

Stress Relief: Toys or Weapons

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- [0 : 00] All right, if you will take your Bible night, turn to 2 Corinthians chapter 10. 2 Corinthians chapter 10. I thought I had a deep voice until about two minutes ago. Love that deep, resonant voice that puts people to sleep, is what I've been told.
- Bring your baby and, yeah, we'll rock them to sleep. We'll preach them to sleep. 2 Corinthians chapter 10 tonight, and we are, you should have a handout in front of you, as your pastor said.
- As you said, we're looking at tonight processing stress. Of all the things that we navigate as men, I do think one of our core issues is how we process pressure, specifically stress.
- And to be honest with you, I feel like sometimes we label certain issues in our man space as being other things. And I think there's a lot more to this that maybe God will help you with this evening.
- Hope that he will. But what we're looking at tonight, stress relief toys or weapons. So discarding that which the world, worldly man, fleshly man uses to process stress and in his place to use what God has provided for us.
- [1 : 02] Let's look at 2 Corinthians chapter 10. We'll look at a couple other verses in this chapter with the Lord's favor and time tonight. But let's look at verse 3 down through verse number 5. Paul says this, For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh.
- And just think for a second as we begin this text, did Paul navigate a few stresses in his life? And obviously the we, we don't know who all he's referring to.
- We could guess who he's thinking of when he says we there. But I assure you, the we, they did process stress. And so in verse 4, he says, So tonight I want to look at this subject, stress relief toys or weapons.
- And I don't know if you've ever had, I don't know if you've worked like in a, you know, cubicle farm as we would say. Or a place where you got a lot of different men working. Or ladies. A lot of times we find gimmicks to process stress.
- You know, like a little punching bag that has a suction cup on it that we stick there. We got a little dart board. There's all kinds of gimmicks you can use to like, to let out that rage or that stress. And that may look different in your space or your workspace.
- [2 : 23] But we find sometimes gimmicks that I think really shortchange everything that God has provided for us in Jesus Christ. And I will just say this as we begin tonight.
- We are foolish to try to fight battles with toys. And we would be wise to take full advantage of the weaponry that God has provided for us through the gospel, through his word, and by his spirit.
- And I just would say this tonight, maybe if you would ask me to summarize from a spiritual perspective, what is stress? I could give you a medical definition. I could give you a practical definition.
- But from a believer standpoint, can I just say stress tonight is not random, but is the result of spiritual forces at war with each other. I think sometimes we blame stress on our wife.

We blame stress on our boss. We blame stress on the problems that we all deal with in a fallen, broken world. But in reality, the stress in our world is because we live in a fallen world. And this fallen world is not just what we see that maybe bothers us in the moment, but there's a spiritual battle going on.

[3 : 25] And the only way to fight that battle and to win that battle is to use the weaponry that God has afforded to us. So Paul here, he is really, where are we at in the Corinthian letters?

We're almost to the end. And it's almost like he's been biding his time to deal with this core issue that really plagued the city of Corinth. Corinth was one of the most over-sexualized, immoral places you could ever imagine.

And it's almost like Paul's been waiting to bring this up. Have you ever had that one thing in the counseling session or that one thing in your message or that one thing with your kid and you bide your time, right?

And that's Paul here in chapter 10 as he's really getting to the crux of his concerns for this church and I think specifically the men of this church. And so I hope tonight we can glean a few lessons from it.

So let's talk about this two-part trade. And you have an outline in front of you there. First of all, number one, we have to subtract the carnal toys. So we have to get out of our lives things we're using to try to process stress that really only either compound it or deal with it superficially instead of dealing with it in a way that pleases the Lord.

[4 : 33] The other day, I don't know if you like bacon or not. I don't think you'd be a man if you don't like bacon, okay? Brother John served us bacon today, or his wife did. And he's a man of God. I can sense that. We had grits that I don't have very often, and we had bacon.

It was a good morning. And somebody asked this question. They said, if you had to choose between eating bacon every day or being skinny for the rest of your life, right? So here's the question. Would you choose applewood or would you choose hickory smoke?

I don't know about you, but there are certain carnal things that I like that it's very hard to let go of those things, right? That could be bacon. I could list a lot of other things I want tonight. But sometimes we lean on these things, whatever it is, in a way that really hinders and undercuts what God wants to do.

So here's kind of the thought as we begin. God has not called us to men to cope as men to cope with stress. He's called us to conquer it. He's called us to lean into it, to look to him, and to use the weaponry that he has given us by his grace.

So let's talk about this evening. So let's start first with the negative. This is going to be a bit direct. I'll be careful with the young men in the room how I speak to some of these issues. But number one, let's talk first of all about mainstream toys.

[5 : 46] So these would be mainstream acceptable ways for men to process stress that, to be honest with you, are not as productive as we've convinced ourselves that they are. If you go down to verse number 12, Paul says this later, For we dare not make ourselves of the number or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves, but they measuring themselves by themselves, comparing themselves among themselves, what's the next three words?

Are not wise. So we are fools to use what everybody else uses when it comes to stress. We could talk about other areas, but we are foolish to use what every guy, the average guy, quote unquote, uses to deal with any given issue.

