

“Consider the Lilies . . .”

*trusting in God reduces
stress in our lives*



*“Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat, or about your body, what you will wear. For life is more than food, and the body more than clothing. Consider the ravens: they neither sow nor reap, they have neither storehouse nor barn, and yet God feeds them. Of how much more value are you than the birds! And can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your span of life? If then you are not able to do so small a thing as that, why do you worry about the rest? Consider the lilies, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, how much more will he clothe you - you of little faith!
(Luke 12:22-28)*

BULLETIN INSERT

Consider the lilies . . .

“. . . do not worry about your life, what you will eat, or about your body, what you will wear. . . Consider the lilies, how they grow . . . if God so clothes the grass of the field, . . . how much more will he clothe you - you of little faith! (Luke 12:22-28)



Jesus tells us, “Do not worry” and tells us to trust in God. We can also help free ourselves from stress and put balance in our lives with the following tips. To manage your stress, first identify the causes, then:

1. Avoid unnecessary stress.
 - a. Learn how to say “No,” graciously and stick to it.
 - b. If possible, avoid people who stress you out.
 - c. Pare down your “To Do” List and prioritize.
2. Alter the situation.
 - a. Learn to express your feelings instead of bottling them up.
 - b. Be more assertive about your needs but also willing to compromise when necessary.
 - c. Manage your time. Multi-tasking is not always most efficient!
3. Adapt to the stressor.
 - a. Look at the big picture. Is this really worth getting upset over?
 - b. Adjust your standards. Perfectionism is a major source of stress! Sometimes “good enough” is the right answer.
 - c. Focus on the positive.
4. Accept the things you can’t change.
 - a. Focus on what you can control – your reaction to the situation.
 - b. Share your feelings with someone you trust. Talking something over can change your perspective.
 - c. Learn to forgive. In the same way that God forgives us, free yourself from negative energy by forgiving and moving on.
5. Make time for fun and relaxation.
 - a. Set aside time every day to do something you enjoy.
 - b. Keep your sense of humor including the ability to laugh at yourself!
6. Adopt a healthy lifestyle.
 - a. Exercise regularly. Physical exercise such as walking, gardening, cleaning house releases endorphins to combat stress.
 - b. Eat a healthy diet. Restrict caffeine and alcohol.
 - c. Get enough sleep. It helps the mind and body recharge.
 - d. Meditate to attain feelings of peace and balance. This can be done while walking or even waiting for an appointment.

Back O' the Door Wellness Tips[©]

- Provide a ready to use, cost effective resource for telling the "Good News" of health promotion, illness prevention and steps toward wellness.
- Disseminate health promotion information in areas where space is limited and makes use of an often overlooked venue—the "bathroom classroom."
- Involve many members of the faith community in health ministry through decorating and posting the information. Preparing the flyers is a great project for older adults who are unable to attend church but want to be involved. Posting and decorating the Tips can provide an opportunity for intergenerational interaction.

Advantages of Back O' the Door Wellness Tips[©]

- Quick read.
- Reaches a large number of persons.
- "Captive" audience.
- Clear and to the point message.
- Easy to use and fun, too! Novelty of the idea attracts attention. Folks can't wait to see what's coming next!
- Reinforces wellness information that has been introduced in other settings. Advertisers say that a person must hear and see a message at least seven times before it begins to stick with them.
- Use of scripture and inspirational quotes with health messages assists in linking faith beliefs with lifestyle choices that emphasize wholeness of mind, body and spirit.

Helpful Hints for Displaying Back O' the Door Wellness Tips

- Change your Tip regularly - no one likes to read "old news!"
- Tips may be laminated for reuse.

A Back O' the Door Wellness Tip about Stress



Is your life a
sentencetypedwithout
anyspaces?

Jesus said, “Come to me all you who are
weary...

and I will give you rest.”

