

Why Are So Many Christians So Stressed Out?

Stress. There have been so many books written on the topic you could literally fill a library—Amazon offers more than 32,000 books on the sore subject!

There are Christian books, secular self-help books, stress-reduction workbooks—even a *Stress Management for Dummies* book—all written by the “experts” from just about every angle under the sun.

I’ve read enough of those 32,000-plus books on stress to tell you about what anxiety does to the body. I know the common stress reduction techniques 10 ways from Sunday. I’ve taught on stress from the pulpit. I can parrot the Scriptures we’re supposed to confess when stress comes knocking on our doors. I get it.

And guess what? I still get stressed out some days.

Monday is a good example. I was stressed out trying to meet the deadline for my new book about “victorious Christian living.” My Christian designer was just as stressed out trying to finish the cover to my liking. It was a ridiculous scene. And I’m not too proud to admit it. (If you’ve arrived, pray for me because most days stress still knocks on my door—and some days I still let it in.)

I figured I wasn’t the only born-again, blood-bought, Spirit-filled believer who gets stressed out now and again. So I put a prayer call on my Facebook page. It went something like this: “Anybody willing to admit they are stressed out? If that’s you, comment or like this status and I’m going to launch out in prayer.”

I was amazed at the response. Hundreds of stressed out saints

wanted prayer. Others reached out to me privately for prayer because they didn't want to publicize their stressful situations.

What were they stressed out about? Some were simply exhausted. Others were stressed out over finances. Still others were stressed out over health issues. The list goes on and on. It seems even the most spiritual Christians are pros at stressing out.

What's going on? It doesn't take a Ph.D. or even a prophet to see the problem. We're wrestling in our own strength instead of resting in Christ. Truth is, the devil isn't stressing us out. Our boss isn't stressing us out. Our family isn't stressing us out. Not even our finances are stressing us out. Beloved, we're stressing ourselves out.

That's right. You are stressing yourself out, my friend, because you aren't trusting in God. (Don't get mad at me. I'm trying to help you!) The hustle and bustle and circumstantial chaos has won your attention. Your eyes are no longer on Jesus, so instead of perfect peace you are living with chronic stress. You can't blame anybody around you for being stressed out—and only you can make a decision to end the vicious cycle.

No, we can't blame our stress response on the devil, but often times he works overtime to weary the saints with circumstances that get our goat. We need a greater revelation of the grace of God. We need to meditate on Scriptures about the peace of God. And we need to rely on one another to pray for us when we are so stressed out we can't verbalize a petition. Never be too proud to ask for prayer.

Let me conclude with an apostolic instruction from Paul, a man who had more opportunities to get stressed out than most of us will face in a lifetime.

I mean, think about it. Paul five times received 39 lashes from the Jews. Three times he was beaten with rods. Once he

was pelted with stones. Three times he was shipwrecked. He spent a night and a day in the open sea. He was constantly on the move. He was in danger from rivers, in danger from bandits, in danger from his fellow Jews, in danger from gentiles, in danger in the city, in danger in the country, in danger at sea, and in danger from false believers. That's not to mention the time he spent behind bars sitting in sewage.

Paul had every natural reason to be stressed out. Yet in all this we don't hear Paul complaining to Timothy about how his back ached, how tired he was, how hungry he was, how scared he was—or anything else. He was confident that God would lead him into triumph—and He did.

So what would Paul do in the face of a printer deadline? What would Paul do in the face of sickness and disease, financial lack, cranky bosses, or family problems? Pray, believe, rejoice and rest. Here is Paul's time-tested advice:

"Don't fret or worry. Instead of worrying, pray. Let petitions and praises shape your worries into prayers, letting God know your concerns. Before you know it, a sense of God's wholeness, everything coming together for good, will come and settle you down. It's wonderful what happens when Christ displaces worry at the center of your life" (2 Cor. 11:24-26, The Message).

So, with that in mind, what will you do the next time you get stressed out? Keep it simple. Pray. Thank Him. Remember that you belong to Christ. And walk in the peace that passes all understanding. When you do, you'll be a witness to a stressed out world—and they'll want what you have.

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