And so Paul here basically says, you guys are fools to be involved in what is basically a mutual admiration society. Attaboy, they say attaboy to us. We all just kind of pretend it's okay.

And we all know if we're honest, there's something missing in this area. So I want to just list for you some things that are very mainstream that I see guys regularly, both first this guy standing in front of you.

And if we're not careful, the men, not just in the world, but in our churches using to process stress. Number one, first of all, and this, I can't believe we have to say this, but alcohol, prescription drugs, we're just, we're in the state of Ohio, we just legalized the medical use of marijuana.

[7 : 04] We also now have it legalized that it can be used recreationally. Gambling, other things just passed this past election cycle in our state. But things that used to be out of bounds are not anymore, right?

And I think we at least have to say that this evening, that we have to be honest where we're using those substances or something similar to process stress. In the medical community, specifically in where counseling and the medical piece merge, which is a hard marriage to reconcile with a confidence in the sufficiency of scripture, but also recognizing that sometimes there are physiological things that contribute to our struggles.

There's what's called dual diagnosis. My brother-in-law, who's with the Lord, passed away a few years ago. I think he clinically would be diagnosed as being dual diagnosis, which means you have an underlying issue that then you are self-medicating with something.

And his struggle was alcohol. He didn't love alcohol. He didn't enjoy alcohol. But it was a way to dull the pain of some other things going on in his life. And I see in our ranks often we also as men are doing the same thing.

But we're using things. We're using substances instead of dealing with the core issues that are before us. A couple more. Food and drink. I'm going to meddle a bit tonight, okay? So just bear with me.

[8 : 18] I'll leave here in a few minutes and you can go back to your normal programming, okay? Food and drink. Number three, random hobbies and interest. This would not be in a wholesome way.

We'll talk about how hobbies can be a good thing in a moment. But we need to be more intentional instead of wasting time. It's kind of like the, you know, scrolling through the cat video kind of content on the internet.

And we're just wasting time. And an hour later we have nothing to show for the management of that, those minutes that we have. Next, mind-numbing media. So that would maybe be in the same vein of thought.

This could be talk, sports, radio, podcasts, internet news, video platforms, social media. A friend of mine in the ministry, he added up the other day. So the average American spends between five to six hours per day on their phone.

That depresses me just to hear that. Five to six hours a day. So here's the math. At six hours per day, that means every year we spend three months on our phone.

[9 : 19] Three months on our phone. And we wonder why we're not problem-solving. We're not dealing with the core issues in our marriage, in our ministry, in our physical stewardship, whatever the specific thing may be.

And so we need to own that. There are all kinds of hacks. If you don't know how to manage your phone, there's all kinds of ways to manage how much time you're on your phone, on which apps you're on. Be intentional with that.

It's a huge issue that does not help but compounds our stress. Next, sports. When you hear, and I know that's really meddling, but when you hear man cave, what comes to your mind?

A place a guy goes to pray and get a hold of the throne of God? No, right? Why aren't men known for other things? Man cave. Why is it the thing we're most known for?

Is it describing that would be more the sports or other things like that? Video games. I run into it regularly all the time. This happens almost every church I'm in. And as we travel, parents with grown son or daughter who is consumed with video games.

[10:17] And it's not the video game. It's the social interaction that's built into and baked into those platforms. And so we have to own where we as men maybe are using that in a way that is dysfunctional and not helping us.

I could say more on that, but I think those are a few things at least to get your brain going in the direction maybe God wants you to this evening. So if you process stress like an average man, you are not in good company from God's perspective, bluntly put.

So may we own that. May we stop being the fool. And may we instead go with what God has given us in his word. All right. Secondly, number two, and this is probably the most painfully direct part of our study tonight, private toys.

So you have mainstream toys that we as men use to process stress. We also have ones that we do in the private space of our lives. One of the things that's funny to me about adulthood are things that we never talk about, but we all think about and we all kind of interact, but we just maybe we've never talked to somebody.

The one that was brought up to me recently was, if you notice when you go to the stove, you know, when your wife's like deathly ill and you have to actually prepare food for yourself. And you go you go to the stove.

[11:25] Do you have like a go to burner? I do. It's front right. I mean, that's just like I mean, I'm sure you all have the same burner. OK, but like nobody talks about these things like we just all do it and we all have our preference.

In all seriousness, do you know that in the church there are certain topics we kind of just dance around? And I think it's specifically how we manage stress in the personal space that is really, I think, robbing us of a lot of our power, our vitality.

The drive we should have for the cause of Jesus Christ is being misdirected. So look back at verse five. Unless you think this issue is just an external one or a superficial one.

Paul here in verse five, he gets inside our heads here. Notice he says casting down imaginations, every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God and bringing into captivity every thought, every thought to the obedience of Christ.

So what is Paul saying here? He's saying that the battle is one in the mind. We men are trying to fight battles on the outside and we've already lost because we haven't fought first the battle in the mind that sets us up for success or failure.

[12:33] And so we have to address the thoughts that often we're not dealing with. Proverbs 23, 7 says, For as a man thinketh in his heart, so is he. You're not who I think you are tonight.

