

Battling Mental Strain

When we become Christians, we remove ourselves from the dangers of the world into a protective lifestyle (at least we are supposed to). - Rom 12:1-2 - Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God — this is your spiritual act of worship. 2 **Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world**, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is — his good, pleasing and perfect will.

When I live fleshly, I leave my mind wide open - Rom 7:22-23 - 22 For in my inner being I delight in God's law; 23 but I see another law at work in the members of my body, **waging war against the law of my mind** and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members.

The Spirit that God gives us is providing us what is needed to defend against mental strain - 2 Tim 1:7 - For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline.

Jesus himself dealt with the effects of mental strain - Matt 26:36-38 - 36 Then Jesus went with his disciples to a place called Gethsemane, and he said to them, "Sit here while I go over there and pray." 37 He took Peter and the two sons of Zebedee along with him, and he began to be sorrowful and troubled. 38 Then he said to them, "**My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death**". Stay here and keep watch with me."

Jesus dealt with it by trusting in God - Luke 22:42-44 - 42 "Father, **IF YOU ARE WILLING**, take this cup from me; yet **NOT MY WILL, BUT YOURS BE DONE**." 43 An angel from heaven appeared to him and strengthened him.

Mental strain can provoke us to want to end it, this is why we must depend on God - 2 Cor 1:8-9 - 8 We do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about the hardships we suffered in the province of Asia. We were under great pressure, far beyond our ability to endure, SO THAT we despaired even of life. 9 **Indeed, in our hearts we felt the sentence of death**. But **this happened that we might not rely on ourselves but on God**, who raises the dead.

THE AFFECTS OF MENTAL STRAIN

Mental strain gives false and painful impressions - Ps 25:16-18 - 16 Turn to me and be gracious to me, for I am lonely and afflicted. 17 The troubles of my heart have multiplied; free me from my anguish. 18 Look upon my affliction and my distress and take away all my sins.

God shows He realizes what stress and depression does to a person - Ps 73:21-22 - 21 When my heart was grieved and my spirit embittered, 22 I was senseless and ignorant; I was a brute beast before you.

Mental strain will cause physical pain and make you feel unbearable –

Prov 17:22 A cheerful heart is good medicine, but a crushed spirit dries up the bones.

Prov 18:14 A man's spirit sustains him in sickness, but a crushed spirit who can bear?

The existence of depression may not always be visible - Prov 14:13 Even in laughter the heart may ache, and joy may end in grief.

Always know, God is closer to the Christian when we are suffering - Ps 34:18 The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit.

KNOW THE REAL PROBLEM AND WHERE IT COMES FROM

The battle is spiritual; therefore, we must fight Spiritually - Eph 6:12 For our struggle is NOT AGAINST FLESH AND BLOOD, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.

We all have corruption within us that fuel mental issues - Matt 15:17-20 - 17 "Don't you see that whatever enters the mouth goes into the stomach and then out of the body? 18 But the things that come out of the mouth come from the heart, and these make a man 'unclean.' 19 For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander. 20 These are what make a man 'unclean'; but eating with unwashed hands does not make him 'unclean.'"

The main battle within us is with us - Eph 2:1-3 -And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, 2 in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, 3 among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others. NKJV

Mental strain can exist if we latch on to how we feel in a situation - Ps 13:1-2 - How long, O Lord? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me? 2 How long must I wrestle with my thoughts and every day have sorrow in my heart? How long will my enemy triumph over me?

From not getting what we desire - Prov 13:12 Hope deferred makes the heart sick, but a longing fulfilled is a tree of life.

The Bible speaks of sicknesses and how we should deal with them, this would include mental illnesses

To be clear, sickness exists in the Christian Body (Ephraim) - Phil 2:27 Indeed he was ill, and almost died. But God had mercy on him, and not on him only but also on me, to spare me sorrow upon sorrow.

We must reach out to the ministers of the church for ALL illnesses, as well as confess our sins and pray when ill, this includes mental illnesses - James 5:14-15 - 14 Is any one of you sick? He should call the elders of the church to pray over him and anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord. →

→ 15 And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise him up. **If he has sinned, he will be forgiven.** Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other SO THAT you may be healed. **The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.**

Christ speaks of doctors in a positive sense - Matt 9:12 On hearing this, Jesus said, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick.

Medicinal assistance for all sicknesses is also acceptable and at times encouraged - 1 Tim 5:23 Stop drinking only water, and use a little wine because of your stomach and your frequent illnesses.

Sometimes a sickness may be a part of a Christian's Walk. We need some of these to produce true strength- 2 Cor 12:9-10 - 9 But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. 10 That is why, for Christ's sake, **I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties.** **For when I am weak, then I am strong.**

Demon Possession is definitely a cause of mental illness for Non-believers - Mark 5:15 When they came to Jesus, they saw the man who had been possessed by the legion of demons, sitting there, dressed and in his right mind; and they were afraid.

