

## **STRESS AND SURRENDER** by M. A. Erickson

Many people are under stress and pressure in our society. Financial stresses, relationship stresses, job related stress, health issues, emotional stress - the list goes on and on. The tensions of life have been tough on many people. The tensions of life have led to breakdown, strain, a lack of peace, and health problems.

But there is a way to come out from under stress: stress and the pressures of life can be released through surrender. "Letting go" is one of the most healthy things you can do. It leads to an inner peace, a release of pressure, a new freedom. "Letting go" ultimately leads to a peace and freedom beyond anything that you or I have yet experienced.

There is a great release in realizing that you do not have to "hold your life together." There is a great release in realizing that you do not have to scheme and strive and pull strings to keep your life manageable. There is a great release in realizing that the universe does not revolve around you or I. You do not have to hold the universe (or even your own life) together. The universe does not revolve around you or I, and so it would be unnatural, unhealthy, for you to try to run the universe or even your own life.

The problem is that many people live as if life revolved around them - their ideas, plans, or needs. Unknowingly, they fall into a trap, because if a person lives as if life and the universe revolves around himself or herself, then "self" will be at the center. When "self" is ruling a person's life, that person will find that happiness and peace escapes him.

This explains why so many rich and famous people cannot find happiness through money, power, fame or fortune. Because "self" is at the center of their life, they cannot find true happiness or peace - only temporary pleasures that lead to dead-ends, dissatisfaction or addiction.

Average people face the same issue of "self," but often it is the problems and difficulties of life that keep a person struggling to stay in control, to stay "in charge," and live life by one's own strength.

But there is a much greater strength, the Strength of Another - the one who truly does run the universe. The loving God who holds the universe together has a personal concern for you, and He alone has the power and love to manage and guide your life.

This brings up the crucial issue: Who or what do you surrender to? Surrender brings peace, if you surrender to the God of love and truthfulness, who truly is at the center of the universe. The loving God alone has the power and wisdom to guide your life and bring you into peace.

But it is possible to surrender to the wrong thing - people do indeed surrender to many things which lead to dead ends and further unhappiness. In fact there is a long and growing list of addictions, each with a substance or activity that people surrender to, trying to find peace, happiness, or just the ability to cope with life. All of them are dead-ends.

Other people surrender to false religious ideas - religions of violence, religions based on self or self-effort, religions based on distorted images of God (Hinduism alone has thousands of

gods, for example).

But the only SAFE and RIGHT surrender is to surrender your life to the One who gave His life for you: the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the only true image of God, who has come to us in the flesh. He gave His life for you on the cross to cleanse you of all your self-based attempts to manage your own life, and to lead you to the true center: the heavenly Father who truly does love you and does rule all things. Jesus said it clearly: "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father, except through Me." (John 14:6).

There are two great pulls in the universe: one is the pulling force of self: this is life that revolves around self in its various forms. A life that revolves around self includes a life that is centered on selfish pleasures; but it also includes life that is focused on man-made religions, false gods, and false ideologies, which all lead back to a life that is centered on "self."

The other great pull is the God of love who created the universe, the living God who also became flesh in the person of Jesus Christ. God came to us to reveal Himself to us. He revealed Himself as a loving and compassionate Savior. Only He is qualified to guide our lives. Only He is qualified to reign in our hearts. He leads us away from the reign of "self," and into the rule of love.

If you look to religious people for clues about a God-centered life, you will find many disappointments. Just because a person is "religious" doesn't mean that their life is truly centered on the God of love. Some people remain at the center of their own life, while they talk of God or

religion. If a person has obvious moral flaws or wrong behavior, or distorted concepts of God, that person has not come to a true surrender to the God of love. Religious people who still have "self" at the center of their life actually turn many people away from the loving God of heaven.

Therefore, rather than looking to people and their failures, look to Jesus Christ. He died for us, not when we were good and noble, but while we were still trapped under the rule of "self." He died for us to cleanse us and forgive us and heal us. He did this while we were still preoccupied with "self," and sin. (All types of sin are just the expression of selfishness, in one form or another- so Jesus died to cleanse us from all forms of selfishness, and to restore our focus on the love of the Father). Believe in Jesus and allow Him to restore you to a life centered on love for God, and a genuine love for people.

"Letting go" is healthy, because it is based on the truth: God is the one running the universe, not you or I. "Letting go" is when you allow God to be at the center of your life, rather than yourself. Letting go is also when you allow Him to be in control, in all the specific areas of your life. This takes your focus off of yourself, and places it on the God of love and compassion.

You and I were not meant to be at the center of the universe, or even to be at the center of our own lives. We were meant to have the loving God at the center of our lives. When He is truly at the center, everything else takes it's rightful place in our lives. Then we love God, and we love people, each in their rightful place and way.

## **ULTIMATE SURRENDER AND DAILY SURRENDER**

The ultimate surrender is when you surrender your life fully to God. He becomes the center of your life, and you love people and use your talents and abilities for the glory of God. This is a once - and - for - all decision. Even after you make that decision, however, there are the many daily surrenders, where you turn your problems and burdens and concerns over to God, to let Him handle them. There are many daily reminders that God should be the one running the universe, not you or I. Surrendering, "letting go," allows the peace of God to rule in your heart during the daily challenges.

