



Sermon Discussion Notes Stress Test - Part 4

Opening Thought

Chuck Swindoll in his book Growing Strong in the Seasons of Life on page 71 wrote this:

"The co-ed had two problems common to many students: low grades and no money. She was forced to communicate both to her parents, who she knew would have trouble understanding. After considerable thought she used a creative approach to soften the blows of reality and wrote:

Dear Mom and Dad,

Just thought I'd drop you a note to clue you in on my plans. I've fallen in love with a guy named Jim. He quit high school after grade eleven to get married. About a year ago he got a divorce. We've been going steady for two months and plan to get married in the fall. Until then, I've decided to move into his apartment (I think I might be pregnant). At any rate, I dropped out of school last week, although I'd like to finish college sometime in the future. On the next page she continued: Mom and Dad, I just want you to know that everything I've written so far in this letter is false. NONE of it is true. But Mom and Dad, it IS true that I got a C in French and flunked Math. It IS true that I'm going to need some more money for my tuition payments.

Discussion Questions

1. According to the quote below little hassles can cause us to experience great stress if we interpret those hassles in the wrong way. What little things bother you, and why do you think miniscule things cause us to stress out so much?

"In the 1970s, psychologist Richard Lazarus coined the phrase 'daily hassles' to describe relatively small or repeated situations in day-to-day living. Research showed that these were a better predictor of stress reactions and health problems than major life events."
The Little Book of Stress Relief (Page 24)

2. When a situation threatens us in some way our stress goes up. Is it possible for us to be threatened by things more than we really should?
3. In the message we talked about the magnifying principle. Discuss this tendency among people in general. What happens when we super-size a situation beyond what it should be?

4. When we feel stress it is because our body has received a high dose of hormones because we feel threatened or are fearful of something. This is what psychologists describe as the "fear and flight" syndrome. Discuss how Elijah responded to a threatening situation in 1 Kings 19.

1 Kings 19:1-5

1 Now Ahab told Jezebel everything Elijah had done and how he had killed all the prophets with the sword. 2 So Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah to say, "May the gods deal with me, be it ever so severely, if by this time tomorrow I do not make your life like that of one of them." 3 Elijah was afraid and ran for his life. When he came to Beersheba in Judah, he left his servant there, 4 while he himself went a day's journey into the desert. He came to a broom tree, sat down under it and prayed that he might die. "I have had enough, LORD," he said. "Take my life; I am no better than my ancestors." 5 Then he lay down under the tree and fell asleep. All at once an angel touched him and said, "Get up and eat." NIV

5. In the Elijah story in 1 Kings 19 what actually did the messenger deliver? How can the mere playing of words in our mind create stress?
6. Problems come in all sizes. Some things are really just inconveniences and hassles while other things are really a true crisis. The book of Daniel presents two stories of individuals in big trouble. What principles do these two stories have that we can learn from when we are in a crisis?
 - Daniel 3:1-30
 - Key verses in this passage: (See also Isaiah 43:1-3)

Daniel 3:25-29

25 He said, "Look! I see four men walking around in the fire, unbound and unharmed, and the fourth looks like a son of the gods." 26 Nebuchadnezzar then approached the opening of the blazing furnace and shouted, "Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, servants of the Most High God, come out! Come here!" So Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego came out of the fire, 27 and the satraps, prefects, governors and royal advisers crowded around them. They saw that the fire had not harmed their bodies, nor was a hair of their heads singed; their robes were not scorched, and there was no smell of fire on them. 28 Then Nebuchadnezzar said, "Praise be to the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, who has sent his angel and rescued his servants! They trusted in him and defied the king's command and were willing to give up their lives rather than serve or worship any god except their own God. 29 Therefore I decree that the people of any nation or language who say anything against the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego be cut into pieces and their houses be turned into piles of rubble, for no other god can save in this way. NIV

- Daniel 6:1-23. Key Verse Daniel 6:23

7. Close your group by taking prayer request for current situations that you are feeling great stress over.

Concluding Thought

The best way to re-size a problem is to place it next to God.