

Finding God's Peace in my Schedule

Welcome to **Week 2** of a **Stress Less Life**. Over these 6 weeks we are taking a look at how we can discover true freedom and peace so that the tyranny of stress doesn't dominate your daily life by robbing you and I of the joy that God intends for us to have. Through this series we are learning how to abide in Christ and to change the way we view our lives so that we can claim the promise God has for us in His word. Our theme verse for this series is

John 10:10 (NIV) 10 The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have LIFE, and have it to the FULL.

The promise Jesus makes to us is not only that we may have life and be saved from death and sin, which is a pretty good promise all on its own. But, He adds a second part to it. The second part is a promise that the life we may have is FULL and ABUNDANT. So as we continue through this series, the heart probing question I want us to wrestle with is, **ARE YOU THRIVING or are you just SURVIVING?** Because if we are not THRIVING we are living below what God has promised us and we need to allow God to make some changes in our lives as we engage in a serious pursuit of trying to eliminate the things that are keeping us from doing so.

Now, when we say the word STRESS here is the definition we are working from for this series and this is the definition that we introduced last week if you joined us for PICNIC & PRAISE in the PARK. **STRESS is fearful concern experienced when life's demands seem greater than my ability to meet them.** The reason we have chosen this definition is because not all challenges in life stress us out. It is only the ones where FEAR takes over and our inabilities are accentuated that we become overwhelmed. It is in these times that we must learn to lean on God and trust Him because we were never designed to carry such loads on our own. It is in times like this that we need to reprogram our mind and heart from going **"What am I going to do about this?"** to **"What is He (GOD) going to do?"**

In order to find God's peace in moments where we are stressed we need to learn how to pray this prayer as our response to those moments:

Lord, you KNOW what's going on in my life right now. You also know that I don't have the resources or ability to fix this situation. To be honest, I'm starting to STRESS out over this, even though I know I am not supposed to. So Lord, I am laying this situation at Your feet.

One of the areas where this prayer is needed is in the area of our busy life - we call it our SCHEDULE! Just the thought of it causes us stress because it feels like we are juggling a million things at once and if we drop one thing it is going to have devastating consequences for our life. Can anyone relate? We have to juggle marriage, parenting, relationships, our finances, our physical health, our emotional health, church, our hobbies, our social media accounts and also try to find time for God. Does that sound like a lot? That's because it is!! But, if we are being stressed out by our schedule and we were never designed to carry that stress, then something

needs to change. But how do we make changes when everything seems so important and so necessary? Well, to help us with that we are going to look at a familiar passage that we have preached on many times. A passage that keeps coming back up over and over again. Let me just say this before we turn there. The best way to get us to stop preaching on a particular passage if you are tired of hearing it is to start putting it into practice in your life. I have found that God repeats Himself often to me personally and the reason He does is because sometimes I am hard of hearing! Israel is a great example of this. Just read the Major and Minor prophets from books like Isaiah, Jeremiah, Daniel, Hosea, Amos, Obadiah, Haggai, Malachi. You will see God repeating Himself over and over again. Why? Because Israel was hard of hearing and they did not do what God told them to do. And sometimes we are no different. So let's see what God wants to say to us again.

Luke 10:38-40 (NIV) 38 As Jesus and his disciples were on their way, he came to a village where a woman named Martha opened her home to him. **39** She had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet listening to what he said. **40** But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made. She came to him and asked, "Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!" Let's give Martha credit. First of all, Martha gets things done!! She is a DOER!! Thank GOD for doers especially whenever you need something DONE. Can you imagine a world without DOERS or as Larry the Cable Guy would put it, "*without people who can get it done.*" Secondly, notice what she does when she is stressed out. Where did Martha turn for help? She turned to Jesus!! She did the right thing! She did what all of us need to do when we are feeling overwhelmed! But!! And here is a BIG BUT! **Is she willing to do what Jesus encourages her to do? Will she listen to Him, trust Him, and find rest in Him in the way that Jesus instructs her to?** Or, will she blow it off and continue with her busy activity? What would you do in that moment? Notice what Jesus says to Martha.

Luke 10:41-42 (NIV) 41 "Martha, Martha," the Lord answered, "you are worried and upset about many things, **42** but few things are needed—or indeed only one. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her."

As we work through this passage I want to deal with THREE HEART probing questions. I have to give you fair warning though. These are not easy questions and to be honest they kinda hurt my feelings a little bit. Especially as someone who is a DOER and takes pride in being a DOER! But if you want to experience God's peace in your SCHEDULE you need to wrestle with these three questions and be ready to let God make some changes in your life. Here we go!!

