

Stress in the Life of Christ

Jesus knows all about stress. He was, “In all points tempted as we are, yet without sin” (Heb. 4:15). Luke records that as He prayed in the Garden, “His sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground” (Luke 22:44). Perhaps the busiest day in the life of Christ is recorded in Mark 5. Everybody seemed to want something from Jesus that day: He was worshiped (v.6), begged (v.10, 12, 17, 18, 23), thronged (v.24, 31), touched (v.28, 30, 31) and finally ridiculed (v.40).

Stress is a natural and often unavoidable part of living in a demanding world, but stress brings peculiar temptations to our lives. First, it can weaken one’s resolve to do what is right. Second, stress can encourage poor attitudes: anger, irritation, complaint, discouragement and a sense of futility are often companions of acute or prolonged stress. Third, stress can contribute to irrational thinking, unreasonable conclusions, and forgotten priorities. Certainly, stress seems to be one of the devil’s devices to tempt us to sin (2 Cor. 2:11).

Since periods of stress (sometimes prolonged) are inevitable, even for the Son of God, it is important to note what Jesus did to deal with it in His own life. Consider:

Jesus took time to be alone with God – Early in the book of Mark, Jesus arose early in the morning and went to a private place to pray (Mark 1:35). On another occasion, He went up on a mountain alone (Mark 6:46). In the Garden of Gethsemane, the Lord intentionally prayed alone, a few yards removed from His closest friends (Mark 14:35). How telling that the Son of God repeatedly took time to be quietly alone with God!

Jesus made prayer a priority – Christians are commanded to cast all their cares upon God (1 Pet. 5:7). We are promised that if we pray about everything then the peace of God will guard our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus (Phil. 4:6-7). Jesus conquered the temptations presented by stress in fervent prayer to God (Luke 18:1; cf. James 5:16).

Jesus identified Himself as a Servant – He declared, “The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve” (Mark 10:45). Jesus had the power to choose His attitudes toward others in part because He had properly identified His purpose on earth. When the world seems demanding, it is essential that God’s people remember that we are to be servants, just like our Master (John 13:15; Gal. 5:13).

Jesus rested, and counseled others to rest – When the demands of ministry had begun to overwhelm the disciples, Jesus said, “Come aside by yourselves to a deserted place and rest a while” (Mark 6:31). Stress often increases when too little attention is given to one’s physical needs (1 Tim. 4:8; cf. 1 Kings 19:5-8). Christians are certainly stewards of the Gospel, but we are to be good stewards of our physical bodies, too (Matt. 25:14-30).

Jesus waited on God – There are times when stress-inducing circumstances cannot be removed. Obligations and responsibilities are sometimes ours whether we choose them or not. In such circumstances, it is important to note that Jesus always chose to do the right thing and to wait on God for deliverance: “Not what I will, but what You will” (Mark 14:36). How thought-provoking to consider that when the “pressure cooker” of life is most intense, God may be doing His greatest work in us (cf. James 1:2-4).

Thank God for Jesus Christ, who shows us how to properly deal with the pressures and stresses of life!

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