

Question: "What does the Bible say about stress?"

Answer from GotQuestions.org: While most major translations of the Bible don't specifically use the word "stress," Scripture does speak to things such as anxiety, worry and trouble and gives us clear answers on how we should deal with them. The dictionary defines stress as physical, mental, or emotional strain or tension. Everyone suffers from stress at one time or another. In fact, research indicates that children who live in a stressful home environment are at greater risk to become highly stressed by life's challenges. Stress can cause us to do things we would not normally do or cause us to shut down completely. Anything that causes stress is called a "stressor."

Stress can be caused by either processive stressors or systemic stressors. Processive stressors are those that elicit what is called the "fight or flight" reaction. Systemic stressors are our bodies' automatic physiological responses to stress. Stress takes its toll on all of us to varying degrees, and how we deal with it depends in large part on who we are. It is no wonder that many days we struggle trying to cope with the distresses that come from our jobs, our health or family issues. God has created us and knows that, because of our fallen natures, we can sometimes allow stress to rule our lives.

Many people become stressed because they don't trust God to provide the basic necessities of life. Jesus said, "Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing? And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life?" (Matthew 6:25, 27). This passage is a classic example of why we get stressed in the first place—we worry about providing for ourselves and our loved ones. We stress over money because we never seem to feel that we have enough. We worry about making ends meet, often living paycheck to paycheck. Or we become consumed by materialism and in turn, stressed out about maintaining our lifestyle. Materialism inevitably leads to stress because when we seek the world's goods, we have fallen for the "deceitfulness of wealth" (Mark 4:19), the lie that such things relieve stress and lead to happiness, contentment and joy. They do not.

The starting point for dealing with stress is Jesus Christ. Jesus offers us great encouragement in John 14:1: "Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me." We desperately need Him in our lives. We need Him because He is the only one who can give us the strength to cope with the troubles in our lives. Believing in Him does not mean that we will have a trouble-free life or that we will not succumb to stress in our lives. It simply means that a life without Jesus Christ makes coping with stress an impossible and often debilitating task.

Believing leads to trusting. Proverbs 3:5-6 tells us to "Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths." Leaning on "our own understanding" often means adopting the world's ways of relieving stress—things like alcohol or drugs or mindless entertainment. Instead, we are to trust His Word as our ultimate guide to a stress-reduced life. David says, "I sought the LORD, and he answered me and delivered me from all my fears" (Psalm 34:4). David knew that by seeking the Lord and sharing his troubles with Him that perhaps he would find favor with Him. The Lord in turn answered him and calmed him down.

Perhaps no passage in Scripture better captures how to handle stress than Philippians 4:6-7: "Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." The Lord tells us not to be anxious about anything, but rather to turn everything over to Him in prayer. Lifting our burdens and concerns to a holy and righteous God daily will mitigate or eliminate the stress in our lives. Psalm 55:22 tells us to cast all our cares on Him because He will sustain us and never fail us. Jesus Christ offers peace if we come to Him with our worries and concerns. "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid" (John 14:27).

Stress of all kinds is a natural part of life (Job 5:7, 14:1; 1 Peter 4:12; 1 Corinthians 10:13). But how we deal with it is up to us. If we choose to try to do it on our own we face a long, uphill battle that will not end well. The only way we can deal with stress is with Jesus Christ, first by believing in Him. Without believing in Him we are on our own, and success in coping with stress is almost impossible. Second, we need to trust Him and obey Him. We should trust Him to do what is right because His ways are always best for us. Disobedience and sin can produce stress and cut us off from the only means of peace and joy. By obeying His commandments we reap the blessings of true contentment from a loving God. Finally, we need to seek His peace daily by filling our minds with His Word, lifting all things to Him in prayer, and sitting at His feet in awe and reverence. It is only by His grace, mercy and love that the stress in our lives can be managed.

Recommended Resource: [Anger & Stress Management, God's Way by Dr. Wayne A. Mack.](#)