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WHY ARE WE SO STRESSED?!

Philippians 4:7: (NASB) *And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*

Stress is all around us and unfortunately, within us. We know stress is not good for us. Physically, it wreaks havoc with our bodies. Mentally, it causes us to make poor, rash decisions and not work up to our full capacity. It causes us to lash out at those around us and causes damage to relationships we once cherished. Having the peace of God does not mean all is quiet in our lives. It means that even though everything is falling down around us, we are still able to hold onto our anchor in the storm and remain balanced and content. Easier said than done! What are some practical ways we can accomplish this so we can have a strong, steady walk with the Lord instead of being distracted and always giving our second best? Stay with us as we explore true peace to combat all of the anxiety this world has to offer.

We have asked one of our CQ volunteers, Julie, to join us on this episode, as she suggested this topic would be important. [Please see CQ Rewind Full Edition for the details of this week's discussion, including the personal experiences of Julie and Rick.](#)

Just because we are in Christ does not mean that everything is always well. On the contrary, being in Christ PROMISES we will be under trial, stress and hurt -and not just from sources that are outside of the true church but also our stress and difficulty can come from wonderful and well-meaning sources within.

There was stress in the early church: Acts 15:1-5: Some Christians announced that all new converts would need to be circumcised. This was a wrong conclusion, but there was legitimacy to this argument. Although after the death of Jesus they would not be subject to the rituals of the Law, the argument was that circumcision was started with Abraham, long before the Law was given. This was used as a symbol of being separated from the world.

This was such a destructive problem that the other Apostles were sought after for their wisdom. There was a big issue. Rather than yelling back, they decided to take this debate to a wider audience. Even while carrying such an explosive issue with them, Paul and Barnabas traveled with *great joy*, not turning this into a negative discussion wherever they went.

Since the Pharisees had been opposed to Jesus about 30 years earlier, how easy it would have been to think, “Not those Pharisee guys again, now trying to manipulate Christianity!” Yet, all were treated with respect in the stress of this major roadblock to the fellowship of Christ. It would have been easy to judge them, but the rest of the chapter tells us of a heated discussion, then a resolution and a compromise made. The approach was not correct, but it was respected.

Acts 15 shows us a sense of coming together for the greater good and hearing each other out. Communication helped diminish some of the stress.

We now want to introduce some of the background of Julie's personal story. Stress can cause or exacerbate many kinds of health problems, including depression, weight problems, heart disease and autoimmune disorders.

Autoimmune disorders alone affect about 50 million Americans and develop when your immune system, which defends your body against disease, decides your healthy cells are foreign and your immune system attacks healthy cells. There are as many as 80 different types of autoimmune disease. Up to 80 percent of patients reported uncommon emotional stress before disease onset.

Though it is difficult to share our personal struggles, the best way to understand and conquer stress might be to see it through Scripture and watch how it unfolds in others and how they work through it.

STEP #1: BE AWARE: Acknowledge the pain of the stress

To find stress management answers we will look into another stressful early church situation: Philippians 4:1-2: These were two women in the church at Philippi who could not come to an agreement. We do not know the subject, but it was important enough for the Apostle Paul to call them out by name in a letter to the entire church. He urged them to come



to a point of being able to agree. The Apostle Paul dealt with a difficult situation that obviously was moving the church away from a pattern of growth and development. The Apostle was aware of the situation and wanted those in Philippi to look it in the eye and acknowledge there was an issue. Being aware of stress is the first major step in trying to conquer it.

STEP #2: ACCEPT ASSISTANCE: Appreciated and engage in the process.

Philippians 4:3: Notice how the stressful situation is not overwhelming the Apostle's viewpoint of those involved. He confirms that they are all named in the book of life, even in the midst of the dissension. This gives us a deep lesson in fellowship, in being able to approach the issue and still see the people at odds in the most positive way possible. Let the love of Christ overwhelm and overcome this problem.

Who shared my struggle - Paul enters in with them to help them get over the issue.

Jesus is our primary source of comfort: Matthew 11:28-30

- *Key to accepting assistance - look up to Jesus, reach up and hand over your burden as you 'fess up about your brokenness!*

Here is how the Apostle Paul handled the stress of life: 2 Corinthians 1:2-7: Whether the Apostle received affliction or comfort, it was ALWAYS used for the benefit of others. What a way to deal with stress!