For a Christian, it's most likely demon oppression and how we deal with it - Matt 4:1-10 - Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil. 2 After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. 3 The tempter came to him and said, "**If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread.**" 4 Jesus answered, "**It is written:** 'Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'" 5 Then the devil took him to the holy city and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. 6 "**If you are the Son of God,**" he said, "throw yourself down. For it is written: 'He will command his angels concerning you, and they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.'" 7 Jesus answered him, "**It is ALSO written:** 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'" 8 Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. 9 "All this I will give you," he said, "if you will bow down and worship me." 10 Jesus said to him, "Away from me, Satan! For it is written: 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.'"

- By attacking your situation
- By attaching your ego/pride
- By using your Bible illiteracy against you
- By enticing your desires

When we depend on the World for our joy and peace, it is more dangerous than the depression & stress the world causes - 1 John 2:15-17 - 15 Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 16 **For everything in the world** — the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does — **comes not from the Father but from the world.** 17 The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever.

*These are what are used by "worldly" counselors

Misleading worldly remedies

- We strive to give what is desired
- We give strength to points of view & personal values
- We make it about us

TRUE PREPARATION

Life is a defined Journey when we rely on our Shepherd - Ps 23 - **The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not be in want.** 2 He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters, 3 he restores my soul. He guides me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake. 4 Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for YOU ARE WITH ME; your **rod and your staff, they COMFORT ME.** 5 You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. 6 Surely goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

It's all about our purpose that dictates our state of mind - Rom 8:5-8 - 5 Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their **minds set on what the Spirit desires.** 6 The mind of sinful man is **DEATH,** but the mind controlled by the Spirit is **LIFE and PEACE;** 7 the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. 8 Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God.

We have to make sure our focus is adjusted correctly - 2 Cor 5:7 We live by faith, not by sight.

Know that God has already given us everything we need to overcome this - 2 Peter 1:3-4 - 3 His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. 4 Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, SO THAT THROUGH THEM you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.

Certain strains in our lives are there to produce Godly qualities –

Trials produce perseverance - James 1:2-4

Discipline produces righteousness and peace - Heb 12:7-13

Suffering produces perseverance → Character → Hope - Rom 5:3-5

We must be Spiritually focused so that our status and situations will not affect our mental health - 1 Cor 7:17-24 - 17 Nevertheless, each one should retain the place in life that the Lord assigned to him and to which God has called him. This is the rule I lay down in all the churches. 18 Was a man already circumcised when he was called? He should not become uncircumcised. Was a man uncircumcised when he was called? He should not be circumcised. **19 Circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing. KEEPING GOD'S COMMANDS IS WHAT COUNTS.** 20 Each one should remain in the situation which he was in when God called him. 21 Were you a slave when you were called? Don't let it trouble you — although **if you can gain your freedom, do so.** 22 For he who was a slave when he was called by the Lord is the Lord's freedman; similarly, he who was a free man when he was called is Christ's slave. 23 **You were bought at a price**; do not become slaves of men. 24 Brothers, each man, AS RESPONSIBLE TO GOD, should remain in the situation God called him to.

Many times, you'll know what is right, but battle with what you want - 1 Peter 2:11 Dear friends, I urge you, as aliens and strangers in the world, to abstain from sinful desires, which war against your soul.

Put things in the right perspective - Matt 10:37-39 - 37 "Anyone who loves his father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves his son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; 38 and anyone who does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. 39 Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it

***People and things that mean a lot to us will be the major source of mental strain if we incorrectly love.**

Even when you FEEL alone, you must know you are Never alone - Heb 13:5-6 - 5 Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you." 6 So we say with confidence, **"The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?"**

Put your joy in and through God - Ps 37:4 - Delight yourself in the Lord and he will give you the desires of your heart.

It is important for us to adjust and prepare our minds in Christ - 1 Peter 1:13-16 - 13 Therefore, prepare your minds for action; be self-controlled; set your hope fully on the grace to be given you when Jesus Christ is revealed. 14 As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. 15 But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; 16 for it is written: "Be holy, because I am holy."

To receive true rest is "IN CHRIST" we must choose to accept it - Matt 11:28-30 - 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."

True mind control is you being in control

Col 3:1-4 - Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. 2 Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. 3 For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. 4 When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

1 Cor 6:12 "Everything is permissible for me"-but not everything is beneficial. "Everything is permissible for me"-but I will not be mastered by anything.

Things that "alter" our minds (self medicating, drugs & alcohol) can be detrimental because they can distort the heart and cause a lack of control –

Prov 23:29-30 - 29 Who has woe? Who has sorrow? Who has strife? Who has complaints? Who has needless bruises? Who has bloodshot eyes? 30 Those who linger over wine, who go to sample bowls of mixed wine.

