

OUT OF THE DARK SERIES: TURNING THE TABLES ON STRESS

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Live Intentionally: **KNOW WHAT YOU'RE TRYING TO ACCOMPLISH**

This is a the principle of organization.

At the end of Jesus' life, the night before he died, Jesus prayed to the father

John 17:1-4 ESV

1When Jesus had spoken these words, he lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, "Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you, 2since you have given him authority over all flesh, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him. 3And this is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent. 4I glorified you on earth, having accomplished the work that you gave me to do.

How could Jesus say that? **There were still hundreds of lepers who needed healing, prostitutes who needed the restoring power of Christ's love, and Pharisees who needed to be rebuked for their moralistic arrogance that blinded them to their need of a savior.**

Unless you plan your life and set priorities, you will be pressured by other people to do what they think is important. Every day, either you live by priorities or you live by pressures. There is no other option.

Either you decide what is important in your life, or you let other people decide what is important in your life.

It is easy to operate under the tyranny of the urgent. Busyness is not necessarily productivity.

You may be spinning in circles, accomplishing many things that you know don't really matter.

One of the great gifts you can give yourself to live intentionally. Decide what matters! Organize your effort. Prepare for the work.

Preparation prevents pressure but procrastination produces it. Good organization and good preparation reduce stress because you know who you are, whom you're trying to please, and what you want to accomplish.

Having clear goals greatly simplifies life.

CONCENTRATION: FOCUS ON ONE THING AT A TIME

Many people tried to detour Jesus from his planned schedule. They tried to distract him from his goal in life.

"At daybreak Jesus went out to a solitary place. The people were looking for him and when they came to where he was, they tried to keep him from leaving them" (Luke 4:42).

Jesus was going to leave, but they tried to make him stay. Jesus responded, *"I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns also, because that is why I was sent" (v. 43).*

He refused to be distracted by less important matters.

Do you want to turn the table on stress. Learn from Jesus.

Focus on one thing at a time. It is the principle of concentration.

When we diffuse our efforts, we are ineffective. When we concentrate our efforts, we are more effective.

Isaiah 50:4-11 The prophet speaks of the suffering of the Messiah. In verse 7, the Servant expresses His complete confidence in God, declaring that He will not shrink back from His mission, despite severe suffering, opposition, and humiliation:

"Because the Sovereign LORD helps me, I will not be disgraced. Therefore have I set my face like flint, and I know I will not be put to shame" (Isaiah 50:7).

Jesus Christ did not let interruptions prevent him from concentrating on his goal; he did not let others make him tense or stressed or irritated.

DELEGATION: DON'T DO IT ALL YOURSELF

One day *"Jesus went up on a mountainside and called to him those he wanted, and they came to him" (Mark 3:13).*

He appointed twelve men, whom he designated as apostles, so they might be with him and he could send them out to preach. In other words, Jesus delegated his authority.

Don't try to do it all yourself. Use the principle of delegation.

Do you know why we get uptight and tense? Because we think everything depends on us.



Jesus enlisted and trained twelve disciples so that they could share his load. He delegated his work. He got other people involved. Why don't we delegate? Why don't we get other people involved? Why do we try to do it all ourselves?

For two reasons. The first reason is perfectionism. We think, "If I want a job well done, I'll do it myself." That's a nice idea, but often it doesn't work well because there are just too many things to be done. We simply don't have time to do everything ourselves.

It's really an egotistical attitude that says, "Nobody, but nobody, can do it the way I can." Do you think Jesus would have done a better job than these disciples? Of course he would have. But he let them do the work even though he would have done it better.

Don't rob others of an education! The other reason we don't delegate is personal insecurity. "What if I turn over this responsibility to someone, and he does a better job at it?"

MEDITATION: MAKE A HABIT OF PERSONAL PRAYER

Jesus often got up *"very early in the morning, while it was still dark, ... and went off to a solitary place" to pray (Mark 1:35).*

Make a habit of personal prayer. This is the principle of meditation. Prayer is a gigantic stress-reliever.

It is a God-given tool for letting off your anxieties.

No matter how busy Jesus got, he made it a practice to spend time alone with God. A little quiet time alone with God can be a decompression chamber for life's stresses.

We talk with God in prayer; we tell him what's on our minds and let him talk to us as we read the Bible. Then we look at our schedules, evaluate our priorities, and wait for instructions.

RECREATION: TAKE TIME OFF TO ENJOY LIFE

Once Jesus' twelve men gathered around him and reported all that they had done and taught. *"Because so many people were coming and going that they did not even have a chance to eat, he said to them, 'Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest' " (Mark 6:31).*

Take time off to enjoy life. It's the principle of relaxation and recreation.

One reason why Jesus could handle stress is that he knew when to relax. He frequently went to either the mountains or the desert just to unwind.

Rest and recreation in life are not optional. In fact, rest is so important that God included it in the Ten Commandments.

The Sabbath was made for mankind because God knows that our physical, emotional, and spiritual constitutions demand periodic breaks. Jesus survived stress because he enjoyed life. One of my favorite verses, Matthew 11:19 in the Phillips paraphrase, says that Jesus came "enjoying life."

Paul wrote that God has richly provided "everything for our enjoyment" (1 Tim. 6:17). Balance in life is a key to stress management.

Organization.
Concentration.
Delegation.
Meditation.
Recreation.

But I want to be clear. The point is not well-organized life. The point is spiritual transformation. God has placed you, purposed you. But you can't affect the world when your inner world is in chaos.