

What to do when your fiddle string is too tight

2 Corinthians 1:8 For we do not want you to be unaware, brethren, of our affliction which came to us in Asia, that we were burdened excessively, beyond our strength, so that we despaired even of life;

Stress is a part of life and without it we are dead. We need a certain amount of stress in our life to accomplish any thing. Stress gives us the energy, effort, and ability to actually accomplish things. Like a violin string, you have to put stress on it to make music. If you stress it just the right amount, it creates beautiful music. If you tighten it too tight, the string snaps.

We all know that too much stress is bad for us. Sometimes we're stressed to the breaking point. We feel like, "I'm ready to pop. I'm going to explode. I'm going to fall apart."

In II Corinthians 1:8 Paul wrote that *they were burdened excessively even to despair or to the breaking point*. Paul's life's fiddle strings were apparently pretty tight. Have you been there? What do you do when you're stressed to the breaking point and you feel like one more twist on the twister key will snap your string? The Bible says we need to do five things.

A. Release our frustrations

Stress always creates all kinds of negative emotions in our life, anxiety, worry, fear, guilt, shame, and depression and certainly frustration. Too often we just try and push them down in our minds.

Is that really what God wants? No, God wants us to be real. He understands those emotions. He gave us the ability to feel those things. So He wants us to own up to those emotions, and frustrations, then to express them to Him. Don't forget Psalm 62:8 says Trust God, my friends, and always tell him each one of your concerns. God is our place of safety.

God wants us to deal with how we feel. Don't repress it, ignore it, deny it, pretend it doesn't exist and wear a mask about it. Also don't rehearse it, so it gets bigger and bigger. God says, "Release it. Tell Me about it. Pour it out to Me."

Remember Psalm 31:22 *I was terrified and thought, "They've chased me far away from you!" But you answered my prayer when I shouted for help.* He says if you want to get well, if you want to lower the stress level in your life, release your frustrations but release them to me.

B. Resist becoming bitter

Bitterness is often a by-product of finding yourself stressed to the breaking point. You start feeling bitter, resentful, feeling, "This is unfair. This shouldn't be happening to me." The fact is, we're going to be hurt in life and we can't stop it.

Although you cannot control what happens to you, you can't control your circumstances, you can control your response, your reaction, how you choose to react to a particular circumstance or person that has hurt you.

Like happiness, bitterness is a choice, and you can't be both at the same time. You're either going to be bitter or happy. So when you get stressed to the breaking point by the hurts in life remember Hebrews 12:15 because in your stress you become a prime candidate for bitterness. That verse says *See to it that no one comes short of the grace of God; that no root of bitterness springing up causes trouble, and by it many be defiled.*

Bitterness is self cannibalism. It could also be said like this, anger is an acid that can do more harm to the vessel in which it is stored than to anything on which it is poured. Is there an alternative to this? Yes, its gratitude. Gratitude is the antidote to bitterness.

1 Thessalonians 5:18 reminds us; *in everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.*

Ephesians 5:20 *always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father.*

The attitude of gratitude will help you avoid the bitter bite of bitterness and help calm your stress level.

C. Receive help from others

The temptation, when you're stressed out and at the breaking point, is to isolate yourself and say, "I don't want anybody in my life. I'm too stressed out." When you're stressed, you don't see the whole picture so you need somebody else who can help you see in a wider view. Maybe a bigger picture would not be quite so stressful.

Galatians 6:2 *Bear one another's burdens, and thus fulfill the law of Christ.*

1 Thessalonians 5:11 *Therefore encourage one another, and build up one another, just as you also are doing.*

Hebrews 10:24,25 *We should keep on encouraging each other to be thoughtful and to do helpful things. Some people have gotten out of the habit of meeting for worship, but we must not do that. We should keep on encouraging each other, especially since you know that the day of the Lord's coming is getting closer.*

Never underestimate the power of just a little word of encouragement. Be an encourager yourself and when necessary, receive the gift of the encouragement from others. Let them help carry your burden and your stress level will go down.

D . Refocus on Christ.

Under stress, our life gets out of focus. We start looking at the problem and stop looking at Christ. What we need to do is get our focus off your problem and back on the Lord. Here are three suggestions or ways to refocus on Christ when we're at the breaking point:

Read God's word. Psalm 119:143 *As pressure and stress bear down on me, I find joy in your commands.*

It will help put life back in focus and we just might find that what was stressing us out might just not be so important in light of eternity.

Remember God's goodness. Psalm 27:13,14 *I would have despaired unless I had believed that I would see the goodness of the LORD In the land of the living. Wait for the LORD; Be strong, and let your heart take courage; Yes, wait for the LORD.*

Remembering God's goodness always puts a song in your heart. And we all know that when we are singing it doesn't allow us much time for stress. Rely on God's power. The key to crisis control is Christ control. The one who raised Jesus from the dead can also raise our hope and courage from the grave of despair in the stresses of life ?

E . Refuse to give up

When our daughter was still just a little girl she wrote on a plaque these words for her dad, A winner never quits and a quitter never wins. A poets says it this way

Don't Quit

When things go wrong as they sometimes will,
When the road you're trudging seems all up hill,
When the funds are low and the debts are high,
And you want to smile, but you have to sigh,

When care is pressing you down a bit,
Rest if you must, but don't you quit.

Life is queer with its twists and turns,
As everyone of us sometimes learns,
And many a failure turns about
When he might have won had he stuck it out;
Don't give up though the pace seems slow-
You may succeed with another blow.
Success is failure turned inside out-
The silver tint of the clouds of doubt,
And you never can tell just how close you are,

It may be near when it seems so far;
so stick to the fight when you're hardest hit-
It's when things seem worst
that you must not quit.

Are you at the breaking point today? Maybe you're on the way there and your stress level is rising. God is aware of the stress in your life and He cares about you. God can help you.

If we can just learn the unforced natural rhythms of his wonderful grace, our stress level will become bearable once again

In closing you may be stressed out about where you are going to spend your forever. You have been running around frantically trying to do enough good works to get you to heaven when you die. If you would just consider these next few lines and do what they ask, you can find relief for the stress you are facing.

Realize you are a sinner Romans 3:23

Understand that the payday for sin is death or eternal conscious separation from God.
Romans 6:23a

Know that there is a way of escape for you. Romans 6:23b and John 1:12

Desire to escape and pray this or a similar prayer.

"Dear God, I know I am a sinner. I am truly sorry for my sins, and I confess them all to You [name them]. Lord Jesus, forgive all my sins and come into my heart as my Saviour and Lord. I receive You right now. Help me from this time forward to live for You. Thank You for hearing and answering my prayer. In Jesus' name. Amen."

On the _____ day of _____ I became a Christian by inviting Jesus Christ into my life to forgive my sin.

Signed: _____

If you have further questions or have chosen to do this, be sure to let us know so we can help you, pray for you and encourage you in your new life.

You can reach us at lapeerchurch@gmail.com Subject line: (Salvation)