

OBSTACLES

#1 Living Stressfree In A Stressful World

Matthew 11:28-30 The Message (MSG)

“Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me and you’ll recover your life. I’ll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me—watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won’t lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you’ll learn to live freely and lightly.”

Stop-Start

Stop being stressed out and worried. Start getting away with God. Then you will learn to walk with Him because you have come willingly to work with Him. When we give our Him our stresses, worries and concerns, we don’t keep any for ourselves, then we will learn how to live freely and lightly.

The world is stressful. I don’t care how many people you have collected around you that are stressful or how many situations around you are stressful the world in itself is stressful.

I don’t like to listen to the news because I don’t want to focus on the issues I can’t do anything about my stressing and worrying. I can pray about them. I can tell God I am concerned about them. I can leave my worries in His hands confident.

Stress is the main roadblock to weight loss. We think food and desire for it is the roadblock. But the roadblock is what is behind our desire for food.

Why do we want the food?

What do we think it is doing for us?

Why do we think it will not only solve our problems but the entire world's problems?

We know that food won't do that but in the moment, we think if we could just stop worrying about this, if we could just peace about it, the world would be ok. We anesthetize our pain which we feel because of stress.

Our stressors are not so much the world going to h*** in a hand basket. We know it is. We know many will fall away in the last days, but we have read the end of the story and we know there is victory awaiting us at the end.

God has given us all free will as much as we would like to change everyone's trajectory to go the right direction, but we know we can't. It won't happen until they want it to happen.

I have several good friends who have several good friends who have grown children who are drug addicts. Their children have abandoned the children they have and grandparents are raising their

grandchildren. Many have had to raise their children as a single mom. Many have those kinds of stressors in their lives.

What do we do about that? Many have turned to food. We say, “Hey pan of brownies, be my best friend today and help me get deal with these kids. I know I can’t fix the problems, but can you help me so I stop worrying about the problems?” And for just a bit, we eat the pan of brownies, the whole pan, maybe we leave one or two for the kids or grandkids, and we feel somewhat better. Our emotions have been numbed. And that’s our issue. We don’t want to feel all that pain.

One of the things we have done is become helpers to everyone else. Many of you are caregivers. You have identified yourself as caregivers, or you are nurses, chaplains or social workers, moms and grandmas. We are helpers. Its what we want more than anything. (#4 Helper from the Enneagram),

Why do we want to help?

God wants us to help others, but not so that we do it so they will love us back. We are seeking love in the wrong way. That may be the deep, hidden agenda if go back far enough and try to find it. Not for the praise of those we are doing it for. We point them to us thinking by us doing this, they will see God, but instead of God, they rely on us and they forget about God in their crisis. If we are not available, which many times we aren’t then they have no resource if we have not pointed them in the right place. We don’t do it to point others to

us for help instead of pointing them to God for help. Hard for a helper.

We also should not help others to exclusion of loving ourselves, not only our physical bodies, but our emotions are all tied up in helping. We are not any good to them if we are not here and haven't taken care of ourselves well enough to help them.

I am in that mode too. My main personality mode is Achiever and my wing is helper. How that works together is I want to achieve things so I can help more people. But if I burn out in the process, I can't help anyone. And if I lead you to rely on me instead of God, I have failed in what I am doing. I have become unvaluable in the Kingdom. God only lets me handle this little segment of His Kingdom when I'm always pointing you back to Him.

Helpers take on the stresses of the people we are trying to help if we don't allow their stress to pass through us to God. When it comes in to us we must hand it off to God. "God I can't handle this. I don't even know how to start. If You want me to do something with this show me. If not, here it is. What do you give me in exchange."

Many times the exchange is peace. We are living in turmoil and worry. We hand all those things that are stressing and worrying us off to God and He gives us peace in the midst of crisis. The ability to live freely and lightly is I have not taken this issue on as my own.

Symbolically put a big burlap gunny sack over your shoulders on your back. Now take each one of your worries, stresses and put them in the bag. Include weight, job, financial provisions, relationships, illnesses and diseases, children, marriages, jobs, relationships, grandchildren what will they become, family, past family issues, all the wrongs and huts you have done, world issues and everything you worry about in your life.

How heavy is the bag? Why would you want to keep dragging it around with you? What's it doing for you?

If you are ready, leave this bag at the feet of Jesus. Surrender your ability to do anything about each issue. Ask Him, "Jesus will you take this bag and throw it into the depths of the sea?" See Him do that. Then ask Him, "Jesus what gift do you give me to help go forward." Write down what He gives you.

When I weighed 430 pounds, the emotional baggage I was dragging around weighed tons. I lost 250 pounds and tons of emotional baggage. Now I didn't lose it all at once. It came off over years, like the layers of an onion. But the truth is, I didn't think God was big enough to handle my bag of worries. I needed to take care of them. They were mine. It was so freeing when I laid them at His feet.