I'm not who you think I am tonight. I'm who I think. How I think. What I think about. What I focus on is the real issue. So I'm going to talk about two areas in just a second.

But I will say this before we begin because we're going to talk about our morality, how we manage our vessel, our mind, our thought life, that I think far less of the men issues in this space.

And I counsel regularly. And I need also accountability in my life. Has nothing to do with being perverted, being obsessed with certain topics and images and ideas.

It's that it's a lazy way to process stress. And so again, without getting too specific tonight, I just I want to challenge you on a couple things that may help you if you're battling this or someone else is that you care for.

[13:31] So first of all, let's talk about the private optical. This would be how we we mismanage stress with our eyes, what we look at and what we focus on. I mean, the obvious struggle in our day is pornography.

And I just list for you a few statistics tonight that show how far this has taken over and taken hold in our society. Over 40 million Americans regularly visit porn sites.

40 million. I think we've got like maybe 330 in our country, something to that tune. The porn industry's annual revenue is more than the NFL, the NBA and MLB combined. So they're not in it to relieve our stress.

They're in it to monetize us, to objectify us as we objectify others. They're using us. Pornography uses pornography use increases marital infidelity by 300 percent.

So don't tell yourself or try to convince yourself it's not going to affect your relationships. 11 is the average age that a child is first exposed to it. So that's why even our younger demographic in the room need to hear this and be challenged in it.

[14 : 35] 94 percent of children will see it by age 14. Ninety-four percent. I don't know if you guys are like me. I have teenage sons. It's all I can do to fight it and to keep the filters and the thresholds up that help all of us, myself included, be accountable in this area.

Lest you think it's just the world at large, 68 percent of church-going men and over 50 percent of pastors view it on a regular basis. So it's in this room. Okay, let's just be honest about that.

It's not just out there. It's in here. And then lastly, 57 percent of pastors say that addiction to porn is the most damaging issue in their congregation. And so may this church be the exception.

May your life be the exception as you process stress properly. So my premise, the reason I bring up this part of our study tonight is because I think a lot of that is it's an easy way to process stress.

It's a lazy way to process stress that often we're shortcutting certain things that God wants to do through the relationships he's entrusted to us. One author put it this way because we talk about men have needs, right?

[15 : 38] And he said this need, in quotes, is a common euphemism for idle. Often we don't have needs so much as we have masters. So we have to own that.

We have to own that. We have to own that. We have to own that. And as we do so, God can help us with that. There's several books I could recommend to you, but one that's been a great help to me in the counseling room is the book called Death of Porn.

It's a good book that I've found to be very helpful. It's kind of written in the vein of Solomon to his son like the Proverbs. It kind of feels like that. It's much more positive, even though it's confronting sin.

So that might be a book that's of help to you or someone that you're trying to minister to in this area. So kind of the final thought in this area would be the world and the devil are not offering you these virtual things to reduce your stress level.

In fact, by participating in it or buying the lie, it will increase your stress, right? Hiding it, the timidity, the guilt, the shame, the effect it has on others around you.

[16 : 37] We have to be willing to acknowledge that. Michael Foster put it this way, Evil rulers will use women against men. Satan used Eve against Adam. Pharaoh unsuccessfully used the midwives against the sons of Israel.

The Philistines used Delilah against Samson. The most widespread form of this attack today, porn. It keeps men pacified and weak. And so we've got to fight that so we can then fight the battles that God has called us to.

All right, number two, go to Matthew 5. And I just, again, I'll be very careful how I say this, but I think you need to hear it this evening. Number two, private manual. Go to Matthew 5 and notice how graphic and blunt Christ is as it relates to our thought life.

We'll get to all the positive in just a minute, but we need to make sure we talk this out a bit this evening. Our private manual. You notice that we as men, like as soon as we hear a problem, we want to fix it, right?

And often the way that we fix things is with our hands. So we hear a wife say something she's concerned about or burdened about, and immediately we don't want to just listen. We want to fix it, right? And the same thing is true with stress.

[17 : 49] We tend to do that in a way that's highly dysfunctional, and I would submit to you is even out of bounds from God's Word. So look, if you will, here in verse number 27. Christ has this cadence of, you've heard this, but I say unto you this.

Remember this passage of different things? You hate your brother, it's the same as murder. He goes through this list of things. But look at this one specifically. You have heard that it was said by them of old time, thou shalt not commit adultery.

And then here's this revolutionary thought that the Jewish men had to have just had almost an intake of error as they hear this. It runs counter everything they had been taught. But I say unto you that whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.

Now I want you to notice the way the next two verses begin. And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, cast it from thee, for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell.

So he's saying practice radical amputation. Cut it out. Is he talking literally? I guess if you have to. But he's talking about isolating, protecting, insulating your life from letting your eyes wander.

[18 : 57] Now look at verse 30. And I've struggled with this verse for years. Where's Christ going with this? And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off and cast it from thee, for it is profitable for thee. Again, these same words, that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell.

And so I would submit to you this evening, I think he's talking about there in verse number 30, having studied it out, if you look at the context, he's talking about self-gratification. And using your own assets and your own abilities to release or to let go of the stress that is in your life.

