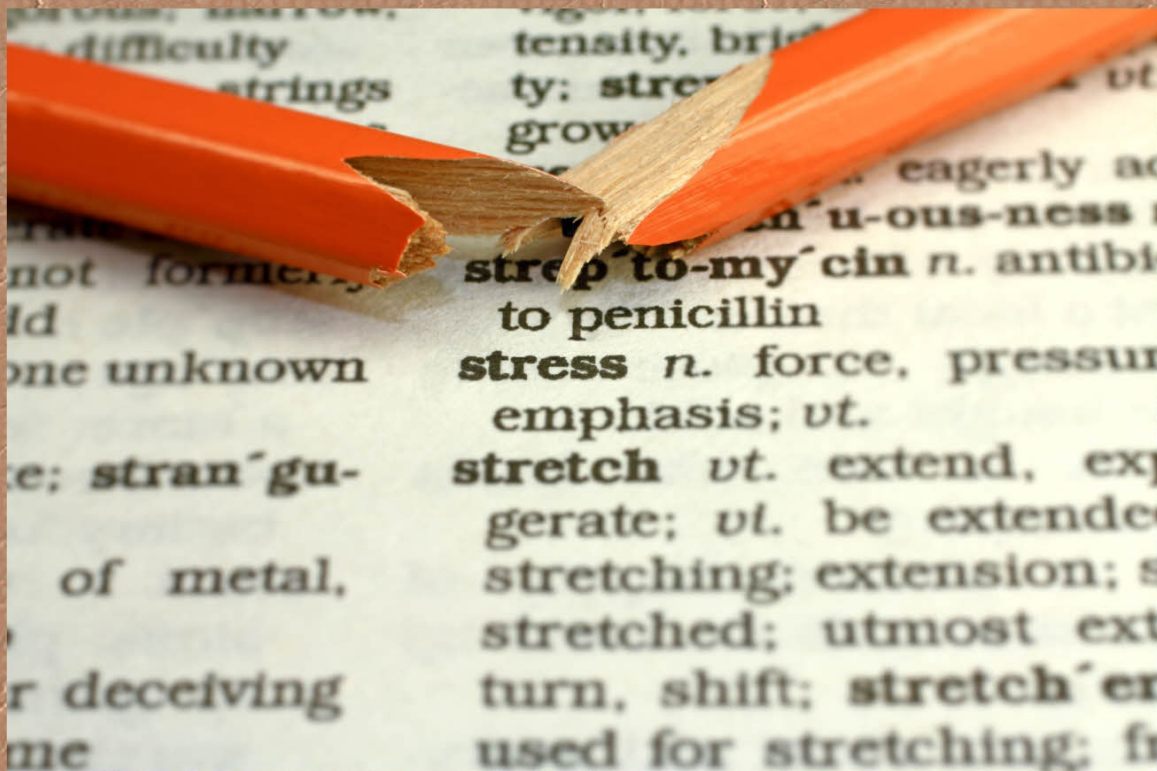


Coping Successfully with Stress and Distress



Desmond Ford PhD

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by

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Preface

There is a place where the inhabitants have no pressure — the cemetery. But that is about the only place, for pressure is an inescapable and often valuable part of life. In fact, if you're alive and not experiencing stress — that itself can be a stress. It's the pressure of stress that gets things done — but also sometimes gets people undone.

Stress is the pressure from outside that makes us feel tense inside. The millions of pill-poppers, martini-gulpers, knuckle-crackers, and nail-biters testify that failure to handle pressure aright over a long period inevitably leads to illness. Knotted guts, touchy temper, regular inability to sleep, leads to the sale of more than \$500 million worth of tranquilizers each year. Annual sales of other pharmaceutical preparations which are designed to act on the central nervous system total beyond \$1.5 billion. Consider also that on the average over two hundred packets of cigarettes are smoked per person each year in the U.S.A. and Canada.

Research on the relationship between mind and body only began to surge ahead in the 1930's. Now we know that between seventy and ninety percent of illnesses are either originated or exacerbated by nervous stress. Tax payers are paying an ever-increasing slice of their salary to compensate for the rise of stress-related diseases.

Prevention should ever be preferred to cure. Too many or too drastic changes or pressures inevitably result in harmful tension and possible breakdown. If this is the case, then we must find wisdom to cope with such "triggers" as personal loss, illness and injury, life-style changes, job changes, money problems, family upheavals, retirement, guilt, disappointment, etc. The purpose of this little book is to give help right at this point of prevention.

To encourage you, may I insist that researchers have concluded that it is not so much the high-tension job or the over-tensed program which is primarily responsible for emotional stress, but the individual's personality. It is at this level that attention is most needed. Only the non-conformist will make first class progress in coping with stress, for the typical American adult is so concerned about keeping up with his fellows (if he can't outstrip them) that he is afraid to relax. Most of us are over-ambitious, ever striving to be likable, social, well-informed, and to achieve.

Only a true sense of priorities, and the readiness to pay the price of a disciplined, organized life can guarantee survival and true success. First of all, insights from our Creator are needed both to inform and motivate us for the fight.

I believe you will benefit in a multitude of ways by applying the principles set forth in the following pages. The author is neither a medical doctor nor a psychiatrist but this particular area of stress research has been a necessary avocation for me for over forty years because of my own temperament and early environment, each of which was provocative of intense stress.

After working several years in a large newspaper firm I felt called to the ministry. As pastor, evangelist, and college professor for twenty years (after securing post-graduate degrees), as I interacted with people of all psychological and physical

shapes and sizes in over thirty countries, I developed some practical convictions about the differences between success and failure in lifestyles. These convictions have been solidified by the study of thousands of books and the fruitage is recorded simply in this tiny volume.

Since I first spoke on radio several years ago on the topic of stress. Good News Unlimited has found that listeners requesting these particular tapes exceeded by about one hundred percent the number writing in for any other cassettes in our extensive catalog. This is entirely appropriate inasmuch as one of the major aims of Good News Unlimited is to apply the gospel to the whole range of human needs — physical, mental, and spiritual. We believe that God's good news has no limits. It is our goal to make the gospel practical, bringing forth in those who receive it the fruit of health, joy, and service to the glory of God.

While everything suggested in these pages has scientific and medical backing in abundance, the main principles have been drawn from the inspired Word — the Bible. He who made us knows best how we "tick" and there is no substitute for the mind-set and life-style that our Creator and Redeemer has recommended.

I desire to tempt you to read and inwardly digest the following pages. Therefore, may I offer you a prescription at the outset for deactivating the very stresses that may have led you to obtain this little book? Ready? Here goes!

It is impossible to experience strong emotions of any kind while physically relaxed. So, here and now, I invite you to imitate the last sleeping cat you saw. Remember how such animals sag at both ends if you pick them up in the middle? Did I hear you say that you can't relax? Listen, you CAN, and this very hour. After brisk physical activity the muscles automatically relax, and furthermore the soothing endorphins are secreted to calm frayed feelings.

Perhaps you have already been sitting tensed for hours. Get out of that chair, put on some comfortable shoes and walk briskly — anywhere, though preferably among scenes of nature if that's possible. Twenty minutes to half-an-hour will do for a start. If you own a portable cassette player take it with you and listen to classical music or anything that's restful. For another time, prepare an additional cassette of passages from Psalms 23, 37, 139, 142; Lamentations 3:21-26; Philippians 4, John 14-15, 1 Corinthians 13, Romans 8, and Revelation 21, 22. As you walk, consciously breathe deeply and slowly (at least for the start).

Resist the tendency of your mind to turn to problems. Treat the time as a sabbatical period. Always remember that rest away from usual activities is not a matter of doing nothing — rest is repair, and the more important your work, the more necessary is rest.

After the walk, return to a quiet room and stretch out, even if only for fifteen minutes. People who are not muscularly tired can never rest properly; their emotions can reign supreme to their detriment. During your rest period again resist the temptation to think negatively. Ask yourself such questions as: "What worried me six months ago? (It's most unlikely you will remember!) Which of my senses or family members would I surrender to have all my current problems solved? If I was invited to do a

special task on the other side of the globe for a year, would the world stop until my local problems had been solved by someone else." Say to yourself over and over if necessary, some of the promises of Scripture:

"The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want." "The Lord is my light and my salvation, of whom shall I be afraid?" "In quietness and confidence shall be your strength " "Rest in the Lord and wait patiently for him." "The very hairs of your head are all numbered." "Not one sparrow will fall to the ground without your Father's will."

Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed upon thee." "Go in peace." "My presence shall go with thee and give thee rest." "In thy presence there is fulness of joy, in thy right hand are pleasures for evermore." "Because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved." That's the recipe for dealing with immediate tensions. Remember that whatever gets your attention, gets you. Try the prescription, yawn and read on.

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CHAPTER 1

Defusing Life's Stresses by God's Pattern of Living

We can no more avoid stress than we can avoid eating, drinking, and breathing. But we can learn to reduce it to manageable amounts, and to handle it so it will not destroy us.

Why can't we avoid stress? Because it is the inevitable friction that comes from two things rubbing together. And all day we are rubbing and being rubbed by people and things. Most of the stress comes from the first — people. The philosopher Sartre said, "Hell is other people." But he forgot to add that so also is heaven.

Because we are not almighty, because we are fragile, it is inevitable that many things will go against us, or seem to. We are contending with the universe where both law and chance seem to threaten continually — the laws of matter and motion, and the unexpected chance upheavals which none of us can avoid, anymore than we can avoid getting wet if we stand out in a storm.

If stress is inevitable, then we do not need a course in how to avoid it, but how to cope with it. Surely some stress can be avoided, but will we collapse helplessly under that which cannot be averted?

Nervous breakdowns, mental illness at the functional level, ulcers, ruptured relationships with friends and family, insomnia, worry, and a thousand diseases are the result of intolerable levels of stress. All of us suffer from stress to some degree, but the extent of our suffering depends upon how much we know about how to live. Universities teach how to make a living but not how to live! But in this little monograph, we will give a capsule summary of what a Christian psychiatrist would teach in such a course.

The Ammeter Test of Vitality

First of all let's take a test to check how well or how poorly we are responding to the stresses of our lives. We are familiar with the ammeter on the dashboard of a car which records whether the battery is losing or storing electrical energy. We are going to apply the ammeter principle to ourselves. It is possible to test whether we are giving out more energy than we are storing and therefore paving the way for sickness.

I will suggest seven common symptoms which any of us could be experiencing. When they occur with regularity and in combination with each other, you can be sure that you are enduring more stress than you can safely handle. The symptoms we shall mention are not significant if only experienced singly or occasionally, but they are most significant if they recur frequently and with several others of the group. Ready? Check your energy level by this ammeter test.

1. Irritability without known reason. Do you find yourself increasingly liable to become angry at trifles? Are the other members of your family becoming more wary of you because from time to time you explode unreasonably? Do you find that a thousand things each day are upsetting and seem to be traps to bring you pain and anger?

2. Difficulty in concentration. Have you suddenly found that your capacity to study and concentrate is lessening? Is it harder for you to read a heavy book or article in a magazine than it used to be? Is mental work unpleasant to you and something to be avoided? Do you tire very easily when you do the reading that you are required to do?

3. Failing memory for names. Most of us experience this in some degree but in times of nervous weariness this symptom increases rapidly. Do you continually find that names you should know well escape your recall?

4. Indigestion constantly. Have you found that the aftermath of each meal is disturbing? Does food seem laden with risks to you these days? Has your stomach become more real to you in recent times than ever before? A healthy stomach is unnoticed. If you know you've got a stomach there's something wrong!

5. Headache. There are few of us who do not have occasional headaches. Most of them come from emotional strain, and they are often engendered by tension-creating situations faced by us when weary. But if headache is becoming a regular feature of daily life, then you've got problems.

6. Chronic fatigue. Ordinary fatigue is the result of a build-up of lactic acid in the muscles due to muscular activity that has been prolonged. But over 90% of the fatigue of people in this generation is not physical at all but mental and nervous, chiefly the latter. Emotional strain and frustrating situations are the causes of most chronic fatigue. In some cases an able physician may track down physiological causes such as hormonal depletion, but for most of us it is the sheer daily stress of life that brings excessive weariness.

7. Mild depression. It is normal for emotions to fluctuate like the weather. A Negro spiritual says, "Sometimes I'm up, sometimes I'm down, yes Lord." That's a fairly normal experience. But when the downs come to cluster more than we've known them before, then something is happening to us which we need to check.

