

JESUS' SOLUTION TO STRESS

Sermon by Todd Lester

April 17, 2016

Living Simply: We value uncluttered lives, which free us to love boldly, give generously, and serve joyfully.

Do you ever get tired thinking of all the things you have to do? Have you ever felt like resigning from the human race so that just for one week you can do whatever you wanted to do? Do you ever feel like your life is out of control? If that describes you, then Jesus has a word for you in this message.

Matthew 11:28-30 Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you. Let me teach you, because I am humble and gentle at heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy to bear, and the burden I give you is light.

HOW TO REDUCE STRESS

1. _____
Matthew 11:28, Isaiah 40:29,31

2. _____
Matthew 11:29a, Matthew 11:30, Psalm 55:22, Galatians 5:25
When we are yoked with Christ the load is _____, He gives _____, and sets the _____.

3. _____
Matthew 11:29b
Characteristics of Jesus:

Stress Test

The following exercise can be found at <http://www.stress.org.uk/stresstest.aspx> (if you want to calculate a score and get feedback)

	Always True	Often True	Sometimes True	Seldom True	Never True
1. I eat at least one hot, balanced meal a day	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. I get 7 to 8 hours of sleep at least 4 nights a week	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. I have at least 1 person who lives nearby from whom I can ask a favour	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. I exercise to the point of perspiration at least twice a week	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. I do not smoke	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. I drink fewer than five alcoholic drinks a week	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. I am the appropriate weight for my height	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. I drink fewer than 2 cups of coffee (or tea or cola) a day	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. I have a network of friends, family and acquaintances on whom I can rely	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10. I confide with at least one person in my network about personal matters	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11. I am generally in good health	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12. I am able to speak openly about my feelings when angry, stressed or worried	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
13. I do something fun at least once a week	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
14. I recognize stress symptoms	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
15. I take quiet time for myself during the day	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
16. I have an income adequate to meet my basic expenses	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
17. I spend less than an hour each day travelling to and from work	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
18. I am calm when I am kept waiting/stuck in traffic/late for an appointment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
19. I have regular calm conversations with the people I live with about domestic problems (eg. chores, money and daily living issues)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
20. I never try to do everything myself	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
21. I never race through a day	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
22. I never complain about time wasted and the past	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
23. I feel organized and in control	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
24. I am able to organize my time effectively	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
25. I recognize when I am not coping well under pressure	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

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HOW TO REDUCE STRESS

1. TURN TO JESUS

Matthew 11:28 Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you...rest for your souls.

Isaiah 40:29,31 He gives power to the weak and strength to the powerless... But those who trust in the Lord will find new strength. They will soar high on wings like eagles. They will run and not grow weary. They will walk and not faint.

2. GIVE UP CONTROL

Matthew 11:29a Take my yoke upon you.

Matthew 11:30 For my yoke is easy to bear, and the burden I give you is light.

Psalms 55:22 Give your burdens to the Lord, and he will take care of you.

Galatians 5:25 Since we are living by the Spirit, let us follow the Spirit's leading in every part of our lives.

When we are yoked with Christ the load is shared, He gives direction, and sets the pace

3. LEARN TO TRUST

Matthew 11:29b Let me teach you, because I am humble and gentle at heart, and you will find rest for your soul.

Characteristics of Jesus: gentle, humble, patient, accepting, forgiving, focused, loving, encouraging, kind, teacher, servant, healer, rebel

Stress Test Response

If you have scored between 25 and 55:

Watch out, you are approaching the danger zone! Your results indicate that you have a vulnerability to stress. You may be experiencing stress related symptoms and your wellbeing is potentially being negatively affected. Your lifestyle may be extremely stressful. In order for you to effectively start managing your stress, you need to be able to understand and recognise it first.

Some ideas to consider:

1) Avoid stimulants – Nicotine, alcohol, caffeine and refined sugar products are all stimulants, so using them when stressed will only prolong your state of stress. Instead, keep yourself well hydrated by drinking water or herbal teas.

2) Get a good night's sleep – Bad sleep is both a cause and symptom of stress. Allow your body and mind to relax before bed by creating a wind-down routine. Prepare for a good night's sleep by removing all stimulants and do something relaxing!

3) Listen to your body – Your body will tell you what it needs; it is important you tune in and listen. If you feel tired, hungry or thirsty, do something about it.

