

Stress – 2 of 2

Sometimes, I tend to get stressed in new and unfamiliar situations. But it helps to remind myself that nothing is new or unfamiliar to my Lord who has already been there, who is always with me and who wants to help me in and through any situation.

Control seems to play a leading role. We think we can or should control situations, yet we blame those same situations for giving us the stress over which we have no control. It's a trap. It's a classic Catch-22 scenario. And until we realize that stress is self-inflicted, we will never break out of that vicious cycle.

Some people get stressed because they don't like to feel helpless.

Others get stressed because they are impatient.

Many get stressed when things don't go their way.

Road rage, for example, is a symptom of "controlitis."

Unrestrained stress only breeds more stress. Control yourself and you will control your stress.

Some tension... stretching... can be beneficial. However, this is not classic stress; instead, it is called *challenge, learning, growing*. But prolonged, senseless stress is harmful and deadly.

I believe that situations and other people do not stress us; we stress ourselves, but we *blame* circumstances and people. It's the current, popular thing to believe and do. It's what much of today's society promotes. But that is not what the Bible teaches.

And, as long as we refuse to take personal responsibility for stress and as long as we shift blame for it, stress will be our life partner. Is that what the Lord wants for me? Is that what I want?

I also believe we generate additional stress when we struggle with the need to surrender to and obey the Lord. Surrender and obedience are great stress "shrinkers." They are remarkably beneficial to our overall well-being, even though this goes against the grain of our old human nature.

If conditions, situations and circumstances – in and of themselves – were inherently stressful, then God would be the most stressed being in the universe. But he's not. Not at all. Is that because he always has as much control as he wants? I know *people* who are more controlling of others than God is.

The Holy Spirit who lives in you, experiences no stress – no matter what *your* dilemma. And he wants to teach you how to be carefree in spite of the circumstances. But that's not the same as having a "care less" attitude. He wants to help you stop manufacturing and sanctioning stress and start enjoying the abundant, stress-free life in Christ. He encourages you to trade your stress for trust. You can experience the joy of the Lord even in times of sorrow.

God could try to force his control on us, but he doesn't. We cannot control people and circumstances, so why do we try.

God is almighty, but he doesn't flaunt or abuse his supremacy. He is not proud of his power. We are weak, but we want to assert power. Why? What is our motive? (For example, I know people who will not let go of stress because they have a martyr complex.)

The Bible doesn't say much about the need to control other people, but it says a lot about *self*-control. (I'm not talking about the need to control our young children or situations where control is biblically and socially expected.) Do you want control? Controlling oneself is a full-time job. That is one kind of control God does approve of.

Here are three pride-swallowing, humility-stimulating suggestions for relief from self-made stress:

One. Acknowledge that I myself create the stress I feel.

Two. Surrender to the Lord not only the situations that are beyond my debatable control but surrender to him in general.

And Three...Embrace and enjoy the peace of God in all situations. ◇◇