A person experiences strain when he or she has insufficient vitality to meet the demands of daily life. On such occasions their nervous system is not charging positively. If this situation is prolonged, sickness is inevitable and possibly breakdown could occur. But a little knowledge can save us great pain and turmoil, and the following pages will seek to offer you that life-saving knowledge.

How Shall We Live?

In Thornton Wilder's book *Woman of Andross* a young man is pictured on the eve of marriage. He knows that most of his friends are frustrated and have failed in their human relationships, and he's fearful he will do the same. He stares into the open heavens and cries out, "How should I live?" That's an appropriate inquiry for all of us.

It's natural to think that we need two lives, one to learn how to live and then the other to live as we have learned. Living is like learning to play the piano or the violin in public. One well-known man used to keep a filing folder with the heading FTIHD — Foolish Things I Have Done. Most of us could fill not just a file folder or a filing cabinet, but a room with records of such matters. Only God doesn't make mistakes. And with the exception of God, he who never makes a mistake never makes anything. But all of us wish to reduce the flow of errors and miscalculations that bring us so much pain. How is it to be done?

Why hasn't somebody told us how to live? Why hasn't God done so if he loves us? He has! But you say to me, "The Bible is too big a book to help me in emergencies. It would take a genius to distill what it's saying on how to live," Not really, the main clues to living are repeated again and again in that great book. But, you say, "If only God could fit it into a two minute recital." He did!

Millenniums ago God came down before a redeemed people and spoke from the top of a sacred mountain for about two minutes. He told people how to live. Again you respond, "That was only those old Ten Commandments." Yes, my friend, and no. The Ten Commandments, but not just the Ten Commandments. The Ten Commandments were a revelation of how to live, how to have the greatest amount of unalloyed happiness in this life and for eternity. We must not make the mistake of despising this unique event when God himself came down and spoke audibly to his people, for tucked away in these few words from God are secrets for happiness.

When God wanted to illustrate the wonderful plan of salvation he led his people to set up a sanctuary and in the heart of it was a box overlaid with gold, containing the two tables of the Ten Commandments. Everything in the sanctuary services revolved around the fact that the people had violated these commandments and therefore deserved death. God was illustrating how our sins could be forgiven through the atoning sacrifice of his Son and how all the blessings of that atonement could come to us through our High Priest, Christ Jesus. Worshippers, aware of their mistakes and failures, brought offerings and confessed their sin. When the sacrifice was slain the blood was sprinkled in the courtyard. If the whole congregation sinned, then blood was taken into the first apartment. But the significance of the symbolism was that obedience to divine law is essential for life and happiness, and that even God cannot connive with the violation of law.

The cross of Christ is the best evidence of the importance of God's moral code. He could only forgive our follies, our selfishness, and our rebellion at the terrible cost of his own Son's life. This indicates the permanence of his law, but it indicates it in such a way as to break the heart of lawbreakers and bring them back into harmony with that eternal code. See Matthew 5:17-19 and the following verses of that chapter for Christ's attitude to this law. (See also Ephesians 6:1-3; 1 Corinthians 7:19; Matthew 19:16-19; Revelation 12:17; 14:12; 15:5; James 2:10-12; Romans 7:12,14,24; 8:4,7.)

But now notice that when God gave the Ten Commandments to his redeemed people, in his love and mercy he was telling them how to live so as to avoid stress as much as it can be avoided in this imperfect world.

The order of the commandments is as follows: God-People-Things. The Ten

Commandments begin with God. "Thou shalt have no other gods before me." And they end with things. "Thou shalt not covet. . . anything. . . ." In modern life most people reverse the order, things are first, people are second, and God is last. More money is spent on cat food in this country than on taking the gospel to heathen nations. Poor God hardly gets a look in as regards most people's lives, and that is why such lives are loaded with excessive strains and stress. People are working against the grain of the universe when they change God's order. Jesus said, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matthew 6:33). Unless we put God first, and last, and best, in everything — nothing will work out. If we make primary things second we'll lose them and the secondary things as well. But if we make primary things primary then we'll win them, and the secondary ones will be thrown in.

Keep in mind that most of our stresses (apart from those self-caused by selfishness, fear, over-ambition, greed, etc.) are triggered by people. Therefore this principle that people are more important than things can be a life-saver in averting unnecessary tensions. Both in the family and on the job we are to live by the New Testament teachings that "we are members one of another," "all one in Christ Jesus," brethren "for whom Christ died." Repeatedly we are warned that when we sin against one another we sin against Christ (see e.g. 1 Corinthians 8:12). Perhaps the most fearful verse in the Bible is Matthew 25:40, "And the King will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me.' "

That word is not only solemn, but saving! People inevitably tend to reflect to us our own attitudes toward them — even mothers-in-law! Suppose that at home and at work we sanctified all interchanges with the awareness that we were dealing with creatures whose lives can measure with the life of God, beings beyond value because they have been bought with the blood of Jesus Christ, Would not our attitudes then be marked by friendliness rather than ferocity? Painstaking honesty rather than deception? Sensitivity rather than severity? An ounce of honey is worth a ton of gall in all relationships.

Many sad parents are to a large degree responsible for their own heaviness of heart because they have forgotten that people are more important than things. When a home teaches the children that things are the great goal, then human relationships rupture, and stresses and strains accumulate until family members reach the breaking point. Many fathers spend more time polishing their shoes than they do interacting with the hearts and minds of their children. They have forgotten that people are more important than things. When families are self-centered in their living and forget that service is the rent we owe for the space we occupy, then they are teaching that things are more important than people and God. Calamity inevitably follows.

Turning "Musts" Into "May I's?"

Observe that in Exodus 20 we are told that before God gave the Ten Commandments he reminded the people that he had delivered them from the slavery of Egypt. People who remember the great deliverance of God in saving them from the guilt and power of sin will gladly obey their Redeemer. Then the commandments become promises to grateful souls. "Thou shalt not kill. Thou shalt

not commit adultery." The soul that is unredeemed reads it another way, "Thou shalt not kill. Thou shalt not commit adultery." So the starting point is vital — when we have accepted God's great redemption all his biddings are enablings, all his commandments are promises.

Law is the first fact of the universe and when God gave the Ten Commandments he was telling us that happiness is not casual but causal, for the universe is run by law. The very atoms march in tune, and so must we. Life works on the harvest principle, and the mirror principle, and the echo principle. That is to say, what happens to us usually depends a great deal on us. Life reflects and echoes the things in our own hearts and minds — usually. "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap" (Gal 6:7). All trouble comes from violated laws. Sometimes it can happen that the trouble which descends upon us does not come from our personal violation of law, but it does come from some type of law violation somewhere. Scripture says: "the curse causeless shall not come" (Prov 26:2). We should never say that every person in trouble is responsible personally for that trouble, but it has to be admitted that the majority of our troubles are usually self-caused and spring from violation of law, either moral or physical.

A musician must obey the laws of harmony, and an artist must obey the laws governing color and blending, and the scientist knows that all research has to be based on inviolable law. And so for all of us, the best life is available only to the obedient. As a generalization it can be said, all happiness and all sorrow can be traced to obedience or disobedience to natural law (see 1 Jn 3:4; Lam 3:39).

Pure Love the First Cure for Stress

When God gave the Ten Commandments from Mt. Sinai he was telling us that the greatest secret for combating the stresses and distresses of life is the exercise of unselfish, disciplined love — love to God and man. Jesus recognized that the Ten Commandments were about love, for he summed them up in the two great commandments (see Matt 22:36-40). We are told in Deuteronomy 33:3 that the occasion at Sinai was a demonstration of the fact that God loved his people. Life was meant to revolve around love. It is the greatest protecting buffer against the "slings and arrows of outrageous fortune."

No one has spelled out this truth better than Erich Fromm, in his fine classic, *The Art of Loving*. Fromm points out that love is the answer to the problem of human existence. Human beings are born without willing it, and then against their will they die. A person often dies before those whom he loves, or they may die before him. Such awareness brings a sense of aloneness, separateness, helplessness, before the mighty forces of nature and the world. This separate, disunited existence is an unbearable prison, and the prisoners feel that they will become insane unless they can liberate themselves and unite themselves with others in the world outside.

After leaving the womb this need of union through love is first fulfilled by the mother. Her closeness, skin, breast, bring unutterable satisfaction to the newborn child. That mother is most unwise who frequently leaves the child alone when awake, or in the care of strangers. Such experience is threatening to the wellbeing of the child and can have life-long consequences.

The child is taught to love by the parents. The mother bestows unconditional love. The child feels that whatever it does it is still accepted and cherished. This is vital for its sense of security and development. The father's love tends to be different. This is conditional love. It is the father's part to teach discipline and the necessity of obedience, the laws of life. Of course the father's love should be patient and tolerant rather than threatening and authoritarian. But nevertheless it shows the need to recognize and fulfill the realities of existence — the laws which govern things and people.

Our Creator intends that the child should ultimately become his own mother and father by the time of maturity. Conscience is to represent both the unconditional love of the mother and the disciplined love of the father. This is the basis for all subsequent mental health, and where it fails to develop neurosis is the result. If a child has a loving but over-indulgent mother and a weak, uninterested father, emotional immaturity is almost inevitable unless some new influence intervenes. Says Fromm:

What is characteristic of all these neurotic developments is the fact that one principle, the fatherly or the motherly, fails to develop or — and this is the case in the more severe, neurotic development — the roles of mother and father become confused both with regards to persons outside and with regard to these roles within the person. Further examination may show that certain types of neurosis, like obsessional neurosis, develop more on the basis of a one-sided fatherly attachment, while others, like hysteria, alcoholism, inability to assert one's self and to cope with life realistically, and depressions, result from mother-centeredness. (pp. 45, 46)

Human beings have other methods of finding a solution to the threat of isolation, loneliness and weakness. Obsession with power or the frantic endeavor to accumulate material possessions, represent two such faulty methods. Better approaches are those of artistic creation, or the service of God and man. One of the least mature methods is that of pursuing orgiastic states. Research of the early 1980s showed that there were thirty-five million persons in this country on illicit drugs, and in many cases there was addiction to several drugs at one time. Excessive sexual pursuits is another form of this method of fulfillment. Yet another is alcoholism which involves over ten million people in the U.S.A.

But the most frequent solution for multitudes has always been that of a union based on conformity with society — its customs, practices and beliefs. By conforming to those around them a false sense of security is engendered.

As we look at God's revelation from Mt. Sinai we find the real secret of love — a love that is a response to God's prior love manifested in redemption.

God has warned us in his loving mercy of the mirror principle of life. In Exodus 20:6,7 we are told that all reap what they sow. God says that he shows "steadfast love to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments," but also that he visits pain upon all those who hate. Let us therefore underline the fact: Recognition of the truth that the universe is run by law and that the obedient are most likely to

avoid unnecessary stresses, is the primary knowledge we need for living aright.

When we remember that the laws of the universe are a reflection of the heart of love that controls all, we should feel no reluctance to come into harmony with them.

CHAPTER 2

The Heart Is the Key

In the New Testament we find that in Christ's first recorded sermon he made it quite clear that happiness was the result of what people are, not what they have, nor what happens to them. Just contemplate these marvelous words:

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied. Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God. Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. (Matthew 5:3-10)

Jesus declares to be happy (blessed) those who are humble in spirit, who hunger and thirst after righteousness, who are peacemakers, pure, and merciful. What a magnificent revelation with which to begin his ministry — happiness depends chiefly on what we are. Christ was but echoing the Old Testament revelation. In Proverbs we read, "Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life" (4:23). "As he thinketh in his heart, so is he" (23:7). The one freedom that can never be taken from any of us is the freedom to choose our response to the troubles and buffeting of life. But our choices will depend upon what we have made ourselves by previous choices. That is, our choices depend upon our character.

The Inside Determines the Outside

It is absolutely vital to understand that experience is not what happens to us but what we do with what happens to us. And what we do with what happens to us depends upon our own hearts and minds. The relationship between mind and body is very intimate. Each affects the other tremendously. When the Bible declares that as we think so we are, it is setting forth not only a psychological truth but a physiological one. Think of how we shed tears when the mind is burdened with sorrows. Think of the way in which we sweat when we are scared and fearful, and how the temperature of the hands and feet can change. Remember the white face of someone who suddenly received a fright. Remember your own racing heart when excited, and the pant of passion, and the sob of horror. All of these things are the physiological results of thinking.

