

RESOLVING INTERNAL STRESS

When we accepted Christ, He paid for our sins, but did He take care of all our internal stress? I believe He has taken care of it, that He has already dealt with all of our pain and struggles. “Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows...” (Isa. 53:4). “...by his wounds you have been healed” (1 Pet. 2:24).

But we must actively appropriate what he has done for us. See Philippians 3:12-16 and Ephesians 1:15-20. Part of growing requires opening more and more of our lives to him, that we might experience in reality what he has already done through his life, death and resurrection.

Renewing our Minds

All internal stress is a function of the mind, and God’s Word clearly provides solutions for it. Unrealistic expectations and damaging attitudes are resolved through the biblical process called renewing of the mind. Let’s look at it briefly.

On the one hand, Christ has done it all for us. Our old self has already been crucified with him (Rom. 6:1-11). We have already put off the old self with its practices, and put on the new self, according to Colossians 3:9-10. On the other hand, Ephesians 4:22-24 commands us to actually put off our old self and put on the new. In this way we actively appropriate what Christ has done on the cross.

Renewing our minds is an ongoing process. Colossians 3:10 says, “...the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator.” Ephesians 4:23 commands us “to [continually] be made new in the attitude of your minds.” It is God who continues to

make us new, but we are to be involved. This is an active, progressive, life-long process, by which we allow God to bring our inner being into closer and closer conformity to Christ. See Rom. 12:1-2.

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As we allow God to renew our minds, our expectations become more realistic through his knowledge, and our attitudes become the very attitudes of Christ (Phil. 2:1-8).

Key Elements in Hebrews on Renewing Our Minds

Hebrews is a helpful handbook for this process. It gives us a glimpse of the mighty, eternal Son of God, Creator of the universe, with abundant power to renew us. But it also reveals the humble Savior, who became like us so that he could truly empathize with our weaknesses. Both of these facets of Christ are needed for renewing our minds.

Hebrews gives us at least six key elements for renewing our minds. These elements are described throughout the Word.

1. The Word of God. Heb. 4:12-13. God’s Word has power to pierce our soul, mind and spirit. As it penetrates our innermost being, it brings revival, wisdom, joy and enlightenment. See Psa. 19:7-8.

According to Hebrews 2:1, we must pay careful attention to the Word. Meditating on God’s Word renews our minds. As it penetrates deeply, it renews wrong attitudes and enlightens unrealistic expectations. See Psa. 1:2 and 107:20.

2. Prayer. Heb. 4:14-16. Prayer brings

gracious help from our sympathetic High Priest to deal with weaknesses, including attitudes and expectations which need renewing. Because He experienced the reality of our humanness, we can trust Him for mercy and grace to help us in times of need.

3. Faith. Heb. 11:23-26. Moses is only one example of a person whose mind was renewed through faith. Our trust in God empowers and motivates us to line up our thoughts and attitudes to be like His.

4. Look to Jesus and consider Him. Heb. 12:2-3. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, and consider Him, so we won't grow weary and lose heart. It's revealing to take a good look at ourselves in the light of the Word. But then we must turn our minds from ourselves to Jesus. As we do, we experience His renewing.

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5. Ministry of others. Heb. 3:13 and 10:24-25. Other people in the body of Christ are powerful instruments in God's hands for renewing our minds. We need others to help clarify our expectations, and to confront our destructive attitudes.

6. Action. Heb. 12:1-3. Our actions are based on the Word, prayer and faith. We are to actively lay aside everything that hinders us, including our sins, and to run our race with perseverance. Scripture gives us many other actions which help renew our minds.

As we apply these and other biblical principles in the renewing process, we experience greater and greater renewal. In the process we find that our internal stress diminishes, and we experience a healthier perception of new stress situations.

Healing in 2 Corinthians

In Paul's second letter to the Corinthian believers, God gives us at least ten principles for healing sore spots, based on Paul's life. He experienced many wounds, and the Holy Spirit revealed these principles for our benefit. Study these passages carefully, and begin applying them to any sore spots you have.

1. Acknowledge the pain. (1:8-10; 2:4)
2. Share the pain with God. (12:8)
3. Share it with others. (1:8-9; 6:4)
4. Allow God to heal through his comfort, directly or through others. (1:3-4)
5. Enlist prayer help. (1:11)
6. Repent if you're aware of any sin in your life. (7:9-10)
7. Forgive if others caused your pain. (2:7-11)
8. Fix your eyes on the Lord and on eternal realities. (2:14; 4:18)
9. Accept God's grace in place of your weakness. (12:9-10)
10. Give thanks to God, especially in times of pain. (2:14)