

# Rising above Stress and Anxiety

The world measures achievement on our successes. Performance has become the name of the game, and almost every single person gets caught up in this job of having to “GET SOMEWHERE”.

This mindset has crept into the family unit – parents will say children only want to be loved and cared for ... but very soon, children see the role-model of their parents and start to understand:

- Some things are **MINE** – ownership/covetness.
- I have **RIGHTS** – if I make MORE noise, others will give in.
- I can **DOMINATE** by my will – brute force overpowers the meek.



**We have ALL been given the freedom to make CHOICES in life:**

Self-EGO/Tension

**OR**

LOVE/Relationship

*A modern-day condition or not?*

Some will say the stress we experience today is only because of today’s fast-paced “rat-race” mentality. However, we see the TENSION between opposites all the way back in Genesis.

*GOD’s Principles are set out in the Old Testament.*

**Genesis 1:1-5** IN THE beginning God (prepared, formed, fashioned, and) created the heavens and the earth. 2 The earth was without form and an empty waste, and darkness was upon the face of the very great deep. The Spirit of God was moving (hovering, brooding) over the face of the waters. 3 And God said, Let there be light; and there was light. 4 And God saw that the light was good (suitable, pleasant) and He approved it; and God separated the light from the darkness. 5 And God called the light Day, and the darkness He called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, one day.

We see that darkness [anxiety/stress] will **PRECEDE** light. This does not mean that there is always stress before we enjoy life ...

It simply means that we will not know or experience the need to handle stress, before we have entered into the darkness that defines stress.

We can also see that stress/darkness causes man to become **EMPTY** – without purpose and without hope.

***And then we are given HOPE!***

- We are given a PROMISE.
- We are included in a Covenant of CREATION.
- We are told that the Holy Spirit will come to HOVER OVER us in that state.

➔ ***Then GOD said, "Let there be LIGHT" and there was LIGHT.***

Whenever we find our selves in stress/darkness, we need to call out to God so that HE can "CREATE" light ... light has to be created.

➔ ***GOD saw that the light was GOOD, and GOD DIVIDED the light from the darkness.***

Here we see the TENSION between day and night – that is, emotional STRENGTH and STRESS exist together.

We see man has NEED for this tension – it is the fuel that drives man to attempt to reach the full POTENTIAL that GOD has placed within him.

➔ ***God called the light DAY, and the darkness He called NIGHT ... so there was evening, and there was morning, one day.***

What we have to learn is that day/emotional-strength defines the entire concept – we are NOT defined by the stress levels that we have, BUT by the emotional strength that we are able to bring to bear on every aspect of our life walk.

*A lesson from the Bible.*

**Proverbs 12:25** Anxiety [Strong's H1674] in a person's heart weighs him down [dejection] [Strong's H7812], but a kind/good [Strong's H1697] word cheers it glad.

Let's analyze this verse in some detail ...

The word **ANXIETY** is relatively well-known by most people, but do we really have a complete picture?

A. The HEBREW word for **ANXIETY** means:

- To fear, to melt,
- To be anxious, be concerned,
- To dread, be afraid,
- To be careful.

It implies that there is “something” that we are aware of, and that is **OVERPOWERING** us ...

So anxiety is not only the feeling that causes us the tension, but the fact that we are involved with a “BEING”.

B. The phrase “heart weighs him down” is a very poor translation of the Hebrew. If we look at the literal interlinear translation, the phrase should be:

*Anxiety ... in heart of ... man ... he shall **BOW DOWN** her.*

The Hebrew word used here, translated as “he shall bow down”, has a few meanings:

- To bow down.
- To prostrate oneself before other deities/false gods.
- To pay homage to a superior.
- To be depressed/to sink down.



The combination of this word “**he shall bow down**” and the Hebrew meaning of **anxiety** reveal a very interesting story ... the fear that causes me anxiety arises when I **BOW DOWN to something that is FOREIGN to the GOD that I serve.**

I am supposed to have some level of stress, to motivate me to action ... however, when the thing that I look at, hear, and/or see becomes so large that me being is CONSUMED ... then I have moved from apposition of “taking domain” to one of “bowing down “ to the circumstances.

**IT'S A CHOICE!!**

And the proverb (12:25) goes on to give us the solution – ***a man who walks in GOD's Way will REJOICE!***

The Hebrew for a **“GOOD WORD”** carries the following concepts:

1. A promise/something promised.
  - a. I must speak the words which are not futile or vain, but focus on the terms of the covenant.
2. A precept, or edict.
  - a. I must revert back to the Commandments – I have a royal mandate to be here, and a wise man will search the Oracles of God for direction and guidance.
3. Good counsel.
  - a. I must guard against all manner of rumor, and gossip. I must be silent when fools speak.
4. A business affair that is done/completed.
  - a. A man's word must be the benchmark of his character – it must also be the standard that all others will measure him by. A man whose word is always true will reflect God's Character, and therefore His Light.