The mind initiates all such changes. When something upsets us or puts us on tension the hypothalamus behind the cerebrum is greatly stirred and it influences the pituitary, the master of all the endocrine glands, particularly the adrenals. And the hormones from these glands secreted into the blood affect every cell of the body. This is why sometimes we can't sleep at night if something exciting or stressful or worrying has come up just before bedtime. The adrenals have sent adrenalin

through the body and mind. The adrenalin is there in case we have to fight or take flight. When we do neither, but go to bed, we do not lose consciousness until the adrenalin has drained away from each cell of the brain.

It would be worth a million dollars to each of us just to remember this simple fact — feelings follow thoughts. When we choose our regular thoughts we choose our regular feelings. All depression that is not hormonal or chemical springs from wrong thinking. We cannot indulge bitterness or anger or anxiety without precipitating feelings of depression.

Observe how very practical these matters are. If our mind triggers our bodies, and if our thoughts trigger our feelings, then there are obviously golden rules to obey if we wish to avoid being overcome by the stresses of life. We shall no more permit negative thoughts to reign in our minds than we would permit a burglar to set up house in our home.

Roger Babson, the great statistician, was once asked, "How come you have lived so long and so well?" He said, "We have a rule in our house, that we don't say anything negative after sundown." That's a mighty good rule. It also applies at all mealtimes. We should never discuss things that cause wrong thoughts, negative thoughts, at mealtime. Never eat when you're sad, mad, or bad. Some might die of starvation if they take me too literally, but the principle remains true.

Who Do You Think You Are?

We are not what we think we are, but what we think — we are. For example, a man's own view of himself and his conclusion to the issue of whether life has meaning will greatly determine the intensity of his personal stresses. If he sees himself with no value, and feels he deserves troubles, then his self-worthlessness increases. Every sorrow that comes his way he will take as a judgment and a punishment and his self-worth will be diminished still further. He finds it impossible to be "loyal to the royal in himself." In contrast, the person who has found the gospel, who knows that God gave his Son for sinners and welcomes them — that person can handle stress as one who already has the richest yields of existence in his grasp. Such persons will remember that the north wind made the Vikings and that kites rise high against the wind. In other words they will view the stresses and strains of life as part of divine discipline to help them mature and grow.

Troubles are for us, not against us, if we are in Christ. One can easily tell whether one is rightly adjusted to God and man. What is our reaction to criticism? If we cannot stand to be criticized by another, if we hate those who suggest we are less than perfect, then something is drastically wrong within. Our own soul is still diseased because we have not accepted the healing forgiveness of God, and because of that we cannot forgive others — and because of that we cannot handle the stress they bring us.

Genesis 1:26 says we are made in the image of God. Paul can speak about the "brothers for whom Christ died." Every soul is of definite value to God because of the redemption of the cross. Luke 15 tells us that God seeks the lost individuals one by one. When Napoleon was asked how he got on in a certain battle, he replied that

things had gone well, that he hadn't lost anybody of importance, just several thousand soldiers. God is not like that. Every one of his soldiers is tremendously precious in heaven's sight. God is like a librarian who knows all the books in the library. He knows us all by name. When Jesus came by a certain tree he looked up and called out, "Zacchaeus!" He not only knew that a man was up a tree, but he knew the name of that man.

And it was similar after his resurrection. When Mary was weeping, not perceiving him to be the risen Christ, he called her by name. The book of Acts reminds us that on one occasion he could send a messenger to a certain street and a certain house and a certain man. He knows all about us, and he cares.

Remember the wild Helen Keller? From two years of age she was blind, deaf, and violent. She was violent because she was angry and she was angry because she couldn't make sense of life. But Ann Sullivan taught her that everything has a name and that everything is loved. One day Ann had tried to spell out the word "water" to Helen but Helen could not understand the message. In her anger she tore her doll to shreds and tramped out of the house. Ann went before her and as they passed by a water pump in the yard she took Helen's hand and placed it underneath it and again spelled out the word "w-a-t-e-r." This time something happened within Helen's brain. She saw the connection between the water and the word. Like an electric shock the conviction came that everything had a name, that everything was known, and that everything had importance because it was loved. She went back into the house and tried to put the torn doll together. She determined that from now on life would be different, and it was.

I am stressing the great truth that only the soul who lives in an atmosphere of love can stand the strains of existence. All of us live with some degree of awareness of loneliness and separateness and helplessness.

Initial experience of separateness in life arouses anxiety, and anxiety becomes a source of intense pain and eagerness to find union with others. This union we call love. Our Creator from the beginning surrounded us with an atmosphere of love by devising the plan of family. We experienced the love of father and mother, brother and sister, then later the love of a spouse, and the love of son and daughter. If these loves are responded to aright we become whole and able to handle the problems of existence. Only those who have been loved can love. A happy home is the best preparation for a happy home of the next generation. But we are ever to remember that God can take us up even if our own family has failed us. And in accepting his love we find the capacity for love — and therefore the capacity to withstand stress successfully.

In one sense it is true that in everything we do we are seeking love. Even a kleptomaniac who steals compulsively does it from the psychological drive that if he possesses enough he will be loved. The over-ambitious person believes that if he arrives at the top he will be loved. Of course such persons are wrong but they do not find out until too late. If we have certainty of love through belief in the love of Christ, we are saved from overwhelming burdens of stress, stress that results from seeking for love in the wrong places at any cost.

In Genesis, chapter 3, we read how man rebelled against God. But in the following chapter we find he murdered his brother. It didn't take long, once God was rejected, to also reject man. Our relationship with each other is like the spokes in a wheel — we are nearer to each other as we get nearer the hub, God. But the further we are from the hub, the further we are from each other. Romans 1:18 tells us that all unrighteousness grows out of ungodliness. That's why the first table of the moral law has to do with our relationship to God, and then we come to the commandments dealing with our relationship to humankind. Only if we are right with God can we be fully right with men. And remember that most of our stresses come from our relationships with people, our violation of the law of love regarding them or their violation of the law regarding us.

Life is triangular — our relationship with ourselves, with God, and with our fellowmen. If we are right with God and have accepted his acceptance of us, then we can accept ourselves. Only then can we accept others. It's easy to find out whether we are right with God. If we are forever in trouble with other people, ever criticizing them, never loving them, it's because we have not accepted the love and forgiveness of God for ourselves. The only person who can forgive is the forgiven soul. The indulgence of hate creates terrible stress for the human system. Remember, what you think — you are. Wrong thinking, loveless thinking, makes a wrong you, and creates stress.

False Fears or True Loves?

What we are determines what we love. It also determines what we fear. Consider the following humorous story as an illustration of this principle.

A man known for his anxious temperament went to a hospital in Buenos Aires, Argentina to have a bunion removed. He was full of fears. He couldn't get anxiety out of his head and so he asked for a general anesthetic. When they gave him the anesthetic, he had a heart attack, so they cut open his chest and the sides of his heart. Then they had to put him in an oxygen tent, and here he had an unwanted stomach contraction, then a rupture, then peritonitis, and so they carried him out of the oxygen tent on a stretcher. He fell off the stretcher, broke a leg and collarbone, and had a heart attack again, so they had to cut open his throat this time, giving him a tracheotomy. That poor man finished up with a drainage tube from his stomach, a breathing tube in his throat, plaster on his leg and his arm in a sling — the bunion still intact! His fear led to all sorts of things that he didn't anticipate.

Then, too, you have heard about that man who owned a great deal more of the earth than any of us will ever own, who died after fifteen years of self-imprisonment, during which time he knew not the day, nor the season, nor the month, nor the year. This man tortured himself by isolation because he feared contagion from about. If anything was sent to him, or passed on to him, it had to be sterilized first. I'm referring to Howard Hughes who wasn't a millionaire or a multimillionaire, but a billionaire. It's estimated that he owned over two thousand million dollars worth of real estate, alone.

But what was his life like in those last years? Perhaps as a result of his air crashes, perhaps as a result of loose living, whatever the cause — Howard Hughes was a

man continually driven by fear, riddled with anxieties. Half-lunatic for the last fifteen years, he neglected himself dreadfully, living in penthouses, changing hotels from time to time. It ran into millions of dollars just to take his entourage of four doctors and six Mormon helpers, his guards, from country to country. He would live in a penthouse on the top of a hotel and there he let his straggly beard grow down to his waist, his matted hair grow halfway down his back. His fingernails grew to two inches long and his toenails were like yellow corkscrews. What a miserable life for anybody, let alone a man who could have bought anything he wished in this world — except peace, health, and happiness.

These two stories illustrate how wrong thinking can have a dreadful effect on physical, mental and emotional health — wrong thinking not only as regards matters feared, but as regards matters loved. The two most important things in the universe for us are what we fear and what we love.

Let's take the second one. I want to share with you a love letter that illustrates the importance of what we love. And in so doing may I remind you that seventy-five percent of diseases are diseases of choice, diseases that spring out of wrong loves that we won't surrender and which ultimately lead to overwhelming stress.

You are closer to me than any living creature, reposing in my pocket near my heart. With my lips, I caress you more than I do my family. When I awake, my thoughts turn to you and remain there all the day. I worship at your shrine with burnt offerings, constantly. At my desk, the fires seldom go out on your altar. I scatter your incense of smoke in the faces of my loved ones. I call upon you more than upon my creator. I pay more money for you than to the church and charities combined. I risk my life for you. By smoking, I take one chance in eight of having lung cancer and twice as many chances of death from heart attack. I take no such risk for my religion. I bear in my body the marks of my devotion to you — the color of my fingertips and skin. My body is so soaked with nicotine incense that when I perspire, many people hold their noses and walk away. A new light is dawning. I have become your slave. I do not smoke but suck one end of the cigarette while you smoke at the other. I am a sucker!

That's a love letter to a cigarette! It's well-known that ninety-five percent of lung cancer is preventable. Ninety-five percent! But I wonder if you know that seventy-five percent of all other cancers are preventable. Seventy-five percent of all other cancers depend on our choices regarding our environment, what we eat and drink, where we live, and what things we allow to affect our daily physical living and mental pursuits. There's a growing theory among specialists that certain people become prone to cancer because of their very negative attitude to life. That certainly won't cover all, because there are over eight hundred different types of cancer and in some cases heredity does have an influence. But for the most part, cancer is a disease of choice. It's what our head fears and loves that has most to do with our happiness and our health.

In contrast to the fears and anxieties of multitudes, contrast the triumphant faith of Paul the Apostle when he said:

We know that all things work together for good to them that love God If

God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things? Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? . . . Who shall separate us from the Love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? . . . Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Rom 8:28-39)

Those who have this kind of triumphant hope, because of right loves that dispel wrong fears — such persons will find the stresses of life greatly reduced.

CHAPTER 3

Inner Strength as an Antidote to Stress

It would help us all a great deal with our stresses if we would read the thirteenth chapter of 1 Corinthians every day. That chapter sets forth the controlling influence that enables Christians to withstand the stresses of life. That influence is love. True love is not a feeling but a principle of unselfish service and caring.

Love is patient and kind; love is not jealous or boastful; it is not arrogant or rude. Love does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrong, but rejoices in the right. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends. (vv 4-8)

Virtue Vitalizes, But Vice Vanquishes

I have mentioned our loves and our hates, and how they precipitate stresses upon us if misdirected. Let me come now to the common experience of insecurity and also that of disappointment and failure. Remember as we do so that emotional tension precipitates physiological changes which, if prolonged, bring sickness upon us. Emotions can result in a change in the amount of blood flowing into an organ, they can change the tensions of muscles, as well as the secretions of glands. Most of us know what happens when a person attempts to speak to an audience for the first time. The mouth becomes parched because alarm messages have gone from the emotional centers resulting in the drying up of salivary secretions. As for the matter of increasing the tension of muscles, tight muscles can produce pain and many tension headaches spring from tightened neck muscles. Similarly the involuntary muscles of the intestines are frequently affected by emotion. Diarrhea is a common result of emotional upset or tension. Heart and chest pains can be triggered by emotional turmoil and often what is thought to be a heart attack is really an anxiety attack.

Dr. William Sadler wisely wrote the following:

No one can appreciate so fully as a doctor the amazingly large percentage of human disease and suffering which is directly traceable to worry, fear, conflict, immorality, dissipation, and ignorance — to unwholesome thinking and unclean living. The sincere acceptance of the principles and teachings of Christ with respect to the life of mental peace and joy, the life of unselfish thought and clean living, would at once wipe out more than half the difficulties, diseases, and sorrows of the human race. In other words, more than one half of the present affliction of mankind could be prevented by the tremendous prophylactic power of actually living up to the personal and practical spirit of the real teachings of Christ.