And our tendency is to excuse that, to validate that, to use that as something that is an out, when I believe God clearly sets it out of bounds. So you see Jesus appears to link self-gratification with lust when he says looking at a woman is the same as committing the act, and so is the act of self-gratification.

And so we have to cut off the things that keep us from processing stress properly. I know for me when I'm stressed, the reason I hate stress is because it makes me feel weak and overwhelmed.

Do you feel that? I wish I could go in 70 directions right now. And when I feel weak, I tend to want to do something to process that that makes me feel either less stressed or feel stronger.

[20 : 15] And so I look for the easiest way to do that. Sometimes it's anger, right? There are all kinds of ways that we can manifest this, but it's unhealthy and it's unholy, and God calls us to a different agenda.

I was in Israel two years ago. I showed this morning a picture from the Garden of Gethsemane. We had a Messianic Jew who was taking us around Israel. This was right after COVID. The country had just opened up.

There were like seven groups maybe of us there. And we flew from New York City that has the second largest Jewish population to Tel Aviv, which has the most.

And so I was processing, I mean, you're on a plane. They would pray, you know, all their prayer hours. You're trying to stay out of their way as we make our way across the pond. And this Messianic Jew was saying, if you go to Times Square where there are all kinds of immoral things you have access to, peep show type things, that Jewish men will brazenly, with their young son beside them, they'll leave their son at the door, and they will walk in in bold, right in daylight, go in, watch what they're going to watch, and walk back out and feel not even a pang of guilt.

And he was saying the reason for that is because they don't subscribe to the teaching of this text. I didn't do anything. And I think if we're not careful, in the interior part of our well-being or lack thereof, there's some issues on this area.

[21 : 35] Our thought life, our gratification, we need to align with God in his word. So practice the radical amputation of private toys and allow God to give you the right way to process stress that pleases and honors him.

Matthew Henry put it this way, lust gets strength by being gratified. And it will take over, and there'll be a tipping point that you can no longer rein it back in without some serious intervention in your life.

Lust gets strength by being gratified. Last thought, and then we'll move to the positive. I was listening to a podcast the other day, and it was a husband and wife talking.

They were being interviewed, and the husband had struggled with pornography for years, and then he had gotten free of it. And then unbeknownst to his wife, he had tripped back up into it for several months. And his wife said after it came out, because she caught him in it, she said the issue wasn't that you were watching pornography.

The issue was you were hiding it from me. She said that actually is the bigger issue. And I will tell you this. We just had conversation over lunch with your pastor about this, but I'm just telling you, Satan does the following things.

[22 : 42] He entices you, he enslaves you, and then he threatens to expose you. And I'm just assuring you tonight, the best move you can make is bring it into the light to the person God has called you to share it with, to be transparent, and to then de-escalate where stress keeps ratcheting up this area of temptation in your life.

All right, so now let's go to the positive. Hopefully you got the point there without being too blunt with you that we need to subtract these mainstream toys, these carnal toys that are in our lives.

So let's get now to the positive. Go back, if you would, to our text there in 2 Corinthians 10, and look, if you would, at verse number 4. All right, so he calls us out where maybe we're off on the interior.

Now let's talk about how we can handle stress in a way that pleases the Lord. Verse 4, he says again, the weapons of our warfare are not carnal. So we've laid those aside. At least we've agreed we should.

Notice this, the end of verse 4, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds. Number 2, add sanctifying weapons. Add sanctifying weapons.

[23 : 48] How many of you, by a raised hand, you've been to Texas? All right, just raise your hand. All right, isn't Texas just a little different than the rest of we weak, feeble states? Everything's, at least from their perspective, everything's bigger in Texas.

The first Buc-ee's I ever went to where I could spend all of my life savings on jerky and put it in one bag probably. Just everything in Texas is bigger.

And the other day, this captures the spirit of our brethren to the Southwest. I mean, they got the Alamo, right? Got all this stuff. But anyway, here's a story from San Antonio just a few months ago.

Here's the headline, okay? News story in San Antonio a few months ago. Man uses gun to rob a convenience store in Texas, which is a mistake, okay? And then here's the second sentence.

Man is shot by every customer in that store. Every guy had a shot at him, okay? Aren't you thankful that God gives us weapons that are comprehensively applicable and effective?

[24 : 53] He gives us weapons to help us deal with everything that burdens us and slows us down and stresses us out. And that includes the area that we're talking about this evening. And so Paul here is admonishing us not to just cope with stress, but to conquer it with the weapons that he's provided.

So what we're gonna talk about now would be kind of proactive or preventative to not dealing with stress in the dysfunctional ways that we just talked about. And I feel like if you can get this second point right, the first one's gonna be a little easier.

Or at least you'll get some momentum as you deal with maybe struggles in that. So let's talk about a couple of them. Number one, resting. Let's talk about resting weapons. I meant to say this to begin. If we have time at the end, if you have a question about this or something you found has helped you process stress, we'd love to have you share that as we finish tonight.

But number one, let's talk about resting weapons. So I'm just gonna give you some practical things as it relates to stress that if you'll do these things, it will help you be more intentional in a way that pleases the Lord. Number one, Sabbath rest.

