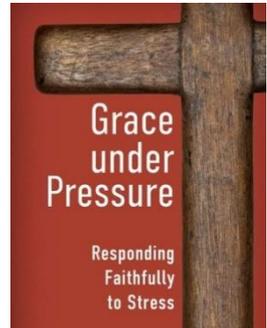


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## ***Responding to Stress with Biblical Resources***

We live in a highly tensed up and stressed up society with many exacting demands made on us daily aggravated in this pandemic world. The pressure to perform and to do well is tremendous be it in the family, marketplace or school is made worse these 2 years. STRESS and distress in our lives will have its serious mental and physical consequences. Carrying too heavy a stress load is like running your car engine going beyond its limits and there are serious consequences. Sooner or later, something will break, or melt down if it is not repaired properly. We need to be ware and manage our bodies and mind by the wisdom and grace of God before it is too late.



Which of these is stressful to you and how should you respond? We shall discuss.

- You have to go back to office to work after 2 years.
- Your mom is suffering from cancer.
- You have to go on an overseas business trip even in this pandemic.
- Your dog or fish or cat is sick.
- Your new house is being renovated for HIP.
- Your best friend just died.
- Your son is tested positive for COVID19.
- Your daughter is having her major exams soon.

### **The Right Resource**

**Muscle tension, headache, insomnia, anxiety and frustration are symptoms of stress and distress.** Spas and massage parlours seem to be doing well these days as stress relieving avenues. The examinations fever was here again in May and now it is over and beside the students, also the parents are stressed up. The economy had its downs last 2 years and jobs were threatened and some were affected adversely and

hopefully this year will be better. Some turn to worldly means like yoga and meditation in a quest for peace and quiet from anxiety and stress and other ailments. Our Lord Jesus is our supreme master and teacher and the Bible is our supreme guide in all things. The 21<sup>st</sup> century Christians felt the same emotional and mental strains made upon them notwithstanding in different ways,

The Lord our Creator knows the daily trials and demands of his own and have given us clear guidelines and principles on how to manage and regulate our lives in the midst of an exacting environment especially in a troubled a turbulent world. The following precepts can be gleaned from the teachings of Christ and the Apostles on this subject:

1. Consider Eternal Priorities (Col 3:1)

**In a sense, some form of stress is always healthy as it pushes and challenges us to achieve and improve ourselves.**

As a student, stress is studying for and passing examinations and an employee's stress is meeting KPI or targets may spur a person on to useful work rather than indolence. However, misplaced priority or purpose in life will cause undue stress. Those who are engrossed with worldly success, wealth and health, fame and accumulation of wealth bring much unnecessary worry and anxiety to his life. Hoarding treasures on earth can be a cause of undue stress for many Christians (v 20). Those who attempt to be masters of many tasks in this world brings to themselves many worries and trials (ie a 2-talent man doing a 10-talent man job, or a corporal trying to be a colonel) and others put their resources in the wrong places, (ie stocks and shares) entangled and confused and suffered much emotionally and spiritually. Honour God first in all things and He will honour you in return. Jesus says in Matt 6:33 *"But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."* Learn to surrender ourselves to him totally and seek the Lord's will first and let the sovereign God take control of all things! Remember what Job said in Job 1:21 to honour God despite what happened to him and his family and God later richly bless and prosper him



2. The Nurture of the Mind (2 Cor 10:5)

Many Christians are struggling with mental stress and depression in the workplace, home and even in the ministry where their minds are cluttered with much anxieties and worries. Our Lord Jesus Christ said, "Take no thought for tomorrow." Stress is essentially also undue mental and emotional strain over a period of time that is disproportionate. Excessive **Concern for things that we have no control over is unhelpful. Our minds are to be concerned with the right things.** Paul in Phil 4:8 *"Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are*

true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things." And read Phil 4:6-8 as well.

**Paul exhorts us not be haunted by the past failures, phobias, anxiety but press on in your Christian race.** Paul said in Phil 3:13,14 "*Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before*". Discipline your thought life with the help of the Holy Spirit. Paul said in 2 Cor 10:5, "*Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.*" An idle or ill-disciplined mind that is full of unedifying imaginations is vulnerable to stress and strain. An over ambitious plan may unnecessarily overwhelm some people who are already stressed with their worldly assets, corporate success, health and wealth Christians can live without all these and will be better off. **Relationships with others can be a source of stress as well.** Even children can be a source of stress for some parents; as Christian parents, we have to learn to prudently manage and gently teach them without venting our anger unnecessarily (Eph 6:3-5). Pray for them rather than tightly control and coerce them to do what we want them to do.

