

SPIRITUAL RESOURCES FOR MANAGING STRESS

As God's children we have immeasurable resources at our disposal for managing stress effectively. God provides these resources so we can live abundant, fruitful lives under great amounts of stress. They are our greatest source of help in times of stress. Paul's prayer for the Colossians in 1:9-14 illustrates some of these resources.

However, applying spiritual resources does not automatically keep us from experiencing distress. Jesus experienced profound distress as he went to the cross. Let's not fall into the trap of thinking that our spiritual resources aren't working because we feel bad.

Spiritual resources are objective and subjective in nature. Objective resources exist independently of us. Their power is without limit, but we must appropriate them by employing our subjective resources, through our knowledge of God. Here are some of our key spiritual resources, very briefly described. Make your own ongoing study of God's Word, and discover for yourself resources you can use most effectively as you face stressful situations.

Objective Resources

Each of these resources can be seen from three viewpoints: Identity, Attributes and Functions. Here are a few examples to give you ideas for further study. You will be wonderfully blessed and helped if you begin studying through the Word to discover more about these incredible resources, not just for managing stress, but for living victoriously.

1. God the Father.
 - a. Identity (who He is): He is the Father of compassion and God of all comfort (2 Cor. 1:3).
 - b. Attributes (what He is like): He is compassionate, gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love (Psa. 103:8).
 - c. Functions (what He does for us): He comforts us in our troubles (2 Cor. 1:4).
2. God the Son.
 - a. Identity: He is the Shepherd and Overseer of our souls (1 Pet. 2:25).
 - b. Attributes: He is faithful (Heb. 3:6), and gentle (Matt. 11:29).
 - c. Functions: He gives us rest (Matt. 11:28), and sympathizes with our weaknesses (Heb. 4:15).
3. God the Holy Spirit.
 - a. Identity: He is our Counselor (Comforter) (John 14:26).
 - b. Attributes: He can be grieved (Eph. 4:30).
 - c. Functions: He helps us in our weakness, intercedes for us (Rom. 8:26).
4. God's Word.
 - a. Identity: It is the sword of the Spirit (Eph. 6:17).
 - b. Attributes: It is living, active, sharper than any double-edged sword (Heb. 4:12).
 - c. Functions: It gives endurance and encouragement (Rom. 15:4).

The Bridge of Knowledge

Before objective resources can be appropriated we must cross the bridge of knowledge. We must come to know God and his Word, not only intellectually, but experientially, on a heart level. “His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him. . .” (2 Peter 1:3). Our heart knowledge of God enables us to draw on Him during times of stress, and so utilize our subjective resources.

Subjective Resources

1. Faith. We need faith to integrate and appropriate all of God’s resources. Hebrews 11:1 describes two types of faith. “Assurance” (hupostasis) is passive, resting faith. It literally means “a foundation, the ground on which one builds a hope.” It is a defensive weapon (Eph. 6:16). “Conviction” (elegchos) is active, assertive faith. It means proving or testing, “a proving of unseen things.” Both active and passive faith form one powerful resource for handling stress.

2. Spiritual Vision. Ephesians 1:15-19 says that the eyes of our heart may be enlightened to be able to see the unseen spiritual reality of God’s objective resources. In 2 Corinthians 4:18, Paul spoke of fixing his eyes on what is unseen rather than on what is seen. This is a growth process in which we must be actively involved. The ability to see beyond our physical situation and perceive spiritual reality enables us to appropriate God’s powerful resources for handling stress well.

3. Prayer. Prayer brings us into direct, immediate contact with the Lord. Faith and spiritual vision are necessary for effective prayer. All three are essential for managing

stress. These five types of prayer help us in stress situations. You might add others.

- a. Confession of sinful reactions (Psa. 32:1-5; 1 John 1:9).
- b. Petition for God’s help (Phil. 4:6-7).
- c. Pouring out our hearts to God (Psa. 55:22; 62:8).
- d. Thanksgiving (2 Cor. 2:14; Eph. 5:20; Phil. 4:6-7).
- e. Praise (Psa. 68:19; Heb. 13:15).

4. The Body of Christ. Other believers are a powerful resource in stressful times. Many Scriptures emphasize this. In Colossians 2:2, Paul prayed that believers’ “...hearts may be encouraged as they are knit together in love” (RSV). Are you knit together with others in love? God never intended that we try to handle life’s struggles alone. Here are just a few ways we help each other in times of stress.

- a. Prayer (2 Cor. 1:11; Eph. 6:18-20; James 5:16).
- b. Mutual upbuilding (Rom. 14:19; 1 Thess. 5:11).
- c. Mutual comfort (2 Cor. 1:3-4; 7:5-6).
- d. Mutual encouragement (Heb. 3:13; 10:24-25).
- e. Mutual burden bearing (Gal. 6:2).
- f. Counsel, etc. (Col. 3:16; 1 Thess. 5:14).

5. Other resources. Many other resources for managing stress can be added to this list. Here are three to whet your appetite.

- a. Joy (Neh. 8:10).
- b. Rest (Matt. 11:28-30).
- c. Peace (John 14:27).