

The Ultimate Stress Reliever

Stress is a modern-day epidemic. Every one of us deals with a degree of stress; however, God never intended for us to live our entire lives stressed out.

Proverbs 12:25a (NIV) says, “Anxiety weighs down the heart.” Stress and worry have an impact on every area of our lives—they affect us mentally, emotionally and physically. They have been proven to cause problems like muscle tension, headaches, increased heart rate and a list of other potential issues.

But there’s good news: God has given us the ultimate natural stress reliever—*trust*. Proverbs 3:5 (AMPC) is one of my favorite Scriptures. It says, “Lean on, trust in, *and* be confident in the Lord with all your heart *and* mind and do not rely on your own insight *or* understanding.”

The choice is up to us. We can “rely on our own insight and understanding”—endlessly thinking about our problems, trying to figure everything out ourselves. Or we can choose a trusting attitude that says:

“God, I’m not sure what to do about my situation, but I know that I can’t fix it on my own. If there is something specific You want me to do, please show me. Meanwhile, I’m going to trust You and enjoy my life while You work on my problems.”

Worry is the opposite of faith and trust, and it’s caused by not trusting God to take care of the various situations in our lives. Too often we rely on our own abilities, believing that we can figure out how to take care of our own problems. However, we eventually learn one way or another that trying to take care of everything ourselves is too big a task.

I used to be a professional worrier—I was good at it! Years ago, when my children were young, I would sit at our kitchen

table and spend hours looking at our bills, worrying how we would pay them. My husband, Dave, on the other hand, would be sitting on the floor in the TV room, letting the kids put curlers in his hair.

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I would say, "Dave how can you have fun at a time like this?" And he would answer, "Joyce, we've prayed about it, and we're doing everything we know to do. I refuse to be miserable with you."

It made me so mad! But Dave was right. I was allowing myself to get upset and waste time I could have been spending with my children.

In John 14:27 (AMPC), Jesus says,

Peace I leave with you; My [own] peace I now give and bequeath to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Do not let your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid. [Stop allowing yourselves to be agitated and disturbed; and do not permit yourselves to be fearful and intimidated and cowardly and unsettled.]

I love this! God is saying, "I am giving you My peace, but the choice is up to you." Look with me at 1 Peter 5:6-7. I can say these verses have truly been life-changing Scriptures for me:

Therefore humble yourselves [demote, lower yourselves in your own estimation] under the mighty hand of God, that in due time He may exalt you, casting the whole of your care [all your anxieties, all your worries, all your concerns, once and for all] on Him, for He cares for you affectionately and cares about you watchfully.

But this requires a decision on our part. I've learned

firsthand that the only way to have what God says we can have is to do what His Word says to do. In this case, if we want to have His peace, we must hand over our worries to the Lord.

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When things come our way that cause us to be concerned, we need God's help. How do we get it? First Peter 5:6-7 lists two important steps:

1. Humble yourself.
2. Cast your care on Him.

How do we humble ourselves? We honestly come before God and let Him know we can't do it on our own—that we need His help to have success in any area of our lives. It's worth it, because the humble get the help.

The truth is this: As long as we try to do everything ourselves, God will let us. He won't take care of our problems and worries until we choose to give them to Him. Either we're going to do it, or God's going to do it—but both of us aren't going to do it.

Now, casting your care doesn't mean you can be irresponsible. God won't do for you what you can do yourself. You must do what you *can* do, and then trust God to do what you *can't* do.

When we humble ourselves and ask for God's help, He's able to release His power in our situations. It's only then that we can really enjoy life.

When life throws you a curve, and you're tempted to worry and get stressed-out, I encourage you to place your trust in God and cast your cares on Him. Choose to think and say positive, faith-filled things from God's Word such as, "The Lord is

going to take care of this. It doesn't matter what it looks like—I believe God is working.”

The truth is, God knew about your problem before you ever got it, and He already has a plan for your solution. In the meantime, you can choose to enjoy your life while you wait. With His help, you can trust more and stress less.

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