Question #1 - Does your SCHEDULE INCLUDE time with Jesus, or is it ORDERED around time with Jesus?

Look back over your week. Did you include SOME time for Jesus here and there whenever you could find time to fit it in or was your time with Jesus foundational to each day? You see when we look at Mary and Martha we find two types of mindsets when it comes to being with Jesus.

Martha welcomed Jesus into her home as a guest. Jesus stops by and Martha is willing to open up her home to Him and by doing so she is making time for Him in her busy schedule. Mary on

the other hand is different. When Jesus stops by she stops what she is doing and proceeds to give Jesus her full undivided attention. For Martha, Jesus was PART of her day. For Mary, Jesus was the central PRIORITY of her day. Which mindset best describes you?

Henry Blackaby says this, **"A love relationship with God is more important than any other single factor in your life."**

Now let's make this personal. Do you believe this statement to be true? If so, does your schedule reflect this belief? I know this is a little convicting. You are not alone! I want you to know that we the pastors of VC struggle with this as well. ([share a personal example of how you have failed at this recently](#))

But here is what I know! Every time I give priority to Jesus I am never shortchanged in the time I have available because of it! The principle of giving applies here. **You can't out give God!** (Btw, this is a VC core value) This is not only true with your finances but it is also true with our time management as well. When we build our lives around Jesus as our priority then everything else falls into place. Jesus promises us this in Matthew 6.

Matthew 6:25 (NIV) "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes?"

Matthew 6:31-34 (NIV) So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' **32** For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. **33** But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. **34** Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own. Do we believe this promise?

When we walk hand in hand with Jesus not only do we experience His peace but we have wisdom and discernment to know what needs our attention and what doesn't. We live in balance and He will quench the feelings of anxiety, the feelings of worry, and the feelings of being rushed or overwhelmed by our schedules. When we order our life around Jesus it is a worthy investment and it pays huge dividends.

Matthew 11:28-30 (NIV)"**28** "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. **29** Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. **30** For my yoke is easy and my burden is light." -

This isn't just a one time thing. This should be whenever we are weary and burdened or begin to feel overwhelmed by the things going on in our lives. But know this, Jesus is offering us another alternative to stress.

Question #1 - Does your SCHEDULE INCLUDE time with Jesus, or is it ORDERED around time with Jesus.

Question #2 - Is your schedule dictated by WHAT'S URGENT, or is it designed to ACCOMPLISH WHAT'S IMPORTANT?

Martha was pressed by the urgent need to prepare the meal! The meal had to be prepared and there was just too much that needed to be done if she was going to host Jesus properly. Doers are notoriously busy going from one thing to the next, never leaving much time for determining priorities. When an urgent matter arises they go into DO MODE (For the DOER, DOING is more important than BEING anyway). Martha was only focused on what was in front of her. She had no time to consider what was the more worthy endeavor. Maybe it would have been better to prepare a simple meal so she could spend more time with Jesus. But because she was always on the go, she had not allowed time for that kind of consideration. Mary, on the other hand, was wired differently. Mary ordered her life in such a way that she was going to choose what is most important. She refused to be bound by the urgent. In fact, this is exactly what Jesus implies about Mary and He encourages Martha to do the same thing.

Luke 10:41-42 (NIV) “Martha, Martha,” the Lord answered, “you are worried and upset about many things, **42** but few things are needed—or indeed only one. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her.”

But the question now becomes, How do we know what's most important? How do we set the right priorities? And that leads us back to the first question I asked. **The only way to set the right priorities is to know what God has chosen as the most important and the only way we can do that is to make God the foundation of our schedules and order our lives around time with Jesus.**

That's what Jesus did. Everything He did He did under the direction of the Father and He knew what the Father wanted because He was with the Father. On one occasion Jesus was in trouble with the religious leaders because He was healing on the Sabbath, A moment that must have seemed stressful for His disciples. It might have been better for them personally if Jesus had picked another day to do it. Listen to Jesus and His response to the religious leaders regarding why he healed on this particular day and on this particular situation.

John 5:16-20 (NIV) **16** So, because Jesus was doing these things on the Sabbath, the Jewish leaders began to persecute him. **17** In his defense Jesus said to them, “My Father is always at his work to this very day, and I too am working.” **18** For this reason they tried all the more to kill him; not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God.

19 Jesus gave them this answer: “Very truly I tell you, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does. **20** For the Father loves the Son and shows him all he does. Yes, and he will show him even greater works than these, so that you will be amazed.

