

Calm . . . Out of the
Storms

Stresses of Life



by

Benny Bristow

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I.

INTRODUCTION

Those that have taken even a casual glance at today's way of life will tell you that we are living in a high-pressured society. With our modern technology, automobiles, jet planes, and rockets, we are recognized as the fastest generation ever to live on the earth. All of this is wonderful, and promotes progress for the welfare of the human race, but it also adds additional stress. Now stress (in and of itself) is not bad. In fact, when it is not abused, it contributes to the response of both body and mind. However, when stress is allowed to get out of control to the point of **DISTRESS**, there are serious results.

The purpose of this book is not to remove all your stress, but rather to help you learn how to harness such for a friend instead of an enemy. In each chapter, the problems that cause heavy stress are discussed, along with how to seek solutions. The suggested solutions are based on biblical principles that have helped millions over the centuries, and it is believed that they will still help today. Please study each chapter carefully, and if you feel that this study has helped you, why not suggest the same help to another.

This work is suggested for adult classes, hospital patients, newly weds, graduates (getting ready to face life), and for all others that wish to remove harmful stress while seeking a better life. If anyone can be helped to lighten the burden of stress, and to find a greater measure of happiness in life, then all efforts to bring this to you have not been in vain.

Benny B. Bristow,
Author

II.

STRESS FROM DISAPPOINTMENTS

There is one thing that all accountable human beings have in common—disappointments. Webster defines disappointment as: “~~defeat or failure of expectation; state of depression caused by failure.~~” Haven’t we ~~all known defeat, failure, and depression?~~ These usually begin in an early age, and become more serious as our lives mature to accept more responsibility and lasting relationships. “~~No man, with a man’s heart in him, gets far on his way without some bitter, soul-searching disappointment~~” (Brown). Even the beautiful experience of ~~marriage and home~~ often ~~bring bitter disappointments~~. Now, these disappointments can throw us down and rob us of the joys of life, or we can use them as stepping stones to greater heights. To be able to cope with disappointments, and to reduce the stress they bring, it is important to ~~first recognize some of the principles that bring disappointment~~. We must be able to see them coming and guard ourselves against their stressful attacks. Thus, would you meditate on some of the problems which cause disappointments and stresses to our lives?

THE STORMS

(1) Failing to make the grade

~~Disappointments~~ come early to ~~millions while in school~~, training for life. Some are disappointed ~~over sports~~. They wish to be skilled and recognized by their peers as being excellent, but when this fails, there is

disappointment. These young people are told that life is more than making the football or basketball team, but this does not remove the hurt and stress. It is so hard to look beyond the present circumstances of life, and this is especially true with youth.

(2) Failure in marriage

The next major area of disappointment often comes in marriage. This relationship is so important and involves a oneness which makes a man and woman one flesh (Genesis 2:24). It is so beautiful and natural that the majority, (sometime in their lives) either seek or experience it. Therefore, with such great importance, when there is failure, there is deep disappointment that brings heavy stress. Some have allowed this kind of disappointment to wreck their entire lives by turning to the abuse of alcohol and drugs. Others have turned to all kinds of immoral practices which caused them to lose self-respect. If uncontrolled, this kind of disappointment can produce stresses that will totally destroy body, soul, and mind.

(3) Failure as parents

There are not enough words to fully describe the disappointments that have been felt by parents because of their children's conduct. Each night finds parents awake wrestling with disappointments due to failure with their children. The list of problems would include: drugs, alcohol, loss of discipline, in jail, no interest in religion, pre-marital sex, pregnancy before marriage, and many others. Those that have experienced disappointments from children will tell you that this brings some of the heaviest stresses of life.

In many cases, the parents are reaping what they have sowed, for they may have taught their children to drink, failed to discipline them, and did not set the right example in religion. However, this kind of guilt brings even more disappointment and stress, because, in addition to being disappointed with their children that have gone wrong, they are disappointed with themselves. Be assured, this can bring a heavy weight to the human heart!

(4) Failure in career

We are living in an age of time where often both men and women are required to earn a pay check by working outside the home. There is a great battle that is fought daily among employees to please the boss, and to seek advancement with higher wages. However, millions are dis-

appointed every year when their efforts fail. There is usually someone else seeking the same position, and when only one can succeed, the others are disappointed.

In some cases, disappointment comes by losing a job that has been secure for years. Others are transferred to another city and state about the time they have settled in; thinking they could put down roots. Then there are those that have bosses that can never be pleased. One may give his all on the job feeling that this will impress, only later to hear criticism and bitterness. All of these and many other experiences add up to stress caused by disappointments.

(5) Failure with friends

Friendship is one of the many beautiful relationships we enjoy. "Life has no blessing like a prudent friend" (Euripides). A true friendship goes deep into our hearts and wishes to become permanent. Some things in life we wish to be temporary, but not a good friend. "Friendship is the shadow of the evening which strengthens with the setting sun of life" (LaFontaine). This explains why there is so much disappointment felt when a friendship goes wrong. There is a void left in our lives, and the heart cries out in pain. The true friendship is so strong that some have felt that it is impossible to ever totally get over the loss. "The loss of a friend is like that of a limb; time may heal the anguish of the wound, but the loss cannot be repaired" (Southey). This kind of disappointment may last for many months as daily stress is added to our lives.

Now that we have looked at some of the problems with disappointments, how can we solve them? How can we reduce our disappointments to a minimum amount of damage to our lives? It is believed that the following suggestions will help:

THE CALM

(1) Seek contentment in your life

Some have the mistaken idea that only when things are going well in life, contentment can be found, and since life is usually filled with disappointments, they are never content. True contentment can come in spite of one's disappointments and hardships. The apostle Paul experienced more disappointments than any other Christian of the first century, and yet, he could write: "I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content" (Philippians 4:11). He refused to let the disappointments of life destroy him. Paul set his sights on higher things, and refused to be overcome with stress. This is not to say that his disappointments were not

painful, because they were heavy to his heart. He could bear them, however, because of his faith in God which would carry him through. Paul seemed to live by the rule that if God is with me, nothing can harm me (Romans 8:31). His philosophy was: "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me" (Philippians 4:13). Thus, Paul was able to find contentment, (even though he had many disappointments) because of his godliness. He wrote: "But godliness with contentment is great gain" (1 Timothy 6:6).

Remember, your disappointments will be easier to accept and overcome, if true contentment is present in your life.

(2) Prepare for the future

Many of the disappointments that destroy our lives are self-inflicted because of our neglect. In so many areas of life, we reap what we sow (Galatians 6:7,8). For example, disappointments in marriage may come because one or both have failed to give their best. Some parents neglect their children and then later suffer over the way they "turn out." It is true that many disappointments come when we are doing our best to avoid them, but far too often, we bring them on ourselves because we fail to prepare.

Ex. DiAR
Kath
Ey.
Eggs

"The story is told of a farmer that advertised for men to work on his farm, but received only one applicant, an eighteen year old boy who was asked: 'Can you run a tractor?' 'No, sir,' replied the youth. 'Can you handle a milking machine?' 'No, sir,' I've never worked with one.'

After several more questions, all with negative answers, the farmer said, 'Well, what can you do, young man?' And he answered, 'I can sleep when the wind blows.'

The farmer didn't understand, but neither did he press for an explanation. He needed help so badly that he gave the job to the young man. It was not many days afterward that a storm came up in the middle of the night. The wind began to blow, accompanied by thunder and lightning and rain. The farmer was awakened and ran to the room where the young man was sleeping. There, just as he had said, he was sleeping through the storm. Rather than trying to waken the youth, the farmer himself ran out to the barn to check on the animals and the equipment. He found the doors to the barn tightly shut and bolted. The animals were in their shelters, properly secured. Then he remembered the pile of straw that the wind would be blowing in all directions, but he found it had been covered with canvas and tied down. Everything was secure. On the way back to the house the farmer remembered what the young man had told him: 'I can sleep when the wind blows.' And he understood." (Selected).

(3) Take life one step at a time

Have you ever been guilty of letting the immediate circumstances and disappointments of life crowd out any hope for the future? The present disappointments may seem impossible to bear, and may create problems that seem too large to solve, but remember, we are usually given time with our problems. "Most of you have seen an hourglass which slowly sifts fine sand from one glass to another. The tube between the two bowls is so thin that only one grain of sand can pass at a time. So with our lives. Regardless of how many problems arise, time will still come to us one moment at a time" (Gilkey). Remember: "One can walk over the highest mountain— one step at a time" (Wanamaker).

(4) Avoid worry

There is a vast difference between WORRYING and being CONCERNED! We should be concerned about our disappointments and try to correct them, but we should avoid harmful worry. Remember, worry which cannot change anything, is capable of adding heavy stress! If you wish to worry, you can always find an excuse to do so. "Some people bear three kinds— all they have had, all they have now, and all they expect to have" (Hale). It is so harmful and useless to worry over disappointment beyond our control.

Jesus asked: "Which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature?" (Matthew 6:27). Then He closes His discourse on worry by saying: "Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble" (Matthew 6:34).

(5) Allow God to help

True Christians should be able to deal with disappointments better than anyone else. Why? Because they can call upon God to help. "Casting all your care upon him: for He careth for you" (1 Peter 5:6,7). The faith of Christians allows them to believe that God is real, powerful, and concerned enough to help. Those that try to carry their problems and disappointments alone, will find that such burdens are too heavy. Remember, millions down through the centuries have trusted God for His help and have received it!

Yes, disappointments may come to our marriages, homes, careers, and even from friends, but if we will seek God's help, and work daily to develop the right actions and attitudes, we will be able to walk uprightly in life while avoiding stress that destroys.

III.

STRESS IN MARRIAGE

One of the most beautiful things that God has given us in life is the happiness that comes from marriage. The institution of marriage was ordained by God in the garden, and is as old as the human family, and its natures and duties are commended in the holy scriptures (Ephesians 5:22-31).

Even in paradise God saw that it was not good for man to be alone, therefore He gave him a wife to make him happy and complete. Marriage is the happy dream of life: the climax of a youthful dream. It is so natural that little boys and girls begin early in life to play at getting married and making and maintaining a home. The ending of the dream is always the same—"we will get married and live happily ever after."

Sadly to say, this is not always the case! Since we live in an age where one half of the marriages in this nation end in divorce, there must be a lot of problems and stresses in marriage. However, looking at the other side of the coin, there are millions that are happily married. May we then, first of all look at the many problems in marriage, and then seek out some solutions.

THE STORMS

Since we are all made somewhat differently with varying personalities, we should not be shocked to learn that stress comes to mar-

riages from many sources. In some cases a couple may have more than one problem causing stress, and we need to be aware of them all. What are some of the causes of stress in marriage?

(1) Love has not been properly developed

The little four letter word "LOVE" is the most important, and most abused word in the world today. Therefore, be informed that the statement, "love has not been properly developed," applies to "LOVE" as God's word has taught it. God's idea of love is more than a physical attraction, a desire for a sexual relationship, or simply a convenience for housekeeping and breadwinning. True love involves these, but goes far deeper into lasting principles. The kind of love that lasts is the kind that grows and matures because a couple works at it. Although verbalizing the words, "I love you" are important, true love goes further, and is both spoken and shown.

Paul called upon husbands to love their wives in a sacrificial way: 'Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for it' (Ephesians 5:25). The husband that loves to the point of being willing to die for his wife, has strong love. Paul further wrote: "So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies: he who loves his wife loves himself" (Ephesians 5:28). In this same chapter, Paul taught: "Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord" (v. 22).

The Greek word used by Paul is "Agape" which is the strongest word ever used for love. It's a love that seeks the good of the one loved, and is totally void of selfishness. Only God can carry out this love to perfection (John 3:16), but it is still the love that one must strive for in a happy marriage.

Heavy stresses are experienced by both husband and wife when this kind of love is not present and developed. In fact, the remaining problems discussed in this chapter arise in marriage because "Agape" love is not present. According to 1 Corinthians, chapter thirteen, "Agape" love will remove all destructive problems.

(2) Selfishness with husband and/or wife

When the right kind of love is not present, selfishness will bring heavy stress to a marriage. The guilty may be the husband, the wife, or both, but be assured that selfishness will wreck a marriage and cause stress. The word selfishness is defined as: "Undue regard for one's own interest, regardless of those of others" (Webster).

Stress is brought to bear when either husband or wife thinks only of themselves. Selfishness may be demonstrated through abuse of hobbies,

sports, spending money, watching television, the sexual relationship, and many other ways.

