



STRESS

Stress is part of the human experience. It can be a constructive experience that spurs us on to learn skills and grow as people. It can be a destructive experience that wears us down and drains our joy. Research shows that when people experience multiple stressors, they are more likely to break down – sometimes over very small issues. Learning to deal with stress allows us to function optimally, and that in turn allows us to fulfill God’s plan for our life.

We can’t always control the stressors in our life, but we can control how we approach life in ways that counteract stress. Here are three simple ways to reduce stress:

Gratitude: Life can be difficult, especially if we are dealing with chronic diseases and/or multiple losses. However, studies show that perception of our situation has a significant impact on how we handle those issues. We build ourselves up when we appreciate the good things in our life – family, friends, or a lovely sunset. This allows us to perceive our world more positively and have the strength to deal with the very real difficulties we endure.

Generosity: Proverbs 11:25 tells us “...he who refreshes others will himself be refreshed.” We often retreat from the world when we feel overwhelmed, and become completely absorbed with our problems. This cuts us off from being generous to others. Active service to others is a great way to be generous with your time and talent. At the same time, remember that a phone call, note, or intercessory prayers are also ways to caring for others and in turn being refreshed.

Forgiveness: Current stress is often complicated by the stress of the past. Hanging onto resentment from the past traps us in the past. The Bible reminds us that “...whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven (Matt 18:18).” The Bible also directs us to forgive if we have anything against anyone (Mark 11:25). If we want to be set free from past negative experiences, we need to forgive the people involved in that situation. That does not mean trying to pretend something was “OK” when it wasn’t. It means letting go of our anger and hurt, which frees us from the energy drain those feelings cause. Releasing the stress of the past helps us handle the stress of the present.