

Stress O Meter

(Stress)
(Trust)
(Worry)
(Anxiety)

Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. Philippians 4:6

The Basic Bible Truth

God is absolutely trustworthy and capable of handling everything that He allows to come our way. Our worry or stress is unnecessary and detrimental to our well being. We need to develop confidence in the ability of God, and learn to trust, but let's admit something—it is a process to come to the point in life that we turn everything over to God and stop worrying.

The Object

A String Line Long Enough To Stretch Across The Room

7 Paper Signs: I Barely Notice, What's Going On?. I'm Uneasy Here, I Definitely Do Not Like This, Nope, I said NOPE!, AUUGGHH!!

An Office Chair On Wheels

4 Cans Of Doctor Pepper That Have Been Emptied Through A Small Pinhole In The Bottom And Then Filled With Only Water

I usually pick a good natured girl from the audience who can take a bit of spotlight. I stretch the string all the way across the classroom and place the signs, in order, along the string. This is the "Stress-o-meter". I then ask the young lady to have a seat and we begin the lesson. Through the lesson, I will introduce situations of increasing concern and have the class decide where her chair should be pushed to in relation to the "Stress-o-meter". For her initial placement, the very fact that she has been placed in front of everyone in a chair and will be subject to this lesson should warrant at least a "What's Going On?" position.

As our talk about stress and worry goes along, I introduce an increasingly stressful condition for the young lady seated in the chair. First one young man is to stand behind her, a little while later, I add another on her side, then another on the other side, then another in front of her. As each person is added we move the chair a bit farther down the "Stress-o-meter" scale. Then we add a chair for each of the guys, then I hand a can of Doctor Pepper to each one, then they are to shake the can of soda very well, and finally, they are to pop the tops open, aimed directly at her. With the introduction of each element, we slide her chair farther down the scale. By the time we get to the opening of the cans, she will be at the final sign on the "Stress-o-meter". Of course, with only water in the cans, she won't get messed up at all.

The Lesson

In reality, stress is often something we invent and introduce into our own lives. We worry and fret, often for no reason other than we don't understand or don't trust as we should. The biggest areas of stress are usually, 1. Finances, 2. Family Issues, 3. Relationships, 4. Occupation, and 5. Personal or family health concerns.

The central figure, the key to everything related to stress and anxiety, is the person of Jesus Christ. Let's look at the verse in Philippians 4:6 closely and see what God has to say about being anxious.

1. Prayer. We are commanded to pray without ceasing. Our relationship with people is usually based directly proportional to how much we are around them and communicate with them. My married daughter, who lives 6 hours away by automobile, has shown a desire to keep communications open with her mother in a common sense way. Each day, on her way home from work, to keep her mind off of the commuter traffic in the big city, she calls Mom on the phone and the two of them talk her entire, hour long drive home. I have overheard the topic of conversation often and it is nothing amazing at all. They talk about average, mundane things that they each experienced that day. God desires that we communicate with Him in a similar manner. We do not need to only talk to Him when we are in trouble or in need. He desires to be a part of even the little things in our lives. That's where we live most of the time anyway, in the little things. That is how I define "praying without ceasing".
2. Thanksgiving. Do we truly appreciate the things that God has given to us and done for us? Or do we take them for granted? Are we even aware of what He has done? Do we ever actually count our blessings? Most of us can look at the physical things around us and count many nice things and a very comfortable lifestyle. But even if those are lacking, even if our health has disappeared, we have much to be thankful for. We have direct access to the God of the universe and can call Him our friend. He loves us, and is deeply concerned about us. That is priceless! We also have a promise of an absolutely amazing future. Heaven is an incredible place. I am convinced that we don't remind ourselves of it as often as we should. Paul said it should be our ever-present goal in life. As I get older, the reality of Heaven is genuinely becoming more and more real. Loved ones who have gone on before, friends who are no longer walking this earth, I will one day get the opportunity to see once again. And I will get to meet my Savior face to face!
3. Ask God. We can lay every concern down at Jesus' feet and know that He cares and we need not be worried. We simply need to ask. My wife and I eat often at a local Mexican cuisine restaurant here in town and found out, quite by accident, that they had a couple of "off menu" items that could be ordered from the kitchen. We tried them one day, and in our opinion, they were by far, the tastiest, best things that the chef made. We now, every time we go to that particular establishment, ask the waiter for a "Steven". It's a delicious dish of sautéed chicken, Mexican rice and cheese sauce that is simply wonderful. And you do not find it on the menu. You must ask the waiter for it. We have a God who has much more in His "kitchen" than we can possibly imagine. When was the last time you asked God for the "Chef's Special"? That amazing off menu item that is there if we will only ask for it.

You watched the stressful situation that this young lady has endure this morning. But let me ask you this question. What made it stressful? Was there genuine physical difficulty for her, or was there ever any real danger? No. It was all perceived stress. It looked like it could be a problem, but in the final reality, there was nothing to it. So many of our problems in life fit that description. We worry about little things that really aren't issues, but we imagine them to be so. God says that we can cast all of our cares, all of our anxieties, all of our worries on Him. He will carry the burden, and relieve us to do the real work of life.