

7 Principles to Combat Stress

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It's no secret that stress levels continue to rise—both here and around the world. And when you're stressed, you're not at your best. Your relationships, your work, your health, and your ministry suffer. But you don't have to give in to stress. Here are seven principles of stress management according to the life of Christ:

1 Know who you are.

Stress increases when you try to be someone you're not. Jesus said, *"I testify on my own behalf"* (John 8:18 GNT). He didn't need other people to validate his worth. You don't either. So don't get trapped in copying and comparing. God made you *you* for a purpose, and Jesus died for you. That shows your worth.

2 Know what you're living for.

If you're just trying to please other people, you'll always disappoint someone. Instead, simplify your life by living only for God, the One who made you. That's what Jesus did: *"I am not trying to do what I want, but only what he who sent me wants"* (John 5:30 GNT).

3 Know your calling.

You don't have to be everything to everybody. God has shaped you in a specific way for a specific calling. Jesus understood his calling. He said, *"I know where I came from and where I am going"* (John 8:14 NIV). Discover your calling—and then spend your life on the things that move you toward that purpose.

4 Focus on what matters most.

Life is full of distractions. And many of those distractions are actually good things. But, ultimately, they'll wear you out and sidetrack you from the *best* thing. The apostle Paul said, *"This one thing I do . . ."* (Philippians 3:13 KJV). Instead of dabbling in many things, he focused on the mission God gave him.

5 Listen to God.

Don't just talk to him. Listen to him. How do you do that? Get quiet enough to sense what God is saying to you. Read the Bible, and think about it over and over. Take to heart the instruction of Psalm 46:10: *"Be still, and know that I am God"* (NIV). When you meditate on God's Word, it will set the mood for your day and lower your stress.

6 Connect with Other Believers.

In the Bible, one of the first things God said is this: *"It is not good for the man to be alone"* (Genesis 2:18 NIV). God is relational. We see that in the Trinity—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. And here on earth Jesus lived in community—with his disciples and others. You, too, need a small group of believers you can count on. When life's stresses come up, you can carry them together.

7 Take time to recharge.

In the Phillips Translation, a paraphrase, Matthew 11:19 says about Jesus, *"The Son of Man came, enjoying life."* Life is meant to be enjoyed, not merely endured. If you're always too busy to take a walk on a pretty morning, you're too busy. If you're always too busy to enjoy time with the people you love, you're too busy. God didn't wire you for continuous work. You need to take time to recharge.

Are you feeling weighed down by stress? Look over this list one more time and pick one thing you can do today to approach life's stresses with the peace of Jesus.