Matthew 11: 28 (NIV)

RX for Stress:

Sit down and close your eyes for a moment or two. Take a deep breath, then imagine you are being held in Jesus’ lap, resting your head on his shoulder, giving him your burdens. Repeat often.

Consider the Lilies . . . Sample Sermon



“Gratitude”

This is Christ the King Sunday. It's the last Sunday of the church year. Next week we begin Advent and start the yearly cycle again. And this time as we end our year I wanted to look at Gratitude. Walter Brueggemann once said “During November we reach the conclusion of the church year. We remember our dead and ponder the God of life. We begin Advent and the season of alert waiting for the newness that God will give. Between, in American "civil religion," is Thanksgiving. Perhaps thanksgiving is the right segue from old to new. It's appropriate that the great festival of gratitude should provide the transition from old to new. Gratitude is, in the life of faith, for every season.”

As we turn from this year into the next, we take time to be thankful for what we have been given. Which all follows nicely, but what on earth does gratitude have to do with the gospel passage on worry?

I am a natural worrier. Now, I don't like to brag, but I can go from calm to worry in almost no time at all. I can get worried over just about anything. Or nothing! I worry about things that might happen and things that won't happen and things that shouldn't have ever happened. My worries used to be so bad that I would have trouble functioning around them. I've gotten better over the years, but I still have times when I am consumed by worry.

I worry about getting a chaperone to help lead the mission trip and I worry about getting all the Christmas presents taken care of for the family this year. I worry about sermon writing and holding events where no one has fun. I know these are minor worries to say the least. Just imagine how tied up in knots I would be if I really had something serious to worry about!

Without a doubt, my worries are small. And usually, they are about things I have little, if any, control over. Still, even my small worries get in the way of my living in the moment God has prepared for me. They distract me from doing things I do have control over. Worries keep me from enjoying life.

So when I read this passage where Jesus admonishes us not to worry about our life. I have trouble. Really Jesus? Just don't worry? How does that help? Doesn't reading these words heap guilt on us who are worried for worrying? You make it sound so easy. Just stop worrying. If I could stop worrying, don't you think I would have done that

already? The advice seems overly simple at best, and downright self defeating at worst.

And yet here it is. “Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life.”
Alright Jesus. How?

Paul Tillich characterized the most predominant modern anxiety as spiritual. We are suffering from emptiness or meaninglessness. We are anxious because we recognize there is something missing in our lives. Now if Tillich is right about that, then perhaps the Jesuit theologian Anthony de Mello, following Jesus’ advice, offers the way to stop worrying: “You sanctify whatever you are grateful for.” In other words, instead of nursing our worries, let us focus on something else. We have to focus ourselves outside our own minds. Look towards our joys and not our concerns. By focusing on what we are grateful for, we stop worrying.

We focus on our worries, and by so doing, we feed them. We have to deliberately turn away from them and towards something else. Now, I’m not saying this is an easy thing to do. Being thankful isn’t something we can just do when we are filled with worry. And a grateful heart doesn’t come in a sudden conversion. We find peace by slowly turning away from worry. And we turn when we intentionally stop and find something, anything, for which to thank God. Now, in the midst of worry, it can be really hard to find a way to say thank you.

I think Jesus knew he was asking for no small task, which is why he told us to focus on something small and specific. Birds in the air perhaps? Or, maybe the flowers in the field. What is in your life that you can be grateful for in this moment? It is moving out of your own head and into the rest of the world that will make the difference.

One of the tricks with gratitude when you aren’t feeling very thankful is to be specific. Rather than just being thankful that I have clothes and a house and food to eat, it helps to be thankful for a favorite shirt, a comfortable piece of furniture or a well cooked meal. Listing five things to be grateful for every time we start to worry, helps to drive the anxiety away. Taking the time to think specifically about the good in our lives changes our attitude.

As I was working on this sermon, I decided to try to focus on all I had to be grateful for when my worries sprung up again. I always started by thanking God for my dog Dylan, because it’s always easy to be grateful for him. Then I would thank God for things like hot showers and comfortable beds and a good cup of tea and indoor plumbing. Before too long, I would forget what I had started to worry about in the first place.