In Mark 2 and verse 27, it says the Sabbath was made for man. The Sabbath was made for man. Even the man that's type A like me. Even the guy that can't handle, you know, sitting still for five minutes like me.

[26 : 12] And like many of you in the room, the Sabbath was made for man. Just as Eve was created so that man would not have to live alone. The Sabbath was created so that man would not have to live exhausted and stressed out.

And isn't it interesting that things that God has created for us, we act like it's the worst thing for us. I'm too busy to Sabbath. I don't have time to take a break. I don't have time to rest to then be able to handle the stressors in life that God allows in my path.

And so we have to work at Sabbath rest. In fact, if you notice there, look back in our text there in 2 Corinthians chapter number 10, did you notice through whom these weapons become mighty?

Did you see that? Look at the middle of verse four. Not carnal, but mighty through whom? Through God. The temptation is when we're stressed out is to do more, to put more in effort.

And sometimes we just need to rest and let God do something with the situation. I remember having a seasoned pastor tell me one time, because I was like, Pastor, we got to do something about this situation. He said, I am doing something. I'm doing nothing.

[27 : 22] I'm giving God room to work in this situation. And some of our fretting and fuming and pacing, we're just spinning our wheels and wearing ourselves out. In the process, we're not trusting in God and giving him space to prove himself.

I found if I give God room, I never regret that. He takes longer, yes. It's more methodical. The wheels of providence move slowly, as we would say. But the end result is always superior to what I could have done in a moment to try to deal with it or put the fire out or triangulate the threat, whatever the case may be.

And so may we give God room by practicing Sabbath rest. Without the honoring of the God-assigned rhythm of weekly rest, listen, we lack the energy needed to even put up a good fight in this battle God has called us to.

I think a lot of us men, I look at you tonight, you're probably like me, we're just tired, right? We've got a lot of balls in the air and our world is complex and we can use all kinds of excuses, right, of why we're not getting the rest that we need.

It's time to drop those excuses and to honor God in the ways that he calls us to. So may we process stress not in a lazy way as we talked about earlier, but in a rested way that will please and honor him.

[28 : 34] All right, number two. So we talked about the hand piece. Let me give you a little hack that I learned from a guy a few years ago that's really been helping me. I'll explain it, but let me give you the point. Manual versus mind rest.

Manual versus mind rest. So here's the principle, maybe jot this down to help you learn how to rest better. If you work with your mind, Sabbath with your hands.

So if primarily you work with your mind as I do, I'm thinking, I'm talking, I'm studying, I'm not on an assembly line, I'm not installing something at somebody's home, I'm not mowing down forest with a big old chainsaw, I'm doing things more mental.

If you work with your mind, Sabbath with your hands. If you work with your hands, Sabbath with your mind. So if you do a lot of manual work, the last thing you should be doing is going home and just leaning into a bunch of physical labor.

Sometimes you'll have to, but your downtime should be the opposite of that. You're learning what depletes you and you're learning what renews you and you're being very intentional with that.

[29 : 37] I think in Ephesians 4, we see just a little bit of an allusion, not maybe to the manual versus mind piece, but the idea of learning what to put off and what to put on. Ephesians chapter 4, verse 22, that you put off concerning the former conversation, the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lust, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind that you may put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and in true holiness.

So with stress, we tend to give in to the old man because he's just more natural, right? It's just more natural to cave to him, but we need to put that off and put on the new man that's being renewed in the righteousness of God, the holiness that he alone provides.

So the very activities that interest you to be mind-numbing, as we talked about earlier, those things can be healthy. There's nothing sinful about a man cave. There's nothing sinful about, probably you want to amen there, but you're not sure if you should, there's nothing wrong for some of you lobbying for that right now with the boss at home, but whatever it is, those things in and themselves are not bad, it's just what's the reason behind it?

How frequently are you giving yourself to that pursuit? But if it leads to a rested mind, if it leads to reengaging in what God has called you to do, it can be a holy activity.

One of the things that I struggle with because I am driven, a driven kind of guy, is that rest, when I do nothing, that that's just as holy in God's eyes, is when I'm doing the most amazing thing for God.

[31 : 01] Leading somebody to Christ, baptizing somebody, counseling someone, whatever the case may be, God is just as pleased when I stop and I let him be God. And I'm human. I'm finite.

I have limitations and I let him work in a given situation. So this would just be me since I work with my mind. A lot of times, working on the house, we've flipped houses on the side a bit, our family.

And so I will have a podcast on in my ear and I'm working on something. And to me, I'm still doing something, but it's opposite of what I do during the week. I'm listening to some podcast about an entrepreneur, some guy who started Home Depot or whatever the case may be.

Something that's just interesting, that it decompresses, it gets me out of my normal bent of thought and I end the day in a way that's refreshed and rejuvenated. So I encourage you to think about where you can do better in Sabbath.

If you don't work intentionally at resting, you will lack the moral and physical fortitude required for a regular spiritual victory. Your victorious Christian life depends upon that fortitude that needs refreshment and renewal.