3. Lectures from Nature (Matt 6: 26)

**Appreciating God's magnificent creation like looking at the fowls of the air is another practical point in combating stress and depression.**

The Almighty Creator has built a beautiful world for us to admire and rejoice in. Have you ever stopped to admire the sunset or the morning glory or the sturdy trees or the singing canaries in the morning in the park? For busy Singaporeans, it is prudent and therapeutic to slow down and to admire God's marvellous handiwork. Ps 19:1-2 "*The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge.*" The lilies of the field is a good testimony of how the Almighty Creator and Sustainer and not only created but preserved His creation. Our Lord's argument is that if He takes care of the temporal and fleeting flora and fauna, will He not take care of His elect who is the crown of His creation, It takes our minds away from concentrating on ourselves to trusting and focusing on God. We need to pause to praise and recognise the mighty hand of God in all these. So it is prudent to take a stroll, to go into the parks and reservoirs, smell the flowers and listen to the sonorous songs of our feathered friends. Take time to look at the snails, or butterflies, the



flora and fauna, and be still and know that He is God (Ps 46:10) who has created all of them.

Some may jog, swim and cycle, go to the gym, play physically stimulating racket games and to enliven our bodies and rejuvenate themselves from a stressful day of work and labour. (Every week, the author and his wife exercise 3 to 4 times in their brisk walks). Not forgetting practical tips like a balanced diet of healthy and nutritious food as reminded by Dr Soo at our recent May Day seminar. Sufficient sleep for rest is vital and insufficient sleep makes one vulnerable to sickness and stress-related problems. Overcome insomnia by talking to the Shepherd directly instead of counting sheep, Ps 4:8 says "*I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep: for thou, LORD, only makest me dwell in safety.*"

#### 4. A Biblical Model

An OT example of someone who is overly stressed or depressed is Elijah. (1 Kg 19:1-11) He had fought a battle and won it for the Lord but was overly stressed and depressed due to the threat of the Queen Jezebel, the wicked wife of Ahab. He actually feared for his life (and forgot about God's victory at Mount Carmel) and ran all the way from Carmel to Beersheba (more than 150 km). Notice how God handled Elijah in his distressed condition. He first fed him, then let him rest for a few days before speaking to him in a still small voice, He encouraged and told him that 7,000 others have not bowed their knees to Baal. This was to give him a more accurate perspective of his ministry that he was not alone. **An inaccurate assessment of the situation increases stress unnecessarily.** (see also 2 Kings 6:16,17) He spoke to him in a gentle still small voice of prudent counselling and encouragement rather berating or shouting at him through the earthquake, wind or fire. Here we learn the importance of being still and to know and remember that He is the Almighty God who is in sovereign control of all things (Ps 46:10).

The Apostle Peter could have been emotionally stressed and depressed too when he denied Christ thrice, but he later repented and was restored by Christ (Jn 21). He became a powerful preacher and witness for Christ at the day of Pentecost. (Acts 2) This reinforces the point that confession and repentance may be necessary at times.



## 5. Learning to Destress

There are different stressful conditions of changes in life - whenever they occur in our lives, eg. shifting house, taking exams, death of a loved one, sickness, changing jobs, wedding, or migration or taking up a new course (eg. MBA). Be careful that you do not have too many changes at the same time, but rather manage one thing at a time. Have a healthy lifestyle and learn to work and relax at the same time with friends and family. Reading a book may be relaxing for one and stressful for another. Some can handle stress better while others cannot (there are genetic factors involved as well). Pray and ask the Lord for wisdom (Jas 1:5) to deal with each changing situation. **Remember that Solomon asked the Lord for wisdom, and he received it (1 Kg 3:9, Jas 1:5). A God-centered and a life of contentment is important for covenant Christians (1 Tim 6:6,10).** A regular worship, devotion and prayer to seek the Lord for strength daily (Phil 4:3,19) A daily quiet time with the Lord in the morning is a good stress-reliever when we meditate and pray rather than being tensed up in our own personal problems and work-related issues. God's help is only a prayer away (Jn 16:24).

