

Stress 5-29-2020

Hello everybody, I'm Hank Wilson with the Christian Life Gospel Ministry and welcome to Living a True Christian Life. Today I want to talk about dealing with the pressures and stress of everyday life.

We live in a world that seems to be growing more stressful by the minute. Due to the COVID-19 virus, millions of people are suddenly out of work, people now have to teach their children at home, people who used to go into an office, now have to work at home, prices for the basics of life are rising, and the world just seems to be spiraling out of control. Everyone seems angry, turn on the news media and you watch as they all take sides, and our politicians; instead of bringing society together are calling each other names. Our friends are often on social media, posting things that they believe and putting us under pressure to agree with them, even when we don't. We are under so much pressure that personally, I sometimes feel like I'm going to burst, I want to yell, do something, anything to relieve the pressure I feel.

Today I want to take a look at pressure, I want to see if I can answer these questions. What are some of the dangers of pressure? Is pressure ever positive? Is there a way to handle pressure?

Most of us know what happens when you take a closed coke can and shake it, and then pop the top. It explodes and coke goes everywhere and that is what can

happen to us when we live under constant pressure and stress. Now we may not physically explode, so what are some of the results of us holding in the pressure. First it can cause us to lose our focus on what is important and instead makes us concentrate on the unimportant things. Matthew 13:22 “And the one on whom seed was sown among the thorns, this is the man who hears the word, and the worry of the world and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful.” Jesus was speaking about how people are much like seeds. When we hear the word and decide that we are believers, we can react to pressure and stress in a couple of ways. We can take what we’ve been taught to heart and use it to stay strong and focused, or we can forget what we’ve been taught and let ourselves be buffeted about by society and the issues. We often have no firm root system and without it, we are prone to fall for anything and to give into whatever we feel is overwhelming us.

Once we lose our root system, then pressure can also make us vulnerable to taking the easy way out, Mark 14:38 “Keep watching and praying that you may not come into temptation; the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.” From personal experience, I can attest to this being true. There have been times in my past when I would look up and see a way to deal with a situation that maybe didn’t require as much effort or thought that another way did. Whenever I took the short cut, it always turned out to be the wrong route to take. I finally learned to go slow, think

about my choices, pray for the wisdom to make the right decision; and when I followed through with that course of action then things most often turned out OK. When I didn't I discovered that pressure and stress can have very negative effects on us physically. We read in Psalm 77:2-3 "In the day of my trouble I sought the Lord; In the night my hand was stretched out without weariness;

My soul refused to be comforted. When I remember God, then I am disturbed;

When I sigh, then my spirit grows faint " Have you ever noticed that when you are feeling extra pressure from life, it's often hard to sleep at night? Maybe you get what is known as a stress headache, a dull throbbing that just won't go away. Or maybe your shoulders tighten up, or your stomach hurts, you just feel rotten.

Those are some systems of the negative effects of pressure, the question becomes, can pressure also be positive?

Yes, because it can help us build character. In James 1:2-4, "Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing." Now those verses were written by James during a time of Christian persecution and the early followers of Jesus were under pressure to turn away from the teachings of Him being the Messiah. As a result many were falling away because trying to maintain their identity both

as Christians and Jews was tough. However, James knew that if they were able to persevere they would come out of the situation stronger and that is what we need to bear in mind when we are facing challenges that stress us out. That thought is echoed in Romans 5:3 “And not only this, but we also exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance;” Once we understand that whatever we are facing is only temporary, then we can understand that our victory comes after the trials are over. Think of it as if you are sitting in a traffic jam, the cars or trucks seem to inch forward, it’s frustrating, especially when you might be late for a meeting or to pickup a child or spouse. Once that traffic jam, opens up, you can feel the relief flood over you and suddenly you realize that you didn’t break under the strain. If you face enough traffic jams, eventually you learn to just accept them as part of life, much like stress is just another part of life. But how can we learn to handle stress.

Pray for guidance and support Mark 14:35-36 “And He went a little beyond them, and fell to the ground and began to pray that if it were possible, the hour might pass Him by. And He was saying, “Abba! Father! All things are possible for You; remove this cup from Me; yet not what I will, but what You will.”” This is the most difficult thing, because when we’re stressed, it’s often hard to just pray because most of the time we want action. Especially in today’s modern society, we want answers, we want solutions, and we want them now. But what do we do,

when the prayers don't seem to be working and our feelings of being frazzled are getting worse?

Seek help from others and then listen to those who can offer guidance and counseling. In Exodus 18:17-18 "Moses' father-in-law said to him, "The thing that you are doing is not good. You will surely wear out, both yourself and these people who are with you, for the task is too heavy for you; you cannot do it alone." Even Moses recognized when things weren't going right for him, and the last phrase is one that is true for many of us, we cannot do it alone. When we are feeling overwhelmed, when we feel like we are drowning, reach out to someone, and ask for help. I served in the United States Coast Guard and one of our primary missions was to be there for those in distress. There were numerous times, when our lifeboats would go out and we would either put a tow line onto a stranded vessel and then bring them in safely, or in some cases toss a life preserver to a person who was in danger of drowning. When we are in danger of drowning because life is trying to hold our heads under water, we can't be afraid to reach for the life preserver. First pray that you'll get the wisdom you need, and ask for a solution to your problem, then if nothing is clear, if there is no clear answer then ask someone for help. It is always better to see if another person has a different perspective on our problems than we do. Sometimes we are just too close to be able to see the exit door.

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Peace and God Bless