[32 : 05] And so see that and defend that and protect that time as being a non-negotiable. So here would be my challenge to you tonight. When is the next time you're going to Sabbath?

And what are you not going to do on that day and what are you going to do on that day? See, we tend to view Sabbath as just I'm not doing anything. And I'm just telling you there's no void in the cosmos.

Something will fill every void. So you've got to figure out what you're going to do on that day and you ought to know that tonight within the next seven days you better have a Sabbath. It might be a couple of afternoons. It might not be all in one day but whenever that time is you know what you're going to do and you know what you're not going to do.

I don't check emails on my day off. If I do, I'm working by 9 a.m. Okay? So I have to set that time aside and that helps me to process. Then when I get in a stressful situation I'm ready for it.

I'm relying upon the Lord. I'm resting in Him. I have the strength and wisdom hopefully I need to navigate that given situation. And so it is not just ignorance but it is avoidance that keeps men from resting.

[33 : 10] I think one of the reasons we don't rest is because if we stop then things that we know we should be dealing with are now there. Right? If something's off with the wife we have to actually sense that.

If something's off physically we have to take the time to evaluate that. If something's off spiritually and so rest is a time to regroup. The temptation to avoid that at all costs.

Alright, so number one resting weapons. Number two let's talk for a few minutes about renewing weapons. So it's one thing to take a break and to kind of pull away but then how do we renew?

How do we add back the strength that we need to deal with the stress that we navigate as men? I don't know if you're familiar with Chuck Norris. Have you heard of this guy? The guy that nobody can win against or defeat.

I was preaching at a college a couple I guess it was a year ago and so I just posted on Facebook I said give me your best Chuck Norris joke alright and that's probably the most popular post I've ever put up in my life okay I had like thousands of comments and some very good Chuck Norris jokes so I shared just a couple of them with you tonight to make sure you're awake.

[34 : 17] Number one when Alexander Bell finished inventing the telephone he had a missed call from Chuck Norris. I love that one okay two more if you'll I have thousands okay but just three top three tonight.

Number two the boogeyman checks under his bed for Chuck Norris and then my my favorite would be this when Chuck goes swimming he doesn't get wet the water gets Chuck so stupid right do you ever feel like we do you ever feel like somebody who's just now clicking do you ever feel like we're supposed to be him like we can take on anything and then you look in the mirror and you you evaluate how you feel and you're like I can't fight my way I have a paper bag right now I got nothing where do we go to find strength where do we go to renew where do we go to have the fortitude we need to deal with the stress that we deal with in life so I want to give you just a few practical things I'm finding that renew me that I think are not just spiritual disciplines they're weapons if I'll let them be that number one personal devotions these are not going to be like you know things you've never heard of before but they're things we need to hear right we need to be reminded of our personal walk with the Lord

Psalms 119 165 great peace of they which love thy law and nothing shall offend them and that word offend there we so butcher that verse it has nothing to do with me being offended by someone else the idea is nothing will trip them up man when you're when you're when you're weak and when you're stumbling through life it doesn't take much to make you fall flat on your face we need God's peace we need his strength and his renewal and we only find that in his word I know it's a simple thought but so often we're too busy for the word of God and if you are you're just too busy right or your view of your business you're too busy and so men we need to be in the word are your kids waking up in the morning and catching dad trying to get his feet under him his faith and his heart and renewed and strength are they seeing you in the word not just so you don't do it just for that does your wife know you're in the word or are you just kind of giving her your hot takes on things you're not giving your scripture you're not showing that you're guided by it and ruled by it and fueled by it and so we need to be in the word of God on a regular basis and I found when I'm in the word my day may not go better but how I process it does go better it could be a worse day but in my frame of mind my perspective is different than when I'm too busy quote unquote to be in

God's word all right number two this is a key one for we men Christian fellowship I'm sure I'm preaching at the choir tonight as we would say but we've got to be in community Christian fellowship let's look at it quickly just because we're so close would you go to Galatians for just a second just go over one book Galatians chapter number six in verse two we quote verse one all the time and I'll read it here in a second but I think verse two is just as key of a verse to Galatians as verse one Galatians six one brethren if a man if a man be overtaken and a fault you which are spiritual restore such in one in the spirit of meekness notice this considering thyself lest thou also be tempted verse two bear ye one another's burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ do you see the communal feel there in verses one and two and I would tell you this sometimes the way that we keep ourselves from misprocessing stress is by helping someone else who is doing it wrong and considering that we could also fall into that same mindset on a regular basis and so the admonition is that we should be in

Christian community there's the proverb you maybe have heard it before shared joy is double joy shared sorrow is half sorrow and I found the same to be true of stress shared stress tends to be reduced stress because someone else at least is carrying the load with me some of you men your greatest struggle with stress has nothing to do with the stressors it has everything to do with your systematic way of processing it that's all by your lonesome can we at least admit that we may sing better and I would agree we don't look better as pastor was saying but we are relationally often dysfunctional aren't we as men the ladies have their own set of challenges but it typically is not in this area they tend to lean into others when they're going through a stressful season we men if we're not careful yeah I'm good you good yeah I'm good we grunt at each other we keep it inside we keep it in our own space we've got to share when we're going through a stressful season and I think it's hard I know for my wife it's hard for me to admit