The teachings of Jesus applied to our modern civilization — understandingly applied — not merely nominally accepted — would so purify, uplift, and

vitalize us, that the race would immediately stand out as a new order of beings, possessing superior mental power and increased moral force. Irrespective of the future rewards of living, laying aside all discussion of future life, it would pay any man or woman to live the Christ-life just for the mental and moral rewards it affords here in the present world. Someday man may awake to the fact that the teachings of Christ are potent and powerful in preventing and curing disease. Someday our boast in scientific development, as regards mental and moral improvement, may indeed catch up with the teachings of this man of Galilee. (*Practice of Psychiatry*, 1953, p. 1008.)

Let me now apply these principles to our frequent experiences of insecurity, failure and disappointment. One who believes in the overruling providence of God spells disappointment with an "H" — as His-appointment. If God is infinite, he knows every stick and stone in the universe. Even the Devil himself can't get at us except as the Lord permits. See the first chapter of Job, where Satan protested that God had set a hedge around Job. After Joseph had been through terrible sorrows he could say to his brothers who precipitated those troubles, "You meant it for evil, but God meant it for good" (Genesis 45:5; 50:20).

In Acts 16:5-10, we have the interesting story of how Paul wished to go to Bithynia. But we are told that "the Spirit of Jesus suffered him not." Bithynia was a very wealthy province in Asia Minor, and one would have thought that the gospel finding access there would have been a marvelous thing. But God prevented it. Instead Paul, while at Troas, received a vision to cross over to Philippi in Europe. This was the beginning of the Christian church of Europe. While Mohammedanism overran Asia Minor including Bithynia, Europe has been blessed by the Christian gospel for two millenniums because of Paul's disappointment.

But we do not read that Paul was angry or frustrated. He believed in the overruling providence of God. The disappointment did not bring him any major stress for his will was swallowed up in the will of God. If we really believed that God loves us, that he means to do us good, then the wills and torments that threaten us from disappointment would disappear because we would have the assurance that our Heavenly Father is in control and will bring good out of the most apparently disappointing situations.

Thus, it has to be said again that experience is not what happens to us but what we do with what happens to us. It's how we interpret matters that counts. It is not the actual stresses of life so much that are responsible for our sorrows and our diseases, but our faulty reaction to those stresses.

Mud or Stars?

You have heard of the two men who looked out through prison bars — one saw mud, and the other stars. That's the way it often is in life. Take retirement. One man retires and he's having a grand time for he can do all the hobbies he has longed to do for years. His health thrives. But now take another man. He's no longer needed at the office. Huh! He sickens and dies. One condition for continuing to live is the conviction of usefulness. If you don't have this important conviction, life may draw to a sudden close. The feeling of uselessness is a negative feeling that is destructive.

The Australian Aboriginals have a ceremony called pointing the bone. The tribal leader points a bone at a person and typically the person will die within days. The reason why these Aboriginals have died is because of what has happened in the mind. It's how they interpreted the pointing of the bone that mattered. Because they believed the witch doctor had the power to inflict death, as signaled by the bone pointing, they despaired and gave up the battle for life.

At the time of the second front in Europe many allied soldiers were wounded on the Anzio beachhead. Strangely enough, only about a quarter as many of the wounded at Anzio called for morphine as would have called for it at home in local hospitals with the same amount of pain. Why? Because the wounds at Anzio were a signal to the boys that they were going home. It meant they would soon be on the boat, and they would soon be with their families. To them the war would be over, and the wounds did not affect them as the same wounds would have affected them in civilian life.

Observe that while our health and happiness depends largely on what we eat and drink, they depend even more largely on what we think. What happens above your shoulders affects every cell of your body in every moment of time. It's safe for a ship to be in the sea, but it's not safe for the sea to be in the ship. Similarly, it's not the sorrows amidst which life's vessel plows that count, but whether those sorrows get inside the vessel. If we harbor trouble within the mind we become ill. But if we believe that all things work together for good for those that love God, then even the gales of trouble will push us onwards to success and glory.

It is what is within us that determines the result of what happens to us. Here the Christian has a tremendous advantage. Christ is in him, the hope of glory (Colossians 1:27). According to John 14-16 God has not left us alone, but has sent his Spirit to indwell us forever. That is the meaning of the Greek word for comforter — God alongside to help in all circumstances. How that changes life!

A mind that is filled with the promise of Scripture is a mind well-fortified against the battering of daily experience. The apostle Peter advised us to "cast all your anxieties on him, for he cares about you" (1 Peter 5:7). In the letter to the Philippians we find a recipe for successful living. In chapter 4 we read: "Have no anxiety about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be known to God" (v.6). What a recipe! Be anxious about nothing, be prayerful for everything, be thankful for anything. Try it and keep trying it. Notice the result: "And the peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus" (v.7).

In many cases of nervous breakdown the precipitating factor is not just the external strain but the continual fear of internal inadequacy. Such people are continually worrying about themselves and their own stamina and ability to survive. As Harry Emerson Fosdick has pointed out:

Many of us feel like trees in a high wind, and asked what occasions our anxiety, we naturally say, these tempests. But what we are really anxious about is our rootage. If we knew that we had roots deep set enough to stand

tempests, our morale would not be shaken.

At this point the deepest need in us meets the deepest fact in Christianity, and if today these two could be brought together, the result might change the course of many a life. Some of us are like cisterns — we are good as far as we go; we have our uses, but we cannot count on ourselves; the source of our supply is superficial; our reserves are limited; we cannot stand the prolonged drought. But some are like artesian wells, with resources that run deep, not at the mercy of transient circumstance. As Jesus said, "The water that I shall give him shall become in him a well of water springing up." [*Riverside Sermons*, 1958, p. 133.)

Christians make generous provision for feeding their bodies. But a large number who profess religion let their souls starve. They pay very little attention to spiritual nutrition. This results in their spiritual nature being so weakened that the mind lacks the power to surmount difficulties and threats.

Three-Pronged Attack Against Stress

If we are to adapt successfully to life's stresses we must learn to do the following:

1. Diversify the stressful agents.
2. Avoid long exposure to such agents by resting.
3. Take a proper attitude of mind.

In other words we must remember that we cannot take continued exposure to any single stress factor. Lift the strain somehow. Change is essential, even more so for mental workers. The sign that we are failing in this regard is fatigue. Above all things avoid self-pity which is the most common form of faulty reaction. Instead, turn to another form of action, either physical exercise or some type of spiritual service. But above all, cherish the promises of God and remember the cross of Christ, which while apparently tragic has brought infinite blessing to the world.

All should read regularly the great passages of Scripture warning against anxiety and undue concern about life's problems. Read Psalms 23, 37, and 142 for example. Here we are promised that we need not want for we have a good shepherd. We need not fret, for we can rest in God's love.

A very common error among capable Christians is that of compulsive working. Workaholics are not rightly representing the Christ who said "come ye yourselves apart and rest awhile."

As Dr. Fosdick pointed out:

There are two aspects to every strong life — rootage and fruitage, receptivity and activity, relaxation and tension, resting back and working hard. The man who cannot do the former can never do the latter well. He who cannot rest, cannot work; he who cannot let go, cannot hold on; he who cannot find

footing, cannot go forward — never! The offices of psychiatrists are littered up with folk who have mastered the techniques of activity and aggressiveness, and who are going all to pieces now because of that other technique they have failed to master: They have nothing to rest back upon.

"Let my soul take refuge from the crowding turmoil of worldly thoughts beneath the shadow of thy wings; let my heart, the sea of restless waves, find peace in Thee, oh God." That was St. Augustine's prayer. (*Ibid*, pp. 133, 136).

In our continual battle against stress our chief attention must always be given to what we ourselves are rather than just to what we do. Only a relationship of trust and obedience as regards our Creator and Redeemer can equip us for making the decisions which either mar or make our existence.

CHAPTER 4

Watch Out For These Blessings or Blights?

A man in deep trouble once came to Dwight L. Moody, spelled out his difficulties, and then said to the preacher, "Now what would you do if you were in such a mess?"

Moody replied, "Man, I would never have gotten into that predicament." Many of our stresses and strains come because of our follies, our carelessness, and our selfishness. Proper attention to our attitudes and habits can save us from many a slip and many a pain.

Four Major Sources of Stress

In John's Gospel, chapters 7-9, we read of Jesus walking in the court of the women by the treasury of the temple. It's here that he forgives an adulteress, deals with the religious leaders, and heals a blind man. The situation of Jesus in these chapters suggests to us some of the sources of life's main stresses.

A court of the women and the encounter with the adulteress remind us that sex is a major cause of stress for many. The reference to the treasury reminds us that money is another such cause. Then the interaction between Jesus as he revealed true religion, and the Pharisees who represented false religion suggests that religion too can be a cause of stress and distress. Finally, the man afflicted with blindness is a symbol of the many problems that come to us via infirmities of the body. Health or lack of it has much to do with our success in handling stress.

Let us consider these four sources of stress one by one.

1. Sex

All God's good gifts to humankind are capable of perversion. All great opportunities have their dangerous side. Sex was God's plan for teaching his children to share and to care — to love unselfishly. Physical union is intended as a symbol of a prior union of heart and mind between two people who love God supremely and each other as themselves. The sexual union is also a symbol of the relationship between Christ and his church. Scripture sets forth Christ as the bridegroom and the church as the bride. No more tender relationship could have been pictured. But as Satan has perverted all good things, so he has done with sex. Like electricity, fire, and many other servants of mankind, it can become a bad master.

Sex was only intended to be a garnish to life, never the main dish. Those who reverse this violate the laws of the universe and bring trouble upon themselves inevitably. A married couple has joy to the extent they share the same lofty ideals and practice them. Those who give more importance to the body than the soul are liable to be trapped in an unfortunate liaison which will precipitate unending strain. Outward beauty perishes but the beauty of soul and temperament goes on into

eternity. There should be no close physical contact between members of the opposite sex until sufficient time has demonstrated the nature of the temperament of the person involved. To marry in haste means to repent at leisure. Furthermore, those who forget the necessity of temperance in the use of all God's good gifts including food and drink, rest and work, and sex, will eventually lose the gift or gifts.

Sex is one of God's best gifts. Along with friendship, worship, music, food and drink, seeing, hearing, and doing, it has been given us to enjoy (see 1 Timothy 6:7). The body is not to be regarded as a prison or tomb of the soul, nor as something independently glorious. Rather it is what St. Francis called "Brother Ass" — an expression which C.S. Lewis called "exquisitely right" because "no one in his senses can either revere or hate a donkey. It is a useful, sturdy, lazy, obstinate, patient, lovable and infuriating beast; deserving now the stick and now the carrot; both pathetically and absurdly beautiful." (*The Four Loves*, pp. 116-117.)

God created male and female and the distinction between the sexes is ever affirmed in Scripture. All unnatural relationships are condemned. It is never possible to improve on the creation pattern, and attempts to do so ultimately bring unbearable stress. See, for example, the Scriptural attitude to transvestism in Deuteronomy 22:5, and for warnings against other unnatural relations such as incest and homosexuality read Leviticus 18.

Celibacy is not exalted above matrimony in Scripture. "Forbidding to marry" is classified as one of the "doctrines of devils" (1 Timothy 4:1-3). But as Karl Barth insisted "coitus without coexistence is demonic." Physical union of the sexes has its right place only within marriage as a symbol and seal of a prior union of heart and mind.

1 Corinthians 7 is full of practical counsels about marriage which if heeded could prevent many unnecessary stresses. This chapter should be studied in a modern translation. Observe that it does not glamorize marriage but clearly affirms that it is an estate of discipline inevitably attended with "worldly troubles" (v 28). On the other hand, those who attempt to scoop the cream of life by sexual pursuits apart from marriage invite troubles of vastly greater magnitude. Recurringly throughout the book of Proverbs we read warnings to this effect.

Because marriage partners are still in the process of sanctification they will at times be tempted to affirm the truth of Socrates' dictum: "If you don't marry, you'll regret it, and if you do marry, you'll regret it." But there is no greater human aid in the battle of life than a compatible consecrated life partner.

Sexual temptation does not cease with marriage. Since the Fall man is by nature polygamous. It is too easy to despise what we have, and long for what we have not. We forget that when the latter is secured it will also ultimately pale. When we turn anything less than God into a god by excessive attention, we bring frustration upon ourselves. The sexual privilege, like eating and drinking, needs to be bridled lest excessive weariness and a pervasive mood of boredom result.