**Learn to destress can be mentally refreshed or replenished with strength through activities like listening to edifying messages or Christian music.** Col 3:16 *"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord."* The Word of God and sacred music was what helped an ancient king when he was distressed (ie consider king Saul when David played on the harp for him in 1Sam16:22,23). Close your eyes, relax, and reflect, talk and share with your spouse or friends about your problems often. Take a break once a while with your family. Jesus said in Mark 6:31-32 *"And he said unto them, Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest a while: for there were many coming and going, and they had no leisure so much as to eat. And they departed into a desert place by ship privately."*

Some may need a sabbatical at the right time and be willing to take a break if necessary. Remember if you do not come part and rest awhile, one may just plain come apart, One has to learn to share our problems



with others for prayer and not keep to yourself. We can request our spouses, mature children, Christian colleagues and Christian friends for prayer support. Gal 6:2 *"Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ."* Prov 17:17 says *"A friend loveth at all times, and a brother is born for adversity."* *If you are aware of someone 's trouble, be also concerned and caring, to uplift and carry one another*

through difficult times and in so doing, one may be surprised that *your stress may also be relieved ironically.*

6. Holy Satisfaction (1Tim 6:6-10)

We are often caught up with too much stress if we are not encumbered with unrealistic, ambitious plans that are unreachable. Covetousness (as a form of idolatry) is a curse in life. Know your limits and be content with what we have or do not have. For example, someone who is trying to get a Masters or PhD when he is not up to the mark academically is unduly stressing himself/herself. Or one who is trying hard to be a director or manager of his own company when he is more suited to be working for others, or those involved in too risky financial investment or a burdensome bank loan may be overly stressing themselves by these commitments. **Exercise moderation in all things and learn to be thankful with what you have (Phil 4:5). Do not bite more than what you can chew and cut your coat according to your cloth.**

7. Regular Physical Exercise (2Tim 4:7,8)

Paul said in 2 Tim 4:7,8 that we are to **exercise unto godliness** and that bodily exercise profiteth little. To read it in the correct context, Paul is not discouraging physical exercise, he is just saying comparatively, spiritual gymnastics is superior to physical fitness which is perfectly in order. But it is crucial to note that Christians should also keep fit and exercise regularly. In order to have a healthy body and mind to work for the Lord, take time off from your busy schedule to replenish our wearied bodies and minds. Not by doing yoga or mindless meditation or *reiki* or any new age therapy but may be better to play a racket game, swim with friends, jog or just go to the beach to relax and read a book (ie, can be the Bible or a sound book). There is a time for everything. Eccl 3:11 *"He hath made every thing beautiful in his time..."*

8. Stayed on God (Isa 26:3,4)

**Isaiah has correctly stated that peace is a state of mind that if our minds are stayed on Christ and His Word, there is real lasting serenity and peace.** 2 Tim 1:7 *"For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind."* A healthy and sane mind is important to handle mental stress. The world is full of turmoil and unrest but Christ is the Prince of Peace. John 16:33 says, *"These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world."*



**Phil 4:6-7 speaks of peace as a consequence of prayer. Talking and unburdening our problems to God is a great stress-reliever.**

Christ is the Prince of Peace (Isa 9:6). Stress is the pre-occupation of mind with worldly cares, worries and anxieties. Peace is when a Christian seeks to be settled on God and not on ourselves or on our problems. Ps 20:7 *"Some trust in chariots, and some in horses: but we will remember the name of the LORD our God."* Cultivate the art of meditating and waiting upon the Lord (Psa 27:14). David learnt the secret when he was distressed. 1 Sam 30:6 *"And David was greatly distressed; for the people spake of stoning him, because the soul of all the people was grieved, every man for his sons and for his daughters: but David encouraged himself in the LORD his God."* **Learn to encourage yourself by reading God's Word, singing or (especially the psalms) and by prayer.** Daniel must have felt the stress of interpreting the king's dreams but he prayed together with three godly friends and God answered his prayers (Dan 2:17,18). Share it with your family and friends and have them shared it as well. We need to recognise that God's ways are beyond ours. Joseph must be stressed in the prison but God used that opportunity for him to reach out and rose up to the top of his career (Gen 38-9).

### **Conclusion**

Stress, and distress are facts of life and no one is exempted. Some form of stress is positive and helpful. God's Word has rich and reliable resources to guide us how to handle life's stressful moments. **We need not turn to unbiblical worldly resources of secular psychology, self-esteem, positive thinking or New Age practices like Yoga or Transcendental Meditation.** (NB: Sound established medical and nutritional advice is acceptable and good exercise) for we have a inspired heavenly guidebook teaching us how to manage stress in this life with spiritual discipline and divine intervention. Read, study and apply the Psalms when you are downcast. It is a **time for personal evaluation and reflection** and prayer as well when we are stressed to see if we are heading the right direction according to the will of God to see if it need any refocusing In our lives. Stress need not destroy us but be used of God for our spiritual and physical revitalization as well when we respond with biblical resources and God given directives.

