! You without money, come, buy, and eat! Yes, come! Buy wine and milk without money- it's free! Why spend money for what isn't food, your wages for what doesn't satisfy? Listen carefully to me, and you will eat well, you will enjoy the fat of the land."*

Thirst and hunger are stressful. Here, God is saying that His relief for these stresses of life are free for the taking, so why pay for remedies that will not work?

Jeremiah 17:7-8

*"Blessed is the man who trusts in ADONAI; ADONAI will be his security. He will be like a tree planted near water; it spreads out its roots by the river; it does not notice when heat comes; and its foliage is luxuriant; it is not anxious in a year of drought but keeps on yielding fruit."*

The tree planted near water is analogous to our planting ourselves near God and trusting Him. Like the tree near the water, if we trust God, we will be anxious for nothing.

Habakkuk 3:17-18

*"For even if the fig tree doesn't blossom, and no fruit is on the vines, even if the olive tree fails to produce, and the fields yield no food at all, even if the sheep vanish from the sheep pen, and there are no cows in the stalls; still, I will rejoice in ADONAI, I will take joy in the God of my salvation."*

This is an exhortation to ride through bad times by rejoicing in God and in our salvation.

Now, here is a Scripture that we all know, and that needs no comment from me:

Psalms 23

*"ADONAI is my shepherd; I lack nothing. He has me lie down in grassy pastures, he leads me by quiet water, he restores my inner person. He guides me in right paths for the sake of his own name. Even if I pass through death-dark ravines, I will fear no disaster; for you are with me; your rod and staff reassure me. You prepare a table for me, even as my enemies watch; you anoint my head with oil from an overflowing cup. Goodness and grace will pursue me every day of my life; and I will live in the house of ADONAI for years and years to come."*

There are many more Psalms that speak to us of being overcomers. Psalms 27:1-3 speaks about overcoming fear by trusting God. Fear is one of the most disabling of stresses, but God has the solution:

*"ADONAI is my light and salvation; whom do I need to fear? ADONAI is the stronghold of my life; of whom should I be afraid? When evildoers assailed me to devour my flesh, my adversaries and foes, they stumbled and fell. If an army encamps against me, my heart will not fear; if war breaks out against me, even then I will keep trusting."*

And Psalms 55:23(22):

*"Unload your burden on ADONAI, and he will sustain you. He will never permit the righteous to be moved."*

Yes, burdens stress us greatly, and this Psalm exhorts us to offload our cares on Him through the exercise of our faith.

Trusting God is indeed the key; as Proverbs 3:5-6 puts it:

*"Trust in ADONAI with all your heart; do not rely on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him; then he will level your paths."*

A level path is a stress-free path, for you need not labor to climb up, nor hold yourself back from sliding down.

Matthew 6:25-34 (see also, Luke 12:22-31).

*"Therefore, I tell you, don't worry about your life- what you will eat or drink; or about your body- what you will wear. Isn't life more than food and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds flying about! They neither plant nor harvest, nor do they gather food into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Aren't you worth more than they are? Can any of you by worrying add a single hour to his life? And why be anxious about clothing? Think about the fields of wild irises, and how they grow. They neither work nor spin thread, yet I tell you that not even Shlomo in all his glory was clothed as beautifully as one of these. If this is how God clothes grass in the field- which is here today and gone tomorrow, thrown in an oven- won't he much more clothe you? What little trust you have! So don't be anxious, asking, 'What will we eat?', 'What will we drink?' or 'How will we be clothed?' For it is the pagans who set their hearts on all these things. Your heavenly Father knows you need them all. But seek first his Kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. Don't worry about tomorrow- tomorrow will worry about itself! Today has enough [problems] already!"*

Here is a one-two punch from the Book of John, verse 14:1 followed by verse 27:

*"Don't let yourselves be disturbed. Trust in God and trust in me."  
"What I am leaving with you is shalom- I am giving you my shalom. I don't give the way the world gives. Don't let yourselves be upset or frightened."*

And here is what I call the Romans trilogy, verses 8:6, 8:28, and 15:13 linked together:

