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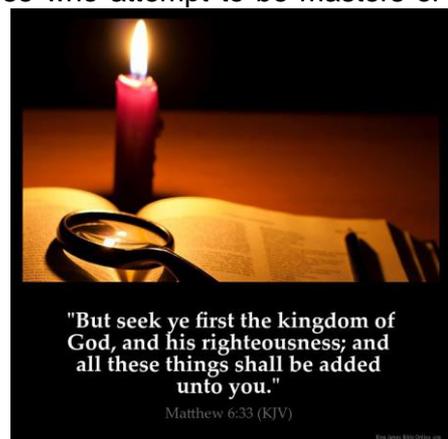
SCRIPTURAL DIRECTIONS ON COPING WITH STRESS

Muscle tensions, headaches, insomnia, phobia, compulsive obsessive behaviour, anxiety and frustrations are symptoms of stress and distress. Spas and massage parlours used to be doing well as stress relieving avenues. Reiki, Yoga and transcendental meditation are so called panaceas recommended by the world. The examination fever has stressed both students and parents. The national economy could be in recession soon due to the COVID19 pandemic. Jobs and businesses are still at stake as many retail and entertainment outlets are closed for this period and not a few are adversely affected. The Lord Jesus is our supreme Master and Teacher and the Bible is our infallible guide in all things (2 Tim 3:16,17).

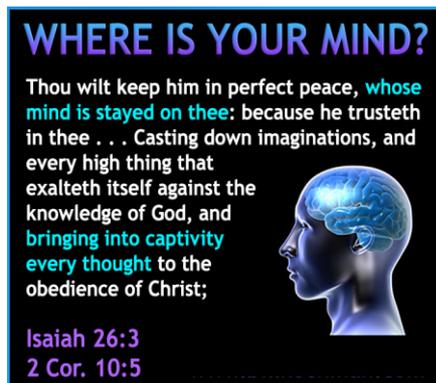
The Lord our Creator has given us clear guidelines and principles on how to manage and regulate our lives in the midst of an exacting, social and economic environment. The following precepts can be gleaned from the teachings of Christ and the Apostles.

1. Setting the Right Priorities

In a sense, some form of stress is always healthy as it pushes and challenges us to achieve more and to improve ourselves. For a student, stress is studying for and passing examinations and an employee's stress is meeting deadlines or marketing targets or the demands of the employers. **A misplaced priority or purpose in life will cause undue stress. Those who are engrossed with worldly success, wealth, health and fame often brings much unnecessary worry and anxiety to their lives.** Hoarding treasures on earth can cause an undue burden for Christians too (v 20). Those who attempt to be masters of others (ie a 2-talent man doing a 10-talent man job, or a corporal trying hard to rise up to be a Colonel) may have put their resources and energy in the wrong places, (ie stocks and shares) may suffer not just financially, but also emotionally and spiritually. Christians need to return to biblical basics to honour God first and He will honour you. 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 trust and rely on God and let God take control! Remember what Job said in Job 1:21, *"And said, Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD."*



2. A Healthy Mental Life



Today, many are struggling with mental, emotional and physical strain, worries and anxieties in the workplace, schools and camps as a result of this recent virus outbreak. Our Lord Jesus Christ said, "Take no thought for tomorrow." Stress is essentially exacting mental and emotional strain that is disproportionate or excessive beyond what we can normally bear. Undue worry or the fear of things or the unknown that we have no control over is unhelpful. We are to be vigilant and take the necessary precaution and our minds are to be proportionately concerned with the right things. Jesus in Matthew 6:33 says, "*But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto*

you." Paul in Phil 4:8 adds, "*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.*"

Do not be obsessed by the present situation or even the past 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 unhelpful imaginations is vulnerable to greater mental stress and strain.** An over ambitious plan may unnecessarily overwhelm some who are already stressed with other commitments. **Relationships with others can be a source of stress as well as a result of trying events in life.** A broken or failed relationship or disagreement with colleagues and spouse can cause stress as well. Even children can be a source of stress for some parents. Christian parents, to learn to prudently manage and gently teach their teenage children without venting our anger unnecessarily (Eph 6:3-5). Be patient and learn to tolerate, live with and forgive others and to let the Lord work in their lives In due time. Pray daily for and with our children rather than tightly control and coerce them to do what we want them to do (Job 1:5).

3. A Lesson from Nature

Appreciating God's magnificent creation like looking at the fowls of the air and the lilies of the field is another practical point in combating stress. The Creator has built a beautiful world for us to admire and rejoice in. Sometimes, it is crucial to slow down and to admire God's marvellous handiwork. Ps 19:1-2 said, "*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 not only created but care for His creation, including the elect. It takes our minds away from concentrating on ourselves or stressful events and to give due attention to the word of God. We need to praise and recognise the mighty hands of God in all these. So it is prudent to take be still and know that he is God. Also take a stroll In the park often, smell the flowers, look at and listen to the birds, or fishes, admire the lovely flora and fauna, and learn to be still and know that He is God (Ps 46:10).