You cannot change anything by worrying. Worrying is praying yourself. It's rehearsing and rehearsing the problem without a

solution. It's not praying to God. You can't change anything with worry.

Luke 12:22-26, 29-32, 34

“Then Jesus said to his disciples: “Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat; or about your body, what you will wear. For life is more than food, and the body more than clothes.

Consider the ravens: They do not sow or reap, they have no storeroom or barn; yet God feeds them. And how much more valuable you are than birds! Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to your life? Since you cannot do this very little thing, why worry about the rest?

“And do not set your heart on what you will eat or drink; do not worry about it. or the pagan world runs after all such things, and your Father knows that you need them. But seek his kingdom, and these things will be given to you as well. Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”

Many of the things we worry about have to do with provision and finance and that has to do with who God is in our lives. One way to find that out is to picture who God is to you.

My picture of God

I was dealing with provision which is a Father God issue. So I put a picture of who Father God is to me in my mind. I saw a beautiful

picture of the throne room of Heaven. Father God was sitting on a beautiful Gold throne. He had a white robe and a gold crown on His head, a big smile on His face. I was a little girl and as He beckoned me to come holding His arms out to me, I ran and jumped into His arms.

This was such a good picture, I was sure there was no lie in how I was relating to God. Surely that shows that I feel and know He's my provider. However just to be sure I asked, "God is there a lie I am believing about You?"

He said, "Why can't you come to me like you are today?"

I said, "I'm too big to sit in your lap."

He just looked at me with those eyes and said, "Try it and let's see what happens."

I didn't run. I walked hesitantly. When I got to the throne I sat in His lap gingerly. He and I looked about the same size. The minute I touched His lap, He became bigger than the Universe. He was juggling the planets, stars and even other universes in His hands and yet He was holding me so close I felt His heart beat.

I stared at His lap which held a huge multi-dimensional map of the earth, time and space. I could see all of eternity right there. I could see time before, after and present. I could see the billions of people on the earth and like l.e.d. light paths I could see how and when and where and why they intersected together and how that changed

trajectories. It was mind blowing!

Then He pointed at one person and said, "That's you."

I said, "When?"

He answered, "Now."

"How can I be here and there at the same time?"

"Because I'm the creative God. I created everything. I know how it all works together. I am bigger than the universe, certainly bigger than you. You have no fear of breaking me. But I am very strategic.

People don't understand that about me. I have the strategy that you don't even know about. And I unveil it to you a little bit at a time as you comprehend, understand and bear it."

"There are times people change their minds, I gave you that right, you know? But that's Ok because the map is always changing. But the destiny of each of my children is always the same."

"How will I know my destiny and how will I get there? What if I fail? How will I have the finances to do what I need to do."

"You don't have to know everything, you only have to stay connected and follow Me. I am your Provider. I take care of your every need."

This is the key to alleviating the stress. God has already got it under control. He has the strategy to get everybody where they need to go, when and get the strategy to work right all I have to do is follow Him.

We have to stay so close to Him that we listen and hear the next step and not make it on our own.

Be sure we are taking care of ourselves, in all areas, physically, emotionally and spiritually. Make sure we are spending time with Him not just reading the Bible and devotions, that's important, but I mean taking intentional no agenda time with God to allow Him to reveal His heart to us. Time alone with Him to clear out the clutter in your brain, opening the channel to where you hear from Him completely about your next step.

This isn't about a diet. It's about listening to God, following His instructions and then doing what He wants you to do. Its also about following His strategy for your life. What you are doing right now determines what you will be doing this time next year. You are already on the path. Its so important to get this time in your life correct. Love Yourself. Take care of yourself. All while being totally connected to God.

There is a strategy in this and God holds the keys.

I've given you a lot of information today. Here's one last piece. **Plan for stress. Don't be surprised by it.** Understand what your habits are or have been in the past because past habits will rear their heads again even when we are far along on the journey.

List what stresses you and where you are when that happens

What foods do you eat when you are stressed? Where do you eat them?

What is something you could do instead.

When I did this exercise I saw that when I didn't meet a deadline and had worked hard all day, I was stressed. I would go through fast food and get a whole ton of food and then go for a drive through the country before going home to fix supper and do all the mom stuff.

So I decided the main thing that was helping me was going for the drive. That then became my action plan when I was stressed in that manner. I decided to add getting a cold bottle of water by going thru drive thru and then go for a drive. Surprisingly this worked because I was looking forward to just distressing in this manner.

Action Steps:

Why do I want that particular food?

What do I think it is doing for me?

Why do I think food will solve my problem?

How do I stop overeating when I feel stress?

What stressors are you carrying with you? List those.

When you handed them to Jesus, what did He give you in exchange for each of these. List those beside what you gave to Him.

List what stresses you and where are you when that happens?

What foods do you eat when you are stressed? Where do you eat them?

What is something you could do instead?

Make this your emergency stop-start. List that here.