A comparison can be made with marriage: at the altar a man and woman exchange vows, and give their lives to one another. That is a decision, a commitment, a surrender of two people's lives to one another. But in marriage there are also many daily surrenders, when a man and woman seek to please each other, and set aside any selfishness.

So it is with our relationship with the God of love. There is the initial surrender of your life to Him. Then there is the daily surrender, where you learn to walk with God and allow Him to guide your life. In this relationship of love God works with you and through you, to manifest His love to people around you.

### **Talking with the God of Love**

In your relationship with the God of love, it is crucial that you allow Him to be at the center of your life, guiding and directing you. This happens as you allow Him to rule and

reign in specific situations. Praying includes asking Him into each situation, to guide and direct you. It also includes asking for wisdom, and believing that God will impart wisdom to you.

Some dimensions of prayer include:

(1) Thanking God: Thank God for the many gifts and blessings He has given you. Thanking God brings you back to the truth - that God is the ultimate source of every good gift, every blessing: even the air that you breathe. Thank God for His love; thank God for giving His Son for you; thank God for His goodness and kindness towards you.

(2) Intercession: This is praying for the needs of other people. Praying and being concerned for the needs of others is a great way to avoid the trap of a self-centered life. In prayers of intercession, you bring your concerns for people's needs to God, who has promised to answer prayer on their behalf.

(3) Worship: Worshiping God is acknowledging the truth: that God is all powerful, almighty, all loving, the creator of all things. He is worthy of our worship. As the Psalmist said, "Because your steadfast love is better than life, my lips will praise you. So I will bless you as long as I live; in your name I will lift up my hands." (Psalm 63:3,4)

(4) Confession: Confession is when we acknowledge our faults, our shortcomings, and ask God for forgiveness for them. True confession also includes a commitment to turn away from the sins you are confessing. God's Word has promised: "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to

forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (1 John 1:9).

## **God Will Speak to You Through His Word**

In our relationship with the God of love, there is a two way communication that takes place. We talk to God, and He talks to us. The most important way that God will speak to you is through His Word. God gave His Word, the Bible, as a guide map and as a revelation of what He is really like. Man, because of his self-centeredness and error, has needed the true guidance of the Word of God. God will speak to your heart and mind, as you read His Word. He will reveal His will, His plans, and His purpose for your life.

### Growth as a Person

As you grow in your relationship with the Lord, He will call you away from the path of self-centeredness, and He will call you into the path of genuine love: using your gifts and giving your life to serve others.

Releasing stress to God is one of the great privileges of the God-centered life. "Letting go" and letting God have control is simply the recognition of the truth - the truth that God is ultimately in control. And He has promised to guide and direct those who let Him have control of their lives. Not only that, but He has promised to take the burdens and cares of His people upon His own shoulders. Scripture says, "Cast your burdens upon Him, for He cares for you." (1 Peter 5:7).

God comes to fill you with His presence, His precious Holy Spirit. This leads you away from self, and to the outflow of genuine love. The selfishness that is prevalent in the human race is obvious, and is the source of man's problems. God changes this by giving you a spiritual rebirth when you surrender your life to Jesus Christ and accept Him as your living Savior. He then comes and fills you with His Holy Spirit, to lead you away from self and selfishness, into an outflowing of love from your heart. This outflow of love and compassion is one of the sure signs of a child of God, who has been filled with God's love. 1 John 4:19 says, "We love because He first loved us." And in 1 John 4:7 it says, "Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God." You must follow Christ, down the path of genuine love.

The Apostle John goes on to say, "He who does not love does not know God, for God is love. In this the love of God was manifested to us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the payment for our sins."

"Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has seen God at any time. If we love one another, God abides in us, and His love has been perfected in us. By this we know that we abide in Him, and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit."

"And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son as Savior of the world. Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God. And we have known and believed the love that God has for us. God is

love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him." (1st John 4:8-16).

A Prayer of Surrender:

Dear Lord Jesus, please fill me with your love, and wash away all my sins. I surrender my heart and life to you.

I ask you to receive me and make me whole.

Thank you for dying on the cross for my sins, to cleanse me and forgive me. Thank you for dying on the cross for me, to make me a child of God. I turn away from all my sins, with all my heart.

I receive you, Lord Jesus, as the Lord and Savior of my life. I ask you to rule in my heart and life from now on. I ask you to fill me with your loving presence, and guard me with your divine protection.

I ask you to strengthen me and help me, to live for you from now on. I ask you to fill me with love so that I can love other people with a pure love. Fill me with love so that I can love you with all of my heart.

I surrender my worries and my fears, and my problems to you. Help me and guide me in your way.

Amen.



After you surrender your heart and life to Christ, these steps will help you grow:

- (1) You can deepen your relationship with Him by talking with Him every day in prayer. You will experience more and more of the love and compassion of God.
- (2) Learn more about God's love, and His plan for your life by reading His Word (The gospel of John and the rest of the New Testament are a good place to start.).
- (3) Find true believers in Christ, who will help you grow in faith and love. Find a good Bible believing church to become a part of.
- (4) Share the love of Christ with someone you know who needs Him.

For more information on the Christian life, you can go to:  
<http://www.compassionheart.com>