So, HOW then are we to DEAL with stress?!

*Tips for dealing with stress.*

**1. Choose NOT to bow down to stress.**

- a) Step back from the problem – take time to sort out the “feeling” from the REALITY that you are facing.
- b) Define the problem – find words that describe your circumstance. Place all of the issues that are of concern inside a boundary line. Make sure that you define the beginning and the END of the circumstance.
- c) Recognize that it has a definite size, and that it's not insurmountable to overcome.

**2. Decide NOT to ignore the matter.**

Many times we think that if we can run away, or if we can think of other things, or if we leave the issue alone – it will either go away ... or get solved in a miracle!

It's important to leave the darkness in its own box – we cannot spend hours dwelling on the might have been, we need to walk towards the LIGHT. God's Word must be studied, meditated upon, and practiced DAILY:

*Proverbs 15:13 A glad heart makes a face happy, but heartache breaks the spirit.*

### **3. Articulate the stress.**

We are designed to live in COMMUNITY – to be apart of a family.

- a) One of the most productive ways to handle stress is to talk about it.

Your EGO is the part of you that prevents transparency. It's what Paul calls the "old man". Paul also tells us HOW to deal with our old man – to nail it on the cross!

As soon as you lay down your own ego, and become prepared to speak about the "something" that you are bowing down to, and that you are not able to overcome ... you will find a release in your spirit to hear with open ears, and see with clear eyes, exactly that which God wants you to do.



- b) Find a friend.

We need to spend time with good friends – there are many things that we can laugh about: the antics of a dog, the jokes that others have to tell ... there are also times to shed tears, to cry together – such as the pain that someone else feels at a deathbed. Connect with your emotions ... and share the feelings of others.

### **4. Ask a ROLE-MODEL/leader to be your teacher.**

- a) Watch someone who has dealt with stress before.
- b) Redefine your priorities ...

Your worth is not in the job title, the size of your house, or the make of your car.

Your worth is in the journey to reach your potential, in the acceptance of your perspective role (especially true for fathers/father-figures), and in your pursuit of building a legacy.

## 5. Be part of a community.

As you help others, even in the most menial of jobs/actions, you will begin to realize that you are better off than most, and have a lot to be thankful for!!

*Some Biblical role-models who overcame stress.*

The beauty of the Scriptures is how GOD uses the “average Joes”:

- People who makes mistakes,
- Who do not get everything right,
- But who eventually triumph over their circumstances.

*Let's look at some examples ...*

### → **Noah**

This man certainly had stress!!

- He sees many people die in a flood.
- He hears their cries at the end, when there is no more time.
- He has to step into the unknown, be the captain of a ship, on a sea with no maps or compass ...
- And he doesn't get it all together – turning to wine after he gets on dry land.

*But is this the WHOLE picture?*

The Hebrew word for ARK is “TAIVA” and it also means WORD.

The story teaches us that if we enter the ARK of the COVENANT, the circumstances that rage around us will cause us to be LIFTED UP, rather than drown us in anxiety.

### → **Jacob**

- He suffers the stress of having to leave home and move to a foreign land.
- He has to work for a slave like uncle.
- He will marry the wrong girl, and then have to work to earn the other one.

### ***But is this the WHOLE picture?***

In Genesis 28, Jacob remembers, recalls, and proclaims the promise made in the dream that he has leaving the Land of Covenant:

- He stands on the promise that his spirit will be connected to the heavens by the spiritual ladder.
- He stands on the promise that he will see his descendants become a nation.

### **→ Joseph**

- He suffers the stress of being rejected by his brothers.
- He knows the fear of being lowered into a dark pit full of snakes and scorpions.
  - He will learn to respond to the bite of the snake that sets a process of slow death, or the sting of the scorpion that is only felt long after the poison, has entered the body ...
- He will be thrown into the dark pit of the jail, for a deed that he was NOT guilty of.

### ***But is this the WHOLE picture?***

He will remember the promise of the dream of the brothers that will bow down to him, and take up the promise of the robe of many colours, to be the saviour of the family in times of distress.

### *Conclusion.*

Our own ego will chase after performance at work, on the sports fields, in ministry. We give in to the pressure to be the best, to be on top ... and we BOW DOWN to the deity of SELF. This path leads to loneliness, helplessness, and insignificance.

As children of GOD, as Sons of Abraham, we are to be set-apart, a royal priesthood, a holy nation. We are to be FREE men and women, who strive to use the gifts GOD has given EACH of us, to reach the FULL POTENTIAL that GOD has planned for us.

*Shalom!*

# Amanda Buys' Spiritual Covering

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