Studies have shown the amazing power of gratitude. It can drag us away from our own concerns and focus us on things that really matter. It can even make us happier people. Those of us, who tend to focus on what we have to be thankful for, are happier people in general. Jesus wasn’t being idealistic; he was being practical. Science has even shown that by not worrying, we can actually add to our life span.

And let’s be honest, God has given us so much. Even if it doesn’t always seem like it. Just by being born where we were, we are better off than many. If you have food in your refrigerator, clothes on your back, a roof over your head and a place to sleep, you are richer than 75% of this world. If you have money in the bank, in your wallet, and spare change in a dish someplace, you are among the top 8% of the world’s wealthy. If you have access to clean drinking water, you are better off than 70% of the world.

God has given us so much, and given it in abundance, and yet too often we take all that we have been given for granted.

It's so obvious that we forget to give thanks. Think for a moment of the benefits of being alive here right now: We can laugh and sing and worship together in peace. But it never occurs to us to say thank you, because we are so used to it. Because we expect these things. What benefits go unnoticed because they are too obvious?

I'd like to share with you a story by Mike Minix that I ran across a few years ago. "There was a father and mother, members of a little church, parents of a young man killed in the military. One day they came to the pastor and told him they wanted to give a monetary gift as a memory to their son, who died in battle. The pastor said, "That's a wonderful gesture on your part." He asked if it was okay to tell the congregation and they said that it was. So the next Sunday he told the congregation of the gift given in memory of the dead son.

On the way home from church, another couple were driving down the highway when the father said to his wife, "Why don't we give a gift because of our son?" And his wife said, "But our son didn't die in any conflict! Our son is still alive!" Her husband replied, "That's exactly my point! That's all the more reason we ought to give in thanks to God."

How often do you tell the people in your lives how much you appreciate them? When was the last time you told someone how thankful you are that they are in your life?

By focusing on the good in our lives, we push away worries over things we have absolutely no control over. By focusing on the good, we realize all that we have previously taken for granted. By saying thank you, we remind ourselves that we live in plenty.

We have so much, and yet we're often deeply unhappy. It always strikes me as strange that the day after we celebrate being thankful for all we have, some of us go to wait in lines for hours in a desperate need to get more, buy more, have more. I don't understand how the two are linked. If we can't be grateful for what we already have, why do we think more stuff will cure the problem? Worry takes away so much of our lives. It damages our health and our quality of life.

We have so much. As we start the new church year, let us take time to acknowledge all that God has done for us and be thankful. Let us realize that getting more will never solve any of our worries. As we turn towards Advent and begin to await our Lord again, let us take the time to say Thank you. Thank you Lord. For everything.

Rev. Cara Milne Gee
November 2012

A Story Starter for a Sermon:

A lecturer, when explaining stress management to an audience, raised a glass of water and asked, "How heavy is this glass of water?" Answers called out ranged from 20g. to 500 g. The lecturer replied, "The absolute weight doesn't matter. It depends on how long you try to hold it.



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If I hold it for a minute, that's not a problem.
If I hold it for an hour, I'll have an ache in my right arm.
If I hold it for a day, you'll have to call an ambulance.

In each case, it's the same weight, but the longer I hold it, the heavier it becomes." He continued, "And that's the way it is with stress management. If we carry our burdens all the time, sooner or later, as the burden becomes increasingly heavy, we won't be able to carry on." "As with the glass of water, you have to put it down for a while and rest before holding it again. When we're refreshed, we can carry on with the burden. So, before you return home tonight, put the burden of work down. Don't carry it home. You can pick it up tomorrow. Whatever burdens you're carrying now, let them down for a moment if you can. Put down anything that may be a burden to you right now. Don't pick it up again until after you've rested a while."