There are times when a husband or wife wishes to pursue a personal hobby, or sport, and have the privilege to make a personal purchase. However, this must be the exception, and not the rule. When selfishness is present, someone is left out and this brings argument, resentment, fighting, and rejection which will all add up to STRESS.

(3) Children

Among the many wonderful blessings that come to the lives of a married couple is the arrival of children. When God made man and woman, He made them capable of love and desire for each other, and out of this union of oneness, the wonder of birth. Only God knows how many hearts have rejoiced and felt deep love from the bearing and rearing of children. With so many joys and blessing, one might think that problems from such treasures would never arise, but this is not true. Because the same children which are capable of bringing happiness and joy, can also bring stress.

With children, (like all other facets of marriage) there are guidelines that must be followed, and when these break down, there is trouble ahead. Problems of this nature come gradually, but if not solved, can cause great damage.

Some married couples have their first baby at an early age, (often less than a year of marriage), and consequently have not had time to be together for the proper maturity and adjustments. The stresses are even greater when the young mother-to-be has weeks of pregnancy sickness! With a newly established marriage, this can bring harmful stress. Due to all of this, her sexual desire for her husband may somewhat subside, and this can also set up frictions between them. Once she diverts more of her attention to the experience of carrying a baby, he may feel left out and show resentment and coldness toward her. By this time, her figure has made a tremendous change, and she may (because of his coldness toward her) feel that she is no longer attractive. Therefore, stresses can weigh heavily on such a marriage.

Once the baby arrives, some of the stress just mentioned, may subside due to the thrill and joy of a new life added, however, the coming weeks can bring new stresses if not properly controlled. There will be the up-through-the-night-feedings, the excessive crying when there is illness, the irritability that arises when the husband refuses to carry his load of changing and caring for the baby, and the confinement at home due to the baby.

If a couple is young, they may feel deprived of being able to get out occasionally, and in some cases the wife refuses intimate relations because she is so tired from added responsibilities with housekeeping and baby.

As the years pass in a marriage and other children arrive, there can be many stresses added as the children mature to various ages. Often the things that we love most can bring the greatest stress, and children (with all their pleasure to us) can certainly do so.

(4) Jealousy

One cannot properly define jealousy without the words **SUSPICIOUS FEAR** and **WATCHFULNESS**. There may or may not be a legitimate cause for such, but in either case, a stressful environment is created. God so designed marriage that love and trust must be present for happiness, and when jealousy is present, problems arise. This likewise causes many fights which increase stress, and when an ill temper is present with one party or both, the problem rages like a wildfire.

Usually when jealousy and fighting are present, it becomes difficult to forgive each other. Thus, grudges may be buried deeply in each heart which also causes daily stress, and this in turn eats away like a cancer.

(5) Sexual Imbalance

There are not enough words to describe the problems of stress caused by sexual imbalance. In fact, this is one of the leading causes of divorce among the millions of broken marriages. At first thought, one might feel that husbands are the ones with this kind of stress because they are deprived by their wives, but this is not necessarily true. As a general rule, the husband may be refused the sexual relation more often, but also the wife may be responding and still feel deprived. It is likewise true that many wives are refused by their husbands. Be assured that all sexual imbalance brings about stress!

Both the husband and wife are commanded from the word of God **NOT** to deprive their mates, and to consider that their bodies belong to the other, (1 Corinthians 7:4,5) but this is too often ignored, and destructive stress follows.

So much of sexual imbalance is caused of selfishness, lack of love, and failure to communicate. Please remember that this kind of stress can cause permanent damage unless corrected. For the chances are that such stress will lead to unfaithfulness on the part of either the husband

or wife, and in some cases both! Once this happens, it becomes even more difficult to repair.

(6) Different Religions

This is an area of marriage that can be very stressful to a couple, and will certainly be felt by the children. Religion is something that involves our inner being, our belief, love, and obedience. When two people become one in marriage while far apart in religion, there is great danger of harmful stress. This is not to say that a satisfactory arrangement cannot be made, but even an arrangement at its best cannot remove all stress.

Some couples experience fights, heated arguments, and resentment over religion, and problems are compounded when children are involved. Each parent campaigns for their particular religion, and the children are caught in the middle. Since religion is such a personal thing, guilt feelings are created which also add stress to stress.

Therefore, who can deny that the marriage relationship is a fertile field for stresses to spring up and to grow in many areas. It is so important to seek a solution for these.

THE CALM

(1) Both must wish to release stress

Before a true solution can be sought from stress in marriage, it is imperative that both husband and wife be willing to cooperate. When one without the other makes an attempt, his or her failure will only add additional stress. Therefore, sit down together and define the problem and the consequences which will follow unless something positive is done. Be willing to jointly give your full cooperation for a solution.

(2) Study the meaning of "Agape" love in the Bible

This is the foundation on which all other facets of success must be built. As you study biblical examples and passages, ask yourself how your love compares. If you find your love for each other is off course, discuss ways to correct it. "Agape" love involved sacrifice. How much sacrifice is shown in your marriage? Are you really putting the needs of each other first?

(3) Plan some time together away from the children

Children fulfill a very important need in our lives, but it is only one of many needs. God did not intend for love, courtship, and romance to die between husbands and wives when children come. In fact, one of the greatest lessons our children learn is by observing a happy relationship between mom and dad. Thus, when you plan regular times together, they will understand, and will not feel neglected. Certainly this must not be abused, but when done properly, this becomes a way to keep excessive stress out of your marriage.

(4) Take a "SELFISHNESS" test

Another step toward the goal of removing stress in marriage is to take a "SELFISHNESS" test. Be honest to see if either or both of you are selfish in your marriage. ^{Test} Do you seek his or her needs first, or your own? What is your goal in marriage, to seek your own happiness or to make your mate happy? Do you believe that an effort to make your husband or wife happy will bring you happiness? Should you take the test and fail, are you willing to make corrections in your life? Will you strive to be less selfish, and to put your mate first?

Don't resolve just to meet him or her halfway, but all the way. If so, you will be well on your way to remove such stress!

(5) Control your temper and avoid jealousy

The marriage relationship is so close, and involves so many areas of your life together that irritations will arise. Resolve to keep your temper under control even if you have to bite your tongue or leave the room for a few minutes. Remember, when you lose your temper, you may release some stress for the moment, but you can also cause damages that will add additional stress to yourself and your mate.

When considering the problem of jealousy, there are two areas of importance. First of all, don't be guilty of doing anything to promote jealousy in the heart of your mate. Secondly, don't be too quick to suspect jealousy. So many times when jealousy is present, such is without cause. If you feel there are circumstances that may cause jealousy, sit down and talk it out. Be honest, and don't be afraid to reassure each other.

In counseling with various couples, more than a few have admitted that they purposely wanted their mates to be jealous. Don't forget,

jealousy builds like a volcano, and sooner or later will erupt, and once this happens, it may be too late to avoid permanent damage. Control your temper and jealousy before they control you.

(6) Learn to say and mean the words, “I’m Sorry”

In this regard, there are two types: (1) Those that say, “I’m sorry” continually, but hardly ever mean it. (2) Those that never say, “I’m sorry.” Neither of these are capable of removing stress in a marriage. However, stress is removed when the words are spoken and then followed up by actions. These magic words take on a powerful meaning when they are followed by a “hug and kiss” or by a “let me hold you a minute,” or by a gift or beautiful flowers. Never forget that sincerity (accompanied by love) is the key to give the words, “I’m sorry” meaning.

(7) Become convicted on 1 Corinthians 7:3-5

Thousands of married couples (especially Christians) have studied Paul’s advice to husbands and wives in (1 Corinthians 7:3-5), but have never believed it to the point of conviction. Read his words carefully: “The husband should fulfill his marital duty to his wife, and likewise the wife to her husband. The wife’s body does not belong to her alone but also to her husband. In the same way, the husband’s body does not belong to him alone but also to his wife. Do not deprive each other except by mutual consent and for a time, so that you may devote yourselves to prayer. Then come together again so that Satan will not tempt you because of your lack of self-control.”

Isn’t it amazing that multitudes of people have emphasized the importance of the command not to commit adultery, and to be faithful to one’s mate (Matthew 5:32; 19:9), but disobey (1 Corinthians 7:3-5) without having a conscience pang? However, both of these scriptures are important and should be obeyed. Did you know that the command not to commit adultery is often broken because 1 Corinthians 7:3-5 is disobeyed? In fact, Paul commanded the husband and wife not to deprive each other to avoid fornication!

When a husband or wife is deprived sexually, they become weighted down with stress. They are forced (if faithful) to live with a natural desire which cannot be fulfilled. It becomes the natural thing to feel (when deprived) that they are being deprived because they are not loved. As time goes on and stress grows, there may be a feeling that their masculinity or femininity has not measured up to par. However, when

this relationship is right, many of the stresses of life are removed, and the majority of temptations to seek another are less.

The principles in this chapter on how to avoid stress in marriage, represent God's way from the beginning of creation, and will help us solve our many problems of stress in marriage if only followed.

IV.

STRESS AND ECONOMY

In every age, individuals as well as families have been forced to deal with the economy of their day. In some cases it may have been no more than hoping for a good hunt, or being able to get a good trade for their furs and crops, but the pressures of stress from such have always been present. It seems that the possibility for stress with the economy becomes multiplied with marriage and family. The earning of wages, and providing for the needs of a family can be rewarding things, or when things go wrong, such can add heavy stress. When a list of causes for divorce are published, usually money (too much or too little) is listed near the top. With this thought in mind, let us first consider some problems with economy that can produce stress.

THE STORMS

(1) More spending than income

It is often so difficult to bring money in, but so easy for it to go out! Millions of couples have experienced this problem. Before marriage they are advised, "don't live above your means," but this advice is often laid aside without thought until troubles arise. The problem becomes even greater when there are inflated prices on most of the things they buy. In so many cases, the salaries do not stay up with the inflated prices of the things to be purchased, and this sets the stage for more spending than income.

Heavy stress comes between a husband and wife when each one blames the other, but it may or may not be the fault of either. Emergencies may have arisen such as large doctor and/or hospital bills. The place of employment may have cut back on hours or even laid off completely for several weeks. However, it is often true that a shortage appears because of unnecessary spending. Even if one or both are guilty, the stress is just as real and very damaging. With the constant arguments between a couple, plus the pressures from rude creditors, stresses will reach a high peak and can even destroy a relationship.

(2) Hard credit

We are bombarded daily with the concept of easy credit. In fact, with a small piece of plastic, one can spend far more in a day than he can pay back in months. Thus, millions have learned the lesson that "easy credit" is really "hard credit." This is not to say that credit and credit cards are evil in and of themselves, but it is to say that the abuse of these bring stress.

Honesty is a principle of the New Testament. Paul calls upon Christians to: "Provide things honest in the sight of all men" (Romans 12:17), but this feeling of honesty is lost when one abuses credit to the point that it is impossible to pay. This in turn can make one feel cheap, and the result is low esteem and a burden of stress.

(3) Failure to budget money

There are millions of other couples that make enough income to live comfortably and free of heavy stress, but they are constantly having problems. Why? Because they do not live by a budget. On payday, (for a day or so) they live it up without a care, but later on, the laughter turns to tears because they are unable to pay their regular bills. Stress really bears down when a semi-annual or annual large bill arrives with nothing left to pay. This kind of stress destroys happiness, peace of mind, and can promote fighting and depression on the part of both husband and wife. Even the children will be affected by the stresses of their parents. This is a problem that needs to be avoided.

(4) Wasteful and slothful

Stresses are often brought to bear on a couple because they are wasteful and slothful. There can be waste in buying, overcooking, and in poor management of the household. Purchases are often made that

are not absolutely necessary, and will eventually be stored away, given away, or sold for a fraction of the price in a garage sale. The total for such waste in a year may become astronomical!

Waste may also come from the kitchen. It has been said that some wives throw more out the back door with a tablespoon than a husband can throw in the front with a scoop shovel. Even though this is an exaggeration, it points up a way that stress is produced by waste, and husbands, wives, and children can all be guilty.

Slothfulness and laziness can certainly bring about stressful situations in life. There are those that do not work because they **HAVE NO JOB**, but there are others that do not work because they **DON'T WANT A JOB!** The latter of these, purposefully bring stress, because they keep the family in financial trouble at all times.

