



Freedom

focus

"To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God..." (Acts 26:18)



August—September 2005

Seven Stress Busters for Your Life

"Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time, casting all your care (anxiety) upon Him, for He careth for you. Be sober; be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour" (1 Peter 5:6-8).

Do you ever feel like your life and schedule are out of control?

Are you under spiritual attack from the enemy when things are chaotic and stressful in your life?

You cannot eliminate stress in your life, but you can manage it. Jesus experienced a great deal of stress and pressure in His life, yet it did not seem to disturb His peace of mind. In spite of opposition, constant demands, and little privacy, His life reflected a calm sense of balance.

Jesus encouraged his disciples to take a break from the demands of the people. "And He said to them, 'Come aside by yourselves to a deserted place and rest a while': for there were many coming and going, and they did not even have time to eat" (Mark 6:31). I have witnessed many lives, marriages, and families torn apart by the impact of stress (anger, depression, loneliness) that accompanies busy life styles. These couples and families hardly have time to eat together! The relationships that matter the most get neglected. Here are seven stress

busters that can help keep you spiritually, emotionally, and physically sharp.

1. *Understand your identity "in Christ":*

Know who you are in Christ. Eighteen times Jesus publicly defined Himself (John 8:12). There was no doubt in his mind as to who he was. If you are unsure of your identity "in Christ," you will allow others to pressure you into their molds. Trying to be someone you are not causes stress!

2. *Have an eternal value system:*

Seek first the Kingdom of God (Matthew 6:33), and follow His priority list for your life. Be dedicated in knowing whom God would want you to please. You cannot please every one. Even God cannot! Just about the time you get crowd "A" happy, crowd "B" will get upset with you.

3. *Practice orderliness:*

Jesus knew where He came from and where He was going (John 8:14). Be organized and have clear goals as to what you want to accomplish. Preparation prevents pressure, but procrastination produces it. You will work either by priorities or by pressures.

4. *Be attentive to one thing at a time:*

We must focus on what is important at that moment (Luke 4:42-44). Trying to solve two problems at the same time will cause us

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Church-Connect Update



The spiritual battle is raging like never before in our world today, and too often the enemy is gaining the advantage in many people's lives. Churches stand on the front lines of this battle, and it is critical that church

leaders be equipped for effective counseling ministry. For this purpose, we have organized a monthly *Church-Connect Luncheon*. Please join us on **Thursday, September 22, at noon at the Indianapolis Training Center** for our next luncheon. For reservations, please call 317.582.1123.

IBC Course Schedule

Interested in being more equipped in counseling? Don't miss the counseling modules offered by the **Institute of Biblical Counseling** this Fall!

Course I—Introduction to Spiritual Warfare

October 17-21, 2005
Indianapolis, IN

Course II—Advanced Warfare

November 14-18, 2005
Big Sandy, TX

Course III—Marriage, Family, and Church Conflict Resolution

September 19-23, 2005
Indianapolis, IN

For more information, contact Jim Gaskill at the ICBC International office—877.467.4222

During these modules, you will have opportunity to hear from several experienced counselors including the following:

Dr. Tim Warner
Dr. Mark Bubeck
Rev. Jeff Pokone
Dr. Michael Jacobson
Dr. Jim Logan

Classes by Rev. Jeff Pokone

- *Evaluating Genuine Repentance*—Course 1
- *Breaking Unhealthy Soul Ties*—Course 1
- *Development of Personality Disorders*—Course 2
- *Depression*—Course 2
- *Developing a Marriage Model*—Course 3

1980 East 116th Street, Carmel Indiana, 46032
317.582.1123

Seven Stress Busters for Your Life (Continued)

stress. When I get overwhelmed, I have reminded myself many times of a quote my wife Suzette shared with me many years ago from missionary and author, Elizabeth Elliot—“Just the next thing.”

5. Delegate to others: Do not try to do it all yourself. (*Mark 3:14*). We experience tension in our lives when we feel like it is all up to us. God has designed us to need others. Do not allow perfectionism or a fear of others doing it better keep you from involving others in the task.

6. Have times of communion with God: No matter how busy Jesus was, He found time to get alone with God and pray (*Mark 1:35*). A daily time with the Lord is a great decompression chamber. Talk to God about your pressures and problems; evaluate your priorities; read and reflect on the Scriptures. God has spoken to me many times during my daily reading of

Psalms and Proverbs to give my life direction in the midst of some very difficult times.

