

PART 16 - CONNECTING MY MIND WITH MY LIFE

❖ DON'T YOU JUST LOVE STRESS?

*Stress has been rightfully called “the silent killer”. In fact, it is known that stress attacks every cell in the body. What stress does is increase the level of cortisol which is the main stress hormone in your body. Cortisol interferes with memory and learning, lowers immune functions, decreases bone density, and increases blood pressure, cholesterol, and heart disease. It can lead to a premature death if not managed properly. What has been learned about stress, however, is very interesting. People who are able to **manage** stress are three times less likely to die from stress induced illnesses than those people who perceive their daily life to be overwhelming and stressful. What that tells us is that it is not the actual stress that kills you, but your perception of the stress. So, when someone is stressed out and becomes anxious, it releases an overwhelming amount of harmful cortisol into their body and their heart rate increases, their breathing is affected, they have chest pains, they get headaches, their blood pressure rises, they become very tired, they cannot sleep, they have digestive issues, and they are likely to become depressed.¹ Stress is not good, but it all begins in a person's mind.*

The spiritual antidote for stress is God's peace. I love [John14:27](#) because it tells us what Jesus gives to us when we learn to think like He thinks.

Jn 14:27 (NKJV) Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.

Just think about who Jesus was talking to when He said this. He was talking to His disciples, who all but John were destined to death and martyrdom, and He says to them not to become troubled or afraid.

[Romans 8:6](#) says,

Ro 8:6 (NKJV) For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.

To “**be spiritually minded**” is to think like God thinks, and when that happens it gives you “**life and peace**”. When you have “**life and peace**”, I doubt that you will ever be very stressed out.

[Philippians 4:6-7](#) says,

Php 4:6 (NKJV) Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; ⁷ and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

Paul is saying that when a believer does not become anxious about difficult circumstances in his life that the “**peace of God**” will guard both his heart and mind. Once again, God's peace is the antidote for stress. This is how God wants you to deal with stress and difficulty. If you are always stressed out about every little thing that comes your way, if you are always negative about most everything going on in your life, then that stress and negativity triggers degenerative processes in both the brain and the body. When your mind is undisciplined, it is filled with a continuous stream of worry and fear because we just read that Jesus clearly tells us not to let our heart be troubled and not to let it be afraid. So, when you

¹ Lam, Beware, ep.

distort and respond to God's truth as if it is not true, that perversion of His truth becomes physically "wired" into your brain and can create brain damage. So, just to see how critical it is to think like God thinks, I want to show you what stress does to your body from a neurological perspective.

BRAIN FACTS:

1. **Every** negative and stressful thought that you have upsets the balance of "peptides" in your brain, and it puts the body into what is called "toxic stress".²
2. When "toxic stress" is present, it constantly releases harmful chemicals into your body and brain.
3. Neurological research affirms that negativity, worry, fear, and stress actually cause physical brain damage the longer you allow them to exist in your mind.

Now, just the words "toxic stress" do not sound good at all. In layman's terms, "peptides" act as messengers that signal specific glands and proteins in your body to perform very specific tasks based on what you are thinking. If you think negatively, these peptides signal your body to release chemicals that damage your body. When you think negatively, it creates mental stress on your brain which undermines your body's natural healing capabilities. Think of negative thinking as toxic thinking that eventually leads to toxic stress.

You would think I was crazy if I offered you some very toxic liquid to drink. Why? It is because you know that it would kill you. However, that is not much different from you always thinking and expressing toxic thoughts. One author said that negativity, worry, and constant stress creates "*neurochemical chaos in the brain*". So, when you respond negatively to a stressful circumstance, you block and impede the flow of good chemicals that control your health and behavior. You have everything to lose by being unbiblical in how you respond and react to difficult circumstances and abrasive people.

On the other hand, when you think biblically, the peptides signal your body to release chemicals that actually provide healing for your body. When you think like God thinks, it stimulates physical healing for your body. The peptides that are in your brain are called "neuropeptides", and when you respond to negative and difficult circumstances in a biblical way, the "neuropeptides" actually release healthy chemicals in your brain which in turn allows your physical body to function in a much healthier way. **THIS IS HOW GOD HAS MADE YOU!!** The Bible never promises you that you can be free of stress, but it does provide evidence that learning to deal with stress the way God wants you to will have great health and mental benefits for you.

