

STRESS

- I. Biblical references to "stress"
 - A. There are no Biblical references which use the word "stress"
 - B. This does not mean that the Bible does not address what we term "stress"

- II. Towards a definition of "stress"
 - A. Physical science
 - 1. In the study of physics, "stress" is the term used to refer to pressure brought to bear upon an object.
 - 2. Also refers to result of such pressure in deformities, etc.; ex. stress-fractures, cracks.
 - B. Social science
 - 1. In the study of psychology, "stress" is a term used to refer to the pressures brought to bear upon an individual by the situations and circumstances of life.
 - 2. Also refers to the mental, emotional and volitional reactions to such pressures creating psychological distress and physical disorders.

- III. Applying Biblical references to such sociological and psychological phenomenon
 - A. The external pressures of the situations of life
 - 1. Examples of Biblical terminology
 - a. Circumstances - Phil. 1:2; 4:11
 - b. Trials - James 1:2; I Pet. 1:6; 4:12
 - c. Tribulations - Jn. 16:33; Acts 14:22; Rom. 5:3; 8:35
 - d. Troubles - Ps. 86:7; Job. 5:7
 - e. Hardships - Job 10:17; I Thess. 2:9
 - f. Ordeals - II Cor. 8:2; I Pet. 4:12
 - g. Difficulties - II Cor. 12:10
 - h. Distresses - Rom. 8:35; II Cor. 6:4; 12:10
 - i. Persecution - Jn. 15:20; II Cor. 12:10; II Tim. 3:12
 - j. Affliction - Job 36:15; II Cor. 6:4
 - k. Suffering - Phil. 1:29; I Pet. 4:12,13
 - l. Adversity - Job 2:10; Ps. 49:5; Eccl. 7:14
 - m. Pressure - Job. 33:7; II Cor. 11:28
 - n. Disaster - Job 30:24; Jere. 17:17
 - o. Discipline - Job 5:17; I Cor. 11:32; Heb. 12:6
 - 2. Differing explanations among Christians
 - a. "Christians shouldn't have problems" - exempt
 - b. If having problems
 - (1) not mature or spiritual enough; don't have enough faith; not praying and working hard enough
 - (2) God punishing for past failures; withholding "blessing"
 - (3) Devil is after you
 - (4) victim of other's actions; blame others
 - (5) pray for deliverance
 - c. Problems are to be expected in Christian life
 - (1) Make you grow stronger, better, more spiritual
 - (2) Avenues of God's action; opportunities and invitations to recognize and rely on God's sufficiency

- B. The internal reactions to the pressures of the situations of life
1. Initial reaction leading up to a decision of action and reaction
 - a. Initial reactions
 - (1) perplexity - II Cor. 4:8
 - (2) troubled - Jn. 12:27; 13:21
 - (3) distressed - Lk 12:50
 - (4) time to consider options
 - (5) time to pray
 - b. Decision of action and reaction
 - (1) God made us choosing creatures
 - (2) Should not ask others to make decisions for us
 - (3) Most decisions do not have to be made immediately
 - (4) Should not allow "waiting on God" to become stalling procedure
 - (5) Indecision can be a decision; sin of omission
 2. Self-oriented decisions of action and reaction
 - a. Mishandling of God's opportunities - Rom. 14:23
 - b. Self-sufficiency
 - (1) I can resolve, explain, outlast, figure out (SELF)
 - (2) Change the circumstances
 - (3) Stoicism - survivalism, coping
 - (4) Fatalism - what will be, will be; "don't worry, be happy"
 - c. Reactions
 - (1) Fight - Ex. anger, hostility, rage, hate, retaliation, bitterness, resentment, violence, judgmentalism, blame, victimization
 - (2) Fright - Ex. fear, anxiety, worry
 - (3) Flight - Ex. ignore, deny, retreat, avoidance, escapism, digression
 3. Consequences of self-oriented reactive decisions - Prov. 14:12
 - a. Stress can lead to distress; dis-ease leads to disease
 - b. Despair (II Cor. 4:8,9), desperation, depression.
 - c. Hopelessness, helplessness, frantic, panic, hysteria
 - d. Mental illness, nervous breakdown, psychosomatic
 - e. Addiction, alcoholism, narcotics, medicines
 - f. Self-destructive behaviors, suicide
 4. Reactive decisions of faith
 - a. Faith - our receptivity of God's activity - Rom. 14:23
 - b. Recognition of God's grace - II Cor. 3:5; 12:9
 - c. Acceptance of the situation and provision - Lk. 22:42
 - d. Rest in God's sufficiency - Matt. 11:28; Heb. 4:4-11
 - e. Perseverance - Rom. 5:3; 12:12; James 1:12
 - f. Endurance - I Cor. 4:12; II Tim. 4:5
 - g. Rejoicing - James 1:2; I Peter 1:6
 - h. Peace - Jn. 14:27; II Pet. 1:2
 - i. Contentment - II Cor. 12:10; Phil. 4:11-13
 - j. Filled with the Spirit - Eph. 5:18
 - k. Abundant life - Jn. 10:10