Prov 23:31-33 - 31 Do not gaze at wine when it is red, when it sparkles in the cup, when it goes down smoothly! 32 In the end it bites like a snake and poisons like a viper. 33 Your eyes will see strange sights and your mind imagine confusing things.

Prov 20:1 - Wine is a mocker and beer a brawler; whoever is led astray by them **is not wise.**

It is our responsibility to guard our heart - Prov 4:23 **ABOVE ALL ELSE**, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life.

It's not just you giving everything to God, it's how you give it to God in order to have Peace - Phil 4:4-7 - 4 Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! 5 Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. 6 Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. 7 **And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.**

We really need to evaluate what we value - Luke 12:34 For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

We must be in control through Christ to protect ourselves from Satan - 1 Peter 5:8-9 - 8 **Be self-controlled and alert.** Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. 9 Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings.

Use what God has given us to protect us - Eph 6:13-18 -13 Therefore put on the full armor of God...

God, at times, uses emotions to guide us - 2 Cor 7:8-10 - 8 Even if I caused you sorrow by my letter, I do not regret it. Though I did regret it — I see that my letter hurt you, but only for a little while— 9 yet now I am happy, not because you were made sorry, but because **YOUR SORROW led you to repentance.** For you became sorrowful as God intended and so were not harmed in any way by us. 10 **Godly sorrow brings repentance** that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but **worldly sorrow** brings death.

***Emotions pointed toward flesh is corrupt, while emotions pointed towards God is life-changing.**

Our True focus...the only focus - Phil 3:7-9 - 7 But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. 8 What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ 9 and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ — the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith.

WINNING THE SPIRITUAL FIGHT

When dealing with mental strain fleshly, you are limited - 1 Tim 4:8 For physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for ALL THINGS, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come.

Christ lets us know that it is up to us how we let our hearts be - John 14:27 Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. **I DO NOT GIVE TO YOU AS THE WORLD GIVES. DO NOT LET** your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.

***Worldly peace is situational driven, Godly Peace is in spite of situation**

We have access to perfect peace by living trusting in Him - Isa 26:3 You will keep in perfect peace him whose mind is steadfast, because he trusts in you.

Let go of worldly Joy, to receive true joy - James 4:9-10 -9 Grieve, mourn and wail. Change your laughter to mourning and your joy to gloom. 10 Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up.

God commands us what to think about - Phil 4:8-9 - 8 Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable — if anything is excellent or praiseworthy — think about such things. 9 Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me — put it into practice. And the God of peace WILL BE with you.

If we fight the way the world does, we set ourselves up to fail - 2 Cor 10:3-6 - 3 For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. 4 The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. 5 We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ. 6 And we will be ready to punish every act of disobedience, once your obedience is complete.

- **We eliminate how we let anything around us affect our walk with God**
- **We deal with the things within us that affect our walk with God**
- **We continually hold ourselves accountable to God**

We are going to go through hardship and we have the power to endure it - 2 Tim 4:5 But you, keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry.

Going with your feelings is dangerous - Prov 28:26 He who trusts in himself IS A FOOL, but he who walks in wisdom is kept safe.

The only long-lasting medicine is God's Word - Ps 119:28 My soul is weary with sorrow; strengthen me according to your word.

Really give it to God - 1 Peter 5:6-7 - 6 Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time. 7 Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.

You control you despite how you feel - 1 Thess 5:16-18 - 16 Be joyful always; 17 pray continually; 18 give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

WE ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR EACH OTHER, ESPECIALLY HOW WE ARE WITH HELPING ONE ANOTHER

It's not your problem alone - 1 Cor 12:25-26 - 25 so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. 26 If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it.

Counsel by the right person is one solution for mental illness –

Prov 20:5 The purposes of a man's heart are deep waters, but a man of understanding draws them out.

Prov 27:9 Perfume and incense bring joy to the heart, and the pleasantness of one's friend springs from his earnest counsel.

***Spiritual advisors-** (Ministers & Godly counselors), **Prayer partners, small groups**

Be careful not to try to force happiness on someone, it could make it worse at times - Prov 25:20 Like one who takes away a garment on a cold day, or like vinegar poured on soda, is one who sings songs to a heavy heart.

Be on the same page when dealing with others - Rom 12:15 Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn.

We must adjust how we see and value everything, or they will directly affect our mental health - 1 Cor 7:29-31 - 29 What I mean, brothers, is that the time is short. From now on those who have wives should live as if they had none; 30 those who mourn, as if they did not; those who are happy, as if they were not; those who buy something, as if it were not theirs to keep; 31 those who use the things of the world, as if not engrossed in them. For this world in its present form is passing away.