We all have to live with stress, so what are some signs that stress may be developing in your life? The obvious signs are irritability, being short tempered, over reacting to your circumstances, being anxious about everything, always being frustrated with people, being fearful about life and the future, and being impulsive.³ You can decide if any of those negative qualities are in your personal life. If they are, then the spiritual side of this is that those negative qualities can quickly become a spiritual stronghold in your life. We clearly know from Scripture that a stronghold, if not dealt with, will begin to actually control your attitudes, mindsets, and perspectives on life. It will weaken your will, your resolve, and your

² Leaf, Think, 61.

³ Leaf, Think, 65-66.

propensity to honor God in your life. It will undermine your faith in God. This is not good. This is exactly where Satan wants to take you.

❖ THE MEXICAN RESTAURANT MENU

Recently I went to a Mexican restaurant. The menu had so many choices that it was almost confusing. It was page after page and picture after picture of what I could order. There were beef entrees, chicken entrees, shrimp and fish entrees, and pork entrees for starters. Then, there were all kinds of tacos, burritos, enchiladas, quesadillas, tamales, chile rellenos, tortillas, guacamole, salsa, refried beans, cheese sauces, and who knows what else. Eventually, I just had to narrow everything down to one single choice.

Every day as you navigate through stressful events and circumstances, you are faced with a multitude of possibilities from which to choose. You have an endless array of choices that you can make at any given point in time, but can only make one choice as to how you are going to respond. Your stressful circumstances force that on you. What happens is that you take all of the possibilities on how you can respond and you collapse them into one choice.⁴ In a stressful circumstance that choice could be “*This is really upsetting and unsettling to me, and it’s making me angry*”, or it could be “*God does not want me to be upset by what is happening. He just wants me to respond the way He would, so that is exactly what I am going to do.*” It is simply a choice that you make in your mind.

KEY PRINCIPLE 40: IT IS JUST AS EASY TO MAKE THE GODLY CHOICE AS IT IS TO MAKE THE UNGODLY CHOICE.

Stress is just a normal part of life, a normal part of living in a fallen world. So, knowing that, **we always need to be cognizant of how we are going to respond to that stress.** Knowing how you are going to respond to stress before it happens is the key to overcoming stress so that it does not become harmful to you. For instance, if you are in a stressful moment, you have to pay attention to what you are thinking so that you can change something negative in your mind so that it becomes something biblical and affirming. Rather than hurting someone with your words during a stressful moment, you must learn how to change your thinking so that you say something gracious and kind to them even when they are saying hurtful things to you. **WHAT WILL THIS DO?** It will disarm and defuse the other person.

[Proverbs 15:18](#) (NIV) and [Proverbs 29:11](#) each say,

Pr 15:18 (NIV) **A hot-tempered man stirs up dissension, but a patient man calms a quarrel.**

Pr 29:11 (NKJV) **A fool vents all his feelings, but a wise *man* holds them back.**

Even if the other person does not respond properly, still be gracious to them. This is when you are literally demonstrating what is the “**mind of Christ**”. This is when you are thinking like God thinks.

I want you to see how Jesus handled a very stressful moment in [John 8](#). This is the story of a woman who had been caught in the very act of adultery and the penalty for adultery was being stoned. For the

⁴ Leaf, Switch, 105-106.

woman, this was a very stressful moment. The men who brought her to Jesus could have cared less about the woman, but what they were trying to do was to test Jesus Himself. [John 8:6](#) says,

Jn 8:6 (NKJV) This they said, testing Him, that they might have something of which to accuse Him. But Jesus stooped down and wrote on the ground with His finger, as though He did not hear.

When the accusers eventually left, the woman taken in adultery was left alone with Jesus. In that moment, He was as gracious and affirming to her as He could be, and as best we know she followed Him the rest of her life. This is what He said to her in [John 8:10-11](#),

Jn 8:10 (NKJV) When Jesus had raised Himself up and saw no one but the woman, He said to her, "Woman, where are those accusers of yours? Has no one condemned you?" ¹¹ She said, "No one, Lord." And Jesus said to her, "Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more."

Jesus took something very stressful and made it something deeply affirming and spiritual. Because He thought like God thinks, he refuted the Pharisees and gained a follower. This is such a great way to think and to live. This is the kind of godly mindset that you have to develop. When you begin to think like God thinks, then and only then can you make a godly impact on those people that are in your life.

KEY PRINCIPLE 41: NEVER LET A STRESSFUL CIRCUMSTANCES DICTATE HOW YOU RESPOND TO THAT CIRCUMSTANCE.

This is a mindset that you must develop. **God wants you to change your thinking so that you see difficult and stressful circumstances as “mental tests” that you can easily win.** You develop a mindset where you say to yourself when the tension rises *“I will think like God wants me to think so that I will respond how God wants me to respond.”* **Even though you cannot control the difficult and stressful circumstances of your life, you can control how you respond to those circumstances.** This is how God has made you, but He leaves it up to you to make that choice.