7. Rest and relax: Jesus instructed the disciples to get away from the crowds and rest (*Mark 6:31*). Take time to enjoy life and the people you love. Nothing brings into perspective what matters in life, like spending quality time with my wife and children. Balance is always the key to stress management.

What will you do about it? For the next several weeks, concentrate on this list of seven stress busters. Keep the list close to your side; meditate on the Scriptures; pray and ask God to give you wisdom and grace to apply these truths in your life.

Stress for most is inevitable. But “[God] will keep him in perfect peace (rest) whose mind is stayed on [Him], because he trusts in [Him]” (*Isaiah 26:3*).
—By Reverend Jeff Pokone

How God Transformed a Contentious Marriage

We had been married 23 years and were plagued with contention and increasing indifference. In fact, my wife began to verbalize fears of an inevitable divorce. I began to think she might be right.

In our despair and hopelessness, we decided to go to separate counselors to get help, and then come together to work on our marriage. It wouldn't be the first time. We went to marriage counseling in 1989, read all their books, paid them for a year, and still struggled.

With anxiety and trepidation, I first stepped into the ICBCI office by myself in 2003. I feared that first meeting, as the Holy Spirit led me down a path I didn't want to go. To put my tension level in perspective, that same morning about 6:45, as I was about to get into my car, my 16 year old son gave a lame excuse for an uncompleted chore. I came unglued, hurling my full cup of coffee across the yard in a very immature display of anger. He just stood there and asked if I felt better. (The answer would have been “NO!” if I would have spoken to him.) This was my first clue that I was really stressing this meeting.

Jeff Pokone's low key and mild mannered demeanor was reassuring, and I felt myself relaxing, until he prayed and then started to probe. I told him my story, and he bypassed my defenses within twenty minutes with the simple question, “What expression would Jesus have on His face if He were sitting here with you now?” The tears would not stop at that point, and so began the healing process that God wanted me to enjoy years sooner than this. Jeff slowly and methodically began to reveal the principles found in the book, *The Life Model—Living From the Heart Jesus Gave You* (Shepherd's House Inc.). In the following counseling sessions, God led me through a process of healing from the impact of the childhood traumas in my life. I learned about the necessity of getting back to joy: why it is critical, how to get there, and why God designed us that way. In my early mental pictures of this path I could only see an overgrown field full of weeds and sticker bushes.

Within a few months, it became very apparent that God wanted my wife and me to go to Jeff together. Considering the seemingly endless tears, hurt feelings, charges of betrayal, fear

of mistrust, and empty longings for closeness, the prospect was terrifying; nonetheless we agreed to see Jeff together. The following ten months were nothing short of the grace and healing that only Jehovah Rapha, the *God Who heals*, could provide. Jeff walked us through each stage of the *Life Model*, and slowly we both learned to trust one another.

Jeff always referred us back to the Word of God and created a climate of hope for healing. When we had to revisit old traumas and ask Jesus to meet us there, He always did. The counselor-directed, “hold hands and look each other in the eye” questions was one of the hardest things we ever had to face, but they also produced some of the deepest healing we had ever experienced. Jeff's counsel led us to see our own immaturity and understand what God really wanted for us, as individuals and as a family. My wife learned to feel safe with me for the first time, which, I discovered, she had needed desperately.

By the midpoint of our counseling sessions with Jeff, the mental picture of my joy path was a fully paved six lane highway! My wife and I could argue and stop after two minutes to laugh at ourselves, recognizing our own immaturity. I rejoiced as I felt the weight of bondage falling away, because I was allowing God to have His way with me.

The Word of God came alive like never before. We learned together how to grow up and to love from the heart that Jesus gave us. I found myself ministering to other men that suffered from similar emotional and mental bondage and saw God free them. We now share the principles with our children.

The work of God through the ministry of Jeff Pokone at ICBC has set us free. Jesus Christ, our Prophet, Priest, and King turned the light on and walked us out into open freedom at last. Imagine resolving the issues that have caused you great pain and having your Savior right there with you. He desires to bring healing in the midst of your dark memories, just as He has for us.
—By Michael Judge

