

# Relieving Stress Spiritually

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The theme of this day is relieving stress spiritually, and this being a Catholic University, the inference is that “Christian” or “biblical” spirituality is what is meant; I wouldn’t want to encourage any other kind because the Bible warns us against seeking blessing from any god other than the one true God, the God of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Jesus. So now let’s ask ourselves “what is biblical spirituality?” The simplest form of it is our believing enough in the reality of God that we are willing to pray to Him and ask him to relieve us in all the areas of our need. That includes, of course, our need to be relieved from stress which is a very disabling and unhealthy thing. In Matthew 11, verses 28 to 30 of the Bible, Jesus said:

*"Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light."*

While pursuing this source of relief by merely asking might seem simple and obvious, unfortunately most people who say they believe in God do not look to Him first, and sometimes do not look to Him at all except as a last resort. How often do we hear a “television program” doctor say: “I have done all I can, so there is nothing left to do but pray.”? Why is this? It is because it is one thing to believe in God intellectually – that is, to believe that there is a spirit creator of all – and it is another thing to believe that He is God who has power, loves us, and is willing and able to help us with our needs.

If we only believe in God intellectually and do not know or believe what’s 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 no power in our prayer because, while we believe in God, we don’t have faith in God being our Heavenly Father who cares about us and is willing to intervene in our lives. On the other hand, if we do 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. Romans 10:17 says:

*“So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.”*

It’s 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 written in Scripture – either through reading it, or through hearing it preached.

I am advising prayer as a means to cope with any of life’s problems, including relieving ourselves of stress, because God can, and often does, help us out of our difficulties when we ask even if our faith level is low. And by the way, don’t think of prayer as mere therapy. Therapy, of whatever kind and whatever operative theory, is a natural solution to emotional problems –

not to be dismissed, yet natural, and therefore limited by what is natural. The reason prayer works so well is because God is supernatural, and His power has no natural limitation.

If you have not been relying on prayer to help you with the stresses of your life, you will be taking a very big step if you begin now. However, there is more of God available to you than just His answering prayer, so why not get the full complement of what He has to offer? Marvelously, the full complement of what God has to offer you is Himself. He says that He doesn't want to be a distant God, but rather a constant fatherly companion to you just for the asking. We know this because Scripture says so. A father instructs his child because he loves his child, and so it is with God; speaking of His instructions to us, He tells us in Deuteronomy 30:11-14:

*"For this commandment which I command you today is not too mysterious for you, nor is it far off. It is not in heaven, that you should say, 'Who will ascend into heaven for us and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it?' Nor is it beyond the sea, that you should say, 'Who will go over the sea for us and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it?' But the word is very near you, in your mouth and in your heart, that you may do it."*

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

*"Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me. To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne."*

Notice that opening our door to Jesus causes us to be over comers. Over comers of what? Of being crushed and destroyed by the adversities of life. If you are being stressed by the adversities of your life, you are not overcoming, and Jesus promises to give you victory so that you can and you will.

But you see we have now taken a step beyond praying to God to solve our problems – we have now asked God Himself to enter our lives and take control; that's an order of magnitude of difference. If you want to know what real godly spirituality is – that's it; it's having a moment by moment personal relationship with God and releasing control of your life to Him.

When Jesus was asked by a Pharisee what is the first and most important commandment? Jesus answered him:

*"You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself." (Matthew 22:37-39)*

If you want to be truly spiritual, to be an over comer of life's adversities through godly spirituality, then this is what is needed – to invite Jesus into your life and give Him control; to love Him and your heavenly Father with all of your heart, soul and strength, and to apply love to

all persons in your life. If you do these things, your life will be so completely changed, that stress born of worry and fear will no longer have a place in it.