

How Can I Respond to Stress?

Stress has become such a universal problem that many medical professionals now connect it with serious problems such as ulcers, depression, and even suicide. In our environment, pressure and stress come through family trouble, financial difficulty, job pressure, and other factors. There are a number of lists that detail stress factors and assign points to the various sources. For example, the most stressful of events is the death of a spouse, divorce, marital separation, a jail term, death of another family member, and illness or injury.

There are several common reactions to stress. Many try to flee the problem in the hope that the irritation will go away. Some internalize their pressure, seeking to suppress it. However, it usually spills over into some other area. Still others crumble emotionally, giving way to despair and depression or addictive behaviours. God's word teaches us several fundamental principles that can bring us through tough times and even positively benefit our spiritual and emotional well-being in the process.

No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.

(1 Corinthians 10)

First, we should look at our situation with a telescope, rather than under a microscope. All too often, we magnify our troubles beyond their significance and in so doing increase their pressure. Instead, we need to remember that God knows the end from the beginning and provides all of our necessities for the present. We need to concentrate on today's problems, not tomorrow's, and thank God for His daily grace to sustain us. "This too shall pass" is a helpful principle we can hang onto. God promises us fresh new love and strength every day so even in a troubling day we can get through, get rest, and face a new day with new resources. This is only temporary. This is one day in the middle of many good days.

Second, we rely on God's strength, not our own. Satan deceives us into thinking we can or must handle our strains in our own cleverness and abilities—until we are almost at the breaking point. The key is to lean on God's power at the initial stage of the problem. God's

strength comes as He stabilizes our emotions with His peace, infuses our hearts with His joy, and provides us with His all-sufficient wisdom to deal with any hardship in life.

Finally, brothers and sisters, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. God gives power to the weak, and to those who have no might He increases strength. (Ephesians 6 & Isaiah 40)

Third, we can thank God that He is at work producing positive results from our stressful circumstances. Trials can always turn us toward the Lord, seeking and trusting Him with new passion even if that passion seems to be in the form of desperation. Trials also are working in us to create sturdier Christian character and the ability to persevere under the load. As we turn to Christ, in the middle of our trials and trust in His power and wisdom to actually support us and show us new solutions, we gain new spiritual maturity and hardness of spirit.

And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance, character; and character, hope.

(Romans 5)

God is never out to break us or shatter us. He knows our frame and will not overload us in times of stress. Rather, He seeks to use our stressful times as cleverly disguised opportunities for us to gain His perspective, lean on His strength, and develop steadfastness with which we can run life's course. God may not change the circumstance that is pressing on us. He may not remove that person who bothering us greatly. He may not heal that affliction that daily grates away at body and soul. But God will dramatically alter our own emotions and responses as we turn to Him instead of running or exploding.

Questions For Reflection and Discussion

1. In what areas am I vulnerable to feeling stress and anxiety these days?
2. What are healthy ways I (or others I've seen) deal with stress?
3. What benefit have some of my trials brought to my life, even though they weren't fun in the process?

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WE WILL WORSHIP HIM

Let us come together
Let us join as one
Let us turn our faces to the rising sun
Let us go up to Zion
To God's holy hill
A mighty army that will worship Him

Chorus

We will worship Him
We will worship Him
Jesus is our king
We will worship Him
Let the oceans roar
Let the heavens ring
To the glory of our God
As we worship Him

Verse 2

Let us come for battle
It is time for war
As we sing "Hosanna"
As we praise the Lord
He will still the accuser
Crush the enemy
As we celebrate God's victory

HOPE OF THE NATIONS

Jesus, hope of the nations
Jesus, comfort for all who mourn
You are the source of Heaven's hope on earth
Jesus, light in the darkness
Jesus, truth in each circumstance
You are the source of Heaven's light on earth

Bridge

In history You lived and died
You broke the chains,
You rose to life

Chorus

You are the hope living in us
You are the rock in whom we trust
You are the light shining for all the world to see
You rose from the dead, conquering fear
Our Prince of Peace drawing us near
Jesus our hope, living for all who will receive

Lord, we believe

YOU SHINE

Why should I fear man when You made the heavens?
Why should I be afraid when You put the stars in place?
Why should I lose heart when I know how great You are?
Why should I give up when Your plans are full of love?

Bridge

In this world we will have trouble
But You have overcome the world

Chorus

You shine brighter than the brightest star
Your love, purer than the purest heart
You shine filling us with courage and strength
To follow You

YOUR LOVE IS AMAZING

Verse 1

Your love is amazing, steady and unchanging
Your love is a mountain firm beneath my feet
Your love is a mystery how You gently lift me
When I am surrounded your love carries me

Chorus

Hallelujah Hallelujah Hallelujah
Your love makes me sing
Hallelujah Hallelujah Hallelujah
Your love makes me sing

Verse 2

Your love is surprising I can feel arising
All the joy that's growing deep inside of me
Every time I see You
All Your goodness shines through
I can feel this God song rising up in me