When a man refuses to be a breadwinner because of laziness, his wife and family will lose respect for him, and this in turn will promote other stressful situations.

(5) Selfishness

It would be hard to fully discuss all the stress that comes from economy without mentioning selfishness. When a couple begins their lives together as husband and wife, they must lay aside all selfishness if they are to find happiness. If either the husband or wife insists on using the income for his/her own selfish desires, the essentials to operate their household will be crippled, and consequently, there will be failure and stress.

It takes teamwork to keep the economy of a home going, and selfishness certainly destroys this. The wife may insist on spending a sizeable amount on her hobby, clothes beyond necessity, and other things for self that are not necessary. The husband may insist on spending much of their income on sports, hobbies, and things that appeal only to himself. When there is selfishness on either side (or both), you can count on destructive stress appearing.

THE CALM

There is no way to give a couple guarantees against problems and stress from economy. However, there are some situations that will help lessen the stresses and make it possible to cope. Please observe closely some of these:

(1) Talk often about finances

Many couples fall into the trap of spending more than their income because they don't communicate. They have the mistaken idea that if we leave it alone, all will "come out in the wash!" It comes out alright, but not so clean. At least once each month, take a look together at what is happening. It is not uncommon to hear a husband or wife say, "I never have anything to do with paying the bills, that is his/her job." A wife may say to a counselor, "if I'd only known we were getting in trouble, I could have helped. I wouldn't have bought certain things if I had known what was going on." The husband may respond, "I didn't want to burden her with the finances, so I have carried the load alone."

It is easier to cope with some monthly stress than to have a full load that has gotten out of control. The Bible teaches that we are to communicate our problems to each other, and not ignore them. It teaches that even if one is making an offering to God and remembers that a brother has something against him, he is to leave his gift, be reconciled, and then offer his gift (Matthew 5:23,24). When the proper communication is ignored in the home, pressures will grow until irreparable stress will appear.

(2) Use credit wisely

Never forget that credit and credit cards can be either your friends or your enemies depending on how they are used. Before making major credit purchases, sit down and count the cost. Can you really afford it? Is the purchase absolutely necessary for your welfare and happiness? Be advised also, that the small purchases may be even more destructive to your budget. When both the husband and wife make many small purchases, the monthly balance that you owe may quickly get out of hand. This is where the old adage, "Watch the pennies and the dollars will take care of themselves" suggests wisdom.

If you decide to use credit cards, discuss the amount that each of you can spend weekly and still be able to meet the monthly payment. Never forget that credit abused is one of the fastest ways to create stress in your marriage and family.

(3) Plan a budget

It is believed that a large percentage of harmful stress could be avoided if a couple would take the time to plan a family budget. Some run from this idea because they think of a budget as something com-

plicated. Before you turn the idea off, please consider how a budget can be made, and how such can help avoid stress. When making a budget, the following steps are necessary:

A. Make a list of monthly bills. This will vary with each couple. Please note an example which you can adapt to your situation.

REGULAR ACCOUNT

1. Church contribution	\$216.67 mo.	\$ 50.00 wk.
2. House note	\$600.00 mo.	\$138.47 wk.
3. Car notes	\$400.00 mo.	\$ 92.30 wk.
4. Hospitalization	\$180.00 mo.	\$ 41.54 wk.
5. Utilities Estimate	\$180.00 mo.	\$ 41.54 wk.
6. Insurance	\$ 65.74 mo.	\$ 15.17 wk.
7. Credit card payment	\$ 73.60 mo.	\$ 16.98 wk.

Weekly total — \$396.00

B. Obtain a large check book and divide it into two sections. Label the first section: "REGULAR ACCOUNT" and the second "CATCH-ALL." (These two will be under one account at the bank). This regular account will pay bills that are pre-determined—already committed such as the list above.

C. Set your budget up on a SIX MONTHS basis. Take each item and determine how much money will be required each week to pay it. Based on the above figures, \$396.00 should be considered already spent each week, and unavailable for anything else.

D. The second section should be labeled, "CATCH-ALL." Suppose your salary is \$550.00 per week. The "catch-all" should receive weekly \$29.00 to be used for drugs, doctors, and all the other unexpected things that come.

E. Each week \$425.00 of the \$550.00 should be deposited and posted in the REGULAR (\$396.00) and "CATCH-ALL" (\$29.00) accounts. This will leave you \$125.00 cash for groceries, eating out, etc.

F. You should NEVER write a check out of the section, "REGULAR," except for the 7 items listed. Therefore, when these items come due, you will always have the money to pay them without any stress.

G. The only danger with the "CATCH-ALL" section is not to write checks above its total. Once it is exhausted and your cash spent, consider yourself broke until the next payday even though your account

shows a large balance in the "REGULAR" section.

If both husband and wife will follow this budget, financial stress which comes from not being able to pay bills will be removed.

(4) Be serious about earning a living

When a couple is joined together in marriage, they promise to carry out their God given responsibility, and included in this promise is providing for each other's needs. The husband is to provide for the physical things to sustain the family. Laziness on the part of either husband or wife will bring failure and stress. Solomon wrote: "How long will you slumber, O sluggard? When will you rise from your sleep? A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep—so shall your poverty come on you like a robber, and your need like an armed man" (Proverbs 6:9-11). In the New Testament Paul wrote: "If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat" (2 Thessalonians 3:10). Perhaps his strongest words against those that are too lazy to provide is found in these words: "But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever" (1 Timothy 5:8). It is wondered how many families have suffered, and how many homes have been broken because of laziness and failure to provide.

(5) Put others first

Be assured that selfishness has no place in a marriage and home, if economical stresses are to be avoided. This is not to say that each must become a robot just working and never enjoying personal things in life. However, it is to say that one can put his family first and still find fulfillment in life. The selfish person that spends all on himself, without concern of others, may find a temporary satisfaction from such, but it will not last. Sooner or later the stresses from selfishness will destroy all happiness. The husband and father that can lie down at night feeling that he has provided for the ones he loves, ususally will have no problem sleeping, and the same thing is true with the faithful wife and mother!

Therefore, it can be said that finances can bring either a blessing or stress, happiness or burdens, depending on whether or not you make money your master or your servant. These suggestions, if conscientiously followed, will help remove stress in your life. Just keep your finances under control, and you will be better able to keep stress under control!

V.

STRESS WITH CHILDREN

Children are among our most precious jewels of the earth. This is no doubt because they represent a part of God's divine plan for the happiness of a home. What a thrill for a couple to look anxiously through the hospital nursery window at their newborn son or daughter, and to know that this little bundle of life is a part of themselves. In a matter of days, this little one will be brought home and things will never be the same. Be assured that this new life can bring great happiness, but also there may be heavy stresses added to the home. However, those that learn to deal with the difficulties will find joys beyond their fondest dreams. Thus, when a couple holds their newborn infant in their arms, they hold either potential happiness or distress. Consider some of the stresses that can be brought by children in a home.

THE STORMS

As a couple awaits the arrival of their newborn baby, they should recognize that this little one will bring many changes in their lives. Being aware of this before it happens can guard a couple against additional stress. Some have made the mistake of believing that since childbirth and child-rearing are natural, that things will have a way of working out. In many cases, adjustments can be made without serious damage, but in too many other instances, problems arise. Children may not themselves break up a marriage, but it is possible that their arrival may activate other difficulties which will have devastating results. Therefore, become aware of some of the changes that will take place, as well as the problems, and be prepared to handle them. What are some of the problems that can bring harmful stress?

(1) Can drive a wedge between husband and wife

Before the first baby comes, the husband is number one in the life of his wife, but after the baby comes, this is usually not the case. "A helpless infant" describes a new baby, and the faithful mother will do everything she can to meet its needs. Since she can do only so much with her time and energy, the husband must take second place. If proper conditioning and understanding have not been previously established, this may upset his world and add stress. When he raises his objections, she will naturally defend herself, and you have the ingredients for heated arguments. He may accuse her of not loving him, and she may accuse him of not loving their baby. Without the proper understanding on the part of both, this can break their relationship apart.

At the same time, the baby is requiring attention even during the wee hours of the night, and the husband (with the wrong attitude) may feel that this is the job of the wife. If she insists that he take his turn, the loss of sleep on the part of both may make them irritable, and unhappiness will appear. Each may be impatient with the other, and this will become a stressful situation.

Add to all of this the fact that the couple is now confined to home, and you can understand why children can drive a wedge between a husband and wife. Before baby came they went out for entertainment, bowling, golfing, and restaurants, but not any more. Since they are living on a limited income, still paying the medical bill for baby, and unable to pay a babysitter, they just sit at home. This can also bring stress.

The real stress load arrives when all of these other stresses affects their sexual relationship. In many cases the man desires his wife sexually to release some of the many pressures of life, but she may feel just the opposite. Her attitude may be, "with all these pressures, arguments, and fatigue, who wants to think about sex?" By this time, the wedge of division between them has brought about distress.

(2) Association with other children

Once the years have passed, and baby grows into an active little girl or boy, there are other stresses that occur. There may be much time spent playing with the neighborhood children, and this can be very stressful as they argue over toys, and in some cases will have fights. This kind of situation becomes even more stressful when such brings a conflict with other parents. Because each parent feels that their son or daughter is innocent, things can really get out of hand.

Also, parents are often concerned about their children being in the

wrong company even at preschool age, and this becomes a stressful problem when their children come in using bad words or repeating things that go against Christian principles.

(3) School problems

When the neighborhood stresses mount up, a parent may say, "I'll be glad when they go to school," but this may or may not help. For you see, there are many problems that arise with our children at school. It may be in the form of improper conduct, low grades, not getting along with other students, or in some cases being rejected by others, but in all instances, stress is generated.

There are times when children resent a particular teacher and both parents are made to feel that their child is being mistreated. This brings stressful trips to the school to talk to the teacher and/or the principal. One may go away from such meetings feeling that nothing positive has been accomplished, and this increases burdens.

(4) Dating problems

Yes, sooner than you think, the time comes when your child is attracted to the opposite sex and wishes to date. This can truly overload any home with stress. The stress may come because you feel that your child is too young, and they don't agree. In some cases you may learn that they are seeing someone behind your back, or it may be that you have to make an appointment to use your own phone.

Once they are old enough, unfortunately, the stresses have just begun. They may choose one to date that you feel is the wrong type, with a reputation for having low morals, and no religious background. Next comes the battle of WHEN to come in from a date. Any time you set as parents will probably be far too early. After all, no one else is made to come in at this early hour. Oh, how the stress builds when the time set arrives, and they are ten or fifteen minutes late. Even though they have a perfect reason, each minute over is very stressful.

Conflicts also arise when children want to go places that are forbidden, and to do things that you feel are wrong. This brings conflict, and in some cases makes you wonder if you are too strict. Since the majority of their classmates go to these places without any problems, your child may try to make you feel guilty for refusing, and that you are an 'old fogy'!

As they begin going steady, and becoming more serious about the one they are dating, parents may fear premarital sexual relations and pregnancy. Even though you have taught them to the best of your abil-

ity, and lived the Christian life before them, you know the power of temptation at this age and this brings stress.

(5) Problems with marriage

While dealing with all the stressful situations of bringing up your child, you may say, "If I can only get them to the age of getting married, things will be fine," but this is not always true. Be assured that our children can bring stress even in regard to marriage. It may be that they wish to marry too young before finishing their education, or have fallen for a non-Christian, or have not the proper financial support for marriage, but be assured that any or all of these add stress.

Perhaps the majority of married couples will have their first baby before they have time to properly adjust, and in some cases, the second is born too soon. This can bring heavy heartache to parents. The problems may be compounded when the newly married couple must move far away from you.

The heaviest stress comes to Christian parents when their children marry and later stop attending worship. They may even cut themselves off from home with only an occasional letter.

Therefore, you can see that in the midst of joy, children can bring stress if things don't go the way they should. Remember, God intended that children bring joy and such will be the case when His guidelines are followed. What are some of the solutions to the problems discussed?

THE CALM

(1) Be prepared for children

It is true that bringing children into the world and rearing them is a natural thing, but it still must NOT be done in a half-hearted way. God's law for all His creation is preparation. Even the smaller creatures of His creation make preparation for their food, and the arrival of their offspring. Solomon wrote: "The ants are a people not strong, yet they prepare their food in the summer" (Proverbs 30:25). The Bible calls upon all the human race to prepare to meet God in judgment, and Jesus taught the awful outcome of those that will not prepare in the parable of the virgins. The five wise virgins that prepared were received, but the five foolish ones which did not prepare were shut out (Matthew 25:1-12).