[39 : 06] I'm angry I'm irritable I'm edgy I'm jumpy and I think if we would be more proactive with stress versus reactionary our wives could help us and the same is true with others maybe in our ministry and context at work we've got to be in Christian community could your poor stress management actually be a fruit issue and your lack of Christian fellowship to help share it be the root issue so I think that's a question we all have to be honest for the Lord I had a thought somebody shared with me just recently have you thought about David specifically what led up to his sin with Bathsheba which I would submit to you possibly was not consensual if I can say it that way he took advantage of her he killed her husband he tried to hide it do you know that that occurred after his best bud Jonathan died and you never see David adding back someone to fill that gap I don't know how I missed that but just recently somebody shot that to me we have got to always have friendships we've got to all

I heard your pastor emphasize several times today we need that for this specific area and I think David if I'm honest with you I think I see a lot of stress in David's life right before he made this mistake he's just blowing off steam he's just not out at battle because he's got a lot going on and he used that excuse to validate all the sinfulness that followed it and so we've got to learn from his poor example as God gives us that in his word maybe this will help visualize it for you heard someone ask this question the other day who are your six who are your six and here's what he meant by that who are the people closest enough to you in life that when you die they will carry your casket you know how many times I've been in a funeral of the pastor and I in care someone from the funeral home has to help out because that guy didn't have his six like we got to have that not just to carry the load when we can't carry ourselves in that moment but the moments between now and then who are your six who are my six that's where the real rub is that's where the battleground is that's where the war is won as we lean into those relationships that God has given or he wants us to be a part of in the days ahead all right one more lastly generous service so these are just practical ways to renew ourselves in the

Lord it's so counterintuitive let's look we're in Galatians go to Philippians for just a second chapter two and we have the example of Christ here and I remind you of familiar verses but ones that we often struggle to implement verse four look not every man on his own things so he's speaking to men here but every man also in the things of others let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus go down to verse seven but made himself of no reputation took upon him the form of a what servant and was made in the likeness of men and so we have to stop looking at ourselves and what we have and we have to look upon the needs of others I don't know if you're like me but when I'm stressed the last thing I want to do is add another task to my list especially if it's quote unquote not necessary that's his thing that's her thing that's the wife's thing and I found the thing that frees me from the downward spiral of stress that's in an unproductive way is to get my focus off of me and to help someone else we've lost that if we're not careful in this day we men are not known primarily as servants we're known as masters and bosses and if we're not careful egomaniacs especially when we get stressed out if you can make your move when you get stressed to go low to go into servant mode you will never ever ever forget that regret that stress always we got to strive to serve people around us when we're navigating this mood this shift in our hearts and in our minds

I don't have to be self focused because God's got my back I can focus on serving others so even when I want to be vigilant I want to focus on things that I'm concerned about maybe primarily about others because God's got me he's taking care of me now I can serve and minister to the needs of those that are around me so stress tends to make us self absorbed the antidote to this harmful tendency is to serve others especially listen those who don't quote unquote deserve it there's no give and take I'll do this for you and you'll do this for me that's not true service and so I encourage you to look for those opportunities this week especially when you're stressed look for the waitress and thank her I don't know that someone who's serving you and recognize that and affirm them is a huge step away from wrong ways of stressing out so you're caving to dysfunctional habits to cope with stress could say less about how weak you are and more about how you're not renewing your strength through the life-giving disciplines and relationships that

God has given to you all right give you a last thought and then we'll open it up we have just a couple of minutes if you have a question or something you found that's helpful to you in this area C.S. Lewis not always a guy we agree with on everything obviously theologically but he has this thought that he wrote he said there's no neutral ground in the universe okay so there's no square inch that isn't claimed by God counter claimed by God you may have read that quote but he says every square inch every split second so not just space but time is claimed by God and is counter claimed by Satan so that means there are no neutral toys everything truly is a weapon the spiritual forces at work have weaponized everything and you may think it's a toy and you might think it's something just to kind of blow off some steam but it is a weapon being used by someone and so may we choose the right set of weaponry may we choose the arsenal God has given us others that we didn't have time to cover tonight and process the stressful moments of life in a way that please and honor the Lord I truly believe that most of the stress in our lives has nothing to do with what we typically blame it on we wrestle not against flesh and blood brethren but against principalities and powers spiritual wickedness in high places it the tension in our souls the stress in our lives is because of that collision and it's time to pick a side by choosing to use weapons or often men are using toys so

[45 : 51] I hope that helps you tonight to let go of the carnal toys and to lean into the sanctifying weapons that God has provided so we've got just a couple minutes here tonight what what questions do you have or an idea on something that's helped you yeah go ahead brother yeah yeah I think that would be if you go back to the resting weapons I mentioned the the mind versus the the manual the manual versus the mind I feel like that's probably where I'm thinking of that fits in there so the hobbies a lot of pastors because we do more of the mental part at least we we have sometimes mental issues as well because of the ministry but you I feel like for pastors most of the guys I feel that are healthy have found something manual to do yeah woodworking it could be all kinds of sports whatever so yeah I think my point with hobbies is not to pick on you it just if you're kind of just checking out with them that's unhealthy and