Some may jog, swim and cycle, go to the gym, play physically stimulating racket games and to refresh our bodies from a hectic and stressful day of work and labour. **A balanced diet of healthy and nutritious food, regular exercise and rest is vital, for insufficient sleep makes one vulnerable to sickness and stress-related problems.** Ps 4:8 said, "*I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep: for thou, LORD, only makest me dwell in safety.*"

4. A Biblical Example

An Old Testament example of someone who is overly stressed or depressed is Elijah (1 Kg 19:1-11). He has just fought a battle and won but was overly stressed 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 (about 200 km). Notice how God handles Elijah in his distressed condition. He fed him first and let him rest for a few days before speaking to him. In a still small voice, He gently encouraged him by revealing to Him that 7,000 others have not bowed their knees to Baal (1 Kg 19:18). This was to give him a more accurate perspective of his ministry that he is not alone. **An inaccurate assessment of the situation increases stress unnecessarily.** Sometimes we read too much into a situation more than what is there for us to bear. The Lord spoke to Elijah in a gentle, still small voice. Often prudent, biblical counselling and encouragement by a godly friend, pastor or elder rather than berating or shouting at others is needed. Here we **learn the importance to be still and know and remember that He is the Almighty God who is in sovereign control of all things even in the midst of an impending disaster or calamity.** Peter might be stressed too when he denied Christ thrice but he later met up with Lord and he repented and was restored by Christ (Jn 21). So sincere confession and repentance may be necessary at times to relieve us of an undue burden.

5. Handling Changes in Life

Change seems to be a constant in life.

Different changing conditions of life, ie shifting house, taking examinations, death of a loved one, sickness, global virus outbreak, changing jobs, wedding, business failures or migration or taking up a new course brings with it new stress. **Be careful that you do not initiate too**



for everything there is a season.....ecclesiastes 3:1

many changes at the same time, but rather manage one thing at a time if possible. Have a healthy lifestyle and learn to work and relax at the same time with friends and family. There is a time for everything. Reading a book may be relaxing for some. 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 got it (1 Kg 3:9).** A regular worship, devotion and prayer to seek the Lord for strength in the morning is a great stress reliever (Mk 1:35). **A daily QT with the Lord in the morning has spiritual and physical benefits when we meditate on His Word and pray rather than being obsessed with our own personal problems and work-related issues.** God's help is only a prayer away (Jn 16:24).

Learn to de-stress or to be replenished with strength with activities like reading a Christian book or listening to edifying Christian music or writing a blog or diary. Col 3:16 said, *"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," edifying Christians.* Sacred music can help some when they are distressed as we sing the hymns and psalms like "A mighty Fortress is our God" or "Our God Moves in a Mysterious Way" and others. King Saul was soothed by the music from the harp of David (1 Sam 16:23). 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."*

We all need a sabbatical once a while. Learn to slow down and take a break, share and not keep them to yourself and open it up to others like your spouse, colleagues, Christian friends and request 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."* **Be also concerned and caring, to uplift and carry one another through difficult times and in so doing, you may be surprised that your own stress may also go away.**

6. Spiritual Contentment

Believers can be overwhelmed with too much stress if we are encumbered with unrealistic, ambitious plans that are unreachable. **Covetousness (as a form of idolatry) is a curse in life.**



(Col 3:5) Know your limits , liabilities and be content with what we have or do not have. For example, someone who is trying to get a Masters degree or PhD when it is not necessary or if he or she is not up to the mark academically is unduly stressing himself/herself. Another 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 speculation for selfish gains) or a burdensome bank loan may be stressing themselves unduly by these commitments. **Exercise moderation in all things and be temperate and learn to be thankful with whatever you have or do not have (Phil 4:5). Do not bite more than what you can chew and cut your coat according to your cloth.**

7. Healthy Bodily Exercise

Paul said in 2 Tim 4:7,8 that we are to **exercise unto godliness** and that bodily exercise profiteth little. To understand it in the correct context, **Paul is not discouraging physical exercise; he is 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 a good immune system to fight any virus and a sound mind to work for the Lord, take time from our busy schedule to replenish our wearied bodies and minds (Mark 6:31). Play a racket game, swim, jog or just go to the beach to relax and read a book (ie not a heavy textbook). Moderate forms of exercise can be adapted even during a Stay Home Notice or Leave of Absence or on a train or a bus while commuting. There is a time for everything. Eccl 3:11 *“He hath made every thing beautiful in his time...”* **God wants us to have a disciplined life, a healthy body to build up our immune system and our mind too.**