*Jack Sin*

# May Day Seminar [2 May 2022]



**MESSAGE 1** Nutrition and our Physical Health  
by Dr Johannah Soo  
Lecturer, Food and Consumer Science, NIE



*Thank God for many participants from various churches who benefited from the messages by the 2 speakers... and the fellowship of saints.*



**MESSAGE 2** Biblical Insights for Preserving our Sanity in an Insane World  
by Rev Dr Jack Sin  
Pastor and Lecturer



*A profitable time of learning including the Q&A session.*

*With grateful thanks to our special speaker Dr Johannah Soo.*



# BIBLICAL PARADOXES OF LIFE EXPOUNDED

LORD'S DAY PROGRAM APR-JUN 2022

## APRIL

[3] FINDING & LOSING ONE'S LIFE

MATTHEW 10:31-39

[10\*] CHOSEN BY GOD & ABIDING

JOHN 15:1-16

*Good Friday Service*

[15] DIVINE SATISFACTION AT THE CROSS

JOHN 19:25-42

*Easter Service*

[17] OF DYING & YET LIVING

MATTHEW 28:1-10

[24] SORROWFUL YET REJOICING

2 CORINTHIANS 6:1-10

## MAY

[1] POOR & YET RICH

MATTHEW 5:5, PHILIPPIANS 4:10-19

[8\*] TEMPORAL & ETERNAL

1 JOHN 5:1-13

[15] STRENGTH IN WEAKNESS

2 CORINTHIANS 12:1-10

[22] KNOWING THE LOVE OF CHRIST THAT SURPASSES KNOWLEDGE

EPHESIANS 3:11-19

[29] OF LIGHT & DARKNESS

2 CORINTHIANS 4:1-7

## JUNE

[5] OF HOLINESS & WORLDLINESS

1 JOHN 2:15-21

[12\*] OF PERPLEXITY & PEACE

2 CORINTHIANS 4:8-18

[19] SPIRIT OF TRUTH VS ERROR

1 JOHN 3:18-4:6

*Gospel Sunday*

[26] ENDLESS HOPE OR HOPELESS END?

ROMANS 5:1-11

## Memory Verse

*1John 5:13* These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.

## Announcements

1. Welcome to our Resurrection Sunday Worship Service! For our visitors, do leave us your contact numbers in our guest book before you leave.
2. Pastor speaks this morning on “**Temporal & Eternal**” (1Jn 5:1-13), continuing the new quarterly series on “**Biblical Paradoxes of Life Expounded**”.
3. Pastor speaks next Sunday on “**Strength in Weakness**” (2Cor 12:1-10).
4. Sunday School classes continues after worship service:
  - WCF Shorter Catechism Class – Pastor Jack
  - Study on 4 Early Old Testament Characters – Joseph
  - Studies in Deuteronomy – Dn Kwong Leen
  - Burmese Bible Class - James
5. Chinese Fellowship meets on Sunday night at 7pm via Zoom with both local and overseas brethren. Included in the programme is a study on Church History in China on alternate Sundays. Join us for a time of profitable learning.
6. Do send your prayer items to Pastor and join us for Church Prayer Meeting on Wed at 8pm via Zoom. The prayer list is available in church.
7. **The Church camp will be from 16 -18 June at Changi Cove** on the theme “**Biblical Precepts for a Vibrant Christian Walk**” by Dr Jack Sin. Registration forms are available from Dn Yue Kay and all are encouraged to register as soon as possible as there is a limited capacity.
8. Monthly Neighbourhood Bible Class will next meet on **Fri 3 Jun 2022, 7.30pm in church** on the study of 2 Samuel. Come and join us!
9. Those who wish to bring a new friend to the worship service, kindly inform the safety officer Dn Yue Kay or Pastor at least a day in advance.
10. Do kindly observe the safety measures of the church and assist with the weekly cleaning of the premises.
11. Love gifts, Offering and Tithes to the Lord can be given in the following ways:
  - **Cheque** payable to **Sovereign Hope Bible Presbyterian Church** and mail to church address. (Kindly write the full name of the church as indicated.)
  - **Fund transfer** to Church **UOB** Account **392-308-825-1**
  - **PayNow** to Church UEN: **T19SS0116FSOV**