While the Levitical law in all its details is no longer binding upon Christians, the principle of temperance embedded in its laws concerning sex in marriage is still

relevant. Great eaters, great drinkers, and great "sexers" have rarely been great at anything else. The sexual drive, like steam, accomplishes most when confined within limits. No human drive should be surrendered to unconditionally. Every sane human being has to deny his own excessive and irrational impulses constantly — whether it be the desire to take, to hurt, to speed, or any one of a hundred other drives. And the denial in each case is in order to achieve a greater good. Just as every kite rises against the wind, so the practice of resisting temptations to excesses brings its own reward.

Sexual energies that are superabundant are best sublimated — providing the energy and drive for other pursuits. Two rules can help: "Guard well the avenues of the soul." Philippians 4:8 deals with that. Secondly, a simple spare diet and abundant exercise enable the mind to rule the body. It is impossible to think clearly, optimistically, or purely, unless physically vigorous every day.

2. Money

About seventy percent of human worries concern money. It's a major factor in causing divorce, and it is often a cause of impaired health. I mean by this that undue concern for amassing wealth or dealing with debt can be devastating to one's well-being. Long ago Dickens put into the mouth of one of his characters words like these: "Income: 20 shillings, expenditure: 19 shillings and 11 pence half-penny, result: happiness. Income: 20 shillings, expenditure: 20 shillings and a half-penny, result: misery." Dickens' father was a spendthrift who spent much of his time in a debtor's prison. Dickens was trying to warn us to keep our expenditures within our income, but many of us learn this lesson only through severe travail.

The thinker and writer Francis Bacon told us long ago that there are great but common truths that are readily forgotten — it's not what we eat but what we digest that makes us strong; not what we read but what we remember that makes us wise; not what we earn but what we save that makes us rich. Families without a budget are inviting trouble. And families that forget their stewardship, that all things come from God and that the first fruits of our increase should return to God, are denying themselves the special blessing of heaven on their financial situation. All our wealth is God's and should be used to his glory.

John Wesley had three rules regarding money: Get all you can, save all you can, give all you can. What we spend on ourselves is lost forever, but what we spend for the cause of God and the well-being of others is laid up in heaven for eternity. Those debts that cannot be comfortably handled by regular income should be avoided like the plague. There are few causes of greater stress than the worry of debt. It would save untold hardship if married couples would remember that their options are simple — they can increase their earnings or decrease their wants. Of the two, the second is by far the better.

3. Religion

As with all other good things this also is a two-sided coin. There are only two religions in the world, and only one of these is pleasing to God. The popular religion of the world says in effect, "Be good and God will love you." This religion is man-

centered, works-centered, subjective, and vain. In contrast the good news of the Bible is that Christ came into the world to save sinners. "This man receiveth sinners" (Luke 15:3). He loves and accepts us even while we are sinners. It is this acceptance of us that changes us. God "justifieth the ungodly." The glory of the New Testament religion is that we are saved on the basis of what Christ has done, not by what we do; by what he has felt, not by what we feel. Salvation is by grace alone, through faith alone.

The righteousness by which we are justified is one hundred percent but it is imputed rather than imparted. The righteousness of sanctification is imparted by the Holy Spirit but it is never one hundred percent in this life. When Christ returns and glorification of our whole being takes place then we will have one hundred percent righteousness within as well as without.

A believer now looks only to the imputed righteousness of Christ for his comfort. When he accepts what Christ did for him on the cross he has the verdict of the last judgment already and for as long as he believes. He has no need to be anxious about what God thinks of him but only what God thinks of Christ his substitute. He is not called upon to make his peace with God for Christ has already done that and Christ is his peace. Law remains as a standard but should never be used as a method of righteousness, Christ is the end of the law as regards righteousness [Rom 10:4]. Paul says he had to die to law as a method before he could live to Christ (Gal 2:19; Rom 7:4).

According to Holy Writ, "all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." Therefore "by the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified in his sight" [Rom 3:23, 20). Therefore we no longer look to the law as a means of achieving acceptance with God. While that law remains ever as a reflection of God's own character and is a standard of righteousness, it is impossible for those who have failed once in anything to use law as a method of obtaining acceptance with God.

Sin is our problem as a burden upon us, as a law over us, and a disease within us. Sin is our creditor, our tyrant, and our traitor. The guilt of sin, the power of sin, the presence of sin can only be dealt with by Jesus Christ and his gospel. He removes the guilt of sin the moment we believe. The power of sin is simultaneously crushed in principle as we behold God's great love for the sinner. But inasmuch as our sinful nature remains (while it does not reign) we can never depend upon our sanctification for acceptance. We are "accepted in the beloved," "complete in him," "without condemnation," made to "sit with him in the heavenly places" (see Ephesians 1:6; Colossians 2:10; Romans 8:1; Ephesians 2:6).

In summary, the only true religion asserts with Scripture that "by grace you have been saved through faith; and this is not your own doing, it is the gift of God — not because of works, lest any man should boast" (Ephesians 2:8, 9). If, however, we forget this religion of the Bible, and trust to anything in ourselves for acceptance and for peace, we are inviting stress.

In Matthew 11:28-30 Christ invites all who are weary and heavy laden to come to him and receive rest. Then he proceeds to say that as we learn of his meekness and lowliness we shall find rest. There is a rest in justification when we cease from

depending on anything in us or by us for acceptance. But there is a further rest in sanctification as Christ's own character is day by day imparted to us giving us victory over sin and making our lives beautiful with the fruit of the Spirit. God gives his gifts with both hands, he justifies no man whom he does not also sanctify. But perfect righteousness is found only in the imputed merits of him who lived and died for us.

False guilt is one of the unnecessary stresses experienced by many unfortunate Christians. Church groups often have a string of traditional ideas and rules which are not based upon Scripture. Culture often poses as revelation, and as sacred. We should learn to distinguish between true guilt which results from violation of a plain requirement of the Bible, and the uncomfortable feelings which are often manifested because of violated tradition or custom.

While a Christian will often be prepared to surrender his rights in minor areas so as not to unnecessarily offend, he or she will ever remember that they belong to the Lord and are not the slave of any human being or institution. A weak, uneducated conscience can be as great a cause of stress as a seared or silenced one. Such a conscience keeps accusing us over trivia that is not really of moral importance. True guilt is an important warning that something is wrong, but false guilt produced only by phony expectations and un-scriptural "rules" creates useless stress. Thus education of the conscience is essential for all of us if we are to avoid unnecessary stress.

"The name it and claim it" cult is a source of stress for simplistic religionists. The Bible does not endorse the philosophy that God is a cosmic bellhop springing to attention whenever we press the button in order that all our desires might be promptly fulfilled. "If we ask anything according to his will he hears us," is the Scriptural principle for answered prayer [1 John 5:14]. We are not God and have not the sense to discern always what would be good for us. If the Son of God himself had to pray by this rule how much more should we (Matthew 26:39)?

Every year in this country thousands of church people have nervous breakdowns. Many of these have their cause in teachings which exalt feelings and emotions above reason. Scripture has no brief for such a perversion, and sets forth the Christian life as something to be lived in the will rather than in emotional ecstasy. Feelings are like the noisy children in a nursery, but the will is the wise mother who should always do the controlling. Nowhere does the Bible promise that we will ever experience emotional "highs." On the contrary, innumerable chapters teach the opposite. See Job, Lamentations, Psalms. Peter reminds us that all Christians experience "heaviness" of spirit (1 Peter 1:6). God often causes us to grow more in our "dry" spells than during our happy ones. Read the counsels of C.S. Lewis in *Screwtape Letters* and H.W. Smith in *The Christian's Secret of a Happy Life*, and Thomas A Kempis in *The Imitation of Christ*, on this widespread but unnecessary stress.

Doubt for Christians is also often a burden. But when we learn to "believe our beliefs and doubt our doubts" rather than "doubting our beliefs and believing our doubts, this giant will be overcome. Ask yourself: "If I gave up Christianity, would I then be freed from doubts?" The answer is obvious — the doubts would be multiplied. When a man in distress sought Christ with the words, "Lord, I believe; help thou mine

unbelief he was not turned away, but strengthened and gladdened (Mark 9:24). Remember that there could be no doubt unless there was truth, just as there can be no shadow without light. Be content to know less than God, and rejoice in whatever light he has already made clear to you. It is your privilege to live a day at a time, taking one step at a time, regardless of a thousand mysteries.

Perhaps the greatest stress of all is recurring temptation. The believer must ever affirm the great truth that temptation is not sin. As Luther said: "We can't stop the birds flying over our heads but we can stop them making a nest in our hair." You may feel besmirched by evil thoughts, but if you refuse to cherish and dwell upon them, there is no guilt. Expect temptation and "fight the good fight of faith" knowing you are "accepted in the beloved" and that nothing can pluck you out of Christ's hand as you strive to trust and obey (1 Timothy 6:12; Ephesians 1:6; see also Romans 3:3-5 and James 1:2-4).

Every Christian should read frequently such supreme passages of Scripture as 1 Corinthians 13, Romans 8, and Matthew 5-7 in order to keep ever before the mind the true elements of genuine religion. The essence of the Christian faith has nothing to do with cultic or traditional bugaboos. It does not consist of negatives or "burdens grievous to be borne," The heart of Christianity is Christ and his teachings on faith, hope, and love. Said Paul: "Neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature." "Neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love." "Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but the keeping of the commandments of God." [Galatians 5:6; 6:15; 1 Corinthians 7:19).

No one said it better than Alexander MacLaren. Observe his words:

Religion is the devotion of the soul to God. Then everything besides is not religion, but at most a means to it. That is true about all Christian ordinances It is true about all acts and forms of Christian worship. These are not religion, but means to it. Their only value and their only test is — Do they help men to know and feel Christ and his truth? It is true about laws of life, and many points of conventional morality. Remember the grand freedom with which the same Apostle dealt with questions about meats offered to idols It is true, though less obviously and simply, about subordinate doctrines. It is true about the mere intellectual grasp of the fundamental truths of God's revelation. These, and the belief of these, are not Christianity, they are helps towards it.

The separation is broad and deep. On one side are all externals, rites, ceremonies, politics, Church arrangements, forms of worship, modes of life, practices of morality, doctrines, and creeds — all which are externals to the soul: on the other is faith working through love, the inmost attitude and deepest emotion of the soul. The great heap is fuel. The flame is loving faith. The only worth of the fuel is to feed the flame. Otherwise, it is of no avail, but lies dead and cold, a mass of blackness. We are joined to God by faith. Whatever strengthens that faith is precious as a help, but is worthless as a substitute. (*"Galatians," Expositions of Holy Scripture*, pp. 148, 149.)

4. Health

With health the poorest person is rich, and without it the richest person is poor. Health is one of those things that we never miss until it is lost. We do not miss the water until the well runs dry. On this subject as on every other important topic, opinions are multiple and divergent. But modern medical science has agreed today on the main laws of physical health.

One great truth is now well accepted — the difference between a poor and a good life-style can mean a difference of several decades in life expectancy. Careless living can shorten a person's life but careful planning can lengthen it, all other things being equal. Only a few people out of a hundred die of old age. About eight die violently, chiefly from accidents, and the rest don't die — they kill themselves. Heredity is no longer considered to be the chief factor in longevity — correct habits are more important.

For example, approximately fifty percent of men in America die from atherosclerosis and related maladies — despite the fact that the major causes are well-known and avoidable. It's no longer a matter for debate that eating a large amount of fat from animal sources, failure to exercise regularly, use of refined foods, smoking, and excessive emotional stress — are the major causes of coronaries, stroke, etc. If a person determined to eat less animal products and increase his consumption of whole grains, vegetables and fruit; if he resolved to exercise for an hour every day; drop the nicotine habit; and seek emotional serenity he would do 100 times more for himself than could the best doctor on earth.

Read on, the next chapter is all about this important topic.

CHAPTER 5

Good Health Enables Coping with Stress

Health is not the result of some mystical factor available only to the initiated. It is available for the great majority of normal people, provided they are prepared to pay the price. That price is the ruthless examination of personal habits and the weeding out of the killers." The golden cure-all can be stated thus: Fresh air and sunshine, proper food and eating habits, regular exercise, adequate rest, serenity of disposition, and the practice of regular worship. Despite all the marvels of medical science there are no other effective approaches to health. And they are all set out in principle in the first two chapters of the Bible.

Genes and Genesis Seek for Eden Below

If we would but remove from our lives the cruel pressures of wrong habits, health's resiliency would reassert itself. But if we fail to do this, the effect will follow the cause as inevitably as night follows day. The universe is run by law and the atoms march in tune. No one really breaks the laws of nature — they break us. The man who walks over the precipice does not break the law of gravity, he illustrates it. And the fool who thinks he can eat and live as he likes is sowing to the wind and will reap the whirlwind.

