



The Blessing of Stress

By Jane Reinheimer

Opening: Lord, there are times when stress threatens to tear me apart ... when life seems too much to bear. Today I come before You to claim Your promise that You will bring me peace and comfort. Oh Lord, it is not

easy for me to let others ... even You ... help me, so it is with a humble heart that I bring You the stressors of my life and leave them in Your care. Help me to let You carry my burden for me. Only then can I join with the psalmist in **Psalm 46:1**: *God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble.* Free me to sing along with the psalmist about the promises of God's comfort in **Psalm 55:16–17**: *But I call to God, and the Lord saves me. Evening, morning and noon I cry out in distress, and he hears my voice.* In Jesus' name, I pray. Amen.

What is stress?

Stress can be defined as anything that makes us change the way we live our lives or the way we react to things that are happening to us. How well we react to stress often reveals how well we make adjustments to both comfort and discomfort.

There are different types of stress. When we think of stress, we may not consider the pleasant stressors that come under the umbrella of *eustress*. Those events might include a honeymoon, the birth of a baby or a grandbaby, graduating from college, getting that first job. Although those events cause the need for many life adjustments, we are receivers of the joy those *eustressors* bring us from a loving heavenly Father.

But many times when we think of stress and the need for stress management, we are talking about *distress*: the nitpicking events that keep us lying awake at night, filling us with discomfort and haunting us with the fear that we won't be able to solve a problem. We despair that we will never find refuge for each day's crisis that

gets dumped into our laps. We grow weary as we toss and turn in the emotion of our anguish. We long for the psalmist's words from **Psalm 116:5–7**: *The Lord is gracious and righteous; our God is full of compassion. The Lord protects the simplehearted; when I was in great need, he saved me. Be at rest once more, O my soul, for the Lord has been good to you.*

The Lord knows.

It is the working of the Holy Spirit in our lives ... a whisper deep within us as we spend time in His Word. Read **Psalm 142:1–7** and discuss:

What does the psalmist do in **verses 1–2**?

What does the psalmist say about the path where he walks in **verse 3**?

Does the psalmist think anyone cares about him or his problems? (See **verse 4**.)

How does the psalmist describe his dilemma in **verse 6**?

In **verse 7** the psalmist appears to strike a bargain with the Lord. Is this something you would feel comfortable doing? Why do you think the psalmist became so brave?

Stress can be a motivator for good.

Stress can serve as a powerful spiritual motivator that changes our relationship with the Lord. Discuss a time when dealing with stress led you to a closer walk with Jesus.

In **1 Corinthians 3:16** we read: *Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit lives in you?* Christ lives within sinners. He came to mingle among the unrighteous. He came to take up residence in our souls. How does that truth motivate you in a positive way?

Stress opens doors.

For certain, stressors frustrate us. They anger us. They interfere with our lives and our schedules.

Turn to **Jeremiah 15:15–16**. What's the first thing that Jeremiah says about the Lord in **verse 15**? In his eagerness to learn more from the Lord, what does he do with the Words of God in **verse 16**? What did Jeremiah believe that these words could do for him and to him? What do you think Jeremiah meant when he said, in **verse 16**: *for I bear your name, O Lord God Almighty?*

Jeremiah had several opportunities to work his way through crises of faith brought on by stressors he endured. Think about the crises of faith you have lived through. What do you believe has helped you most as you endured such crises?

Stress can strengthen who you are as a child of God.

We have only to look to Paul's letter to the **Romans 5:1–5** to see how this happens. What does Paul say in these verses about Christ, faith, and grace?

Christ is our peace in the midst of every stressor because He has already overcome our greatest stressors of sin and death and given us as a free gift, His salvation, which the stress of this world cannot overcome. Even as Christ reminds His followers in **John 16:33(ESV)**: *“I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world,”* we are reassured that His promise holds true in our lives today.

It is through enduring and resolving of stressors that we can come to rejoice in our sufferings as redeemed, beloved children of the heavenly Father ... realizing that perseverance

has made us stronger in faith through the working of the Holy Spirit.

Closing: Paul gives us a powerful blueprint in **Ephesians 3:14–21**. Read these verses as a closing prayer: *For this reason I kneel before the Father, from whom his whole family in heaven and on earth derives its name. I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge ... that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.*

Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus through all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.

Jane Reinheimer is a member of Faith Lutheran Church, Shumway, Illinois. She is a mental health counselor in private practice. She and her husband, Quint, are parents of four adult children.