There are those today that attempt the important task of rearing children without any preparation. A couple should spend much time together before the new arrival studying books that will help them count

the cost as to time, money, and sacrifice required on the part of both husband and wife. They should make special plans to share the responsibilities so that the new father can carry on his job of breadwinning while helping to lighten the load of the new mother. Having the right attitude and planning together will avoid many unnecessary stresses.

(2) Rear them by the Book

You can go to the library and find many helpful books on child rearing, but there is one book that supercedes all—THE BIBLE! Here you will find all the principles needed to mold your precious one into the image of the Creator. When God gave Israel the Ten Commandments, He knew the importance of parents, and their responsibility toward their children. Thus, the commandment was given to children: "Honor your father and your mother, that your days be long upon the land which the Lord your God is giving you" (Exodus 20:12). Even though his command was directed toward children, it implied that the parents must be worthy of honor. In fact, in the New Testament, immediately after Paul quoted this command to children, he wrote: "And you fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord" (Ephesians 6:4). Just think of the stresses that could be avoided if all parents would bring up their children in the, "training and admonition of the Lord." This is what is meant by rearing children by the book.

The parents of the Israelites were commanded to rear their children by the commandments of God: "You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates" (Deuteronomy 6:7-9). What about today, do we rear our children by the Book?

(3) See that they receive special training

Many parents of this generation have believed that they can simply turn their children loose on the streets and let them rear themselves. This is one of the fastest ways to create stress in the home caused by children. Parents have a responsibility to show personal interest, and to train them, or else suffer the consequences. Solomon wrote: "The rod and reproof give wisdom, but a child left to himself brings shame to his mother" (Proverbs 29:15). Again "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it" (Proverbs 22:6).

It is true that we are living in a busy world, and great demands are made upon parents just to keep things going financially. However, all the justifying of our actions which keep us from training our children, will not change the fact that they **MUST** have our personal training. When parents spend all their time making a living and neglect the training and making of a life for their children, great burdens of stress will come.

Jesus gave the true formula for a well-balanced life when he said: "But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you" (Matthew 6:33). Try to imagine how much stress (that comes to parents) could be avoided by keeping their priorities straight!

(4) Keep the flame of love burning

God never intended that the coming of children to a couple should destroy their relationship. In fact, He rather desires that it becomes richer and fuller. For this to happen, each couple must work to keep the flame of love burning between them. To avoid the "all work and no play" syndrome which can develop from being confined to home, a couple should plan a night out together. This gives them some time together to talk and will help keep their feelings of romance alive. Special occasions such as birthdays, anniversary, mother's day, and father's day should be remembered. All of this will help the addition of children to bring joy to a marriage rather than stress.

Remember too, that the strength of any marriage is based on the "oneness" God originally intended (Genesis 2:24). It is so important that a couple consider faithfully each other's sexual needs. This is God's way of keeping a couple one with each other, as well as being faithful. At this point, the husband should not make excessive demands on the wife, and she should not starve him for her attention. When the wife makes time for him, she should never make him feel that this is only for his benefit, and since the baby has come, she doesn't really have time for him. This destroys any relationship, and will develop stresses that may reach the state of no return.

The key to dealing with your mate and children to avoid stress is **LOVE**. In 1 Corinthians 13, Paul analyzes all the beautiful, unselfish things that love will do, and be assured, this will help a couple find the right way. When a husband loves his wife as Christ loved the church and died for it (Ephesians 5:25), and when a wife submits herself to her husband as to the Lord (Ephesians 5:22), the burdens of stress will be reduced, and both parents and children will find happiness in this life and forever.

VI.

STRESS AND IN-LAWS

In the beginning when God made man and woman and brought them together in oneness, He called upon all future generations to: "Leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife" (Genesis 2:24). This set the stage for all future in-laws. Unfortunately, it has come to the point in the thinking of millions, that in-laws are bad or a necessary evil, but this may or may not be true. It is a fact that in-laws can be among our richest blessings or a thorn in our flesh, and most of the time a married couple can control the situation. Like all other facets of life, there are guidelines that must be followed for a peaceful relationship with in-laws, or else there will be much unhappiness. Only God in heaven knows how many couples have been burdened down with stress because they were unable to get along with their in-laws. Before we can seek the proper solutions in this relationship, we need to be acquainted with the problems. Consider carefully some of the problems that promote stress from in-laws.

THE STORMS

(1) Failure to leave father and mother

When God brought the first man and woman together, He called upon them to: "Leave father and mother" (Genesis 2:24). When this command is disobeyed, the first step has been taken toward a stressful relationship with in-laws. At first thought you might say, "we left and bought our own house or rented our own apartment." This is great because living under the same roof of his/her parents is almost instant

trouble, and even when serious troubles can be avoided, there are still stressful situations. However, don't forget that a couple can move to another address and still not leave father and mother. In far too many cases, in-law stresses are no further away than the nearest phone, and his or her life may be ruled even by long distance. It may even reach the point where every decision must be approved by one or more in-law or else later face the firing squad of subtle ridicule. Be assured, this kind of stress can destroy a marriage.

(2) Failure to cleave to each other

The same passage (Genesis 2:24) that calls upon a couple to leave, also commands them to "be joined" or to "cleave" to each other. So many in-law problems arise because a couple fails to stick together. This is not to suggest that one should compromise truth for the sake of standing together, but so often with in-law conflicts, it is just a matter of opinion, and what they wish is based on the fact that since we are older and wiser, you should listen! Certainly it makes good sense to listen to their suggestions, and to weigh them carefully since they are older and often wiser. However, once you have done this and both still feel that you are right, thank them for their advice and then stand together. A house divided against itself will not stand, and this principle applies also to marriage. Don't bring harmful stress to your marriage by refusing to be joined together with your mate.

(3) By promoting jealousy

It is wondered how many husbands have been burdened down with jealousy because his wife constantly reminded him that her dad can do things better. Or, how many wives have been driven to jealousy by a husband that continually compares her to his mother. In both cases, a burden of stress appears because normally, there is no way to measure up to these standards.

It may be that the in-laws are innocent, but far too often they promote it. There is nothing wrong in a mother bringing over some of her best cooking, but trouble arises when she lets her daughter-in-law know (in no uncertain terms) that she's worried about her son's nutrition and health. Or, what about the dad that comes to his daughter's house and begins work as though the son-in-law is helpless? Remember, there are so many areas where in-laws can create jealousy, and such should be avoided because it always burdens a couple down with stress.

(4) Heated arguments

All the problems mentioned so far between in-laws can break out in heated arguments, and when this happens, stress is no longer ADDED, but MULTIPLIED. In a matter of moments, harsh and cutting words can be said that will last a lifetime, and in some cases make wounds that will never heal.

One of the places where arguments often arise with in-laws is over the grandchildren. Be assured, this is a touchy subject on both sides. Only one spanking by either father or mother may set off an atomic explosion with the grandparents. The couple may be accused of child abuse, not loving their children, and even being cruel. Things really get heated when the grandparents hug the spanked child and assure it that mother or dad is being mean. Such episodes usually end with the grandparents leaving abruptly while promising never to return. There is not a marriage on earth that needs this kind of stress!

THE CALM

Even though there are many stresses caused by in-laws, this does not have to be the case. When a couple abides by God's rules, the chances are great that their relatives will respect them. At first there may be some friction, but eventually each will accept the other, and will have a deeper appreciation. Therefore, study some principles that will help.

(1) Marriage is God's idea

The idea of leaving father and mother for marriage is God's idea and should be entered into with the thought that we have God's blessings. You must each still love your parents and respect them, but you have the responsibility of leaving their home to begin your own. Remember, they had to do this to build their home, and you must do the same. Don't ever make your mate feel you are just living with him or her away from home, but rather you now have your OWN home.

There will be many problems arise in your marriage, but don't ever threaten to run back home. Should you seek advice from your parents, you must still solve your own problems. Once you recognize that you are carrying out God's purpose for you, you will strive harder to build your own home and this will lighten the stresses. Should your parents try to interfere, remind them that you are seeking to carry out God's plan in your marriage.

(2) Become united in marriage

Many stresses can be avoided from in-laws when a couple unites themselves together in purpose. At first, it may be true that your mother can cook better than your wife, or your daddy is a better “fix it” man, but don’t do or say anything that will make the other feel unimportant. Remember, your mother was once an inexperienced bride and needed a chance to improve. Love will make her cooking important even though it has not reached perfection. When each bears with the other’s weakness, and lets the parents know that all is well, harmful jealousy is stopped before it begins.

Why does jealousy bring stress to a marriage? Solomon answers: “Set me as a seal upon your heart, as a seal upon your arm; for love is as strong as death, jealousy as cruel as the grave; its flames are flames of fire, a most vehement flame” (Song of Solomon 8:6). Therefore, what could bring more stress than jealousy?

(3) Avoid arguments with in-laws

One of the reasons why it is difficult to avoid arguments is because they slip up on us and are well underway before we realize it. Sit down with your mate and discuss how arguments can be avoided with your loved ones. Since personalities are different, you will need to talk about each individual case. If there have been arguments in the past, analyze what happened, and how to avoid such in the future.

If the problem is over discipling the children, then resolve not to punish the children before their grandparents. Agree to always take your children to another room for discipline. If they still object, refuse to argue the case, but simply inform them that we love our children and God has given us the responsibility to discipline and train them. Should they insist on an argument, in a kind way let them know that the matter is settled.

Also, avoid being angry when you take a child to another room for discipline. Do not allow the child that is punished to run to a grandparent for sympathy. After discipline, require them to stay in their room for 10 minutes. This will allow time for all to cool off after the incident. Never lose sight that God authorizes proper punishment for children: “He who spares his rod hates his son, but he who loves him disciplines him properly” (Proverbs 13:24). Again: “Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it” (Proverbs 22:6).

(4) Consider in-laws a blessing

Part of getting along with one's in-laws is having the proper attitude. If you feel that they are to be your enemy, and that you shouldn't get along, chances are that you won't! However, if you train yourself to think properly, they can become to you a blessing.

In most cases, your mate's family is dear to him/her, and if you fail to get along with them, it will affect your marriage. One may develop the right attitude by remembering that your mother-in-law and father-in-law gave you the one you love. They gave him/her life, and were responsible for their rearing. Be thankful to them, and this will make a world of difference.

Never forget that thousands of husbands and wives come to love and appreciate the parents of their mates almost as much as their own parents. One of the most beautiful stories of the Old Testament is found in the book of Ruth. Ruth loved her mother-in-law, Naomi, to the point of forsaking her old way of life to be with her. "Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God" (Ruth 1:16). Such a beautiful relationship doesn't usually just happen, but comes by a dedicated effort on the part of both parties. Remember, when you have love for your mate, and love for his/her family, you have one of the greatest blessings of life.

VII.

STRESS AT WORK

Since we spend 40 or more hours at work each week, it should not be surprising to learn that much stress originates on the job. The economy and American lifestyle that we have today, demand a large amount of money to survive, and this creates a stressful environment. Let us look at some of the problems that often arise.

THE STORMS

(1) Employer/employee relationship

Stress problems are present whether one is an employer or employee. In the case of the employer, it is necessary to show a profit to meet the demands of overhead and profit. Therefore, he must find a market for his product, keep the employees earning their pay, and try to out-smart the competitors. The stresses from all of this can be very heavy, and this may cause the employees to feel more burdens.

The employees also have their problems, because some bosses have a way of making life miserable for those under their control. They may assume that all employees are out to beat the company out of a full day's work. Even though this is not true, there are usually two or three "dead-beats" that cause all honest employees to suffer and stresses are added to their lives.

(2) Unhappy with job

It may be that some employees are working at jobs they hate, and should they consider changing jobs, it would require a cut in pay, and their living is geared to a point that this would be a disaster. Therefore,

they continue to work in an unhappy situation which also increases stress.

(3) Stresses from home

In the case of some women, stresses at work are heavier because of the many burdens at home. They could perhaps deal with the at-work-stresses, but when home problems are added, the load is too great to bear. The husband may also find himself burdened with problems at home that affect his work. When stresses at both places are added together, it can become a distressful situation for all involved.