- *Key to accepting assistance - realize that others experiences can be golden teaching tools for you in your stress - even if the details are different the core lessons are the same - share your sufferings!*

This fits so well: John 16:27: (NASB) *For the Father Himself loves you, because you have loved me and have believed that I came forth from the Father.*

- *Key to accepting assistance - it is often said that taking a hot bath can be relaxing - bathe in the knowledge that God himself - the Father and Creator of all loves you and therefore will help you to be an over-comer!*

There is a high level of acceptance that the Father Himself loves you. It is still a hard thing to put this into practice and make stress go away.

Julie: (see Full Edition Rewind)

STEP #3: TAKE ACTION! Attract and apply the power to cope

The Apostle has confronted the issue (#1: Aware). He has looked for help in addressing it (#2: Assistance), and now he tells us how to cope: Philippians 4:4-6: This can seem silly and even trite. How am I supposed to rejoice, be without anxiety and be thankful when my whole life is collapsing around me?

- *Key to action: Think higher, act higher see from a higher place. Remember, circumstances can and often do easily dictate our state of mind. The fact is our state of mind is an absolute choice and does NOT have to be captive to what's happening around or to you. Paul is telling us to choose our thoughts!*

The struggle is with the state of mind, making the choice not to be captive to the circumstances; to be free to choose a higher way. This choice of higher thoughts reaps a powerful harvest.

This brings us to our theme Scripture: Philippians 4:7: (NASB) *And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*

- *Key to action: Pursue the peace of God for it will not arbitrarily grace you with its presence. God's peace can only come to us when we make room for it, when we evict our own will and our own way in favor of his higher plan - whatever that plan might be.*

The peace of God does not just come sauntering into your life; you have to pursue it, Julie. "Whatever that plan may be" was written with your experience in mind. Although you have made a lot of adjustments, the issue is still there. What has to change? Sometimes the



circumstances do not change, but the peace of God in our hearts can grow and take over, and learn to evict the stressors in our lives and take root. Both cannot live in our hearts.

Much has been written on the “power of attraction;” these are the places where it really does work: Philippians 4:8-9: Think on things that are in this list. That is the power of attraction. When we dwell on the stress in our lives, the stress gets bigger and overwhelming. If we dwell on things worthy of praise, they can also overwhelm us in a good way.

- *Key to action: Commit to higher ways, even if you continually fail at them, for the power of choosing our thoughts to be godly takes time to learn. Find examples who inspire you and follow them as they follow Christ.*

Philippians 4:12

The power to cope with stress ultimately comes from our ability to let go of what we cannot control, to be alert to our old habits and thinking and to be prepared to always resist Satan: 1 Peter 5:6-10: Humility, follow-through and preparedness are all elements of the power to cope. There are many places, circumstances and experiences that deliver stress to our lives. Now we will touch on some of the more obvious stressors and see if we can find practical solutions.

Rick’s “Epic Fail” story: [\(See Full Edition Rewind\)](#)

LIFE STRESSOR: FAMILY ISSUES - Sometimes stress involves family dynamics and part of the challenge is to “stay above the fray.” Jesus set a sound principle in place for this:

Luke 12:13-15: Be on guard against all forms of greed. Greed creates stress because it is insatiable. “Things” make us stressed, and often family squabbles are over material possessions.

Matthew 5:7-9: *Merciful, pure in heart, peacemaker.* These are ways of being, not things, and these can help keep stress at bay.

- *Stress Management Key: Our personal greed and need factor inherently creates stress. To continually moderate this desire is to keep its stress from even approaching our lives!*
- *Stress Management Key: If we daily build mercy a clean heart and peacemaking as a foundation of life, we can again head stress off before it even arrives!*

What is a practical way to reduce stress? Julie: What many experts say is the most important thing... BREATHE! Deep, conscious breathing. In (count to 10) out (count to 10).

This always makes me think of Jonathan because one of his favorite words is *selah* as used in the Psalms, meaning “pause and consider.” Use the space between your breaths to calm down. This is easy because it is free, you can do it anywhere and in front of anyone! Breathe. Selah. Pause and consider. The experts today tell us this is what we should do, and here David wrote the Psalms thousands of years ago and gave us the same advice.

