

Where Does Stress Come From?

Introduction

We are promised tribulation. It will come.

"I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world."
(John 16:33 ESV)

Even if we live a long time, we will experience difficulty. Because we live in a time of human history with many cultural conveniences (air conditioning, easy access to food, relative safety, etc.), we're used to assuming that life is supposed to be full of comfort and joy. When pressures come, we are often *ill-fitted* to handle the pressures because we have been pampered in other areas of life.

"The years of our life are seventy,
or even by reason of strength eighty;
yet their span is but toil and trouble;
they are soon gone, and we fly away."
(Psa 90:10 ESV)
"but man is born to trouble
as the sparks fly upward."
(Job 5:7 ESV)

The real question is, how can we _____ the stressors of life before they _____ us?

The Sources of our Stressors

"Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds,"
(James 1:2 ESV)

Environment or circumstances in life

We may have no _____ over wildfires, hurricanes, a car wreck, traffic, a flat tire, a leaky roof, et.

Our limitations and deficiencies

"What's wrong with me? Why can't I be as successful or productive as they are?"

You compare yourself to others around you and find yourself coming up short. You might compare yourself with what you used to be able to do and find that discouraging. You feel like

you're losing ground on your battle for personal progress.

Other people

_____ with other people doesn't just happen, it takes work.

"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God."
(Matt 5:9 ESV)
"eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."
(Eph 4:3 ESV)

Typical Responses to the Stressors of Life

You need to be _____, on the lookout for these responses when stressors are in your life.

"Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."
(Matt 26:41 ESV)

If we are going to overcome stress we must be aware of the different kinds of stressors we are most likely to experience and second, we should _____ the **particular** _____ ways in which we are most prone to respond to the stressors we encounter and be on guard against them.

Debilitating Fear or Anxiety

What are some persistent fears that you are comfortable sharing with others?

"The fear of man lays a snare,
but whoever trusts in the Lord is safe."
(Prov 29:25 ESV)
"There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not been perfected in love."
(1 John 4:18 ESV)

The opposite of fear is not courage, but _____. _____ conquers fear.

There is no reason to respond with fear.

"The name of the Lord is a strong tower;
the righteous man runs into it and is safe."
(Prov 18:10 ESV)

"Fear not, for I am with you;
be not dismayed, for I am your God;
I will strengthen you, I will help you,
I will uphold you with my righteous right
hand."
(Is 41:10 ESV)

"There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out
fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and
whoever fears has not been perfected in love. We
love because he first loved us."
(1 John 4:18–19 ESV)

Worry or Anxiety

Worry is focusing on what may happen if something
does or doesn't occur.

"Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow,
for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient
for the day is its own trouble."
(Matt 6:34 ESV)

But worry can also be a response to what has
happened or is happening.

Worry is associated with something that appears
threatening, something that might harm your safety,
something you would like to _____ but
are overly concerned that you **cannot** _____.

The Bible tells us not to worry and to experience
God's peace instead.

- Matt 6:25–34
- John 14:1–27

"do not be anxious about anything, but in
everything by prayer and supplication with
thanksgiving let your requests be made known to
God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all
understanding, will guard your hearts and your
minds in Christ Jesus."
(Phil 4:6–7 ESV)

Bitterness, Anger, and Resentment

This is always a wrong way to respond. See the
following verses:

"Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and
clamor and slander be put away from you, along
with all malice."
(Eph 4:31 ESV)
"Let your reasonableness be known **to everyone**
[not just people you like]. The Lord is at hand;"
(Phil 4:5 ESV)

"But now you must put them all away: anger,
wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from
your mouth."
(Col 3:8 ESV)

Depression and Discouragement

Example 1: Cain (Genesis 4:5–7)

Example 2: Ahab (1 Kings 21)

Godly Response

"Finally, my brothers, rejoice in the Lord. To write
the same things to you is no trouble to me and is
safe for you."
(Phil 3:1 ESV)

"Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say,
rejoice."
(Phil 4:4 ESV)

"Rejoice always,"
(1 Th 5:16 ESV)

"But if we have food and clothing, with these we
will be content."
(1 Tim 6:8 ESV)

"Keep your life free from love of money, and be
content with what you have, for he has said, "I
will never leave you nor forsake you."
(Heb 13:5 ESV)

Envy and Jealousy

Jealousy is very dangerous.

"Wrath is cruel, anger is overwhelming,
but who can stand before jealousy?"
(Prov 27:4 ESV)

Biblical response:

"Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those
who weep."
(Rom 12:15 ESV)

"Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo
one another in showing honor."
(Rom 12:10 ESV)

"Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but
in humility count others more significant than
yourselves."
(Phil 2:3 ESV)

Annoyance, Irritability, and Impatience

"Now as they went on their way, Jesus entered a
village. And a woman named Martha welcomed
him into her house. And she had a sister called
Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet and listened to
his teaching. But Martha was distracted with
much serving. And she went up to him and said,
"Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me
to serve alone? Tell her then to help me." But the
Lord answered her, "Martha, Martha, you are
anxious and troubled about many things, but one
thing is necessary. Mary has chosen the good
portion, which will not be taken away from her."
(Luke 10:38-42 ESV)

How would you describe the way Martha behaved
here? What are some words that come to mind?

Denial and Pretense

Application Questions

1. Identify some of the most common sources of stress in the lives of people.
2. In what ways can (or does) our environment become a circumstantial cause of our stress?
3. In what ways can (or do) our own limitations become a circumstantial cause of our stress?
4. In what ways can (or do) other people become a circumstantial cause of our stress?
5. In what ways can (or do) past or future events become a circumstantial cause of our stress?
6. Identify which of these common sources of stress are most problematic to you.
7. How would the Bible describe the main reasons we get stressed out? What are the various wrong (unbiblical) ways that people respond to stressful circumstances?
8. Besides the wrong responses mentioned in this chapter, what other wrong responses to stress have you observed people using?
9. To which of these unbiblical ways of responding to potentially stressful circumstances are you most prone?