(4) Ignoring stress

What is the solution? Some might say, there are no solutions to this problem. Work is a necessary evil and we must keep going until something "bends or breaks." Be assured that if excessive stress is ignored long enough, something will break! Our bodies and/or minds will respond in a negative way with such things as heart attacks, hypertension, changes in personality and/or disposition, and perhaps a nervous breakdown.

It is true that all stress cannot be removed, but it is believed that one can learn to lighten it to the point of toleration, and learn to cope. Therefore, please study closely the following helps:

THE CALM

(1) Become aware that you are under excessive stress

How can we seek a solution for something that we don't recognize? To analyze your stresses, consider some key words associated with stress in your life. Do you have too much STRAIN, PRESSURES, and URGENCY? Some stress is helpful, but are you being pushed almost to the breaking point? Certainly, in everyone's life, special days will come when our stress gage climbs to the RED DANGER zone, but usually on an occasional basis we can handle this. However, when these special stressful days become a way of life, damaging consequences are ahead.

We are told that alcoholics cannot receive help until they recognize that they are alcoholics. The same is true with the problem of stress, one

cannot receive help until such is recognized as being a problem. Millions will not recognize that they have a problem with stress until they suffer a heart attack, stroke, or some other difficulty.

(2) Consider the cost to solve the problem

Jesus taught that it is important to count the cost before going ahead so that success can be obtained: "For which of you, intending to build a tower, does not sit down first and count the cost, whether he has enough to finish it—lest, after he has laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all who see it begin to mock him, saying, 'This man began to build and was not able to finish' " (Luke 14:28-30). When counting the cost, be honest, because solving stress problems demands a high price, but pays great dividends. Remember too, that self-discipline and sacrifice are required. It may mean receiving less money, and even saying, "no" to friends that add to your stress, but look to the rewards that will be yours by giving up excessive stress. When counting the cost, remember that the price becomes higher if you wait until something breaks. In this case, "an ounce of prevention is worth more than a pound of cure."

(3) Choose a plan of action

It is at this point that many fail. They talk about the problem of too much stress, and even admit that they are in danger of great danger, but they never take steps to improve. Others wish to do something, but don't know what to do. Whatever is keeping you from taking action, it needs to be removed. Each person must choose those things that specifically meets his or her needs, but for now, let us consider some general principles that will help if sincerely followed:

(a) Don't bring home work problems

This is easier said than done, but it is worth consideration. There may be rare occasions when such cannot be avoided, but it must never become one's routine of life. After 8 to 10 hours at work, the mind needs rest. In addition to bringing home extra work, some leave the work and bring home the worry, and both of these can cause harmful stress. When the mind is allowed to refresh itself at night, it will be more prepared to deal with the difficulties of the day.

"The night shall be filled with music
And the cares that infest the day

Shall fold their tents like the Arabs,
And silently steal away”

(Longfellow)

One should plan (as much as possible) to confine work to the days, so that the nights can furnish a time for relaxation. If one believes this to be important, he/she will work hard to accomplish it, and the majority will be successful.

(b) Train yourself to take life step-by-step

Have you ever been guilty of viewing life's troubles as one huge mass that will be thrown at you all at once? If so, did you overlook the fact that we are usually given time along with problems? “Most of you have seen an hourglass which slowly sifts fine sand from one glass bowl to another. The tube between the two bowls is so thin that only one grain of sand can pass at a time. So with our lives. Regardless of how many problems arise, time will still come to us one moment at a time” (Gilkey) After you have done your best today, let tomorrow stand on its own. Too much worry and stress today can destroy all of your tomorrows. “Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble” (Matthew 6:34).

Napoleon said: “When I want to consider a particular problem, I open a certain drawer. When I have settled the matter in my mind, I close that drawer and open another. When I desire to sleep, I close all the draws.” Those that are burdened down with stress usually try to open all the drawers at once and then are unable to sleep because they failed. Our biggest problems in life can be solved when we take them one step at a time. “One can walk over the highest mountain—one step at a time.”

(c) Allow God to help

Those that choose Christianity as their way of life have the most powerful help ever available to the human race. All throughout the Bible, God has offered His power to His people, and encouraged them through His word to call upon Him. The apostle Peter wrote: “Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time, casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you” (1 Peter 5:6,7). In the words of Paul: “be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let

your requests be made known to God" (Philippians 4:6).

Why is David pictured in the Old Testament as such a powerful man? Was it because he possessed strength from himself? No, it was because he continually trusted in the power of God to make him strong. Whether he was slaying a bear to protect the sheep, slaying a giant with a sling and stones, or sending forth his army as the king of Israel, God represented his source of strength. Thus, in spite of his own weakness, he was declared to be "a man after God's own heart" (Acts 13:22). The majority of the psalms written by David reflect that he allowed God to help. Only God knows how many stresses were transferred from David to God in his psalms and prayers! It is so important that we learn to do the same in our lives today.

C (d) Seek outlets other than work

There are so many choices in life which (if not abused) can also help us avoid stress. One may choose a hobby, fishing, golf, tennis, bowling, or one of the many other sports. However, there is a danger of getting so involved in these outlets that they can add even more stress. Therefore, if you win or lose, don't let it upset you. The fruit of your effort is to get your mind off of work and to have a good time. Likewise, there is a danger of choosing an outlet that works you too hard. If your hobby or sport has been over-demanding to the point that you are not rested to go back to the job, you have increased your problem with stress. Also be sure to choose an outlet that is not similar to the work you do because this would not provide enough change to relieve the stress.

(e) Seek spiritual activities

The most important outlet anyone can choose is getting involved in spiritual activities. You may choose working with young people, talking to someone about Christ, teaching Bible classes, visiting the sick, or many other good works. These kinds of activities can help relieve stress in two ways. First of all, it is usually different from the type of work you do all week, and a change is helpful. Secondly, it brings inner peace to be able to give of yourself. Also, on the job one is seeking material gain—money, but in spiritual work one is seeking only the spiritual good of others.

When one is involved in soul saving, he/she can know that they are showing wisdom in their lives. "The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life, and he who wins souls is wise" (Proverbs 11:30). This kind of wisdom can satisfy a longing deep within our hearts to serve our Creator, and

many physical stresses are removed.

When you learn to deal with stress at work, three great things happen: (1) You will become a better employer or employee. There is no way we can be at our best when our minds are loaded (near breaking point) with stress. However, once we learn how to cope, all of our time and energy can be devoted to the job. (2) We will be happier in life. Remember, stresses at work will not confine themselves to work, but will be felt in all areas of our lives, and this in turn will bring unhappiness. Keep in mind that when all is in control, happiness will have a better chance to surface in our lives. (3) We will have better health and lessen the odds of a serious illness, or a premature death.

Therefore, won't you agree that learning to cope with stress at work is worth the effort?

VIII.

STRESS AND THE CHURCH

The greatest institution in the world is the church or kingdom that you find recorded in the word of God. It is great because Jesus promised and built it. To His disciples He promised: "and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 16:18). In Acts 2, we find that this church came into existence after Jesus had purchased it with His blood (Acts 20:28). Its importance is further shown when Christ allowed His church to be His spiritual body with Himself the head (Ephesians 1:21,22; 5:23).

God considered the church or kingdom so important that He guided His prophets to speak of its coming as well as its eternal nature. Daniel wrote: "And in the days of these kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed" (Daniel 2:44). It is obvious to see that this great church is eternal and very spiritual.

The question might be raised, "since the church is so great and spiritual, how could there ever be stress in it?" Stress is caused by the human element! With God's part of the church, there is perfection, but from the human side there can be weaknesses. This great church is made up of those that have come to Christ in obedience to the Gospel where forgiveness is found through Jesus Christ (Romans 1:16; 6:17). Just as there is continual forgiveness through Jesus' blood (1 John 1:7), there is also continual sinning, and this can bring heavy stress.

Therefore, let us look at some of the problems with the human side of the church that is capable of bringing heavy stress.

THE STORMS

⊆ (1) Improper leadership

The Bible plainly tells the kind of leaders that the Lord wants in His church even to the point of giving detailed qualifications (1 Timothy 3:1-13; Titus 1:5-9). When these are followed with the proper love for Christ and His church, all things go well, but when they are neglected, the church will be burdened with destructive stress. When a leader turns to sinful motives, and seeks after pride, haughtiness, material gain, or any other unscriptural motive, there is bound to be problems.

It is wondered how much stress was brought upon the apostle John because of a so-called leader named Diotrephes? John (along with other workers) was turned down by this arrogant man! "I wrote to the church, but Diotrephes, who loves to have the preeminence among them, does not receive us" (3 John 9). John further describes his evil ways: "prating against us with malicious words. And not content with that, he himself does not receive the brethren, and forbids those who wish to, putting them out of the church" (v. 10). Be assured that those that act as this man are leading for the Devil instead of the Lord, and all that are associated with such in the church will feel painful stress.

It is a fact that God had a purpose in providing leadership, and that purpose was to avoid strife, quarrelling, and stress to those that follow. God even built into the leadership certain things to avoid problems. You do not read, for example, where the Lord gave authority over a church to ONE elder, but rather to a plurality of elders. Paul told ALL the Ephesians elders to: "take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood" (Acts 20:28). Leadership in the church is a joint effort of the elders, and when one elder becomes THE ELDER, stress is brought to bear on the church.

(2) Division and strife

Only the Lord in heaven knows how much stress has been caused in the church by division and strife! This has been one of the devil's favorite weapons against the church since its beginning. Division and strife are often present either on a personal basis or with the whole church, but in either case, many hearts will cry.

Very early in the history of the church, the church at Corinth experienced division and strife. Paul knew that they were in trouble when

they divided to the point of saying: "I am of Paul," or "I am of Apollos," or "I am of Cephas," or "I am of Christ" (1 Corinthians 1:12). To avoid this division and strife Paul wrote: "Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment" (1 Corinthians 1:10).

Just think of the churches perhaps in your lifetime which have split, argued, carried grudges, and in a few cases experienced some physical blows. When this happens, the church stops growing, and every family suffers defeat, disappointment, and stress. In the words of Paul: "But if you bite and devour one another, beware lest you be consumed by one another!" (Galatians 5:15). "Religious contention is the devil's harvest" (Fontaine).

C (3) Liberal trends

There are many thoughts and concepts on the word "liberal," but it is used here to refer to those that accept authority in religion other than the Bible. From the beginning of the church, there has been a battle raging between God's Word, and the teachings and commandments of men. Even though the Bible is from God, and cannot be improved upon (2 Timothy 3:16,17), there are still those in the church that wish to substitute their own will. The Bible warns: "Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son" (2 John 9). However, this (along with many other warnings) does not stop the liberal trends. When sincere, Bible-loving Christians see the church gradually drifting away from the Word of God, stress appears.

The stress becomes heavier when fellow Christians ignore the liberal trends. When such is mentioned, they pass it off by saying, "You are imagining things, don't be so narrow, this is the 20th Century, and the Lord won't allow anything to happen to His church."

When one studies the human race and its relationship to God all through the Old and New Testaments, it becomes obvious that liberal trends have been present in all generations. There have always been those that wish to "add to" God's Word, and to "subtract from" its teaching. In all examples, God was displeased, and in the ages of direct miracles, He often physically punished them. Almost every prophet of God in the Bible cried out against liberal trends of their day, and (like today) they were mocked for being out of step with the times!

When one takes his stand for God, and weekly sees the church being infiltrated with a "watered-down-type-of-religion," harmful stress builds almost to the breaking point. That which we love so dearly (the church), can weigh us down with stress.

(4) Personal conflicts

Since the church is made up of many members having different personalities and abilities (Romans 12:4), stress can be caused from a personal standpoint. Such conflicts may come to one or both parents, or to one of the children, but in all cases, the whole family is affected.

Stress can become a heavy load when one person in the church makes you feel unwanted, or when such speaks to you unkind and cutting words. Even though they may not really mean to hurt, and perhaps they are carrying heavy burdens in their lives, but it still hurts. On some occasions, conflicts arise in a Bible class. There may be a disagreement over the meaning of a passage of scripture, or in the way a scripture is applied. It may even reach the point where words are exchanged publicly before the entire class. If this is not corrected, future attendance in that class may bring stress. In larger congregations where there are other classes to choose, one may even become so disturbed that he/she moves to another class. This problem causes a weight of stress that is carried each day of the week. In severe cases, a family will even move their membership to another congregation. These conflicts are very real and not only bring unhealthy stress, but can cause one to grow weak spiritually.

