

Learn

Series: From Stress to Rest

Matthew 11:28-30

September 23, 2018

Welcome everyone again to worship. It's great to be together. I want to invite you to turn to page 5 in your bulletin.

For the last few months or so, our Dayton Pilots' Club airplane has had some kind of electrical problem. If a pilot flew a long time – at least an hour and 15 minutes – all the avionics on the airplane – radio, GPS, transponder (the instrument the helps air traffic control know where you are) – all of that would fade and then die. The remedy to get them back on was to turn off the alternator – something you can do in the airplane – wait 30 seconds, then turn it back on. Then everything would come back on. So, if a pilot was talking to air traffic control, they would be out of contact for probably about a minute. This was an intermittent problem, but when it would happen for the first time, it would happen again if the pilot kept flying. In on a trip from Virginia back to Dayton, one of our pilot's had to switch off the alternator a dozen times. On Wednesday, after observations that provided some additional information, the mechanics diagnosed that the alternator was bad. Since then, the plane has flown about 4 hours, and it appears to be fixed.

You know, there is already a lot of things you have to focus on to safely fly an airplane. You don't need something like losing your avionics add to the work load, the stress levels.

In our hurry-up, pressure-cooker world, everyone knows about stress. Such pressure comes from the various demands our fast-paced life places on us. Sometimes, they seem like they will pull us apart.

We are in the 3rd week of our series, "From Stressed to Rest." We're looking at a wonderful passage of Jesus from Matthew 11:28-30. I'd like for us to read the passage together on page 5.

*Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.*¹

During our series, we have been focusing on the imperative verbs in this passage. Imperative verbs are commands. "Do." "Run." "Stop." Those are imperatives. So, in this passage, we have three imperatives: Come, Take, and this week, we will focus on the 3rd imperative, Jesus' 3rd command: "Learn." He said in verse 29:

*... learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.*²

The Greek word here is *mathete*³ means learn or study. And it is not simply learning the doctrine of Christ, but Christ Himself, a process not merely of getting to know the person but of so applying the knowledge as to walk differently. So, how do we

¹ Matthew 11:28-30 (NRSV)

² Matthew 11:29 (NRSV)

³ from *manthanō* μαθηάω

learn from Christ, especially about stress? We learn by looking at what He did and what He said about it.

Reading through the Gospel of Matthew, we can observe major crisis moments in Jesus' own life and note how He handled each situation. We are going to look at 5 stressors and keys to cope with these various kinds of stress in our own lives.

I have created a table for you to write these down: the kind of stress, how Jesus handled it, and where in Matthew do we see this. So, fill in the table as I share about these stressors.

First, Seductive Stress. Put Seductive Stress in the left-hand column. We all deal with Seductive Stress at some point in our lives. This might be sexual, but not exclusively. It could be any time when we see an opening, an opportunity, either for fame, fortune, advancement, or prestige. But the opening, the opportunity, is immoral, improper, or just downright wrong, and you know it.

Did you see the video of the TV crew taping vandals stealing from, I think, a Dollar General, during Hurricane Florence? The people knew it was wrong; they were trying to hide their faces. But they still did it none the less. That is Seductive Stress.

No sooner had God confirmed Jesus' identity and mission at His baptism than Satan called it into question in the wilderness temptations. Temptation to sin is seductive stress. And what did Jesus do? What do you do?

Write this in the central column. **Remember God's Word.**

In the right column, put **Matthew 3:16-4:11**. Each time Satan tempted Him, put seductive stress in front of Him, Jesus responded by saying, "It is written..."

When Jesus was hungry, Satan came and said to him: *"If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread."* But Jesus answered, *"It is written, 'One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.'"* Then the devil took him to the holy city and placed him on the pinnacle of the temple, saying to him, *"If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down; for it is written, 'He will command his angels concerning you,' and 'On their hands they will bear you up, so that you will not dash your foot against a stone.'"* Jesus said to him, *"Again it is written, 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'"* Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor; and he said to him, *"All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me."* Jesus said to him, *"Away with you, Satan! for it is written, 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him.'"*⁴

Jesus knew and expertly used Scripture to blunt each temptation. Even in the stressful arrest in Gethsemane, instead of abandoning His mission, Jesus focused on fulfilling Scripture to help Him stay the course.⁵ So, instead of falling prey to our changing moods and surging urges, contemplating Scripture helps to refocus our minds in the calm light of unchanging, eternal truth. The Psalmist wrote:

*Great peace have those who love your law; nothing can make them stumble.*⁶

Fill your heart continually with God's Word, which is the instrument by which the Holy Spirit encourages and strengthens you in times of trial, and you will defeat Seductive Stress.

⁴ Matthew 4:1-10 (NRSV)

⁵ See Matthew 26:54,56

⁶ Psalm 119:165 (NRSV)

The second stress is **Overwhelming Stress**.

We all know what this kind of stress is. The boss or the teacher gave you a huge assignment that needed to be done yesterday. There are too many items on your to-do list. You've got too many irons in the fire. There's just too much stuff and too little time.

Jesus dealt with this all the time. Put in the right column **Matthew 8-9**. Let me summarize that passage:

- Jesus entered Capernaum, and a centurion, a Roman officer over 100 men, asked Jesus to heal his servant. No pressure there. If you don't, I've got a hundred guys that will put a beat-down on you and everyone you know. Jesus healed him.
- Then Jesus went into Peter's house. (On our Holy Land tour in November 2019, you can see what they believe to be Peter's house.) When Jesus goes in, Peter's mother-in-law is sick in bed. Jesus heals her.
- After dinner, many who were possessed with demons or who were sick came to the house, and Jesus cast out the spirits and cured all who were sick.
- The next morning, Jesus tried to get away, and while in the boat crossing the Sea of Galilee, a storm comes up, but Jesus was asleep – He was so tired. The disciples woke Him up all worried, and Jesus calmed the storm.
- Once they got over to the other side of the lake, they run into the demoniac, a man filled with a thousand demons. After He cast them out, the whole neighboring town showed up.