4) Learn to say 'NO' – Simple but effective. Negotiate a mutually agreeable outcome and when 'no' is the appropriate response, say it without guilt.

5) Take 5 – Take a break and calm down with a walk, flick through a magazine or listen to some music. Don't continue with something if it's driving you crazy, leave it for half hour and come back to it later with a fresh perspective.

6) Exercise your breathing –

- Sit or stand in a relaxed position
- Slowly inhale through your nose, counting to five
- Let the air out through your mouth, counting to eight
- Repeat several times. That's it!
- As you breathe, let your abdomen expand outward, rather than raising your shoulders. This is a more relaxed and natural way to breathe, and helps your lungs fill themselves more fully with fresh air, releasing more 'old' air
- You can do this just a few times to release tension, or for several minutes as a form of meditation

7) Organisational tips –

Make a list of all the things that you need to do:

- List of them in order of genuine importance
- Note what you need to do personally and what can be delegated to others
- Note what needs to be done immediately, in the next week or next month or not at all!
- Create time buffers to deal with unexpected emergencies.

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Icebreaker/Introduction

Pastor Todd has been emphasizing how much stress people are under today so I've included a stress test that is available online (at <http://www.stress.org.uk/stresstest.aspx>). For scoring it basically works that the further to the left your answers are, the less stress you are likely experiencing. I've included a scoring response from the website (on the Apr 17 Scriptures page) for those who score with some significant stress – it may be interesting to share those ideas with the whole group.

Is there such a thing as good stress and bad stress? What do you think of the strategies suggested by this test for stress management? Are different people able to handle different levels of stress?

Ask if there was anything from this week's message that stood out – either a point that was made which really resonated with them, or perhaps a question or difficulty that came up for them.

Read Matthew 11:28-30 Todd suggested that Jesus gives us 3 pretty straightforward, simple steps to reduce our stress. Would you agree that they are simple and straightforward? Are they easy to apply?

HOW TO REDUCE STRESS

1. TURN TO JESUS

Focuses on Matthew 11:28, Isaiah 40:29,31

Recall the things Todd suggested people often turn to in order to handle stress (TV, drugs, alcohol, food, escapism). Is it okay to escape sometimes? Do you agree that "people will always turn to something when they are under stress"?

What does it mean to you on a practical level to 'turn to Jesus'? Is it a moment by moment decision? Is it simply spending more time with God on a regular basis? Or is it some combination of these, plus more?

What does it mean to you when Isaiah (in 40:29) says those who trust in the Lord will find new strength?

Discuss/recall the things that people came to Jesus for in the Bible (forgiveness, answers, healing, eternal life, salvation, deliverance). Do people today still come to Him for these things? Other things?

Jesus said to come to Him for rest – what else does He give? (peace, power, ...)

2. GIVE UP CONTROL

Focuses on Matthew 11:29a, Matthew 11:30, Psalm 55:22, Galatians 5:25

When we are yoked with Christ the load is shared, He gives direction, and sets the pace

What are both the challenges and the benefits of being 'yoked with Christ'?

How do we practically give up control? What does that look like for you?

Todd said that if we follow Jesus' pace it will usually cause us to slow down. What are some ways that you could slow down?

Would you agree with Todd's statement that we get overloaded because we do things we were never created to do? What about things we feel we were called to do yet are still stressful (eg. career, family, school, etc.)?

Todd asked who sets our pace – ourselves, others, God? How do we find God's pace?

3. LEARN TO TRUST

Focuses on Matthew 11:29b

This section could be called 'Learn to Trust,' 'Letting Go,' or 'Following Jesus' Model.' Discuss these different titles in light of Matt. 11:29b.

Todd encouraged us to take Jesus as our example. This passage in Matthew highlights His humility and gentleness. List some other characteristics of Jesus.

Characteristics of Jesus: gentle, humble, patient, accepting, forgiving, focused, loving, encouraging, kind, teacher, servant, healer, rebel, etc.

Is there one of these characteristics that stands out to you as something you do well? Is there one that you could focus on to do better? Discuss Todd's statement that 2 significant causes of overload are aggression and arrogance.

Todd pointed out that our habits of a hurried and worried life have been developed over many years, so that it is a lifestyle that will take time to unlearn. What is one small step you could take this week to lead you on a new path of responding to stress in a different way?