Other conflicts may arise between the children and their teachers. By the time the parents hear the problem from their children secondhand, it is often blown out of proportion! Thus, conflicts arise between parents and teachers. Again, this has a way of affecting each member of the family, and can leave the wrong impressions in the hearts of youth toward the church. Children may even reach the point of not wanting to go to Bible study and worship. Before each service, there may be arguments among family members because of this conflict, and this all adds up to serious problems.

Surely, it becomes easy to see how that problems can arise in the church that bring stress to a family. Therefore, there is a pressing need to seek solutions, and especially before the problems arise. May we now consider some of the guidelines that can help solve these problems and lighten many stressful situations.

THE CALM

(1) Communicate with leaders

Isn't it often true that things get out of hand, and misunderstandings arise because communications break down? This is often true when there is friction between Christians and the elders that are overseeing. How sad it is that so many wait until things are out of hand, and after hours of stress have been carried before going to the leaders to talk. So many times when things are not right with the elders, we may talk to everyone else instead of them! This is not the way to avoid stress, but rather will build from a mole hill to a mountain. Make an appointment with the elders and in a prayerful way, talk it out.

There is a caution that we should be aware of at this point. Never meet with only one elder when there is a problem. Remember, God's wisdom chose a plurality of leaders over each church to shepherd the flock—NOT ONE. If these men are what God wants them to be, they will be just as anxious to help you with your problem as you are to receive help. They have a very serious responsibility given to them by the Holy Spirit through the Word. "Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account" (Hebrews 13:17).

When you talk with the elders, tell them all the facts, because without this they could make wrong decisions. Keep in your mind always that there may be three sides to every problem, your side, the side of your opponent, and the right side, and that your goal is to find the right side. When lies are told, stories slanted, and wrong impressions left, your communication with the leaders will set you up for more stress. Therefore, try with all your power not to give only one side. Truth and honesty will lessen stress.

(2) Hold fast to the Book

Some of the greatest advice that can be given to anyone is to hold fast to the Bible and its teachings. Yes, liberal trends are always around trying to make inroads into our thinking, but the antidote for this is God's Word. Don't allow anyone, regardless of their prestige and influence, to lead you from the Old Paths. When you are called upon to accept something that is questionable, demand a "thus saith the Lord." You might say, "It upsets me to rock the boat." Be assured that you will be even more upset, and more stress will be created if you allow things to go on that you know are NOT approved of God. Luke records: "These

were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so" (Acts 17:11). Paul writes: "Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Timothy 2:15). "The whole hope of human progress is suspended on the ever-growing influence of the Bible" (William H. Seward).

Hold true to this Book, and you will have a deeper respect for self, and when all is said and done, you will avoid stress.

(3) Go the second mile

"Getting along," even with other Christians is not always the easiest thing to do even though they are the best people in the world. Why? Because we are all human beings and sinners that are continually kept saved by the blood of Jesus Christ (1 John 1:7). We may wish to rise to the point that sin is never committed, but this can never be: "If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us" (1 John 1:8,10). Therefore, to avoid many personal conflicts that cause stress, we must apply Christ's teaching and go the extra mile (Matthew 5:38-41). This is not easy, and at the time even seem the wrong thing to do. However, those that choose to return evil for evil, find (if striving to be a Christian) that this is not the way!

Paul also taught the Roman Christians that the best way to deal with an enemy is to return good. "Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, 'Vengeance is Mine, I will repay, says the Lord. Therefore if your enemy hungers, feed him; If he thirsts, give him a drink; For in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head' " (Romans 12:19,20). Dealing with enemies the wrong way has brought far more stress than the right way.

Have you ever hated someone to the point of having stress? "Hating people is like burning down your own home to get rid of a rat" (Fosdick). "When we hate our enemies, we are giving them power over us: power over our sleep, our appetites, our blood pressure, our health, and our happiness. Our hate is not hurting them at all, but our hate is turning our own days and nights into a hellish turmoil" (Dale Carnegie). God's way is always right, therefore, deal with your personal conflicts as a mature Christian. Keep the light of Jesus shining in your life, and even those that appear to be your enemies, may turn out to be among your best friends.

(4) Work and pray for unity

Most of you have attended a football game and observed the teams at work. The eleven men on a team have different positions—one is the quarterback, some block, run, and tackle, but all eleven are working for the same purpose. All wish to get the ball across their goal line to score. As you think of the work of the church, please remember that there are many members with different personalities and abilities, but all should be striving for unity. However, when one or more forgets this goal, there will be problems. Each Christian should feel a personal responsibility to promote unity, and work hard to accomplish it.

As one works for unity, he/she must also pray for it. Jesus recognized the importance of praying for unity, and all of John 17 is His prayer. He had perfect unity with His Father, and desired that all that believed on Him should have the same. Show me a congregation whose members are working and praying for unity, and I'll show you a church that will achieve it. God helps us when we work and pray for the right things.

Is unity worth seeking? Yes, not only to avoid stress, but in all other ways. Jesus taught: "Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation, and every city or house divided against itself will not stand" (Matthew 12:25). Just think of the souls that have been lost over the years because someone failed to work and pray for unity. And, think of the harmful stress that has come to many souls because of division.

The church is the greatest institution in the world, but since it is made up of people that are often weak, we must seek those things in our lives to avoid friction with each other and stress. When this is done, we will not only help the church to be stronger, but we will guard ourselves against stress!

IX.

STRESS FROM ILLNESS

Even though illness comes to us in different degrees, it is a fact that all have experienced it. It may be a headache, virus, flu, surgery, dreaded disease, or a severe cold, but illness is common to all. Why is it that some can deal with illness better than others? Certainly, pain is not enjoyed by any, then what makes the difference? The difference is often in having the right attitude, being able to understand, and looking for the good hidden beneath the bad. It is true that some are able to find blessings from illness, while others allow such to destroy their world.

As we have done in previous chapters, let us look at some of the problems of illness that bring stress, as well as seeking some solutions.

THE STORMS

(1) Living with pain

Pain is something that the human eye cannot see, but who would deny its existence. This has been a big problem in all generations, but we are today blessed with better ways to relieve pain than ever before. However, even in this age of so called "miracle drugs," pain continues to add stress to our lives. We are told that there are those that are never completely relieved of pain, and must use medication daily to survive. In fact, there are many suicides brought about by being unable to cope with pain, and this is stress at its highest peak.

Modern medicine has certainly prolonged the life span, but it has also (in many cases) allowed us to live so long that extra pain becomes our lot. The stresses become even greater when we consider the many terminal illnesses that require extensive therapy, and thus bring added

pain to those that are already ill. Those that are free of pain often fail to understand those that do, and this adds more stress.

When the average person thinks of pain, he may think only of the physical. However, those that suffer mental disorders and diseases, suffer pain that may far excel all other. Those that have suffered from both physical and mental often say that their mental illness is more stressful. Their physical bodies may appear sound, but their minds are in deep stress.

(2) A costly experience

Those that have experienced long illness can also testify that in addition to the stressful pain, there are usually financial burdens. A single illness in the hospital may be totaled into the thousands, and only a few escape without any pay. Those that have no hospitalization insurance may find themselves in debt for the rest of their lives, and this can load one's mind with daily stress. Once the hospitalization insurance has paid its maximum, there are usually scores of bills that continue to come in, and if unable to pay, the unkind statements and letters stating that the person is refusing to pay his bills, can bring added stress.

The problem becomes even greater when one's job does not provide "sick pay," and the salary stops during an illness. This can cause one to lie awake many hours at night worrying, and this kind of stress has touched more families than we can imagine.

Sickness can also add burdens to a marriage, and this is especially so if things were not right before the illness. The husband or wife caring for the other may run out of patience, and the entire family becomes irritable toward each other. When the money runs out, all members of the family will feel the stress.

(3) The weight of depression

Both physical and mental illnesses are capable of bringing heavy depression into our lives, and this can be difficult to bear. Depression is defined as: "Low spirits; gloominess; dejection; sadness; lowered in position" (Webster). All of these words in this definition are capable of bringing stress. Depression seeks those times in our lives when we feel defeated and are unable to achieve our goals. Even though illness may be a temporary setback, it may be difficult to accept at the moment. Depression blinds us of our many blessings, and seeks to keep us from seeing the blessing that can come from illness. When one is depressed, it may be more difficult to seek God and His powerful help because all attention is on self. This makes one most vulnerable for stress!

Depression can effect the body's natural ability to heal. Medical authorities tell us that the patient's attitude and mental outlook are very important. Thus, the mind that is loaded down with depression and stress does not respond to the body's needs. Even the appetite is affected which is so important when overcoming an illness.

Thus, it is easy to see that illness can bring with it many stressful problems, and it is so important that we seek solutions to deal with them. You may be saying, "It is impossible to have illness without stress," and this is correct! A certain amount of stress is inevitable, however, it is a fact that stresses can be reduced in the event that proper attitudes are developed. With this thought before us, let us look at some helpful solutions.

THE CALM

(1) Look for roses among the thorns

Perhaps from a child we have been taught that sickness is all bad, therefore, we become blinded to the blessings. "Sickness brings a share of blessings with it. What stores of human love and sympathy it reveals. What constant affectionate care is ours. What kindly greetings from friends and associates. This very loosening of our hold upon life calls out such wealth of human sympathy that life seems richer than before" (Royal Pathway). Certainly we would never wish to seek sickness for this purpose, but once it comes, why not look for the roses among the thorns?

It is a fact of life, that one's best is often brought out during times of trials. James must have had this thought in mind when he wrote: "My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience" (James 1:2,3). You cannot study the New Testament during the time of the apostles without observing that the heavier they were persecuted, the stronger they became. They were put in prison, beaten, and some even put to death, but this did not stop their goal of preaching Christ to the world. "Stars shine brightest in the darkest night: spices smell sweetest when pounded: young trees root the faster for shaking. An acorn is not an oak tree when it is sprouted. It must go through long summers and fierce winters; it has to endure all that frost, and snow, and thunder, and storm, and side-striking winds can bring, before it is a full-grown oak" (Royal Pathway).

(2) Take time to meditate

When all is going well in our lives, we may become so caught up in earning money and pursuing our career that we lose sight of the real meaning of life. We may get so involved in looking down upon earthly things that we never take time to look up. Illness that places us flat on our backs, causes us to look up! It can bring a seriousness to our thinking and allow us to recognize the fact that we are NOT indispensable — that life would go on even without us. “What important personages we imagine ourselves to be! We think that we alone are the life of the circle in which we move; in our absence we fancy that life, existence and breath will come to a general pause; and alas! the gap which we leave is scarcely perceptible, so quickly is it filled again” (Royal Pathway). This is not to say that we are not needed, but rather to recognize the fact that life WILL go on without us. Such thoughts should make us more appreciative of the opportunity to get well, and the blessing we have in the ability to work.

While in the process of meditation, we should think about how fragile life is, and that in only a moment of time, it can be taken away. When all is going well, it is so easy to take life for granted, and to feel that we have a guarantee of many years. While lying in a hospital bed looking up, we can view things differently, and after our illness, have a better attitude about life.

(3) Develop patience

To many people, developing patience is one of the most difficult things in life. In fact, many do not even know how to completely define the word. To them, patience is nothing more than the ability to wait. A more complete definition is the ability to wait “without complaining.” Also, “bearing or enduring pain, trouble, etc. without complaining or losing self-control.” Thus, not only the ability to wait, but even the attitude is involved while waiting. Sickness is a trying time, and can test one’s patience. This is why James declared it a joy when one is tried. He explains why, “knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing” (James 1:2-4).

It is believed that the more patience one develops, the less stress will be carried. Those with patience will have a greater degree of other virtues. “Patience is the guardian of faith, the preserver of peace, the cherisher of love, the teacher of humility. Patience governs the flesh, strengthens the spirit, sweetens the temper, stifles anger, extinguishes envy, subdues pride; she bridles the tongue, restrains the hand,

tramples upon temptations, endures persecutions, consummates martyrdom" (Royal Pathway).

How long will your sickness last? Some may say, "one day," another "many weeks," and in some cases, "years." Whichever one of these may be our lot, harmful stress can be avoided if we will only "add patience" (2 Peter 1:6). It has been said that you can do anything if you have patience; water may be carried in a sieve, if you can only wait till it freezes.

(4) Draw close to God

How could there be a better way to avoid stress while ill than to draw close to God? "Draw near to God and He will draw near to you," and "Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up" (James 4:8,10). When you are ill, it is good to talk to your doctor and close friends, but there is none that understands better than God! Since He is concerned about an insignificant sparrow that falls to the earth (Matthew 10:29), isn't He more concerned about you? In the words of Jesus: "Do not fear therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows" (Matthew 10:31).

