

BY DALE FLETCHER, M.S.

# Faith and HEALTH Connection

## Manage Your Stress... With God's Help

**W**e all have stress in our lives. It can be in the form of inconveniences, chronic problems or major life issues and events. Stress can come from long lines at the store or from the demands at home or work. We can also be stressed by the loss of a loved one or by holding deep resentment against someone.

When we experience or think about a stressful situation, our brain activates the nervous and endocrine systems to prepare to fight or flight. Hormones and chemicals like cortisol and adrenaline are released into the body. This results in an increase in metabolism, blood pressure and heart rate and can have other physiological affects that are harmful if they are continually released for long periods of time. Our challenge regarding our health is to minimize the frequency and length of time that our nervous system stays chronically aroused. We can do this with God's help.

**What the Research Says:** The American Psychological Association indicates that 75-90% of all physician visits are for stress-related ailments and complaints. In a study conducted at Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh, researchers found that chronic stress at work and home increased people's chances of developing colds by three to five times. Women diagnosed with metastatic breast cancer who have also endured previous traumatic or stressful events see their cancer recur nearly twice as fast as other women, according to [a report](#) by a University of Rochester Medical Center scientist. In his book, *Faith-Based Fitness*, Kenneth Cooper, M.D. says "I find that my patients with the highest levels of stress and anxiety tend to have the most physical problems... a mind weighed down by cares and concerns may be the greatest threat to our health."

**What the Bible Says:** "As pressure and stress bear down on me, I find joy in your commands." Psalm 119:143. "I am leaving you with a gift - peace of mind and heart. And the peace I give is a gift the world cannot give. So don't be troubled or afraid." Jesus in John 14:27. "Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you. Let me teach you, because I am humble and gentle at heart, and you will find rest for your souls." Jesus in Matthew 11:28-29 "I have told you all this so that you may have peace in me. Here on earth you will have many trials and sorrows. But take heart, because I have overcome the world." Jesus in John 16:33

**What You Can Do:** We can expect a certain degree of stress in our lives yet we can be better prepared to handle it if we start each day with some quiet time with God. Clearly, the days that I start off with devotional time go better than the days I don't read devotional material and the Bible and spend time in prayer. If you're not in the habit, consider taking just a few minutes in prayer to acknowledge God and ask Him to guide you throughout the day. To go deeper, open your

Bible and read a few scriptures to allow His spirit to mix with yours. See if this makes a difference in how your day goes.

Do you have significant levels of anxiety or fear that torment you regularly? God wants to take it from you. Although current situations may initiate the fear or anxiety, it may be a deeper issue that is actually at the root of these strong emotions. I know of many people who have had debilitating anxiety associated with certain circumstances. Often, the anxiety was a matter of the person not being able to trust that the situation would work out okay. This inability to trust, and the associated anxiety or fear, was rooted in the fact that the person was hurt in the past by someone very close to them. If this applies to you, ask God to help you forgive the person and to fill you with His love.

*"Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest."*

*Jesus  
in Matthew 11:28*

In a similar way, issues such as insecurity, guilt, rejection or shame can be a major source of stress if these strong emotions linger deep in your spirit. Certainly behaviors such as exercise, eating well, getting adequate sleep and deep breathing exercises will help you manage these and other stressors. But, with these deeper issues, those behaviors are kind of like putting a bandage on a cut or bruise. God wants to attend to them at a deeper level. In prayer, ask God to reveal to you the root causes of these emotions and for restoration of these issues. Ask God to help you let go of these emotions and allow His love to heal your heart.

Finally, consider the impact your thinking has on your day to day quality of life. Do negative thought patterns contribute to inner stress? If so, what may be happening is that the evil one, the Devil, may be trying to keep you "tied up" in chains by putting images and ideas into your mind. He wants your thoughts to be focused on these lies because when you are stressed or thinking negatively, it's hard for you to be doing God's work effectively. There are several scriptures in the Bible that reveal how much He loves you and about your true identity in Him. One of my favorites is Ephesians 2:10. (You'll find a listing of other scriptures on the [Faith and Health Connection](#) web site.) Read and then think on these truths. Consider speaking them aloud. I have found that when I do this regularly for a period of time, these truths begin to sink deep into my spirit. This changes my thinking and reduces my inner stress.

Are you in the habit of asking God to help you manage the stress in your life? If not, tell Him your concerns, ask for His help and believe expectantly that you'll receive it.

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