(Chesterman, Personal communication, 2006). p30 - from *Hawkins, Peter and Shohet, Robin, Supervision in the Helping Professions (2007)*.

Consider the Lilies . . .



Scripture Passages focusing on Trust in God

1. Matthew 11:28-29 - "Come to me, all you that are weary and carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls." (NRSV)
2. Psalm 46:10 - "Be still and know that I am God!" (NRSV)
3. Isaiah 26:3-4 - "Those of steadfast mind you keep in peace - in peace because they trust in you. Trust in the Lord forever, for in the Lord God you have an everlasting rock." (NRSV)
4. Philippians 4:6-7 - "Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." (NRSV)

Scripture Passages focusing on Happiness which brings relief from Stress

1. Proverbs 15:13 - "A happy heart makes the face cheerful." (NIV)
2. Proverbs 15:15 - ". . . a cheerful heart has a continual feast." (NIV)
3. Isaiah 35:10 - ". . . everlasting glory shall be upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away." (NRSV)
4. Luke 6:21 - ". . . Blessed are you who weep now, for you will laugh." (NIV)
5. Jeremiah 31:13 - ". . . I will turn their mourning into joy, I will comfort them, and give them gladness for sorrow." (NRSV)

Hymns

1. Dear Lord and Father of Mankind
2. In the Night I Can Take my Rest (Psalm 4)
3. I've Got Peace Like a River
4. Near to the Heart of God
5. Savior, Again to Thy Dear Name We Raise

23rd Psalm for Busy People
By Toki Miyashiro

The Lord is my Pace-setter, I shall not rush;
He makes me to stop and rest for quiet intervals.
He provides me with images of stillness, which restores my serenity.
He leads me in ways of efficiency, through calmness of mind.
And His guidance is my peace.
Even though I have a great many things to accomplish each day
I will not fret, for His presence is here.
His timelessness, His all-importance will keep me in balance.
He prepares refreshment and renewal in the midst of my activity
By anointing my mind with His oils of tranquillity.
My cup of joyous energy overflows.
Surely harmony and effectiveness shall be the fruits of my hours,
For I shall walk in the pace of the Lord and dwell in His house forever.

“A Japanese version of Psalm 23” published in *Guideposts Magazine*

Consider the Lilies . . .



Prayers

Staying in the boat with Jesus

reprinted with permission by the Rev. Tom Jones.

Holy God,

We remember the disciples of old: in a boat trying to get to the other side. For us the “other side” is where *all* persons have decent homes and there is no more poverty. As it was for the disciples of old, a great storm has arisen.

Dear Jesus, let us hear anew Your words to disciples: “Why are you afraid? Have you no faith?”

God, help us help each other keep it straight, that we are in Your territory—that we are dependent on You—that in crises is opportunity for spiritual growth—that in trust of You is the *ending* of fear.

Now, at the beginning of another week, we realize that trust in You is day by day, week by week. And we truly need each other in this venture. Toward that end, right now plant within us the old tune:

“Trust and obey, for there’s *no* other way, than to trust and obey.”

So put it in our minds and hearts that we cannot put it aside, that we

- sing it,
- say it,
- hum it,
- whisper it.

But most of all that we *live* it:

“Trust and obey, for there is *no other way*.”

Christ, keep us in the boat with You.

Amen.

Adapted from the *Book of Common Worship*

Lord and giver of life,
As by your power
The apostles anointed the sick,
And they were healed,
So come, Creator Spirit,
Enfold your children in your caring and protective arms.
Pour out the spirit of grace and supplication on all who desire it
To bring them healing, peace and freedom to manage their stress.
Amen

Prayer for Healing and Care of Creation and Creatures

O Loving God: we are stewards of your wonder and mystery: from the amazing sight of a child's hand that can grow into the hand of a surgeon, a carpenter, or a painter, to the grace of giant coconut palm trees that grow from the largest of seeds, to the beauty of butterflies that were once caterpillars, there is wonder all around. With the sight of stars in the sky that long ago went dark, to the depths of our vast oceans filled with frightful and fantastic life forms, to the drive that compels a person to be attracted to another, your world is also filled with mystery. At the center of the wonder and mystery is you, most Holy One, with child-like, mother-like, and father-like qualities. We are in awe of the only thing in the universe that deserves the adjective "awesome."