8. The Preoccupation of the Mind

Isaiah has correctly stated that **peace is a state of mind if our minds are stayed on Christ and His Word, there is real lasting serenity and peace.** 2 Tim 1:7 said, *“For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.”* **A healthy and God-centred sane mind is a sure aid to handle mental stress. During you home time, don’t just play computer games or watch a movie (which is plausible for some) but spend time in much prayer or read a good book too.** The world today is full of turmoil and unrest but Christ is the only Prince of Peace who can give us real 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. Private communication and unburdening our problems to God are 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 comes when a Christian’s mind is settled on God alone and not on ourselves nor on our problems (Isa 26:3,4). Ps 20:7 said, *“Some trust in chariots, and some in horses: but we will remember the name of the LORD our God.”* **Cultivate the art of praying and waiting upon the Lord (Ps 27:14).** David learnt the secret when he was distressed. 1 Sam 30:6 said, *“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 (especially the Psalms) and by persevering prayer.** Daniel felt the stress of interpreting the king’s dreams but he prayed together with three godly friends and God answered their prayers (Dan 2:17,18). Share it with your family and friends and have them shared theirs as well. Recognise that God’s ways are higher than ours. Joseph might be stressed in the prison, though falsely accused but God used that opportunity for him to reach out to other inmates and later he rose to the top of the civil

service in Egypt (Gen 38-9). We may not know why God has allowed us to go through certain trying circumstances in life (ie like this pandemic) but we do know that he has a purpose in all things and His will is the best for the people of God (Gen 50:19,20).

Conclusion

This is a time of great distress in the midst of a fast spreading and fearful pandemic. Stress and strain are facts of life and no one is exempt. Some form of stress can be positive and helpful. God's Word has rich and reliable resources to guide us on how to handle life's stressful moments. **We need not rely on worldly resources of secular psychology of self-esteem, positive thinking, any New Age practices like Yoga, Reiki, meditation techniques and crystal gazing.** As believers, we have a heavenly guidebook teaching us how to manage stress in this life with spiritual discipline. Commune often with the Lord and as we read the Psalms and other portion of the word of God when one is downcast, we can be revived and awakened by the living word. Stressful moments are also seasonal **times for personal evaluation and reflection** to see if heading the right direction in the will of God or if we need any spiritual reorganisation of our lives. Let life's adversities be turned into God's opportunities to share Christ and be a blessing to others to encourage and strengthening trembling hearts or even to mould and develop our character In perilous times , to serve and glorify Him forever which is our present and eternal calling and aim in life.

Jack Sin



Dn Choo Siang chairing the service last Sunday with Rev Peter Goh preaching.

Memory Verse

Joshua 24:14 Now therefore fear the LORD, and serve him in sincerity and in truth: and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the flood, and in Egypt; and serve ye the LORD.

Announcements

1. Worship services are now on Facebook Live streaming till end Apr 2020. Those interested can contact the Session members to request access.
2. Rev Jack Sin speaks today on “Final Charge from a Veteran Servant of God” (Joshua 24:1-24)
3. Rev Jack Sin speaks next Sunday on “Christian Scholar Conquering Compromise” (Daniel 1: 1 - 21)
4. The Christian Perspective of the COVID 19 virus article is being translated into 7 languages (ie Chinese, Tamil, Vietnamese, Indonesian, Spanish, Kannada, Khmer). Those who are interested may request from Pastor.

- APRIL 2020 -

- 5th Christian Scholar Conquering Compromise (Dan 1:1-21)
- 10th* **Good Friday Night Service (8pm):** 4 Persons and the Deadly Victory of the Cross (Matthew 27:20-54)
- 12th **Resurrection Sunday (10am):** Why We Fear Death No More (1 Corinthians 15:1-21, 51-58)
- 19th Lessons from a Royal Dream (Daniel 2:17-49)
- 26th Fighting Fire – God’s Way (Daniel 3:1-30)

- MAY 2020 -

- 3rd An Earthly King exalts the Heavenly King (Dan 4:19-37)
- 10th* Handwritings on the Wall Explained (Dan 5:11-31)
- 17th The Prayerful Prime Minister (Dan 6:1-28)
- 24th The interpretation of a revelation from God (Dan 7:1-28)
- 31st A Vision of the Past, Present and Future (Dan 8:1-27)

- JUNE 2020 -

- 7th The Supplication of a Godly Saint (Dan 9:1-24)
- 14th* Deep Eschatological Insights (Dan 10:1-21)
- 21st The End Times Revealed (Dan 12:1-13)
- 28th **Gospel Sunday:** The God I cannot ignore (Rom 1:1-16)

SOVEREIGNHOPE
bible-presbyterian ministry

APR - JUN 2020
WORSHIP PROGRAMME

- THEME -

EXPLORING AND
APPLYING
PROPHETIC LESSONS
IN OUR LIVES
(STUDIES IN THE
BOOK OF DANIEL)

- EVERY SUNDAY -

WORSHIP
SERVICES
AT 10AM

- CONTACT -

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