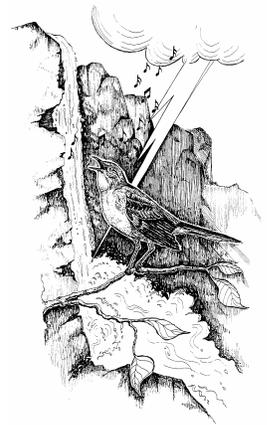


Journey Into Stress-free Living

LESSON 1 . . . Three Keys for Stress-free Living (Philippians 1:1-2)

The book of Philippians is all about “stress-free living.” The word “stress” means “mental strain” or “mental tension.” Have you ever experienced stress? Are you stressed-out right now? In either case, you need the book of Philippians because on a regular basis you will experience stress. If you have trouble finding the book of Philippians in your Bible, remember: “General Electric Power Company.” G is for *Galatians*, E is for *Ephesians*, P is for *Philippians*, and C is for *Colossians*. Let’s look at **three** keys for stress-free living.



NOTES



You must know who you are (1:1a).

Paul begins this letter by writing, *Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus* (1:1a). Timothy is not a co-author of this great book; he is an associate of Paul’s and is like Paul’s own son. Paul won Timothy to Christ on his first missionary journey, and Timothy became Paul’s lifelong co-worker in the ministry. As Paul writes this letter he is a prisoner in Rome, so Timothy will deliver this letter to the church at Philippi.

I think being in prison would be very stressful, don’t you? Yet, while in prison Paul writes a book about stress-free living. One reason Paul handles stress so well is he knows who he is. Paul writes that he and Timothy are *servants of Christ Jesus*. Paul is a model for stress-free living because he knows who he is. Let me ask you, “Who are you?” Unless you can answer that question, you are going to have a lot of stress in your life. The greatest example of knowing who you are is Jesus Christ. In the gospel of John, Jesus reveals who He is with fifteen great *I AM* statements. For example, who does Jesus say He is in John 8:12b?

Paul can handle stress because he knows who he is: a servant of *Jesus Christ* (Philip. 1:1a). The word translated *servants* (DOULOS, doo-los) means “slave.” The English word “slave” has negative connotations, suggesting forced obedience and abusive treatment. This is not what Paul means when he calls himself a “slave” of Jesus Christ. The word “servant” or “slave” expresses Paul’s absolute devotion to Jesus Christ. Everyone is a slave to someone or something. Whose slave are you or to what are you a slave? The answer to that question will determine whether or not you will experience stress-free living. To have a “journey into stress-free living,” **you must know who you are** and . . .



You must know what you want to accomplish (1:1b-c).

On his second missionary journey, about ten years prior to writing this letter, Paul, along with Silas, Timothy, and Luke, established a church at Philippi (Acts 16:9-40) in Greece. It was the first church founded in Europe. At the time of Paul’s writing it is a thriving church with whom Paul continues close ties.

Paul writes this letter *to all the saints in Christ Jesus at Philippi* (1:1b). Paul calls the believers in Philippi *saints*. The word translated *saints* (HAGIOS, hag-e-os) means “set apart ones.” Few words are as misunderstood today as the word “saint.” Every Christian is a *saint*, which means “set apart” from the world to be used by God. *Saint* basically means “different.” It means we are non-conformists; we don’t give in to peer pressure; and we don’t go along with the crowd when we know the crowd is wrong. How does Romans 12:2a describe what it means to be a *saint*?

This means you should not let people squeeze you into their molds. If you don’t **know who you are** and **what you want to accomplish**, other people will squeeze you and make you fit into a mold of their liking. Then, you can’t be yourself, and that leads to all kinds of stress. If you want to take a lot of stress out of your life, just be the person God created you to be. God doesn’t want you to be like anyone else. He just wants you to be the unique person he created you to be, and He will help you be that person. How does Ephesians 2:10 express this truth?

The word translated *workmanship* (POIEMA, poy-ay-mah) is the word from which we get our word “poem” and refers to a work of art in the making. What an awesome description of who we are in Christ! You and I are God’s unique works of art; we are His masterpieces. Therefore, we are not to be copies of anyone else. Just being the masterpiece God created you to be will take all kinds of stress out of your life.



Paul also writes to the *overseers* (“bishops,” KJV) *and deacons* in the church at Philippi (Philip 1:1c). These are the church leaders. The *overseers* were in charge of overseeing the spiritual needs of the church.

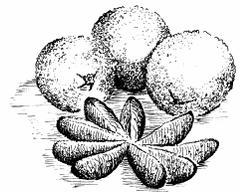
They were to watch over, nourish, and protect the church through teaching and preaching. How are the duties of *overseers* described in Acts 20:28?

Deacons were selected by the church to serve the members. The word translated *deacons* (DIAKONOS, die-ak-on-os) means “attendants or servants.” *Deacons* are not a board of directors but men who minister to the needs of people within the church. The office arose in response to a need in the church in Jerusalem. There was a complaint the Greek-speaking widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution of food. Therefore, what do the apostles say to the church in Acts 6:3?

Therefore, *deacons* are to be servants in the church. *Overseers* and *deacons* should know what they are supposed to accomplish, and so should you if you want to have a “journey into stress-free living.”

In life, you will be guided either by priorities or pressures. Priorities are what God wants you to do, and pressures are what everyone else wants you to do. At the end of the day do you ever say, “I really didn’t accomplish anything today.” There is a big difference between being busy and accomplishing something. Being busy and not really accomplishing anything causes stress. “Stress-free living” requires knowing what God wants us to accomplish in our daily lives. What did Jesus say in John 15:16a?

The Lord calls each of us to be branches in the true Vine—branches that produce the *fruit* of new believers. The *fruit* also refers to the qualities that make us like Jesus Christ, which the Bible calls the *fruit of the Spirit*. What are the nine components of the *fruit of the Spirit* (Gal. 5:22-23a)?



1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____

To have a “journey into stress-free living,” **you must know who you are, what you want to accomplish,** and . . .



You must know God can empower you (1:2).

We all get stressed because we try to do too much in our own power. We cannot be who God wants us to be and accomplish what He wants us to accomplish by ourselves. That’s why Paul writes: *Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ* (1:2). There are three kinds of *grace* in the New Testament: **saving grace**, **equipping grace**, and **empowering grace**. As Christians, we usually think only in terms of **saving grace** because we know we are saved by grace through faith (Eph. 2:8). But there is also **equipping grace**. How does Romans 12:6a describe this kind of *grace*?

However, in Philippians 1:2, Paul is not referring to either of these kinds of *grace* because the Philippians have already been saved and received their spiritual gifts. He is referring to a third kind of *grace* called **empowering grace**, also known as “sustaining grace.” We see this kind of *grace* in the apostles, who flee in fear at the arrest and crucifixion of Jesus, but then in *Acts* powerfully preach about the resurrection. Why, according to the last phrase in Acts 4:33?

As Christians, we experience all three kinds of *grace*: **saving grace**, **equipping grace**, and **empowering grace**. Only after we have experienced God’s *grace* can we have His *peace* (Philip. 1:2). The word translated *peace* (EIRENE, e-ray-nay) means inner peace or tranquility in the midst of life’s pressures and problems. What is the opposite of *peace*? It is stress. How do you get the *peace* to which Paul is referring? How does Jesus answer this question in John 14:27a?



“Stress-free living” begins when we receive Jesus Christ as savior and Lord. When we receive Jesus, we also receive the *peace* about which Paul is writing. To enjoy stress-free living, **you must know who you are, know what you want to accomplish, and know God can empower you.**