We appreciate the strength and courage to face daily obstacles and treat them as opportunities; and daily conflicts, treating them as conversations. Give us the wisdom to know when to speak and when to keep silence. Then water the seeds of our work with your life-filling Holy Spirit.

Lead us to sane or even radical answers when it comes to caring for our energy reserves, our beaches, the seas, and the fast disappearing natural land areas. Help us to learn how to care for what you entrusted to us before we get to the horizon of regret. There is plenty on our plate; teach us not to leave your world solely in the hands of politicians, developers, or those who drill, but to keep a holy head about us as we live our lives. We pray for that.

Finally, we pray that you would make us whole in the measure of our own desire to be whole. Heal us through Heaven's medical plan of a measure of forgiveness, a dose of hope, gifts of grace, prayers of confession and lives that are lived by faith. Show us the way in a world that often seems so lost. Today we pray for healing for those who are ill, understanding and acceptance of our brokenness and the brokenness of others, and for new insights to know when to pray, when to act, and when to be still.

Thank you, Great Physician. In the name of the Savior who seeks lost and broken sheep-Jesus Christ-we pray. Amen.

Jeffrey A. Sumner
Senior Pastor,
Westminster By-The-Sea Presbyterian Church, Daytona Beach Shores, FL

January 14, 2012

Consider the Lilies . . .



References related to Stress

Books:

Gray, David Edman (2012) *Practicing Balance: How Congregations Can Support Harmony in Work and Life*. Herndon, VA: Alban Institute. This would make a wonderful book study for a series in Adult Education or for a small group such as the Deacons. Questions and/or exercises are found at the end of each chapter as well as appendices with exercises to complete.

Gray, David Edman (2002) *The Spiritual Call for a Service Centered Psyche*. Baltimore, MD: PublishAmerica. Chapter IX, called *Stability: Chill on the Hill*, addresses the problem of “stress to impress” where being stressed becomes a badge of honor and individuals become addicted to being busy. A common term for this is “workaholism.” The Rev. Gray also cites several biblical stories regarding ways of coping with stress and restoring balance.

Jones, Kirk Byron (2001) *Rest in the Storm: Self-Care Strategies for Clergy and Other Caregivers*. Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press. The Rev. Jones addresses the problem of “overdosing on over-commitment.” He uses the story of Jesus going to the back of the boat to rest, being awakened by the disciples and then calming the storm as an analogy for obtaining God’s help in maintaining inner peace.

Weems, Ann (1995) *Psalms of Lament*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press.

Weems, Ann (1991) *Searching for Shalom: Resources for Creative Worship*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press.



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These **Care Notes pamphlets from Abbey Press** are particularly good references for distribution in the congregation in a pamphlet rack or in pastoral counseling situations. See:

http://www.onecaringplace.com/search.asp_Q_ipp_E_5000_A_t_E_c_A_c_E_40008

<http://www.onecaringplace.com/Category.asp?c=40001>

Finding Hope When Times are Tough by Jim Auer.

Pulling Together as a Family after a Job Loss by Sue Fox McGovern.

Reducing Caregiver Stress by Julie Interrante.

Coping with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder by Staff of the National Military Family Association.

When Emotions Control Your Life by Judith E. Courtney.

Easing the Burden of Stress by Dr. Wayne Oates.

Overcoming Everyday Anxiety by Joan Webster Anderson and Eugenie G. Wheeler.

Slowing Down and Finding God in Your Busy Life by Sharon Robinson.

Letting Faith Help You Handle Stress by Judy Ball.

What Everyone Should Know About Stress by Tom McGrath.

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