LIFE STRESSOR: Personal confidence issues - Sometimes we are overrun by stress when we are not confident in our ability to do a task, or take a stand or fulfill a responsibility: Hebrews 10:32-36: The Apostle is asking us to remember when we were in dire straits and stood up under it and met the challenge. *Do not throw away your confidence* - look back and see what you were able to accomplish. Do not get tired now. We can find strength and inspiration in our prior victories as well as those of others.

- *Stress Management Key: We all have past experiences that we can look back on to and see how God’s hand guided us. Relive that victory in Christ and look for God’s leading in this new experience!*

We fall down but God is always our enduring strength. Psalms 73:26: (NASB) *My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.*

We need to rise above stress by processing it differently in our minds.

LIFE STRESSOR: External pressure, character attacks, misrepresentations

Matthew 5:11-12: We are blessed, but we still may feel stressed! **What should we hold on to?** Romans 8:31,35: Scriptures like this have to be more than our intellectual understanding.



- *Stress Management Key: We once again return to the inward workings of our own minds. We can choose to REJECT the nastiness of our environment from invading our minds sacred space which is solely reserved for godly worship, praise and thought - that's what Jesus did!*

There is a sense of sacredness in the mind of a Christian. There is supposed to be a place where God's Spirit dwells within us. When we allow stress in, we have to push something else out. It is important to realize that sometimes the things that do not seem so exciting is the pathway to managing trials and tribulations and the tsunami of experiences surrounding you.

LIFE STRESSOR: Weariness issues - Stress becomes ever more tenacious when we become just too tired to fight: Isaiah 40:28-31: We may stumble and fall, but our God IS eternal energy, direction and purpose! He does not get tired. We can *mount up with wings like eagles* because of His strength if we have the faith, trust and humility to allow His strength to respond through us.

Philippians 4:13: (KJV) *I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.*

2 Corinthians 12:9-10: We are going to fall apart and that is okay. This is a great stress relief! We just need to get up again.

There is an end result to every battle. If we have God's glory in our minds and hearts, it changes the way we fight. Have the motivation to crush the adversary - not because you are so strong (because you are not), but God's grace and strength can lift us beyond the stress.

We need an anchor for our soul whose weight holds us steady and stable through the storms of life: 2 Corinthians 4:16-17: Our *outer man* might not be doing so well, but our *inner man* is being renewed day by day. Even if our outer circumstances cannot change, our inner circumstances are supposed to grow and develop.

LIFE STRESSOR: Worry issues - Perhaps one of the easiest ways to allow stress to permeate our beings is through the simple choice to worry. Jesus had plenty to say about that: Matthew 6:25-34

Worry Point #1: Our lives are bigger than the basic necessities. Do we *live* this?

Worry Point #2: God's design provides for the plant and animal world. Surely we, as His children, can realize His providence applies to us as well! Worry Point #3: As followers of Jesus, we certainly strive to have a clearly defined focus on the kingdom. Such focus is higher than the average population and will supply our needs without the added burden of worry. Do the most important thing at any given moment. Focus on today and not on constantly asking, "What if?" Worry Point #4: Do what you must do for God's glory today with focus and passion. Tomorrow's challenges will wait until tomorrow. God never gives us more than we are capable of.

- *Stress Management Key: To worry is to spend our minds energy on a wasteful endeavor, for worry NEVER changes an outcome. To focus is to invest our minds energy into the shaping of our attitudes and actions, which ALWAYS changes and lifts the outcome to a praiseworthy level.*

2 Corinthians 4:8-10

We can worry or we can focus - same kind of energy but with different results. Isaiah 26:3-4

Julie: I implore our listeners to find balance in your life. Do not be afraid to ask for help. Share with others. Pray for others. Redeem the time. Use your moments of quiet profitably. Make a plan to change your schedule and your attitude. Pray. We have an incredible opportunity to look stress in the eye and say, "Okay. It is here and lives in my circumstances but does not have to live in my heart or mind. What must I do to keep stress out?" The answer is to fill your heart with things that are profitable, spiritual and godly and rehearse them again and again. We can put stress where it belongs - away from us.

***So, why are we so stressed?
For Jonathan and Rick (and Julie!) and Christian Questions...
Think about it...!***