I could keep going, but you get my point. Jesus was always dealing with overwhelming stress. He was bombarded by the needs and demands of people. So, what does He do? What do you do?

Do God's work.

Even when there was seemingly too much to do and too little time to do it, when He said, "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head"⁷, He still did God's work. Jesus faced the situations without despair by doing what God had sent Him to do – day by day, dealing with one person at a time.

When the task seems too enormous to bear, remember that we can only breathe one breath at a time, do one thing at a time, take one step at a time, and live one day at a time. We must prioritize our actions to "seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness."⁸

Write Matthew 6:33 as well in the right column. Do not let trivial things obscure the vital things we ought to be and can be doing. Simply do whatever you know God has given you to do for that moment and that day, without biting off more than you can chew.

Also, consider this saying: "We must stop stewing and start doing!" Stress can come from an over active mind and an underactive body. God will be with us each step of the way. He will give us strength and guidance for each challenge confronting us.

The third stress is **disappointing results stress**.

Did anyone watch that Browns' football game last Sunday? Know who was dealing with disappointing results stress? Their kicker. He missed two extra points and a pair of field goals that would have given the Browns a win against the Saints.

⁷ Matthew 8:20 (NRSV)

⁸ See Matthew 6:33

Remember seeing him on the sidelines? His life goal was to be an NFL kicker, but he knew it was gone. That's disappointing results stress.

What did Jesus do about disappointing results stress? Yes, there were disappointing results. Some cities which saw most of Jesus' miracles still did not believe in Him. What did Jesus do? What do you do?

Rest in God's Sovereignty.

You see it in **Matthew 11:20-30**. Jesus' response was a joy-filled heart and a prayer to God, Who is always in charge and Whose work will never be defeated.

When our agenda crashes, our hopes wither, and our plans fail, we must rest in the knowledge that God has an eternal purpose. He alone is in ultimate control of the universe and eternity. There is not enough power in hell to defeat God in the accomplishment of His purpose.

The fourth stress is **tragedy**.

Tragedy is an event that causes great suffering, destruction, and distress, such as a serious accident, crime, or natural catastrophe.

Anyone ever had their house broken into? You know the stress from tragedy. You feel violated and unsafe. You ask, "What if they come back again?"

So, whether it is a car accident, a murder, or hurricane, tragedy can cause a great deal of stress. Every once in a while, I'll have my tornado dream, where a tornado is following me, and no matter what I do, it follows me, and I get so stressed out in my dream that I feel its affects when I wake up.

So, when you are dealing with stress from tragedy, do what Jesus did: **seek God's Presence**.

Put in the right column **Matthew 14:12-13, 23**.

When word came that John the Baptist, Jesus' cousin, forerunner and friend, had been beheaded, Jesus went out in a boat to a lonely place by Himself. To cope with the stress of tragedy, Jesus made time for intimate communion with the Father. He drew strength and direction for His Messianic task. And when the clamoring crowds tried to make Jesus a political king in John 6, He refused the pressure by going on the mountain by Himself to pray.

The same powerful resource of prayer is ours today, if we will seek and receive it, for the work God has entrusted to us.⁹ Prayer can relieve the stress we face and soothe our soul. Also write in the right column Philippians 4:6-7:

Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.¹⁰

Finally, there is the stress of **no more options**.

What do I mean by this? When you have exhausted everything else, and there is nothing more you can do. There is only one outcome left, and it's the one you have been avoiding the whole time. When the doctor says, "There are no more treatments; this is it." When your spouse says, "I'm out of here." When your employer says, "You're laid off" or "fired." When the bank says, "We're foreclosing on Monday." That's the stress of no more options.

⁹ See Hebrews 4:16

¹⁰ Philippians 4:6-7 (NRSV)

In the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus faced the stress of no more options. The time had come for Him to be handed over to be beaten and crucified. What did He do? What do you do?

You **trust God's Faithfulness**. Jesus entrusted himself to the Father's will.

Put **Matthew 26:36-44** in the right column.

And going a little farther, he threw himself on the ground and prayed, "My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me; yet not what I want but what you want." Then he came to the disciples and found them sleeping; and he said to Peter, "So, could you not stay awake with me one hour? Stay awake and pray that you may not come into the time of trial; the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." Again he went away for the second time and prayed, "My Father, if this cannot pass unless I drink it, your will be done." Again he came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were heavy. So leaving them again, he went away and prayed for the third time, saying the same words.¹¹

He prayed for 3 hours for God to spare Him this trial. But in the end, He was confident of God's faithfulness.

You then see this in His last words: *Then Jesus, crying with a loud voice, said, "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit." Having said this, he breathed his last.¹²* Even at the end, He trusted God's faithfulness.

Sometimes, life reveals no quick answers, no simple solutions, no ready escapes. Yet, God is always faithful. We can always entrust ourselves to His care, with full confidence and without any reserve. He can see us through today's stress to tomorrow, even to the day of eternity.

I want to put up this meme:

"Stress makes you believe that everything has to happen right now. Faith reassures you that everything will happen in God's timing."

This room is filled with people dealing with at least one of these five stresses. If that's you, do what Jesus did. Go home, look up those passages, learn from Jesus, and do what He did.

¹¹ Matthew 26:39-44 (NRSV)

¹² Luke 23:46 (NRSV)