

Checking It Twice: Stressed?

Reconnect – December 12, 2010



Text: Matthew 11:25-30, John 14:25-28

Key Thought: The peace of Christ can be yours this Christmas if you will embrace Him.

Then Jesus said, “Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you. Let me teach you, because I am humble and gentle, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke fits perfectly, and the burden I give you is light.” Matthew 11:27-30 < NLT

Pre-Intro: The Human Fund (Seinfeld Video)

Intro: ‘Tis the Season to be... stressed?



- If anyone could find stress in a situation, it was George – between scheming to be more lazy or to find an easier way or a way to get someone else, all he ever did was stress himself out more and ultimately sabotage his own chances – episode after episode (Serenity now!)
- Hopefully, you and I aren’t much like George Costanza – but we laughed at his character because we saw a sliver of him in ourselves – and the stress that he felt in every area of his life
- They say that life is getting more stressful all the time, and I believe it – we’re busier, we have more responsibilities, we’re expected to do more with less at work, at home, we want more and more out of life but we have less time and money to trade for it

- And we pay the price for our stress – we’re continually tired, we take lots of sick days from work, we even shorten our lives – heart attacks and strokes
- You would think that holidays and a festive time of year would go towards alleviating stress – you would think – but it doesn’t seem to be the case

Q: What do you find stressful about the Christmas season? (explore each one)

(money, gifts, food, family, friends, short at work, travelling, expectations of kids as to the holiday, expectations of the parents as to their kids behaving... ?)

- The holidays can be full of stress – especially if your life isn’t found in a greeting card
- Sometimes the holiday only reinforces what a terrible year it’s been, and how grim the prospects are going to be in January
- There’s a reason why so much of Christmas advertising is talking about trying to help us with our levels of stress – it’s because they are off the charts
- Everyone wants Christmas to be perfect – or, like we talked about last week, at least one person in the family does
- Seems that a lot of times it can be wives that get stressed while us guys kind of just coast through and enjoy the benefits of all their work - but that's not fair- if you know your wife is stressed than get off your butt and help her with it- find something you can be an expert in and so doing share the load – because the more stress you have with the holiday, the more likely that whether everything goes well or not, you won’t have had any rest, or peace, or enjoyment, except when you see that Christmas is finally DONE

Let’s talk stress:



- I was looking for a definition of stress, and there were a few out there that I liked:
 - “Stress: The confusion created when one’s mind overrides the body’s basic desire to choke the living daylight out of some jerk who desperately deserves it”
 - “Stress: When you wake up screaming and you realize you haven’t fallen asleep yet”
 - “Stress: Nothing more than a socially acceptable form of mental illness” (Richard Carlson)
- Perhaps more formally defined, it’s this group of definitions:
 - importance or significance attached to a thing; emphasis

- the physical pressure, pull, or other force exerted on one thing by another; strain
- a load, force, or system of forces producing a strain
- physical, mental, or emotional strain or tension, or a situation, occurrence or factor causing this
- a specific response by the body to a stimulus, as fear or pain, that disturbs or interferes with the normal physiological equilibrium of an organism
- Stress is how we respond to something acting on us – it could be something that someone else puts on us, like a boss handing us a difficult task with a deadline, or it could even be something that we expect and put on ourselves, like how we expect ourselves to look or act in a certain situation

Stress: not ALL bad

- Here's the thing: not all stress is bad
- Stress, as I learned on the John Tesh radio show, is something that is going to happen, as a result of the outside world going on around us and affecting us – but it's how we deal with it that makes the difference
- There are different kinds of stress – like what gets put on us by someone else, versus what we put on ourselves, and then there's also “good stress” – that gets you out of bed in the morning, that keeps you focused, that lets you achieve and have purpose in your life
- But most of the time, when we're talking or thinking about stress, it's the bad stress that is being referred to – the kind that makes you anxious, that makes you short of breath, that makes you depressed and fearful that something isn't going to get done properly or that there is doom coming
- That's the stress that has no upside – it's related to worry – worry is only good if we're worrying about something we can affect – something we can change – like, if you have a lot to do at work, get up early and go in and get it done – but worry is very very bad if we're worrying about what we can't change – like someone else and what they might say or do – because there's no upside to that kind of stress
- That's epidemic in our world, and it flares up this time every year

Read/Explain Text: Matthew 11:25-30

Then Jesus prayed this prayer: “O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, thank you for hiding the truth from those who think themselves so wise and clever, and for revealing it to the childlike. Yes, Father, it pleased you to do it this way!

- **Q: What do kids stress about at Christmas? Or what SHOULD they be stressing about?**
(only good things – anticipation, fun, looking forward to what they will discover – there's plenty of stress to go around, which is why they often melt down before lunch – but they're not burdened down with what you and I might be burdened with – or at least, they shouldn't be)
- The innocence of Christmas is what we love, is what we strive to try to create, year after year
- Why are kids like that at Christmas? ***Because they know that their parents are taking care of things***
- Read on...!

My Father has given me authority over everything. No one really knows the Son except the Father, and no one really knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.”

- “My Father has given me authority over everything” – in other words, “I’ve got this”
- Life, and all of the pressures we feel, is actually in the control of the Son of God – the one who really knows what God the Father is like, and the One who loves to show us what God is like, in His words, in His actions, in His character
- Jesus never botched anything – He was never too late, He was never too short, He never forgot anything that mattered – He was reliable, He was dependable, He was in control, even when it seemed like everything was going wrong – **He had authority over everything**
- Like your job – you might have some authority – decision power over something you understand, over something that you have a responsibility for, others may need to do what you ask – and they do, because that’s the way it works – and you have someone with authority over you, who gives you direction and their expertise
- Jesus has ALL authority – everything is in His hands – but we need to stop trying to pull our lives away from Him in some kind of bizarre existential tug of war
- Can you imagine a kid at Christmas saying to their parents, “I’m going to plan Christmas this year, because frankly, last year you really messed it up. Since you’re not a good risk, I’m going to take over and make sure things get done right. Can you reach me down the stuffing?”
- We’d laugh, and then we’d think they were nuts – of COURSE they can rely on us, right?
- And I think Jesus often feels the same way when it comes to our lives

Then Jesus said, “Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you. Let me teach you, because I am humble and gentle, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke fits perfectly, and the burden I give you is light.”

