

This Test Will Reveal the Strength of Your Faith

Note: You can read this story in the August issue of Charisma magazine. To subscribe, [click here](#).

“It matters not how great the pressure is, only where the pressure lies. As long as the pressure does not come between me and my Savior, but presses me to Him, then the greater the pressure, the greater my dependence upon Him.” *—Hudson Taylor*

We have heard lots of talk in recent weeks and months about the stresses of the COVID-19 world. The stress of fear. The stress of illness (yours or a loved one’s). The stress of isolation. The stress of economic impact such as job furlough or loss. The stress of relationships during quarantine. And now, the stress of reopening.

With or without the coronavirus, stress can serve as a powerful motivator or stimulus to burnout and dropout. In the language of physics, engineers use the term “stress” to describe both the external force applied to a material and the internal strength required to resist its pressure. These combined stresses will cause the material to change size and shape.

For example, a metal such as iron will have a yield point at which outside pressure increases its density, making it stronger. But when the strain exceeds its load-bearing capacity, the metal reaches a failure point and breaks. When a blacksmith heats and hammers a horseshoe, he not only shapes the metal but also increases its strength.

“We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed. We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be

revealed in our body” (2 Cor. 4:8-10, NIV).

The Bible uses a form of the word “distress” more than 100 times to describe negative stress. It most often pictures the negative result pressure and pain can have on the heart:

“We saw how distressed he was when he pleaded with us for his life, but we would not listen; that’s why this distress has come upon us” (Gen. 42:21).

“In my distress I called on the Lord, and cried for help to my God; He heard my voice from His temple, and my cry for help came before Him to His ears” (Ps. 18:6, MEV).

“For You have been a defense to the poor, a defense to the needy in his distress, a refuge from the storm, a shadow from the heat; for the breath of the ruthless ones is as a storm against the wall” (Isa. 25:4).

Stress is ultimately a spiritual issue that affects your whole life. Pressure is not the perpetrator. Instead, our reaction to pressure reveals our understanding of God’s ways.

We can allow pressure to come between us and the Lord, or we can allow pressure to press us closer to Him. We must all evaluate our mental, emotional and physical response to the pressures that produce distress in our lives.

After a time of tremendous victory, the prophet Elijah found himself in a place of spiritual warfare that caused him distress (read the story in 1 Kings 19). Elijah’s first response, like many of ours, is to run. He goes to the wilderness and ends up under a broom tree, asking God to take his life.

But Elijah’s stressed-out state does not distress the Lord. He ministers to His hurting prophet in various ways, ultimately quarantining him in a cave to protect him from the fury of the elements. He then allows Elijah to experience the power of His

presence on the mountaintop—not in the earthquake, not in the fire, but through “a still, small voice” (1 Kings 19:12c).

June Hunt, heir to the Hunt oil fortune, has some advice about our own times of stress: “On your journey through life, don’t miss the signs God has for you.”

When stress singles you out for repair:

Slow down and seek God’s direction.

Stop and turn from danger.

Yield to Christ in the driver’s seat.

Resume speed, trusting in the Lord.

As we resume our normal activities and come out from our pandemic-produced caves, let us look to these signs and to the power of the Holy Spirit to relieve the stress and distress life brings our way.

“I have told you these things, so 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 16:33). {eo}

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