I think maybe one way to guard against that is to do hobbies that are communal get a young man in the wood shop with you if we're using that as an example you know what I mean you can use even your hobbies to still be building relationships I think isolated hobbies can be good for us introverts but you can go to seed on that right and be very self-absorbed my son Landon for example he he and I are working to connect now as the only child with our oldest at college and I think what we're going to do I don't know if this sounds crazy to you but he's into books the older the book the better all right he he distrust any book written after 1960 he might be smart on that okay and he's like they haven't died yet dad so I don't know for sure if I want to read from them it's kind of his mindset and I don't know if 1960 should be his threshold but anyway but he and I one of the things we're probably going to do this summer when he gets done with basketball or spring we're just going to go around to use bookstores in Ohio find like the coolest ones we can find and that's something I'll enjoy doing but I'm spending time with my son while I'm doing it so that's what I'm talking about just finding fun things to do that that's very healthy and wholesome and for us task-oriented people it's like all we can do to do it because we're just like I could be at home doing this or at the church doing that and so I have to grow in that yeah good question what else tonight either idea something that's helped you with stress especially some of you guys that are ahead of me a bit in age that were born before 1960 maybe

I'm just kidding what are some things you're finding help or what's a question you have about that don't be bashful one thing I was going to say earlier my boys and I just stumbled onto it's called accountable to you and is a great internet what I like about it you may still use some filters but it sends an email report unless you think I'm just monitoring my sons they're monitoring me so you can put every device that you have in the house on it and it sends an email that will be as consolidated as you want but if there's anything that gets flagged then you can look at the report and hold each other accountable I haven't found anything everything else I found just has holes in it or you can get around some of it this just gives you the rundown and it's painfully honest so that might be something to use yourself or with your I feel like the dad's son I love that my son's in Pensacola right now he's getting reports on my devices I'm getting reports on his and I feel like it shows I also need the accountability so that's something maybe to think about as your boys get older if they're not right now that's a great resource any other ideas maybe a book you've read or a resource that you feel like has been helpful with the thought life or managing stress

I know it's what is it it's almost six o'clock our brains tend to start getting mushy as we go that's why we watch yeah go ahead brother I think it's interesting how the world celebrates these toys yes you're not wasting time on video games you're a gamer yeah yeah you're not a glutton you're a foodie yeah it's true now you're meddling but yeah it's true yeah you're right and we have to get out of that mindset of finding a way to celebrate the things that are actually killing our God yeah yeah amen to that yeah the world is very good at relabeling things aren't they and dumbing down deviancy like we just we found ways to like ease our conscience on that yes go ahead bro yeah so one thing that I don't see is powerful Christian music because it is this unification of body soul and spirit it is essential in scripture and and a great stress relief that's a good word yeah I

I would wholeheartedly agree with that isn't it amazing how quickly you can make a space sacred by just adding a soundtrack to it in your car I do think it's sometimes we overdo that like where we don't have quiet like we should have white space but I think that can also then our the false narratives can creep in yeah music is a powerful find those anthems you know that you can just sing your lungs out and just let go of the the more temporal things in your life focus on the Lord do you think a lot of our stress like here be maybe the question it I'm not trying to lead you but if we're in heaven is the reason we will not be stressed because there's nothing to stress us or because God is there like I think we overplay that heaven is so wonderful because we won't have anything to bother us I think even if we did we'd be fine because God is fully manifested right in that space but in one sense we have access to that right now don't we we have this complete word he's going to continue to teach us from this word his spirit is within us we have the local church I mean we have so many resources at our disposal and what is the back to the brother's point what is the primary thing we're going to be doing for eternity singing our lungs out to the Lord to the Lamb right with every tribe tongue and nation with their own individual stressors and challenges they all had to push through and persevere through I mean there'll be martyrs there many that have faced much more than we have on the stress front so I think we have to you're right let that future shine into the present I think is so key anybody else real quick a thought I don't I know the ladies have probably been done for yeah right they'll be I won't say who's teaching over there might be at fault for that but does that help does that help us tonight okay let's pray together thank you Lord for your goodness these men God I pray you'd help them to identify where they're out of bounds and the on the negative front that you would allow them to acknowledge where they're doing stress the way other men the average man even the average Christian does it may they acknowledge and repent of that I pray where there is secret sin Lord it's not if but where and who in this room is struggling with it or will this week pray to help them to know know they're among friends that love them and may they allow your spirit and your conviction to rob the the darkness of the power it has the secrecy the denial the deflection may they own it may they find the help they need through the relationships and the resources that you put at their disposal and I pray as well secondly you'd help us become more proactive help us to own where a lack of rhythm of rest and renewal is causing us to be weak when we need to be strong that's undermining our stamina Lord because we're not taking the time off and being intentional when we are in the way allows you to renew us and refresh us I pray we would start this new week with this mindset and Lord that practically we would take the heart the things that have been shared tonight and we will give you alone the praise and glory for it in Christ's name

[53 : 33] Amen