

## Calm Down and Cheer Up

Today it seems as if everyone is under stress. It has become a normal part of everyday life—and as long as we can keep that stress within reasonable limits, there's no problem. But when we allow it to exceed its reasonable limit, trouble begins. For example, a chair is built to sit on. It is designed and constructed to bear a certain amount of weight. If it is used properly, it should last a very long time. But if it is overloaded beyond its capacity, it will begin to wear out and can eventually break down completely under the strain. In the same way, you and I were designed and created to bear a certain amount of physical, mental, and emotional strain day after day. However, problems arise when we allow ourselves to come under more weight than we are capable of supporting.

**Jesus said: "These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."** (John 16)

Each one of us has been given a different set of gifts, and different levels of ability to manage those gifts. Each of us needs to know our limits—we need to know how much we are able to handle. We need to be able to recognize when we are reaching "full capacity" or "overload." Instead of pushing ourselves into overload just to please others or to satisfy our own desires to reach our personal goals, we need to listen to God and obey what He is telling us to do.

**Unless the LORD builds the house, they labor in vain who build it. Unless the LORD guards the city, the watchman stays awake in vain. It is vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows. For God gives His beloved sleep.** (From Psalm 127)

Anything can cause stress and what causes you stress may not bother anyone else. What bothers you today may not give you any problems tomorrow. Stressors can be big things or little things. For example, going to the grocery store and becoming upset by high prices may be a stressor for you. Then the process of paying for your groceries may become a stressor. The checker in your lane runs out of change in the register and has to shut down temporarily. These small, seemingly innocent circumstances pile up until you feel that you may explode from the pressure. Nobody can remove all the things—big and little—that cause stress in our

lives. For that reason, each of us must learn to identify and recognize the stressors that affect us most and learn how to respond to them with the right action.

If the stressors are not managed properly, one by one, they can mount up to bring us to the breaking point. Because we may not be able to eliminate or reduce many of the stressors in our lives, we must concentrate on reducing their effects on us. When we can't control all of our circumstances, we must adapt or adjust our attitude so we don't let them pressure us.

**For the LORD your God has arrived to live among you. He is a mighty savior. He will rejoice over you with great gladness. With his love, he will calm all your fears. He will exult over you by singing a happy song.** (Zephaniah 3)

It seems that the very atmosphere of the world today is charged with stress and pressure. But the good news is that we don't have to operate in the world's system, reacting like people in the world who have no hope for peace in their lives. The world responds to difficulties by becoming upset and stressed, but our attitude and approach should be entirely different.

We need to have a change of attitude. The right attitude and approach to a situation can completely turn a situation around. Instead of stressing out and getting tense, we can calm down by taking a deep breath and trying to get some perspective on the situation. If we approach a circumstance already stressed out, we are setting ourselves up for misery before we begin. We can refuse to allow the circumstances to dictate to us how we are going to feel. We may not be able to control the situation, but we can control how we respond to the situation.

**God blesses those who work for peace, for they will be called the children of God.** (Matthew 5)

You, too, can choose to calm down and cheer up. Try it—you'll like it!

### Questions For Reflection and Discussion

1. What is healthy stress?
2. What kinds of stress wears me down?
3. In what kinds of stressful circumstances do I need to invite God to be with me?
4. How do we actually calm down and cheer up in stressful times?