

S.T.U.P.I.D. Machine

(Stress)
(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 wellbeing. 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 S.T.U.P.I.D. Machine
Dowel Pins



S.T.U.P.I.D. is an acronym for System Transport for the Unique Packaging of Individual Dowels. It is a made up ridiculous machine used to move dowels from one container, into a board filled with drilled holes. I usually use a volunteer who is of a personality type that will genuine try to succeed in the object lesson, to be the “worker” who gets to use the machine. Another volunteer is asked to feed the dowels into the machine and coach and pressure the first person to do their job faster and better. The more stress and push, the better.

The Lesson

The central figure, the key to handling 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.

Anxiety and stress can be a serious issue for us as we walk through this life. The fast paced pressure of our culture is a natural breeding ground for the problems associated with worry. There is a recurring theme in the Bible that we would do well to notice and live by, and that is that God supplies our needs one day at a time. Lamentations 3:23 states that His mercies *are new every morning*. As Israel wandered through the desert for 40 years, their daily supply of manna from Heaven was to be found every morning except the Sabbath. They could not keep it from one day to the next except on the Sabbath day. We must learn to trust God implicitly and always and daily.

In 1965, Billy Graham wrote, "Historians will probably call our era 'the age of anxiety.' Anxiety is the natural result when our hopes are centered in anything short of God and His will for us." Paul told the Philippians to not be anxious or worried about life. Our focus must not be on terrorism, or natural disasters, or our coworkers who dislike us, or our lack of finances, or any such things. Later in the letter, Paul reminds them that whatever is true, honorable, just, pure, and so on, to think on those things.

When we take our eyes off of God, they will automatically focus on something else. It's the way we were made. God desires our attention in the form of a relationship. And when our concerns are channeled in that direction, the issues that often plague us in life become less disconcerting, and He becomes more important to us. We are only here for a short while. An amazing place called Heaven is waiting for us and will be worth anything we have to endure while we are here. May we live life with that goal in the front of our minds, instead of looking toward the little things that tend to drag us down into the mud puddle of stress and worry.

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