"God should be the object of all our desires, the end of all our actions, the principle of all our affections, and the governing power of our whole souls" (Massillon).

Unfortunately, these suggested solutions will not take away your pain, but it is believed that they are principles that will help you bear it. They are principles that will help you come forth with blessings in your life that have never been known. Remember, all things in life have a purpose, and if you be a child of God, can't you believe that God can use your illness for a purpose? "Difficulties are God's errands. And when we are sent upon them we should esteem it a proof of God's confidence — as a compliment from God. So man must be willing to take life as it comes; to mount the hill when the hill swells, and to go down the hill when the hill lowers; to walk the plain when it stretches before him, and to ford the river when it rolls over the plain. Thus we may grow better within, whilst the cares of life, the crosses and losses and disappointments lose their sharp thorns, and the journey of life be made comparatively pleasant and happy. God knows what keys in the human soul to touch in order to draw out its sweeter and most perfect harmonies. They may be the minor strains of sadness and sorrow; they may be the loftier notes of joy and gladness. God knows where the melodies of our natures are, and what discipline will bring them forth" (Royal Pathway).

May the thoughts of this chapter help all of us bear our burdens during illness, and avoid the heavy weight of destructive stress!

X.

STRESS FROM BEREAVEMENT

Every day that passes finds thousands of hearts bowed down with bereavement and pain because death has taken someone they love. Thus, hearts are heavy and millions of tears flow. For you see, death separates us from the ones we love, and this brings heavy stress to our hearts. Ever since sin was introduced to the human race, death has been inevitable. For the moment we are given physical life, we begin facing an appointment with death. The Psalmist asks: "What man can live and not see death? Can he deliver his life from the power of the grave?" (Psalms 89:48). He does not answer these questions because the answers are implied and known by all. No, there is no way of avoiding death and the grave! "And as it is appointed for man to die once, but after this the judgment" (Hebrews 9:27). Millions will not accept the fact that they are presently dying, whether in youth, middle age, or old age, and they live as though their lives will continue on earth forever. However, hiding one's head in the sand like an ostrich does not change the fact that death is coming and is on every hand.

Since death is a reality to all, sooner or later the cold chilling blow is felt by every family. Each hour of any given day finds husbands grieving over wives, and wives over husbands; children heartbroken over the loss of parents, and parents grieving over their children. In fact, every relationship of humankind feels the pain of bereavement.

Please take the time to consider some of the problems of bereavement, and the stresses that are brought to bear, and then in the latter part of this chapter, look at some solutions that will hopefully lighten the load.

THE STORMS

(1) Death comes to all ages

Yes, the young die too, but this is perhaps the leading problem in accepting death. When we are called upon to give up a parent or grandparent that has lived near 100 years, there is certainly pain and bereavement. However, we understand that they have lived a full rich life, and to stay longer on the earth would only bring burdens and pain. Thus, after a few weeks of sorrow, we begin to accept their death. This is not the case though, when death strikes down a loved one either in youth or in the prime of adulthood. At this point, stress may build to the point of mental illness, isolation from society, and miserable hours of stress and loneliness. In addition to the problem of bereavement, all other facets of life are affected, and if not controlled, happiness will be destroyed.

Only those that have given up a young person in death can empathize, however, this is a problem that must be overcome before life can have any meaning for the ones involved. Refusing to overcome the tragedy will not help the precious one lost, and will possibly destroy many other lives.

(2) Deny the fact of death

There are those that add more stress to their lives by denying the fact of death. They set out to pretend, and to keep their loved one alive. In the case of a son or daughter, they may (for years) keep the room intact as it was left. Each week finds them in the room pretending he or she is alive, and even talks as though they are present. All clothes are kept ready just as though the deceased will return from an extended trip. Some of this during the normal time of bereavement can be expected, but when such continues for months and even years, the results will be very destructive. It will be impossible for such to carry out their relationships to the living members of the family, they will likely lose all interest in the work of the church, and may even develop pain and illnesses that do not exist. Those that make this a way of life will certainly destroy their mental health, and will possibly lose the full respect of their family. It is, therefore, a very serious matter not to accept the fact of death.

(3) Death brings painful separation

It is so important that we see death as a part of life, and how it has had an effect upon millions. One of the leading causes of pain and sorrow at the death of a loved one is the realization that one will never (in this life) see them again. Such thoughts motivated the following poem:

Write on! Write on! You cruel hand of life
How often do we see you dark and cold,
When you carry away in death those we love
And rapidly change youth from bright to old.

Just think of all the human hearts you've torn
And all the tears and crying in the night
The longing only to touch a vanish'd hand
Or hear the sound of voices ghostly quite.

How often do we gaze upon your fallen prey,
One who is lying still in silent death
And think of all the laughter along the way
That has ceased because of your request.

No more to smile and greet the morning light
Nor lift the burdens from those hearts forlorn,
Asleep, Asleep! 'til heaven and earth shall pass
And Christ appears the righteous to adorn.

(bbb)

Death certainly goes against feelings that are deep into our inner being. Love (one of the most powerful forces in our lives) is disturbed, and we long to change such shocking reality. For a long time, the loss may seem like a bad dream from which we hope to awaken, but each day brings us closer to the reality that they are gone.

In time, one can learn to live with being separated from a loved one, but until time has passed and brought its power of healing, to do so seems impossible. Thus, every awakening moment is filled with pain and stress, and there is a longing for: "the touch of a vanished hand, and the sound of a voice that is stilled."

(3) Unprepared spiritually

The problem of giving up a loved one in death becomes even more stressful when they died unprepared spiritually. This is especially true,

and very serious when the ones mourning are faithful Christians. In this case, they not only grieve for their loved one's departing, but also weep over their eternal destiny. What a load of stress this can bring to the human heart!

It may also be that they blame themselves for not trying harder to lead their loved one to Christ. This kind of guilt can make their burdens almost unbearable. Even if there was no hope for their reaching them, they may still feel stressful guilt.

It should be evident to see that the many circumstances that accompany bereavement are capable of causing stress. Now, are these problems insurmountable? Is it right, since the effects of death are so powerful, to just give up? No, certainly not! Even though there is not an instant cure for grief and bereavement, there are some solutions that will help when followed over a long period of time. These great biblical principles need to be studied, and implanted deeply into our hearts even before sorrow comes. These, in turn, will help us eventually rise above the weight of stress that is caused by bereavement.

THE CALM

(1) Look at death through God's eyes

We often fail to overcome sorrow and bereavement because we fail to look at death in the right way. Even with the death of a faithful Christian, we may see death only as an enemy. Death is an enemy: "the last enemy that will be destroyed is death" (1 Corinthians 15:26). However, to the faithful Christian, the enemy of death is overcome: "So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: 'Death is swallowed up in victory'" (1 Corinthians 15:54). To see death as a victory for the one you love can certainly help!

God also sees death as the valley through which all His faithful children must pass to reach eternal life. Among the many voices from heaven, John heard these words: "Write: 'Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on. . . that they may rest from their labors, and their works follow them'" (Revelation 14:13). The apostle Paul had the right attitude about death because he was so close to the Lord. He could say: "For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain" (Philippians 1:21), and also: "having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better" (Philippians 1:23). How often do we feel this way about death?

To look at death the way God sees it, we must have full confidence in Him. Death is too serious and complicated for us to fathom, but this is

not true with God! "Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out!" (Romans 11:33).

One day a man was watching a bird that was perched on a limb that was blowing in the wind. He thought: "If I were sitting on a flimsy limb in the midst of a wild storm, I'd worry for sure."

Yet, there sits that tiny bird being tossed and jerked about without a care in the world, and not only is he calmly sitting on his limb, but he is of all things, singing at the top of his voice. Listen—you can almost understand the words of his happy song:

You can blow, mister wind,
But I'm still gonna sing,
And if you do blow me off,
I've still got my wings.

(Unknown)

When we look at life in a realistic way, we recognize that there are many disappointments, heartaches, and failures, and we must weather many winds that blow (bereavement perhaps the severest). How will we withstand the storms? Are we going to give up, worry, have fears and be depressed? Or, be like the bird that sings through the storm with confidence that should we fall, God has given us wings? "I will lift up my eyes to the hill—from whence comes my help? My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth" (Psalm 121:1).

There are two ways we can face life and death: We can face such with faith, trust, and God's guidance, believing that the wind is forceful, but God is stronger, or face it alone. However, those that choose life without faith must look to flesh with all its weakness, and death. When these find themselves caught in the storm, they cannot sing because they have no wings.

/ "It is better to walk in the dark with God than walk alone in the light; It is better to walk with Him by faith, than to walk alone by sight."

(When we allow God to be in control, we will be able to deal with both life and death.

I do not ask, Dear Lord, that life may be,
Always a pleasant road beneath my feet
Nor paths to walk where thorns prick not my feet.
I do not ask, Dear Lord, for flowers along the way
Where only shines the sun in soft array.
But this I ask, and pray that it may be,

That when I walk in storm or calm,
That you, Dear Lord, will walk with me.

(bbb)

(2) Recognize the brevity of life

Millions cannot accept the death of a loved one because they have not been impressed with the brevity of life. The average person seems to believe that he or she has many years upon this earth, and if you press them to talk of death, it is usually far into the future at a ripe old age. This is opposite to the teaching of the Bible. Even though the normal life span is set at seventy: "The days of our lives are seventy; and if by reason of strength they are eighty years. . . for it is soon cut off, and we fly away" (Psalms 90:10), the Bible still considers life brief. "Man who is born of woman is of few days and full of trouble. He comes forth like a flower and fades away; He flees like a shadow and does not continue" (Job 14:1,2). The apostle Peter compares our brief life to the grass and flowers that wither and fall away (1 Peter 1:24). James looked at life as "a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away" (James 4:14).

Therefore, death (either our own or others) should be considered a part of our thinking just the same as any other part of life. If we can only develop the right attitude, we can avoid much stress. This is not to say that we can reach the point where death is not painful. It is a proven fact that weeping over the death of a loved one is right. Jesus wept at the death of His friend Lazarus even though He knew that he would soon be raised (John 11:35). In fact, a certain amount of weeping is helpful in preparing the mind and body to cope with the loss, but this must not take over one's life and interfere with future living.

(3) Do your part to accept death

There are many wonderful helps available, but none of these will help during bereavement unless you do your part. No one can accept death for you. They can visit, encourage, and pray for you, but there are some things necessary for you to do!

You must first of all, be willing to receive help. The burden of grief and stress becomes heavier when all help is shut out. Your first impulse might be: "I'm hurt, and I don't want anyone to bother me!" This is wrong for two reasons. You are not allowing Christians to share and care as Christ teaches them to do, and you are turning down needed help.

Even though it may seem at the time that nothing can help, remember, this is grief speaking, because you CAN be helped.

Please don't lose sight of the fact that time will heal if you will give it a chance. The pain may seem unbearable now, but remember, time, along with God, will help. Therefore, open your door to brothers and sisters in Christ, and spend hours daily reading God's word. The Holy Spirit has guided the writing of words needed especially for hearts that are grieved from the loss of loved ones.

Become more involved in service to the church and others. It is more difficult to be sad when you are making others happy. While serving in the church, you have thought on spiritual things. This will help you to have a better understanding of death.

(4) Allow God to help

One of the saddest mistakes ever made by those in bereavement is to shut out God, and to blame Him! God did not sin to cause death, mankind did! In fact, God has made it possible for all to be resurrected and to overcome death through His son. He has promised to stand by His children even in the experience of death. Thus, David could sing: "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for you are with me" (Psalm 23:4).

God sent His son to help us with physical and spiritual death. Christ has taken the sting out of death for those that will die in the Lord. The most restful and peaceful sleep is to be "asleep in Jesus." These thoughts were in my mind when writing the following song:

I'll trust in Him, each fleeting day—
I'll share my life along the way
The world will know, I trust Him all the way
He'll change my nights of darkness into day.

No other one can take His place—
He came to earth, to show the way
Of happiness—forever and today
He'll change my nights, of darkness into day

When this my life, on earth is done
I'll trust His power, to take me home—
Where angels dwell, and glory never fades
He'll change my nights of darkness into day.

