

Fil-Am Community Church
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”Fearsome Future”

Good morning! We’ve reached the end of our series titled “Is There an App for That?” We’ve been talking about how to deal with stress in our lives. All of us experience it. In fact, stress has been called America’s number one disease. But you know what, the Bible never promises that we are going to have a stress-free life. In fact, Jesus is very clear that sometimes life can be tiring. Life is going to wear you out and it’s going to stress you out from time to time. In fact, you don’t want a stress-free life. Because the only people who are stress free, are those in the cemetery and none of us really want that. And so Jesus says you are going to have stress in life. But, if you trust Him with all of your life, you can find rest in this life. You can find peace in this life in the midst of stress.

Let’s read together our series verse as we look at what Jesus can do for us. *“Then Jesus said, ‘Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you. Let me teach you, because I am humble and gentle, and you will find rest for your souls.’”* Matthew 11:28-29 (NLT)

This morning, what I’d like to talk about is our future. I’m sure many of you want to know what the future holds for you. Because you are afraid. And what is it about the future that most stresses us out? Well, it’s unknown. It’s uncertain. We don’t know what’s going to happen. We are not happy where we are right now, and we are stressed out about the future. So what do we do? How do we move From Stress to Rest in the future? That’s what we are going to talk about today.

So get your outlines and you will see on top, it says—When I Feel Stressed About My Future. You follow these four steps.

1. **Remember God’s faithfulness in my past.**

You know, when you start looking forward into your future, and you feel stressed, the first step is to look back. The Bible says over and over that we are to remember the past. In fact, the Old Testament has over 31 times where God says to His people—remember. And if you will recall, often in the Old Testament, whenever God did something significant in the lives of the Israelites, they would build an altar, and that altar would serve as a remembrance of God’s faithfulness. So when there came a time when they faced some terrible circumstances like a gentile nation threatening their security, God would say to them—remember. And they would look back and they would see that altar and the altar was a visible reminder of God’s faithfulness in the past. And that lowered their stress about the future, about what was going to happen.

You see, we all need to build altars in our lives. We should all keep a record of what God has done in our past so that we can go back and recall what He’s done so He will lower our stress about the future. You see, God has been faithful to you in the past, and He will be faithful to you in the future.

One example of an altar that served as a memorial to God’s faithfulness is mentioned in Joshua 4. This is the time when God split the Jordan River and Israel miraculously crossed into the Promised Land to fight for their inheritance. The Lord had them bring twelve stones from the middle of the river and pile them up on the other side. This is what the Bible says, *“Now the people came up from the Jordan on the tenth day of the first month, and they camped in Gilgal on the east border of Jericho. And those twelve stones which they took out of the Jordan, Joshua set up in Gilgal. Then he spoke to the children of Israel, saying: ‘When your children ask their fathers in time to come, saying, ‘What are these stones?’*

then you shall let your children know, saying, 'Israel crossed over this Jordan on dry land'; for the LORD your God dried up the waters of the Jordan before you until you had crossed over, as the LORD your God did to the Red Sea, which He dried up before us until we had crossed over, that all the peoples of the earth may know the hand of the LORD, that it is mighty, that you may fear the LORD your God forever.' (Joshua 4:19-24)

Well, we too can build an altar to God. It doesn't have to be made of stone but it can be something that represents God's faithfulness in your life. Maybe he came through for you in a difficult time or maybe he has done something that really blew you away. It may be just a simple entry in your journal or maybe something tangible. Perhaps you already keep something like that at home, or in your office. Little mementoes that remind you of God's goodness.

I brought one with me today. But let me tell you a story before I show it to you. Some of you actually saw this before and I talked about it before but in a different context. Whenever I look at it at home, especially when I'm afraid, I get reminded of how he really loves me.

Twenty-two years ago I was in Russia as a missionary in a little-known city called Krasnodar. It's north of Sochi, you know, where the recent Winter Olympics was held. I think I was just 10 years old at the time. One time, our team of missionaries presented the gospel on the street, preaching, singing, and doing a skit. Afterwards, we were approached by the people, eager to learn more and just wanted to have the literature we were handing out. In the corner of my eye, I saw one of the missionaries, a girl, talking to a Russian in military uniform. She pointed to his hat and then, this soldier took off his hat and gave it to the missionary. Of course, she was elated. Suddenly, I felt envious. And I said, "Lord, I wish I could have a military hat like that. It will be nice for a souvenir."

A week passed and I forgot about that. I didn't pray about it again because I thought it was unlikely that I'd get a gift like that. Then, one night, I came back to my room after our school outreach. I opened the door and lo and behold, lying on top of my bed was a blue, military hat like this. I didn't know where it came from.

