

Your Get-Rid-of-Stress Test

A beautiful truck won first prize at a local classic car show. Not just because of the impressive exterior, the great paint job or even those snazzy wheels. It won because of the engine, its components, the way it was built, the clean look and its performance. The judges at the car show analyzed all entries to determine the first-prize winner.

In Line for a Prize

God begins his analyzing. Like the truck, He won't look at the way we painted the outside—with a lean body, fancy clothes, impressive jobs, or tons of followers on social media.

None of that attracts His attention. He Himself said, "Man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart" (1 Sam. 16:7).

Our heart is His focus because it's the engine that makes it all work. He said, "Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also" (Matt. 6:21).

If our heart stores anger, stress will flow out. If our heart holds on to resentment, stress will increase. If our heart keeps notions of insecurities, stress accompanies it. And if fear rumbles in our heart, stress rises like the summer temperatures in Orlando.

As you read this, the content in your heart defines your mood, your attitude toward this message, your path and even your destination. Jesus said in Matthew 12:34b, "For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks."

Gulp. That mouth creates and pours out words that either give life or death. Circumstances test this truth.

Put to the Test

I sat at the gate. And the announcement came telling passengers my flight to the event where I was to speak was full. No room for me. No chance to reach my destination till the next day. No other options than to miss my event.

That was the reality of the circumstance. But here's the action in my heart. I had choices:

1. To let stress build up.
2. To demand my rights as a disabled person who should have boarded first.
3. To speak my mind and join my irate fellow passengers.

You've been there, haven't you? Stress and tension are eating you for lunch. Good news: Here is the get-rid-of-stress test to take and see if you pass.

Multiple Choice

1. Do I recognize the Holy Spirit is beside me, listening, observing and taking in all my attitude and words?
2. Will my demands change the situation?
3. Will I gain favor from the person to whom I'm lashing out?
4. Will I mirror the Christian I claim to be—displaying patience, forgiveness and understanding?

If you answered "yes" to A and D, that means the circumstance didn't dictate your reaction; your heart determined your response instead. Then you became a winner by deleting stress and tension.

Not only that, but the victory carries God's promise—His supernatural ways to turn impossible situations around. By removing obstacles. By granting us favor before others and ushering an outcome we never expected.

Just FYI, while at the gate, I took a deep breath. Although there was no solution, I silently thanked God for His way to

resolve it. I took the multiple-choice test myself. I relaxed, sat back and waited. Then the agent offered a huge credit for volunteers to give up their seats. Two people took it, and I boarded the plane.

Let's Pray

Father, how often I create my own stress by reacting to circumstances. I ask Your help to analyze my heart first, to seek to please You and be confident in Your solutions. In Jesus' name, amen.

Who's winning today—you, or your stress? {eo}

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This article originally appeared at .

To learn more about godly ways to deal with stress, listen to the podcasts included with this article.