Many stresses and burdens can be lifted by praying with faith. Don't try to carry the burden of bereavement alone, because the weight can be shared. Peter wrote: "Casting all your cares upon Him, for He cares for you" (1 Peter 5:7).

The principles suggested in these solutions have been tried by millions down through the centuries of time, and be assured that they will still help. May God's blessing be with all whose hearts are burdened down with stress caused by bereavement is my prayer.

XI.

STRESS AND THE SUNSET YEARS

Unless we die young, each day brings us twenty four hours closer to old age. To many, this is a frightening thought, but to others, they refuse even to let it cross their minds. However, whether we think about it or not, we have only one of two alternatives—either die young or become old! Life is an ever-moving-forward journey with no turning back. “The old man may sit and sing, ‘I would I were a boy again,’ but he grows older as he sings. He may gaze backward with an eye of longing upon the rosey scenes of early years, as one who gazes on his home from the deck of a departing ship, which every moment carries him farther and farther away. No snow falls lighter than the snow of age; but none is heavier, for it never melts” (Royal Pathway).

It is a proven fact (from the testimony of millions) that old age brings heavy stress, but it is likewise true that millions have learned to cope. “To know how to grow old is the master-work of wisdom, and one of the most difficult chapters in the great art of living” (Amiel). Therefore, it is important to be aware of the stressful situations caused by old age, and how to accept them. Please consider first some of the problems, and then later look at some solutions.

THE STORMS

(1) Loss of physical strength

One of the most difficult problems of growing old is the slowing down of our physical bodies. While the younger years are passing by, we take

our health and bodies for granted. If we wish to run, work, or play, we call upon our bodies and they respond. However, this is not true in most cases with old age. At every turn the aged are reminded that their bodies are old, and this can become distressful. In Ecclesiastes 12:2-7, Solomon describes what happens to the body at old age. In highly figurative language, he shows that all its functions slow down, and in some cases stop. One of the reasons why this loss is difficult to accept is because we get the mistaken idea that our bodies will always renew themselves without ever wearing out. We accept it when our cars rattle and won't run because of age and too many miles, but not so with our bodies! It is believed that it must stay strong forever. Some become angry at this physical failure and will even force themselves to the point of harming their health.

(2) Mental failure

In addition to the loss of physical strength, the mind reaches the point where it does not function as when younger. It may or may not be mental illness, but in either case, failure of the mind can add stress. It is so common to hear: "I can't remember anything, any more!" "I'm losing my mind!" "Where are my brains?" "I guess I'm going crazy." These expressions, (and many others) indicate that we can't think as we once could, and this can be hard to accept.

This is not to say that we don't get wiser in the golden years, because wisdom is often one of the blessings of old age, but it simply says that our brains function at a slower pace, and often require more time to remember. Usually, with a little patience one can work through this problem, but far too often, stress is added which gets out of control.

(3) Loneliness

One of the things that millions fear in old age is loneliness, and such may be very difficult to handle. For you see, all through the years we are active, in the spotlight, and achieving, but almost instantly we may feel that all have set us aside. With all this extra time, one can spend hours increasing his/her loneliness. Our loved ones have their busy lives, and can spend only a limited time, and this adds more loneliness.

Some that reach the sunset years, feel that they are supposed to be lonely therefore they play out the role, and when efforts are made by others to help, they may reject it. An excessive amount of loneliness can cause one to reach the point of no desire to live, and this is the point of distress. Loneliness then, is often a serious problem in old age.

(4) Wrong attitudes

One of the leading causes of harmful stress in old age is developing and maintaining wrong attitudes. It might surprise you to learn that most of the wrong attitudes do not develop at old age, but rather come from the younger years. It is a mistake to believe that one changes over to old age by the flip of a switch. No, life is a gradual process, and we live our way (day by day) into old age. Thus, the wrong attitudes grow along with us. Be assured that if attitudes are bad while younger, they will be worse when we get old! What are some of the wrong attitudes that add stress to old age?

Some have the wrong attitude about these later years of life. They feel that when one is old that they must not have too much fun, should feel terrible most of the time, must be lonely, and complain to others at every opportunity. Do these wrong attitudes help? No, in fact, the opposite is true—they bring stress and misery to our lives and those around us. Having the wrong attitudes block one from overcoming his/her weaknesses at this age, and add to the many other problems.

Now that we have looked at some of the distressful situations that can arise with old age, let us consider some solutions. It is true that the problems of old age cannot be reversed or totally removed, however, it is believed that there are solutions that will make life happier and worthwhile. Please study closely some of these.

THE CALM

(1) Accept your frailties

There are those that refuse to accept the fact that age has slowed down the ability of their bodies to function as in younger years. Therefore, they may abuse their bodies, or else become depressed because of its failure. Accepting one's frailties does not mean giving up, or becoming helpless, but rather learning to work and function within nature's limits. Maybe you can't work as much, run and walk as fast, and think as quickly as before, but there are still so many things that can be accomplished. God does not expect us to go beyond our ability! He does, however, expect us to use what He has given us at any given age in our lives. "Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might; for there is no work or device or knowledge or wisdom in the grave where you are going" (Ecclesiastes 9:10). Paul referred to himself as being in prison, and as "Paul the aged" (Philemon 9), but this did not stop him from carrying on his work for the Lord. He was able to work to

the end of his life because he accepted his frailties and difficulties with contentment. "Not that I speak in regard to need, for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content:" (Philippians 4:11).

Each age of our lives has a natural pace, when if followed, all goes well. When very young, we have our limitations with wisdom and physical strength, but maturity can change this. Likewise, once the body experiences many years, we must then follow the pace that nature has set. Those that refuse to do so will harm their health, both physically and mentally.

(2) Find something to do

During the years before retirement, one may dream of the day when the rocking chair becomes a way of life, but when the time arrives, it doesn't take many hours of rocking to become bored. The rocking chair is great to REST IN after hours of work, but is not great for the purpose of getting TIRED. To avoid the "rocking-chair-boredom," find something to do. We are designed by our Creator to work and accomplish things. "A man is a worker. If he is not that he is nothing" (Joseph Conrad) "All rest, and no work makes Jack an unhappy boy!" There are many areas from which to choose: Yard work, hobbies, visitation, part time jobs, helping with youth programs, and (most importantly) doing church work. Don't just sit back and wait for something to happen, MAKE IT HAPPEN! "I never did anything worth doing by accident, nor did any of my inventions come by accident" (Thomas A. Edison). Set your goals to become a daily achiever. In addition to your many physical activities, make an effort each day to lead someone to Christ. It may be a phone call, a short conversation, the mailing of a tract, or setting the proper attitude and example as a Christian, but with EFFORT, one can find something daily to show his/her love for the Lord.

(3) Never stop making friends

"Friendship is a flower that blooms in all seasons. No one can be happy without a friend" (Royal Pathway). When the sunset years come, we (perhaps more than any other time in our lives) need friends. "He alone has lost the art to live who cannot win new friends" (Mitchell). Make it a goal in your life to find and keep friends. Some have the mistaken idea that they can sit down and friends will come to them, but this is NOT true. Like all other precious treasures of life, we must search for them, and when they are found, guard them as something rare. Solomon writes: "A man who has friends must himself be friendly, but there is a

friend who sticks closer than a brother" (Proverbs 18:24). You can see close friends, but it is also helpful to have passing friends. The latter represents someone that chats for a few minutes from time to time, but is seen only at brief periods of time. These have their place, and can help brighten a day.

As we get older, there are many extra burdens to carry in our lives, but friends can help us carry the load. Even if it is impossible for them to lift the weight, they often bring joy to our lives which encourages us to cope. "Friendship improves happiness, and abates misery, by doubling our joy, and dividing our grief" (Addison). Friendship also has another facet which must not be overlooked. We must not seek friends from a selfish standpoint—seeking only what we can get from the relationship. Friendship is a mutual experience, and we should likewise wish to help by being a friend to others. Remember, when you give your all to be a helpful friend, you will find a personal rewarding relationship. Therefore, have the same resolution as Sam Walter Foss: "Let me live in a house by the side of the road and be a friend to man."

Those in the sunset years often say that loneliness is one of the major stresses of their lives. Some of this cannot be avoided, however, friendship is one of the greatest antidotes available! "If a man does not make new acquaintances as he passes through life, he will soon find himself left alone. A man should keep his friendships in constant repair" (Johnson). When you feel the stress of loneliness (more than what seems normal) get out and seek a friend. Share some past experiences, review some of the current events from the paper or local news. Try sharing a laugh or two, because this will help remove loneliness. "A merry heart does good, like medicine, but a broken spirit dries the bones" (Proverbs 17:22). Remember: "Life has no blessing like a prudent friend" (Euripides).

(4) Stay close to God

Of all the suggestions to remove stress in the sunset years, there is none greater than to stay close to God. He is our Creator, and understands us better than anyone else. Keep in mind that the arm of flesh will fail us, but this is not so with God! When we are close to God, He will often use those that care for the aged to help, and never forget that there are still those with a Christ-like spirit that understands our stresses. Someone has written: "Beatitudes for Friends of the Aged," and these represent the attitude of those that care and are worth quoting:

Blessed are they who understand my faltering steps and
palsied hand.

Blessed are they who know that my ears today must strain
to catch the things they say.

Blessed are they who seem to know that my eyes are dim
and my wits slow.

Blessed are they who look away from coffee spilled at the
table today.

Blessed are they with a cheery smile, who stop to chat for
a little while.

Blessed are they who never say, "You've told me that story
twice today."

Blessed are they who know the ways to bring back
memories of yesterdays.

Blessed are they who make it known that I'm loved,
respected and not alone.

Blessed are they who know I'm at a loss to find strength to
carry the cross.

Blessed are they who ease the days on my journey HOME,
in living ways.

(20th C. C.)

Those that stay close to God in their sunset years will ~~look at old age through the eyes of God~~. As human beings, we have a tendency to look only at ~~the external appearance~~, but not so with God! He sees the inner man and knows that only the body is wearing out. ~~Paul was guided by the Holy Spirit when he wrote: "Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day"~~ (2 Corinthians 4:16). Therefore, don't allow anyone to warp your thinking—your outward body is getting frail and weak, but nothing can stop the youth of your soul and spirit so long as you remain true to God. If you are a faithful Christian, you are alive forever, and the deterioration of your physical body will not stop you.

~~One of my favorite poems for the aged expresses this:~~

You tell me I am getting old; I tell you that's not so!

The "house" I live in is worn out, and that, of course, I know.
It's been in use a long, long while; it's weathered many a gale.

I'm really not surprised you think it's getting somewhat frail.

The color's changing on the roof; the windows getting dim,
The wall a bit transparent and looking rather thin.

The foundation's not so steady as once it used to be.

My "house" is getting shaky, but my "house" isn't me!

My few short years can't make me old; I feel I'm in my youth.

Eternity lies just ahead, a life of joy and truth.

I'm going to live forever there; life will go on—it's grand!

You tell me I am getting old? You just don't understand!

The dweller in my little "house" is young and bright and gay,

Just starting on a life to last throughout eternal day.

You only see the outside, which is all that most folks see.

You tell me I am getting old? You've mixed my "house" with me!

God has not promised to remove all burdens and stresses from our lives, but be assured that when we stay close to Him, He will help and give us the strength and knowledge to know how to grow old. Therefore, when the going gets rough, share your load with God who has all the power and wisdom. There will be distresses all through our lives, but whether young, or old, or in between, God invites us to allow Him to help. "Casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you" (1 Peter 5:7).

Calm . . .

Out of the Storms

About the Book

The purpose of this book is not to remove all your stress, but rather to help you learn how to harness such for a friend instead of an enemy. In each chapter, the problems that cause heavy stress are discussed, along with how to seek solutions. The suggested solutions are based on biblical principles that have helped millions over the centuries. Please study each chapter carefully. If you feel that this study has helped you, why not suggest the same help to another?

This work is suggested for adult classes, hospital patients, newlyweds, graduates (getting ready to face life), and for all others who wish to remove harmful stress while seeking a better life. If anyone can be helped to lighten the burden of stress, and to find a greater measure of happiness in life, then all efforts to bring this book to you have not been in vain.

About the Author

Benny B. Bristow has been preaching and teaching adult and high school Bible classes for over 20 years. He attended Harding University and Louisiana Tech, majoring in Bible and education.

He is also author of **Ten Commandments for Husbands, Ten Commandments for Wives, From Kneepants to Romance** and **Charts and Sermons** from Quality Publications.



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