Disease is not just a matter of noxious germs. It's a matter of seed and soil. Excessive amounts of the wrong seed can bring forth the wrong growth. But if the soil is in good condition a moderate amount of even the wrong seed will not come to dominate the soil. Our part is the care for the soil — the condition of our bodies. And germs (the seed) will usually not do us untoward harm, unless present in overwhelming amounts.

In the first verses of the Bible we read about the creation of the earth's atmosphere. Essential for health is the right quality and quantity of air. We should avoid living for long periods in polluted areas and we should keep in mind that the worst pollution of all is that of tobacco smoke. About 350,000 people will die in America this year from tobacco-related diseases.

But one can live in the most unpolluted atmosphere the planet can provide and not benefit if one fails to exercise. It is exercise that sucks in copious amounts of life-giving oxygen. The vital capacity of our lungs is the best test of our personal physical vigor. If up to the age of approximately fifty you can run a mile and a half in twelve minutes, you have an excellent vital capacity and good chances of longevity. But a middle-aged man with a vital capacity of two liters has at least three times the risk of death as a man of the same age with a vital capacity of five liters. The first is not at all unusual in our society. The brain is eight times more dependent upon oxygen than any other part of the body, and mental workers above all others are dependent upon this precious element.

The first chapter of the Bible speaks of God's creation of the sun and sunshine. Those who live as though residing in the bowels of the earth and who know only artificial light and the darkness of sleep are inviting disease and an early death. It is, of course, possible to get too much of a good thing, and for some people exposure for too many hours in tropical sunshine can cause premature aging. According to some authorities this is likely if the diet includes refined oils rather than the natural fats found in unrefined foods. All should strive to be in the open air and sunshine for at least an hour a day. Remember that sunshine aids metabolism, is a natural antiseptic, and is an invigorator of the human spirit.

Exercise

If fresh air and sunshine go together, so do exercise and rest. No one can properly rest if he has not exercised. Similarly, continuous physical exercise becomes impossible without rest. Genesis 2:1-3 tells us the first Sabbath of earth when man rested in the Creator's work. The fourth commandment stresses work, rest, and worship, and we need all three so long as we have a physical body. The Sabbath is a principle of life as well as a weekly experience. Each day should have its sabbatical period when we can turn our thoughts and minds to God, and rest the body from strain. Each year is the richer if it includes a sabbatical holiday apart from the regular seventh day of rest and worship each week.

In some respects, harder still to secure than rest is the matter of adequate physical activity. The extremely sedentary person is eight times as likely to have an early death as the most vigorous of people. The body has over six hundred muscles and all are intended for regular daily use. For good health, at least an hour's vigorous exercise is essential. But for those not used to such a habit, the transition should be made gradually.

The best all-around exercise is vigorous walking. It's better for health than all the medicines the doctors may prescribe. It can be done by those of all ages, at all times, and in all places. Those who are extremely fit will not be able to reach the desired heart rate by mere walking, and they require something more vigorous such as jogging, cycling, or swimming.

One thing is certain, if we want to be hearty we must learn to be sweaty. Being still is the nearest thing to being dead. Exercise aids oxygenation, circulation, digestion, and all the natural processes of the body and mind. Our ancestors often walked thirty or more miles a day. Today we live in the coffin age — the box age. Our home is a big coffin that confines us, despite the beauty of the world outside. We leave home in another mobile coffin on four wheels to go to yet another coffin which we call an office. We avoid sunlight like the plague, and fresh air as though it were a noxious, poisonous gas. It is true that men don't die, they kill themselves.

Exercise is one of the finest remedies for stress. It's impossible to have relaxed muscles and entertain strong emotions at the same time. But relaxed muscles can only come after the muscles have been on tension — the tension of vigorous activity. Unexercised muscles are flabby rather than resting. Those thinking of suicide should take up jogging instead — not to reach the desired end but to prevent it. It has often been said that we never take into a cold shower the same thoughts that we bring out

of it — the same is true of vigorous exercise. It promotes the secretion of the endorphins which have a similar effect upon body and mind as morphine but without its dangers. Many things that we do sitting down could be done while walking, such as chatting with friends. Those who are diligent in learning can buy a cassette player and listen to recorded cassettes of materials of inspiration or information as they exercise.

Diet

It is not strange that all sorts of fads and fancies are associated with this topic. Everything good is capable of abuse and the more important the matter — the more capable of abuse.

The word death is mainly "eat"! What we eat and drink today walks and talks tomorrow. We are what we eat, and most people dig their graves with their teeth. We live in the most scientific age of history, but in the field of nutrition science has been allowed to destroy us in part or in whole by the refining of foods, extreme processing, and over-cooking.

For health we need to learn to become accustomed to simple, wholesome food — natural foods prepared in as simple a way as possible. Here is a handy summary;

1. Eat fruits and vegetables abundantly,
2. Eat unrefined cereals moderately.
3. Eat pulses (peas, beans, lentils, etc.) still more moderately.
4. Eat fats and concentrates sparingly.
5. Use refined foods not at all or very sparingly.

By fats, we mean butter, cooking oil, margarine, nuts, egg yolk, cheese, cream, as well as flesh foods. Among the concentrates should be included malt, honey, yeast extracts, yeast powder, etc. And refined foods include white flour, white sugar, white rice, tapioca, glucose, gluten flour, pearl barley, spaghetti, white bread, etc. A book entitled *Pure, White and Deadly* told the truth about these items. The old saying "the whiter the bread the sooner you're dead" has some truth in it.

While fruit may seem expensive, it is an investment in health, and better than medicine. Furthermore it's a great time-saver. What can be eaten fresh should be eaten fresh and uncooked. Many a meal can be eaten made up mainly of chopped-up fresh fruit, with a little dried fruit, coconut, and granola on top. It is simple, delicious, and a great boon to health. Fruits are natural mines of minerals and vitamins.

Whole grains are essential for the B vitamins which enable us to withstand stress successfully. Those who only have refined grains are lacking the essential elements of nutrition that enable the nerves to function properly in times of stress and distress.

The foods recommended here are rich in fiber. In the western world where refined foods are largely used, fiber is lacking in the diet. As a result millions die from diseases unknown in third world countries where fiber-rich diets are still consumed. An abundance of natural fiber prevents constipation and the ills that follow, including cancer of the colon, diverticulosis, hiatus hernia, appendicitis, excessive cholesterol build-up. Adequate fiber regulates naturally the appetite and prevents obesity. (Free-ranging animals on natural foods are never overweight.)

An excessive amount of salt is a major cause of high blood pressure which in turn spawns other serious diseases. Excessive use of sugar cancels out the B vitamins ingested and makes one more liable to irritability and depression. It is sheer foolishness to think that the swallowing of vitamin tablets can adequately compensate for bad nutritional habits. Only in nature are the nutritional elements rightly combined. There are dangers in indiscriminate use of supplements.

In essence I suggest that the majority of food consumed should be natural food prepared in as simple a way as possible, eaten with a cheerful, grateful, rejoicing spirit, and in moderate amounts appropriate to your physical program and condition. Scripture says in 1 Corinthians 10:31, "Whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God." In ancient times God forbade his people to eat "abominable" things (Deuteronomy 14:3). He did not do this as a kill-joy, but because it is his great desire to see his children in good health (3 John 2).

CHAPTER 6

Stress on the Job

The major source of job-stress is inadequacy. If one lacks the abilities and skills to meet the demands of his or her work assignment, tension and distress are inevitable.

Thus first and foremost among the principles for reducing work stress is this one — your hobby should be your work, and your work your hobby. What you have to do should be what you want to do and would choose to do if financial constraint did not exist. Emerson was right when he said "Blessed is the man who has found his work, let him ask no other blessedness."

Almost everybody is born with talents which, if applied in the right place, will bring success. Be sure you know what yours are. Sometimes your friends perceive them more clearly than yourself, though as a rule our voluntary interests reveal our special abilities. Usually we like what we are good at. Therefore, to avoid vocational stress beyond the limits of normalcy, select employment that is in harmony with your disposition, likes, and abilities.

Here is a set of guidelines to help reduce stress on the job. Study these points closely.

Be All There

It is dishonest to attend the place of employment only half alive because of a hangover or a succession of late nights or other forms of dissipation. Your employer is hiring all of you — not just fifty percent. The hour of commencing work should find you "raring to go." Alertness prevents mishaps, while sleepiness invites them.

Imitate the Sun Shine!

Let your work center be the more cheerful and the more attractive because you are there. A positive, optimistic, cheerful temperament gives morale to any office or factory workshop. In these days of psychological work studies, morale is seen often as more important than machines. Any employee who is willing as well as able has doubled his or her value.

Don't Grudge an Apology

"I was wrong" are the three most difficult words to put together in the English language, but they often have a unique capacity for deactivating a tense situation. You are not God, and he is the only one who doesn't make mistakes. Don't hesitate to own your mistakes and to do something about them. Everyone will love you for it.

Learn from Your Mistakes

Turn every lemon into a lemonade. Instead of pretending you didn't really "blow" it, analyze the mishap and safeguard yourself for the future. That person is very wise who, understanding his or her own tendencies, makes provision against his or her own weaknesses. If, for example, you have a tendency to forget, learn to write frequent reminders for yourself — and more than one about the same thing if necessary. If you are prone to arrive late at work, plan to get there earlier than you think necessary — you might just make it. If you are careless, get the habit of reviewing a task once you think it has been completed.

Look for Better Methods

Don't be content with the status quo of means and methods. If you are among the less than five percent of natural innovators you'll reach the stars. There will be no stopping you. Bosses love people with initiative. They're usually the ones who get promoted. Some people have more "bright ideas" than others, but we all have some from time to time. Use all you have to the advantage of your company.

Honesty Is the Best Policy

So they say. But the truth is that honesty is first of all the best principle. Employers find it very difficult to find trustworthy staff. Thieving is common in almost all places of employment. And perhaps the worst kind of thieving is the thieving of time or another's reputation. Because of this a genuine Christian has a head start in seeking and holding down a position of trust.

Watch the Clock to Start but Not to Stop

We are not suggesting you continually do overtime gratis. But you deserve your job only if you are prepared at times to sacrifice a little of your own time to promote the interests of your firm. Remember as you give, so it shall be given to you, good measure, pressed down and running over. We all know that generosity is a good policy at home and in the community; it's also a good idea at work.

Some Words for-Not the Bossed-but the Boss

It's much harder being boss than being bossed. It's more demanding. The buck stops with you. What then are your obligations?

All the above to start with. Unless you are a good employee, you will never make a good employer. But there is more required than just employee talents.

Avoid the God and Gulliver Complexes

God is superior and makes no mistakes. Gulliver is ever looking down condescendingly on all the little Lilliputians. Bosses are neither God nor Gulliver, They do make mistakes, and one of them is to forget that everyone working "beneath" them is their superior in some way — even if it is only in humility.

Don't Be Greedy

Don't be foolishly over-ambitious. As mortals we have limits. It is poor leadership to use other people unreasonably in the endeavor to achieve our own unrealistic goals. If the tension is high among those you oversee, there is something wrong and you should begin looking at the top.

Control Your Work Don't Let It Control You

If your work is ever a burden, there is something wrong. Everything runs at its best when it runs smoothly. Athletes usually seem almost effortless as they display their skills. If the chariot wheels are dragging, probably they are too heavily freighted. Do you permit your assignments to dictate to you your hours, attitudes, hopes, and fears? If so, you are not really the boss. The job is.

Crises with People

People have a sixth sense for detecting our real feelings toward them. If they find to their delight that you are "for" them, they will respond in kind. But the reverse is also true. Don't look at everybody as a competitor to be guarded against, but as a brother or sister to be enjoyed and helped. If a competitor — either real or imagined — does not feel you are a threat to him or her, he will probably stop being a threat to you.

Remember too that just as you should not expect too much of yourself, neither should you expect too much of others. Avoid being over-critical and learn to express appreciation. Keep in mind that every person has his or her own special virtues, values, abilities, and shortcomings — including you. Everybody has the right to develop as an individual. Rather than manipulate employees, try to help in their development. Their gain will ultimately be yours.

Most unnecessary tension arises from the often unperceived personal drive and determination to "get there first" and to therefore edge out all who appear threats in the race. Obviously people will be hurt in such a situation as surely as if competing on the freeway. Cooperation is better than competition. People are better led than pushed.