When something negative happens to you, your five senses immediately activate an emotional response to that circumstance. When Satan sees that difficulty happening in your life, he is just licking his chops because what he wants is for you to **respond impulsively** to the emotions that are being created in you. Rather than remaining calm and peaceful, he provokes you to become anxious, fearful, agitated, irritable, unkind, abrasive, impatient. When you react in any of these ways, you can know that the enemy has placed that ungodly attribute into your mind. However, because the Holy Spirit indwells you and leads you, you can control your reactions, what you think, as well as the choices you make. When you believe one of Satan’s lies, your brain processes that lie into a physical reality. Your brain creates a neural pathway that forms the nerve networks that influences your choices and how you act. So, when you accept the enemy’s lie, you physically create that lie in your brain and eventually you will act on it.

KEY PRINCIPLE 42: YOU ARE RESPONSIBLE TO CONTROL BOTH YOUR THOUGHT LIFE AND YOUR EMOTIONS.

Just consider the spiritual attribute of forgiveness that God says is absolutely critical for your life. Listen to [Ephesians 4:32](#) and [Colossians 3:13](#).

Eph 4:32 (NKJV) **And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ forgave you.**

Col 3:13 (NKJV) **bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do.**

Forgiveness is a spiritual choice that you have to make in your life when someone wrongs you or hurts you. Being wronged and hurt will happen to you. Some people just know how to hurt someone else, and if that happens to you, you may quickly become unforgiving. The result in your life will not be good because you can easily become a bitter and resentful person.

BRAIN FACTS:

1. Neurologically, unforgiveness creates **chemical toxicity** in your body which deteriorates your body's health.
2. When you exercise forgiveness, it physically releases your body and brain from the chemical toxicity that negative and unbiblical attributes have created in your life.
3. Forgiveness is an attribute that neuroscientists have concluded creates extreme health benefits.

What neuroscientific research has discovered is that what and how you think actually changes the physical components, the chemistry, and the programming of your brain. I.e., what you think and how you respond to people who hurt you becomes a **physical** reality in your brain, and it directly affects your mental and physical health – either good or bad. Your thoughts are what determine your attitudes, and your attitudes are what determine your quality of life. No wonder people are so sick.

BRAIN FACTS:

1. Neuroscientific research confirms that over 75% of mental, physical, and behavioral illnesses come directly from a person's thought life.
2. The association between stress and disease in the body is 85%.⁵
3. Neuroscientists affirm that negativity causes physical brain damage the longer the negativity is allowed to exist in your mind.

What is always happening physiologically is that your thought life is sending out signals from your brain to every part of your body. So, when your thoughts and emotions are negative, they have a very real mental, emotional, and physical impact on your life. What and how you think has a “physical” brain component to it that is constantly changing the physical make-up of the cells in your body. You have to think of the implications of this. This is why some people feel so bad all of the time. It is because they have been so negative in their thinking, that they have actually and physically “infected” the various cells in their body that regulate how they feel. When you do not feel good physically, you are more prone to make bad judgments, to say wrong things, and to become difficult to be around. How you feel physically will generally effect how you respond to people.

One thing these findings tell you is that if you do not learn how to spiritually control your stressful reactions to difficult people and circumstances that it will significantly impact your health in a very

⁵ Leaf, Switch, 33, 37.

negative way. However, the way that God has designed your brain to work is that it can become exponentially better by just understanding how to eliminate and replace the problem of negativity.⁶ Listen to how Jesus responded to negativity in His life in [1 Peter 2:23](#). He is our example to follow.

1Pe 2:23 (NKJV) who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed *Himself* to Him who judges righteously;

[1 Peter 3:8-9](#) says,

1Pe 3:8 (NKJV) Finally, all of you be of one mind, having compassion for one another; love as brothers, be tenderhearted, be courteous; ⁹ not returning evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary blessing, knowing that you were called to this, that you may inherit a blessing.

Do you really want God's blessings on your life? Then be compassionate, be loving, be tenderhearted, and be courteous. Never return evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary give that person a blessing. I.e., do not say negative and ugly things to people when they say negative and ugly things to you. If they revile you and say irritable and negative words to you, in your mind just cast those comments down and stay calm, relaxed, and at peace because you know that you are under the control of the Holy Spirit. You know that you are thinking like God thinks. **You must shape and mold your life around God's truth.** If you will choose to do that and to think the way that God wants you to think when people hurt you, then you will inherit His blessing on your life. It will be health to your mind and your body.

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⁶ Leaf, Switch, 61.