*"Having one's mind controlled by the old nature is death, but having one's mind controlled by the Spirit is life and shalom."*

*"Furthermore, we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called in accordance with his purpose;"*

*"May God, the source of hope, fill you completely with joy and shalom as you continue trusting, so that by the power of the Ruach HaKodesh you may overflow with hope."*

And let's not forget the Philippians "Dynamic Duo," verses 4:6-7 followed by verse 19:

*"Don't worry about anything; on the contrary, make your requests known to God by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving. Then God's shalom, passing all understanding, will keep your hearts and minds safe in union with the Messiah Yeshua." "Moreover, my God will fill every need of yours according to his glorious wealth, in union with the Messiah Yeshua."*

Just two more, so bear with me:

James 1:2-3

*"Regard it all as joy, my brothers, when you face various kinds of temptations; for you know that the testing of your trust produces perseverance."*

And finally:

1 Peter 5:6-7

*"Therefore, humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, so that at the right time he may lift you up. Throw all your anxieties upon him, because he cares about you."*

There is a song that captures the message very well; its lyrics are:

*"All these trials and temptations ..*

*Oh, what needless pain we bear.*

*All because we do not carry,*

*Everything to God in prayer."*

Brothers and sisters, prayer is the greatest means that God gives us for coping with the stresses of life. Even if our faith level is low, God can (and often does) help us out of our difficulties when we ask Him to. Prayer is not mere therapy. Therapy, whatever kind it is, is man's attempt at a solution to ease emotional problems – not to be dismissed out of hand, yet natural, and therefore limited by that which is natural. The reason prayer works so well is because God is supernatural, and His power has no natural limitation.

Those of us who do not regularly rely on prayer to help with the stresses of life can take a big step forward by committing to rely on prayer from now on. Also, there is more benefit to praying than just God answering our prayers. The fullness of what prayer has to offer is

fellowship with God Himself. God does not want to be distant, but rather a close constant companion to us. We know this because Scripture says so. A father instructs his child because he loves his child, and so it is with God who tells us in Deuteronomy 30:11-14:

*"For this mitzvah which I am giving you today is not too hard for you, it is not beyond your reach. It isn't in the sky, so that you need to ask, 'Who will go up into the sky for us, bring it to us and make us hear it, so that we can obey it?'*

*Likewise, it isn't beyond the sea, so that you need to ask, 'Who will cross the sea for us, bring it to us and make us hear it, so that we can obey it?' On the contrary, the word is very close to you- in your mouth, even in your heart; therefore, you can do it!"*

And in Revelation 3:20-21, Yeshua tells us, not only is God's Word close at hand, but Yeshua Himself is close at hand; for he says:

*"Here, I'm standing at the door, knocking. If someone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he will eat with me. I will let him who wins the victory sit with me on my throne, just as I myself also won the victory and sat down with my Father on his throne."*

Opening our door to Yeshua allows us to be over comers. Over comers of what, you ask? Of being crushed and destroyed by the stresses of life. If we feel unduly stressed in our daily lives, we are not overcoming the stress even though Yeshua assures us that we can. To take hold of His promise, we must pray and ask the Holy Spirit to enter our lives and take control. Letting go may be difficult at first, but it is the only way.

When Yeshua was asked by a Pharisee: *"Rabbi, which of the mitzvot in the Torah is the most important?"* Yeshua answered him:

*"You are to love ADONAI your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength." This is the greatest and most important mitzvah.*

*And a second is similar to it, 'You are to love your neighbor as yourself.'"*  
(Matthew 22:37-39).

If we want to be over comers of life's adversities, then we must invite God into our lives and give Him control; love Him with all of our heart, soul and strength, and apply His love (that He gives us) to loving others. If we do those things, our lives will be so shielded from faithless thoughts, and unholy temptations, that stress born of worry, fear, and self-concern will no longer have a place to thrive.

#### **Notes:**

1. Unless otherwise indicated, the English translations of Scripture in this paper are from the Complete Jewish Bible (CJB).

2. Where the Hebrew and English Scripture verse numbers are not the same, the English verses are placed in parentheses.