

Question: Stress seems to have taken control of my life. I get more tense and irritable as the day goes on. How can I deal with the stress mess? What would Jesus do?

What we call stress is usually an internal response to external factors in our lives. Thus, it is a sign of overload. Like pain, feelings of stress serve as a warning system to protect us from further harm. Stress is a symptom that something is wrong and changes may be needed.

I would suggest that you begin by identifying the sources of your stress instead of merely trying to deal with the symptoms. Because the problem of stress is itself so complex, I do not want to over simplify. Yet, I do believe we can draw some principles from Jesus and the Bible that can help us.

- After identifying the sources of your stress, set some priorities. Jesus said, “Seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well” (Matthew 6:33). Organize your life’s activities around your priorities, and focus on the things of higher priority first. Often this process will also bring the things of lesser importance into place without all the worry and hard work.
- Do not try to handle everything at once. Again Jesus said: “Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own” (Matthew 6:34). You may need to back away from some things until another day. By the time you return, any anticipated difficulties may have been solved.
- Take some time off and get away for renewal. I believe that’s why God gave the Sabbath as a day of rest each week. In fact, God’s law to the Jews shows that even the land needs a Sabbath one out of every seven years. During his ministry on earth, Jesus often took time to go away and rest before returning to his extremely busy schedule.
- Give your relationship with Jesus Christ top priority in your life. When you do this you will find that you are never alone in facing the stressful events in your life. Through regular times of prayer,

Bible reading and worship it is possible to draw strength and wisdom for coping with life's issues.

The apostle Peter wrote: "Cast all your anxieties on him because he cares for you" (1 Peter 5:7).

This is not the final word on stress. There are other helpful principles and practices for dealing with stress. But these principles are primary, and they can move you in a direction to discover other help as needed. May God bless you for a life of productivity and peace instead of stress.

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