If things do blow up, ask whether at the time you yourself were at your best or were you like dry tinder just ready for a spark? If we are as tense as a coiled spring, it will not be surprising if at some point the tension is released in an unexpected and harmful manner. Remember that uncontrolled emotions are like mini-bombs.

One thing is quite certain; If in our experience people are forever in the wrong and plain hateful to us then our vision is surely distorted. We, not them, are not in touch with reality. While every person of superior abilities provokes jealousy and envy, and every person of principle encounters opposition, still it remains true that in the overall picture of life as a whole, people reflect back to us our own attitude towards them.

Satisfying Everybody

Don't even try. The dog that responds to everyone's whistle is no good to any master. Here again the Christian approach to life is a winner. Life is horribly complicated when we forget the first commandment. But when we learn to put God

first, which in our work means doing the very best we can to his glory and the benefit of others, then we can let the chips fall where they might. Settle for doing your best and let those who aren't satisfied simply put up with that!

Wisdom to Know the Difference

Somewhere there's a saying about changing what can be changed and being resigned to what can't — and may God enable us to know the difference between these two. Until a person learns to cooperate with the inevitable, he can know no peace. Often decisions will be made by superiors that go against our grain. Furthermore, we may be right, and the superiors wrong. Nevertheless, learn to bend to what must be. It's surprising how much has been achieved despite faulty people and decisions. A Christian who believes in the sovereignty of God, again has a head start in this matter.

Learn When to Withdraw

The person who is always working is a poor, ineffective worker. It is impossible to see things in perspective if you are too close to them. All of life works on the rhythm of change, activity, and rest. Even the earth does not produce continually, but rests in winter. A person's capacity to work depends on their capacity to rest. We must often step back in order to jump further, learning to tarry awhile that we might finish the sooner. In the heart of the Decalogue is the sabbath law, calling for regular rest, which is a principle of life as well as a religious rule of worship.

The Good Oil

In all our relationships with people — whether in the home, or the office, or factory, there is only one best oil for greasing the wheels and avoiding friction. The recipe for it is found in 1 Corinthians 13 — love, unconditional love for all the other people made in God's image who surround us. All substitutes are noxious and fail.

Try to implement these principles on the job, one at a time, week by week, and see if a conscious effort cannot reduce stress.

CHAPTER 7

Guidelines to Wholeness and Joy

Religious worship is not escapism, it is a flight to reality. It is a pausing in order to finish sooner, a stepping back in order to jump further. It is the rest that refreshes and a revival of strength.

Worship

The practice of private worship, family worship, and church worship, is the only way to make the spiritual world such a reality that we will be superior to the rebuffs of outrageous fortune.

Only worship can enable us to fulfill the priority principle — the 80-20 principle. Twenty percent of the things we do in life give us eighty percent of satisfaction. And eighty percent of the things we do give us only twenty percent of satisfaction. Therefore, the essential requirement is to be able to distinguish the things of preeminence from all the rest, in order that our concentration might be focused first and always upon those. Only worship, where we come face-to-face with our Maker, and see all truths in the light of him who is the truth, can enable us to put first things first, or even to discern the first things.

For years the British Navy has had the practice of blowing "The Still" — a signal of an emergency or disaster that requires men to be still, calculate their positions, and check their resources in order to avoid confusion and avert catastrophe. This is what worship involves, among other things — the stopping in order to interpret rightly our personal situation.

In summation we would say that the only life capable of rightly resisting the inevitable stresses of existence is the life that's hidden with Christ in God. As a deep-sea diver needs pressure within his suit to offset the pressure of the water, so we need our pipeline with heaven, communicating heaven's power to ward off the pressures of earth. There is no other way.

And this connection will lead us to obey all the laws of life, moral and physical. Rejoicing in the good news that Christ has finished the work of the atonement and brought in everlasting righteousness, that he has cast down the accuser of the brethren, that he has tasted death for everyone, that his righteousness is freely available for all who will receive it by faith alone — rejoicing in these glorious certainties will enable us to meet life's troubles with the assurance that all stresses and distresses work together for good to them that love God.

Watch Out for These!

Earlier I have dealt with the major causes of our stress and distress — those intimated in John 7-9 — religion, sex, money, health. Obviously much more could be

said about many other areas of trouble and remedy. I'll fire off a little grapeshot to cover some of these.

1. Haste. Continual rushing leads to tension and distress. Haste usually makes waste. Nature at its best is never in a hurry. Watch a sunrise or sunset, or the coming in of the tide, or the growth of a wheat field. Give yourself more time than you need for a task. Furthermore, instead of cramming every minute, take brief vacations within each hour to look out the window, stretch, pray, relax.

2. Failure to plan. To fail to prepare means to prepare to fail. Planning can save us from much unnecessary stress. Each evening plan the next day, or map out your program at the morning hour. Planning includes the 80-20 principle mentioned earlier. Assignment of priorities ensures that what is most important and gives most satisfaction is accomplished.

3. Overwork. As a rule the labor of the day should not be prolonged into the evening unless by way of review or planning. The person who works more than twelve hours a day is a poor worker accomplishing less in the long run. Neither mind nor body can survive continued immoderate application. A bow always bent ultimately snaps. And this applies equally to the frazzled housewife as it does to the business executive. We need to learn to stop.

4. Over-seriousness. God made monkeys and gave us a sense of humor. Abraham Lincoln, during the Civil War, when rebuked for joking said, "Gentlemen, if I couldn't laugh I would die." Humor is a safety valve and has its place provided it is not cruel. *Cheaper by the Dozen* is a classic story filled with harmless hilarity. Find books of this kind and take them like medicine.

5. Neglect of the aesthetic. It is life's garnishes which make the main dish palatable. Don't forget music. Music at its best (not the discordant or vulgar cacophony which often is offered as music) glorifies the beautiful, the true, and the ideal. It is not only a source of inspiration, but of victory over stress. Select classical music with a meter lower than ones pulse rate to aid relaxation.

6. Failure to irrigate and fertilize the spirit. Take time to read — not only Scripture and devotional books, but biographies, books on the health of body and soul, on travel, on history, on your hobbies — whatever is wholesome (see Philippians 4:8).

7. The dilution of excessive interests. Paul said, "This one thing I do." We confess, "these forty things I dabble in." Digression is as dangerous as stagnation, and he who chases two hares catches neither. Concentrate your whole attention on one thing at a time until you burn a hole in it, so to speak. When the sun's rays are concentrated through a magnifying glass they can burn. So with our own powers when focused. Leave some of the unimportant things with their stresses undone, then concentrate on the major items which bring the greatest satisfaction. Remember the 80-20 principle.

The Bible often repeats itself when dealing with important subjects (for example four accounts of the life of Christ), and I will venture to do the same. In dealing with that stress of life which often becomes distress, the essential factors are: (1) attitude; (2)

choices; and (3) vitality. Therefore I have emphasized the need of our inner transformation in order that we might react and choose aright. But without the vitality that good health alone can bring, the battle is often overwhelming — therefore my reference to that topic.

Gospel Freedom

What the Bible calls "sin" (lawlessness, 1 John 3:4; lovelessness, Matthew 22:37-40) is the source of all our distresses. Therefore our main concentration must ever lie in this direction, that sin's guilt and power might be nullified. When a person has chorea the sufferer at times stands in the one place and spins round and round. So with all of us spiritually by nature. We revolve constantly about ourselves in our unalloyed egotism. True humility would save us from at least seventy percent of our distresses. Luther was so bold as to say, "our self-love is the root of all our disquietude." It is this which needs curing, and only the expulsive power of a greater affection, gratitude for the cross of Christ, can accomplish this task.

Observe how the high point of Paul's letter to the Romans sets forth the relieving of all our key distresses once we have grasped and surrendered to the gospel. Take chapter 8 and read it, observing the following:

- Verse 1 No more condemnation
- 2 No more bondage
- 3 No more reign of sin
- 4 No more tyranny of the flesh
- 6 No more domination by a carnal mind
- 10 No more loneliness and spiritual death
- 11 No more fear of physical death
- 14 No more aimlessness and bewilderment
- 15 No more fear
- 16 No more uncertain identity
- 17 No more disinheritance
- 18 No more depression by suffering
- 20 No more hopelessness
- 25 No more impatience
- 26 No more prayerlessness
- 28 No more anxiety
- 31 No more defeat
- 32 No more lack
- 35 No more separation

What a marvelous inventory of problems swept away by the grace and power of God!

Just contemplate the simplicity and marvel of the gospel in its essence:

So the judgment of God lies very heavily upon the Jews, for they are responsible to keep God's laws instead of doing all these evil things; not one of them has any excuse; in fact, all the world stands hushed and guilty before Almighty God.

Now do you see it? No one can ever be made right in God's sight by doing what the law commands. For the more we know of God's laws, the clearer it becomes that we aren't obeying them; his laws serve only to make us see that we are sinners.

But now God has shown us a different way to heaven — not by 'being good enough' and trying to keep his laws, but by a new way (though not new, really, for the Scriptures told about it long ago). Now God says he will accept and acquit us, declare us "not guilty" — if we trust Jesus Christ to take away our sins. And we all can be saved in this same way, by coming to Christ, no matter who we are or what we have been like. Yes, all have sinned. all fall short of God's glorious ideal; yet now God declares us "not guilty" of offending him if we trust in Jesus Christ, who in his kindness freely takes away our sins.

For God sent Christ Jesus to take the punishment for our sins and to end all God's anger against us. He used Christ's blood and our faith as the means of saving us from his wrath. In this way he was being entirely fair, even though he did not punish those who sinned in former times. For he was looking forward to the time when Christ would come and take away those sins. And now in these days also he can receive sinners in this same way because Jesus took away their sins.

But isn't this unfair for God to let criminals go free, and say that they are innocent? No, for he does it on the basis of their trust in Jesus who took away their sins.

Then what can we boast about doing, to earn our salvation? Nothing at all. Why? Because our acquittal is not based on our good deeds; it is based on what Christ has done and our faith in him. So it is that we are saved by faith in Christ and not by the good things we do. (Romans 3:19-28, Living Bible)

Centuries ago, when problems were crowding thick and fast upon Martin Luther, the German reformer, his friends saw him scrawl on a dusty table the word *vivit* — the Latin for "he lives." The fact that Christ lives and intercedes for us, that he knows every detail of our existence, that he has numbered the hairs of our head, that not even a sparrow falls without his knowing — these things enable us to say with Paul, "If God be for us, who can be against us? . . . For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom 8:31, 38, 39).

The philosophy expressed in the following paragraph written nearly 500 years ago can transform your life. I recommend it heartily as the best prevention for devastating stress and distress:

The gloom of the world is but a shadow. Behind it, yet within our reach, is joy. There is radiance and glory in the darkness, could we but see; and to see, we have only to look. I beseech you to look.

Life is so generous a giver; but we, judging its gifts by their covering, cast them away as ugly or heavy or hard. Remove the covering, and you will find beneath it a living splendor, woven of love, by wisdom, with power. Welcome it, grasp it, and you touch the angel's hand that brings it to you. Everything we call a trial, a sorrow, or a duty: believe me, that angel's hand is there; the gift is there, and the wonder of an over-shadowing Presence.

Life is so full of meaning and of purpose, so full of beauty — beneath its covering — that you will find that earth but cloaks your heaven. Courage then to claim it; that is all! But courage you have; and the knowledge that we are pilgrims together, wending through unknown country, home.

And so I greet you; with the prayer that for you, now and for ever, the day breaks and the shadows flee away. (David Francis, *Treasures of Darkness* p 64.)

Annotated Bibliography

I have stressed in this little book that life reflects the person living, and that therefore our greatest effort should be applied not to changing circumstances or other people but to changing ourselves. Whether we give that permission depends upon whether we are self-centered or God-centered.

There's no substitute for conversion — that conversion which results from seeing in the Christ of the cross, One who loved us and gave himself for us. Only then shall we see other things clearly. In the light of Christ even those things which are normally terrifying lose their horror.

But something else should be said. Even converted Christians need to grow; and according to their growth will be their serenity and peace amidst trials and stresses. Therefore this bibliography aims at both objectives, as well as including works on the technical aspects of stress and distress.

Some of the books listed are Christian classics, often out of print for a time, but always available in libraries. I have listed them because they are so superior and irreplaceable. Even if your local library does not have them, that same library can get them for you on inter-library loan. So just ask your local librarian to secure them for you if your Christian bookshop cannot.

