

SCRIPTURE READING: Ex 18:13-24.

INTRODUCTION:

1. Illustrate stress.
2. Life is stressful.
 - A. It was for Moses. Ex 18:13.
 - B. It is for us. 2 Co 5:4A.
3. Some stress is good. Ex 18:19B-20; Ga 6:5.
4. Too much stress is not good. Ex 18:14, 17-18.

DISCUSSION: What must we do to bear as many burdens as possible without subjecting ourselves to too much stress?

1. **Come to Jesus.**

- A. Sin increases stress. Ps 38:4; 2 Ti 3:5B-6A. Ex: Pr 12:25A; Pr 19:19A.
- B. Jesus decreases stress. Mt 11:28-30. Learn, do, trust.

2. **Bear our own burdens and give the rest to God.**

- A. Things we can do nothing about are God's burdens to bear, not ours. Politics, crime, disease, etc.
- B. Once we have done all we can about the burdens we must bear, we must give them to God and leave them with Him. Ps 55:22. When Henry Ford was 78 years old he was asked if he ever worried. He replied, "No. I believe God is managing affairs and that He doesn't need advice from me. With God in charge, I believe that everything will work out for the best in the end. So what is there to worry about?" (Carnegie).

3. **Bear today's burdens, not tomorrow's.** Mt 6:34.

- A. "It is not the cares of today, but the cares of tomorrow, that weigh a man down" (MacDonald). "The load of tomorrow ... carried today, makes the strongest falter. Shut off the future ... cultivate the habit of a life of 'day-tight compartments'" (Osler).
- B. This does not mean we should not plan and act today on behalf of the best interests of tomorrow. Rather, it means:
 - 1) First, that we should only think today about what we can do today about tomorrow's burdens.
 - 2) Second, that once we have done all we can do today about tomorrow's burdens, we must leave them with God until tomorrow.
 - 3) "Our Lord is not condemning the man who ploughs the earth and sows the seeds, but the man who, having done that, sits down and begins to get worried about it and has his mind always centered on it, the man who is obsessed by the problem of life and living, and by fear of the future" (Lloyd-Jones).

4. **Be realistic.**

- A. We cannot have it all.
 - 1) Because we only have so much time, energy and ability we must prioritize what we want to do according to what is truly important and live consistent with these priorities. Ti 3:14.
 - 2) Christians must "constantly guard against the scourge of over commitment. Even worthwhile and enjoyable activities become damaging when they consume the last ounce of energy or the remaining free moments in the day ... You must resolve to slow your pace; you must learn to say 'no' gracefully; you must resist the temptation to chase after more pleasures, more hobbies, more social entanglements; you must 'hold the line' with the tenacity of a lineman for a professional football team, blocking out the intruders and defending the home team. In essence, three questions should be asked about every new activity which presents itself: Is it worthy of our time? What will be eliminated if it is added? What will be its impact on our life? My suspicion is that most of the items in our busy day would score rather poorly on this three-item test" (Dobson adapted).
- B. Things will not slow down. Lu 10:38-42. "Most people can tell you with a straight face that the pressures they feel are the result of temporary circumstances. Their future will be less hectic. A slower day is coming. A light shines at the end of the dark tunnel. Unfortunately, their optimism is usually unjustified. It is my observation that the hoped-for period of tranquillity rarely arrives. Instead, these short term pressures have a way of becoming sandwiched back to back, so that they emerge from one crises and sail directly into another. Thus, we live our entire lives in the fast lane, hurling down the road toward heart failure. We have deluded ourselves into believing that circumstances have forced us to work too hard for a short time, when, in fact, we are driven from within. We lack the discipline to limit our entanglements with the world, choosing instead to be dominated by our work and the materialistic gadgetry it will bring. And what is sacrificed in the process are loving relationships with God and other human beings that give life true meaning" (Dobson adapted).

5. **Decrease our burdens.** Eliminate them entirely and/or share or give them entirely to other people. Don't be proud. Don't be concerned about imposing. Ex 18:21-22; Nu 11:14, 16-17.

6. **Grow stronger in Christ.** John 16:12; 2 Co 1:8A.

- A. The stronger we are in Christ, the more burdens we can bear without subjecting ourselves to too much stress.
- B. We must study to learn where we are weak and practice in those areas until we become strong.

7. **Do not take our stress out on other people.** 2 Ch 16:7-10.

8. **Hear and heed trustworthy counselors.** 1 Ki 20:11B. Do not be like Rehoboam. Rather, be like Moses! Ex 18:19A, 21-24. But don't wait for the proven to come to you. Go to the proven! Pr 11:14.