- Jesus promises us rest – not the idea of rest, not a theory, not a “yes, but” – REST
- But it involves an action on our part – an embrace of His ways – taking HIS “yoke” on us (farming) – getting strapped in to life as He wants it – He’s going to guide us, He’s going to lead us, and in return, we are going to have rest
- Not freedom from all stress – we were made to experience the desire to get stuff done, to achieve, to be able to call on inner resources to succeed at life – but from the negative, destructive kind of stress, that produces no benefit, that gets nothing done, that only wears us away as if we were teeth being ground day and night
- We don’t have to worry, we don’t have to fear, we don’t even have to doubt or wonder – because if God is for us, then who can be against us? Our lives are in His hands
- You might be saying, “That’s fine for you – but we’re doing the church thing, we’re trying to live good lives and be good people, but I’m not feeling this peace you’re talking about”
- But that’s where life has to be completely turned over to Jesus – and we have to identify with Him in order to do that, and it involves putting aside everything else for Him, to say “I have nothing to offer, nothing that could make you want me or take me God – but I’m here, looking to get what you offer
- And He will respond, and you will feel His nearness from your inside out – that’s what it takes, no more, no less – and then you begin to know that “yoke” he’s talking about

- You'll be able to relax – and take some of the stress off that you're putting on yourself, because Jesus will begin to teach you what's really important and what's not so much
- You'll also be able to put into better perspective the stress that gets put on you – because you'll have a sense of trust that someone else is in control – you can be like a kid at Christmas again, and even the rest of the year
- And when you're tempted to panic, or worry, or stress in the negative way, you go back to your relationship and tell it to Jesus
- That's not going to help with the relative who always brings the fruitcake and drinks too much egg nog – but it's a start, and you have someone with you to help you process the stress of your life as you go

That night there were shepherds staying in the fields nearby, guarding their flocks of sheep. Suddenly, an angel of the Lord appeared among them, and the radiance of the Lord's glory surrounded them. They were terrified, but the angel reassured them. "Don't be afraid!" he said. "I bring you good news that will bring great joy to all people. The Saviour—yes, the Messiah, the Lord—has been born today in Bethlehem, the city of David! And you will recognize him by this sign: You will find a baby wrapped snugly in strips of cloth, lying in a manger." Suddenly, the angel was joined by a vast host of others—the armies of heaven—praising God and saying, "Glory to God in highest heaven, and peace on earth to those with whom God is pleased." **Luke 2:8-14, NLT**

Key Thought:

TAKE IT HOME:

**Christ's peace can be yours this Christmas
if you will embrace Him.**

[Jesus said,] I am telling you these things now while I am still with you. But when the Father sends the Advocate as my representative – that is, the Holy Spirit – he will teach you everything and will remind you of everything I have told you.



I am leaving you with a gift – peace of mind and heart. And the peace I give isn't like the peace the world gives. So don't be troubled or afraid. Remember what I told you: I am going away, but I will come back to you again." **John 14:25-28, NLT**

The peace of Christ can be yours this Christmas if you will embrace Him.

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Conclusion: Jesus on a collision course [advent conspiracy]

No one has ever seen God. But the unique One, who is himself God, is near to the Father's heart. He has revealed God to us. **John 1:18 NLT**

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John 1:18, NLT



[play video here – advent conspiracy ad youtube]

- Advent Conspiracy movement – to take some of the materialism out of Christmas by Worship Fully, Spend Less, Give More, Love All – to redirect what we do and how we do it
- And this can be a HUGE stress release – because so much of the stress of the holiday is related to possessions and presents and bills and money and lineups and shopping
- The spending season has just begun – unless you're Sandy, you probably don't have your Christmas shopping done, and maybe it's not too late to do something to differently shape your strategy this year
- What about this?

Get what you need, get a deal if you can, ask yourself if what you're buying is something you'll still have/be using/need a year from now (fruitcake is not the best example of this) – be choosy with what you get, and not only for yourself, but for others – then you can really make a difference this Christmas that will last

- if “everyone else” has been looked after... but truthfully, they haven’t – so many needs in our world, and there are people in need – paradox of Christmas that so much is spent on people who already have everything – “What do you get the person who has everything?” – and unfortunately, we don’t often answer that question with “nothing but good wishes”
 - all the charities that can be supported at this time of year, that ramp up what they do – breakfast clubs of Canada, Samaritan’s Purse (shoeboxes), Worldvision, Snowsuit fund, Toy Mountain – all deserving, and all lacking – even Reconnect ;)
 - There are so many who have no voice, who are left behind in our organized greed of a holiday
 - Our children are watching – how do we spend or not spend our money at Christmas? – we teach our children about money and stuff by what they see us do, rather than what we say
- Let’s start trusting God to provide for us and through us, for others
- **III. – our Christmas 2005** – money was almost out, stress was building, I was needing to come back to life... and God was at work... job(s), vision for the church, a new direction in our lives – because after 6 months of wrestling, we had finally started to trust God and put our lives in his hands – we had moved past the stress and the worry of our circumstances, of what was pushing and pulling us, of what was straining and wrestling in us

Response: “O Come, All Ye Faithful” (band)