Popular Works by Technical Experts on Stress

1. Bonnell, John Sutherland, *No Escape from Life* (N.Y.: Harper and Brothers, 1958).

This writer has written several books of note, most of which are readily available in many libraries. He is a Christian counselor with a deep knowledge of psychiatry and of the Christian gospel. This particular book offers a road to the acceptance of life instead of trying to escape from it via tranquilizers, alcohol, anxiety neuroses, or suicide. It is based on the experiences of over eight thousand persons who have visited Bonnell for counsel. Some of these experiences are given in dramatic detail in this book.

2. Dunbar, Flanders, *Mind and Body: Psychosomatic Medicine* [N.Y.: Random House, 1947).

This is one of the early classics on psychosomatic medicine written by a lady psychiatrist with vast experience. Observe some of the chapter titles: "The Child You Were," "Delayed Action Mines of Childhood," "The Beloved Symptom," "The Accident Habit," "The Hygiene of a Quiet Mind," "Mental Indigestion," "Half in Love with Death." The book is a mine of illustrations of how mind affects body — illustrations which will touch a chord in the memory and experience of most readers. The author quotes Sir William Osier, probably the greatest medical teacher who ever lived, as saying that the fate of certain patients depended more on what they had in their heads than on what was in their bodies. This is the keynote of the book.

3. Fink, David Harold, *Release from Nervous Tension* (N.Y.: Pocket Book

Paperback, 1973).

This book was first published in the 1940's and has been reprinted many times since. The 1973 edition is a revision. This book is eminently readable as even the chapter titles indicate. Here are some of them: "Even Dogs Get Neurotic," "The Mind Tells the Body, and the Body Talks Back," "Play is Good Medicine," "Are You Allergic to Some People?" "Try on a New Attitude," and "Tranquility Without Tranquilizers." Along with all writers on psychosomatic medicine, Fink is reminding us that it is the way we interpret situations that counts most, not the situation itself. This book should be read again and again.

4. Rathbone, Josephine L., *Teach Yourself to Relax* (N.Y.: Prentice-Hall, 1957).

This is a very practical work doing exactly what its title indicates. Again the headings are a true indication of the contents. Here are some of them: "There's No Smooth Road to Getting Ahead," "Fatigue is a Miserable State," "Tension is Physical and Psychological," and "Beating a Common Bugaboo — Insomnia." Rathbone points out that the person who has sense enough to rest when tired and who works consistently but without over-effort does not need to learn special techniques for relaxing. But such people are rare indeed.

The advice for insomnia alone is invaluable. According to the author the inability to sleep soundly is the most common complaint of tense people. Over-tired people are usually those who are always keyed up and on the move and it is mental work that is particularly hazardous for those who desire easy sleep. Advice given for the insomniac includes the avoiding of stimulants or sleeping pills, practicing techniques of physical relaxation, and cutting down on the intensity of thinking at least a half-an-hour or so before retiring. If you must think at nighttime, choose that which is happy and cheerful, not your anxieties.

5. Selye, Hans, *Stress Without Distress*, (N.Y.: Signet Paperback, 1975).

This volume gives a simplified technical explanation of the nature of stress and then proceeds to discuss some ideals and objectives that can help us to handle the normal stresses of life. Selye particularly emphasizes that it is failure and frustration that bring most stress. The hard work involved in achievement is not usually dangerous stress. Selye shows that many eminent, hard workers in every field lived a long life and overcame their inevitable frustrations by the great preponderance of success.

His favorite saying is "strive for the highest possible aim, but never put up resistance in vain." Altruism is commended and the folly of over-ambition or antagonisms to others is condemned. The writer insists that it is forced prolongation and intensification of any activity beyond a desirable level that leads to the frustration, fatigue, and exhaustion which precedes mental or physical breakdown. Therefore Selye recommends diversion, a voluntary change of activity, frequently. Similarly, he points out that physical exercise is a sovereign remedy for mental frustration and psychological fatigue.

6. Weekes, Claire, *Peace from Nervous Suffering* (N.Y.: Hawthorne Books, 1972).

This lady specialist has written a number of books which are practical in their application to nervous problems. They are particularly aimed at those who suffer from depression, fear, tension, and nervous exhaustion. She suggests methods of breaking up the cycle of fear and of understanding one's physical symptoms and learning to cope with tension and exhaustion.

Books on Life-style by Popular Writers

1. Carnegie, Dale, *How to Stop Worrying and Start Living* (N.Y.: Simon and Schuster, 1948).

This book has been through a number of editions and has also been published in paperback. It is fascinating to read, and eminently practical. Some of the chapters are these: "Live in Day-Tight Compartments," "A Magic Formula for Solving Worry Situations," "What Worry May Do To You," "How to Analyze and Solve Worry Problems," "How to Eliminate Fifty Percent of Your Business Worries," "How to Crowd Worry Out of Your Mind," "A Law That Will Outlaw Many of Your Worries," "Cooperate With the Inevitable," "Don't Try to Saw Sawdust," "The High Cost of Getting Even," "Would You Take a Million Dollars For What You Have?" "If You Have a Lemon, Make a Lemonade," "How To Cure Melancholy in Fourteen Days," "Remember that No One Ever Kicks a Dead Dog," "How to Add One Hour a Day to Your Waking Life," "What Makes You Tired and What You Can Do About It," and "How to Banish the Boredom that Produces Fatigue, Worry, and Resentment."

The book is a mine of illustrations from well-known people and others less known, and never forsakes the practical realm for the purely ideological. Its section on maintaining energy levels high is worth much more than the price of the book. Part Ten of the book entitled "How I Conquered Worry," has about 40 testimonies from such well-known people as Dorothy Dix, J.C. Penney, E. Stanley Jones, Jack Dempsey, and others. This too is a book that can be read and reread.

2. Mandino, Og, *The Greatest Salesman In The World* (N.Y.: Bantam Books, 1968).

This book was called by Norman Vincent Peale "one of the most inspiring, uplifting, and motivating books I've ever read." The same writer has written *The Greatest Miracle in the World* and *The Greatest Secret in the World* (also published by Bantam). This particular little volume can be read in less than an hour and is full of good counsel on a life-style that will yield joy and health rather than misery and disease. While it purports to be addressed to salesmen its contents apply to all of us.

3. McMillen, S.I., *None of These Diseases* (London: Fleming H. Revell, 1971).

This book has been through many editions and despite some technical errors in a few minor areas it is an invaluable work as it sets forth the only type of life-style that can survive twentieth century pressures. The book is very readable and should be read repeatedly. Chapter titles include: "Upset Mind — Sick Body," "It's Not What You Eat — It's What Eats You," "Love or Perish," "Don't Shoot for the Moon," "The Enemies of Sexual Happiness," and "David and the Giant — Worry."

4. Ray, Marie Beynon, *How Never to be Tired* (N.Y.: Grosset & Dunlap, 1954).

The book has been reprinted more than once. Chapter titles here include; "Energy to Burn," "Meet Your Mr. Hyde," "The Strangest Story in the World," "God Helps Those Who Help Themselves," "Balance Your Life," "Your Secret Sin," "What Do You Do Between 5:00 P.M. and 11:00 P.M.?" and "Strong Men and Lovely Women."

This book is chiefly inspirational in purpose though it is also informational as it draws from the lives of well-known achievers.

Christian Classics

I would first recommend all the writings of Paul Tournier, and the religious books of C.S. Lewis. The greatest source of gospel materials in the last century is to be found in the writings of C.H. Spurgeon which are readily available in any Christian bookshop. An excellent one of Spurgeon's to begin with is the paperback, *All of Grace* (Chicago: Moody Press, n.d.). Others I recommend include the following:

1. Bonar, Horatius, *God's Way of Holiness* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1970).

This book is a reprint of a classic frequently reissued. In a world of cheap grace, this volume is a protest. It is simply written but probing and inspirational. One of greater depth and size on the same topic is J.C. Ryle's *Holiness* [London: James Clark, 1962], which should also be read.

2. Guillebaud, H.E. *Why the Cross?* [London: InterVarsity Fellowship, 1950).

This book has been printed again and again and is a classical presentation of the gospel of substitution and representation. It explains the cross in a simple, biblical manner.

3. Hession, Roy, *The Calvary Road*. [London: Christian Literature Crusade, n.d.)

This book and *We Would See Jesus* (London; Christian Literature Crusade, 1963) are very practical manuals on Christian living. Compare them with some of the counsels of Madam Guyon and Thomas A Kempis's *The Imitation of Christ* (London: Penguin, 1965). While the latter has some things purely sectarian, it also has a great deal of generalized counsel which is invaluable.

4. Jones, E. Stanley, *The Way* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1947).

The books of E. Stanley Jones are continually being reprinted and I recommend every one of them. He is easy to read, inspirational, motivational, biblical. Every Christian bookshop should have books by Jones. Read all of them.

5. Krummacher, F.W., *The Suffering Saviour* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1977).

This is a reprint of a famous classic on Christ's Passion Week. It is unsurpassed in the field. Every Christian will be deeply grateful for its treasures.

6. Smith, Hannah Whitall, *The Christian Secret of a Happy Life* (Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell, 1973).

This book has been published again and again over the last century and has helped millions including the famous American psychologist, William James. Its chapter titles include these: "God's Side and Man's Side," "The Life Defined," "How to Enter In," "Difficulties Concerning Failures," "Difficulties Concerning Doubts," "Is God In Everything?" "Practical Results in Daily Lives," "The Joy of Obedience," "The Chariots of God," and "The Life on Wings,"

The real classics in religion are few and far between. They include *Pilgrim's Progress*, *The Imitation of Christ*, *The Institutes of the Christian Religion*, and this particular volume. Hannah Whitall Smith has been characterized as a Quaker, a rebel, a realist, and many other things. She was a woman of wide experience who blessed the world as few other women of her generation did. She was a contemporary of Catherine Booth, wife of General Booth, whose books are similarly invaluable. She is also the author of *Everyday Religion* and *The God of All Comfort*. Most Christian bookshops have the latter as well as the first listed.

I mentioned *Pilgrim's Progress* above and I would like to underline the fact that every Christian should read this volume again and again and not forget John Bunyan's other chief work, *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners*.

Biography

We should read books not just for information but also for inspiration. Biographies offer both. I recommend the reading of great lives, particularly the great workers for Christ. During this century there have been many widely-read biographies of such men as Hudson Taylor, George Muller, Adoniram Judson, William Carey, George Whitefield, C.H. Spurgeon, John Wesley, and many others. Many church libraries have these books in their collection but public libraries also have them or can secure them.

One of the most fascinating is Courtney Anderson's *To the Golden Shore* [Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1972). Richard Ellsworth Day is an American writer who has written several splendid, very readable biographies. Do not forget that some of the best biographies are of great women such as Catherine Booth. The lesser known Gladys Aylward, *The Small Woman*, story is excellent.

A paperback biography that is packed with interest is *The General Next to God*, by Richard Collier (London: Fontana, 1968). Another volume very well known in recent decades is *A Man Called Peter* (London: Peter Davies, 1955), the story of Peter Marshall, chaplain of the U.S. Senate, written by his widow. Another valuable work is *Here I Stand* by Roland Bainton [N.Y.: Mentor, 1950), a splendid biography of Martin Luther.

Bible Study

1. A simple but comprehensive work dealing with the Bible book-by-book is J. Sidlow

Baxter's work, *Explore the Book* (London: Marshall, Morgan and Scott, 1956). Also the writings of Arthur Pink, despite his predestinarianism and dispensationalism, are of great worth.

2. For those who wish to dig deeply into the last book of the Bible, I suggest you consider studying my own three-volume work *Crisis!* This work has gathered the cream of twenty centuries of Christian research on the book of Revelation and comprehended it in one study. It shows that the prophecies of the future are all couched in the light of the significance of the cross of Christ. This work can be read devotionally or for more studious purposes and is crammed full of materials. It is, however, not suitable for those who enjoy only light and superficial reading.

3. Hodgkin, A.M., *Christ in All the Scriptures* (London: Pickering and Inglis, 1943). This is a classic forever being reprinted. It shows how all books of the Bible tell of Christ. Invaluable. Any Christian bookshop should be able to secure it for you, if not already on its shelves.

I have named but a few out of thousands of works that could be recommended but these few will lead the reader to others of like nature. The more one becomes aware of the eternities, the less one is troubled by the times. Nevertheless, reading does offer immediate first-rate help for temporal problems as well.

An hour with a book would have brought to his mind,
The secret it took him a whole year to find;
The facts he learned at enormous expense,
Were all on a library shelf to commence.