While everyone else was in an uproar, Jesus had full peace in the moment. If you and I want a schedule saturated with the PEACE of God, we have to intentionally build a schedule that is fixed on accomplishing what's IMPORTANT over what's URGENT.

Question #1 - Does your SCHEDULE INCLUDE time with Jesus, or is it ORDERED around time with Jesus.

Question #2 - Is your schedule dictated by WHAT'S URGENT, or is it designed to ACCOMPLISH WHAT'S IMPORTANT?

Question #3 - Does your schedule express a heart captivated by WHAT'S ETERNAL or is it distracted by WHAT'S TEMPORARY.

Notice what Luke says about Martha in verse 40. **Luke 10:40 (NIV)** But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made.....

Then notice what Jesus says to her in verse 41. **Luke 10:41 (NIV)** "Martha, Martha," the Lord answered, "you are worried and upset about many things,

Distracted and worried! Two words that kind of describes us today in our modern world don't you think? But think about it: what are we so worried about and distracted by?

What did you have for dinner four days ago?

Who won the National Championship in basketball 3 years ago?

How many Christmas presents you received for Christmas are still in use today?

What was the most important email you wrote a month ago?

How many likes did your Facebook post get last Monday?

What was your last meeting at work about?

You are pretty special if you can answer any of those questions with any detail. I certainly can't. And that's my point: so much of what fills up our time and attention is in the grand scheme of life meaningless, insignificant and temporary at best. But because our culture seems to be so materialistic we tend to be worried and concerned over right much that is temporary in nature.

Now let me just say that this doesn't mean that we are going to have to eliminate all temporary matters from our schedules or our life. Nor is it to suggest that these things are necessarily bad in and of themselves. Nothing wrong with a good movie. Nothing wrong with good food. Work provides resources for our families etc. But we do need to keep in mind the reality that one day this life will end and then there is eternity. **1 John 2:17 (NIV)** The world and its desires pass away, but whoever does the will of God lives forever. In order to have a balanced life we need to be able to tell the difference between what is temporary and what is eternal. At the end of the day, what matters most is God and people. We need to be less concerned over things that do

not matter and more concerned about those things that impact eternity. We need to eliminate the temporary things that stress us out and are robbing us of emotional bandwidth to invest in that which is eternal. That was the point Jesus was trying to make to Martha.

Luke 10:42 (NIV) but few things are needed—or indeed only one. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her.”

In other words, few things really matter in life. Jesus is the one thing that matters most and Mary has chosen that which will have an impact on her life that far exceeds her time on earth. She has made the better choice. And we should do the same!!

Invitation:

So what are some steps we can take to redeem our schedules from the tyranny of stress? Are you ready to make a change and eliminate stress from your schedule? Let me give you 5 Steps that will help you do just that.

Step 1: Establish a daily rhythm with Jesus

- Time in God's word (Reading or Listening) - NEXT resources
- Time in Prayer
- Remember Jesus is a person not a book or vending machine. Make Him a priority in your life

Step 2: Determine what's most important in your life

- What are your priorities
- What are your core values for daily life going to be
- Make prayer part of your decision making and allow time to think through what these priorities are going to be. Are they scriptural? Are they important? Are they eternal?

Step 3: Build a plan for your life around what is most important

- You need an ACTION plan for what you are actually going to do based on the priorities you have set and prayed over.

- Examples:

If my wife/children are important then I will be home by a certain time each evening,

If church is a priority then other things will be scheduled around that.

Eating dinner together so many nights a week around the table.

Date nights/retreats with the wife so many times each month/year.

I will meet with Jesus in His word at ___am/pm everyday.

Step 4: Create margin within your plan for God's activity in the lives of others

- Leave room in your schedule for unexpected events or unplanned God moments. Don't pack your schedule with one thing after another.
- We need space for God to do the unexpected (Jesus and the woman with Blood or the Samaritan woman at the well)

Step 5: Establish accountability to eliminate distractions

- Share with a close spiritual friend what your values and plan are and invite them to hold you accountable to that plan

On a Side Note: if you are still struggling with stress, anxiety, depression, etc. after attempting to implement these 5 steps, then there might be an underlying issue which needs to be addressed through counseling and therapy because maybe there is a mental health or physical issue going on that needs to be practically addressed. So reach out and don't be afraid to ask for help.

PRAY

Wk 3 - Finding God's Peace in my Finances

Wk 4 - Finding God's Peace in my Relationships

Wk 5 - Finding God's Peace in the Face of Spiritual Attacks

Wk 6 - Finding God's Peace in Circumstances Beyond my Control