My roommates then told me that a soldier came earlier and asked for me and then left his hat on my bed. I then realized that that soldier was actually Sasha, an officer in the Air Force, who I met weeks before. How he knew that I wanted a hat was beyond me. But I knew God knew and he surprised me. God totally blew me away and I felt that God really was looking after me and he wanted to show me that he really loved me. What made it really significant was that it came at a time in my life when my faith in him was wavering. In fact, the reason I joined that missionary trip was because I wanted to know more about God.

So, don't be afraid of the future. If you're feeling afraid and you're worrying a lot and wondering what's gonna happen, look to the past. Remember God's faithfulness in the past. He will not let you down.

Then you are ready to go to step number two, which is:

2. Evaluate the specific source of my stress.

What is it exactly that is causing me to stress.? I have people tell me all the time—Rolly, I'm just stressed out. And I will say—well, what are you stressed out about? And they say—well, everything, you know. And a lot of times we feel that way. Sometimes we feel like we are stressed out about everything, but when we dig a little deeper, it's not usually everything. It's usually this one particularly difficult person at work. Or it's one relationship that is not going the way you wanted. Or it's just one thing where you don't have purpose and you can't find fulfillment. So what we have to do is we have to get behind the cloud of everything and find the specific. What is it specifically that is causing you the

stress? And you know, somehow or another, when you name it, it lowers your stress level and now you can deal with it.

Earlier, I mentioned that there was a point in my life when my faith in God wavered. To tell you the truth, there was a point, even before that, when I lost my faith in God.

And during that time in my life I was living in a constant state of stress. And you know, when you're stressed out, you tend to have a lot of headaches, you can't sleep, you can't eat well, you can't concentrate. And I was stressed out big time. My life was a mess. I was in college and I lost interest in my studies. I almost did not graduate. I couldn't pinpoint the cause. Was it because I always got turned down by girls? Was it because I didn't have enough money in my pocket? Was it because of too much traffic and air pollution? That was in the Philippines.

This went on for several years until I moved to Australia where I found a job. By then, the stress had taken its toll on my body and I sank into depression. It affected my performance on the job until after six months on the job, I was fired. That's when I hit bottom. You know how they say that when you're down, there's no way to go but up? Well, that didn't happen to me. Because I went down some more. In fact, I contemplated on ending my life right there. But I did have second thoughts. Until I read a book by David Wilkerson called "The Cross and the Switchblade". And that turned my life around. That book made me realize that the source of all my problems was a void in my heart. It took me years to find out but sometimes we don't want face to face the truth. We deny it. But healing comes when we deal with the root cause.

So, I realized that until I let God into my empty heart again, I would continue my downward spiral. From then on, I started to get closer to God and the more I did, the more peace I had and the stresses went away one by one.

Now, one of the things that I want to help you evaluate today, is what is it specifically that you are stressed about, and then once you know what that is, understand that there is good stress and there is bad stress. Did you know that? There is good stress. In your notes, it's called eu-stress. Eu- from the Latin meaning good, so good stress is eu-stress. Good stress is stuff that God allows in your life to grow you.

Let me give you an example. When I was starting in ministry, in fact, I was still studying to be a pastor, the church I was attending experienced an upheaval of sorts. The leaders of the church I was attending did not agree with each other and some left including our Senior Pastor. As you could imagine, people were in panic mode. Many were also discouraged and left, too, including our worship leader. They looked for someone to lead and I was quiet and didn't say a word but someone knew I was studying for ministry and said, "There he is, send him." Yes, send him", I said, pointing to another guy. Well, it ended up being me. And I asked the Lord, "Why me?" and God said, "Why not?"

I had no choice. So, every Sunday, I would start the Service in prayer, then played my guitar and led the people in worship with the worship team or whatever is left of it, then preached a 30-minute sermon, led the giving back portion, did a special number, made the announcements, and closes the worship in another song. Then I cooked too and fed the people. Now, you don't believe that part, do you? Anyway, I was practically doing it all by myself. On top of it, I would do a Bible study at night, and that was every night except on Wednesday night when I would lead our prayer meeting. And, of course, throughout the week there were phone calls to attend to. I tell you that was hard especially when something went wrong. People knew immediately who messed up. That went on for a couple of years until people stepped up and other pastors in the area took pity on me and helped to

preach on Sunday and helped us to find a new pastor. Now you know why I married late. Aside from the fact that girls were turning me down.

Looking back, those were really stressful years but I would acknowledge the stress I experienced as eu-stress, good stress. That kind of stress helped me to grow as a person and as a minister. During those years, God stressed me in order to stretch me. He knew what I needed to grow, and he gave me those things I needed.

Today, I'm blessed to be a part of this church where I don't have to do it all by myself. There are so many people here, like Pastor Dave, my associate pastor, and our directors, Kuya Elvin, Kuya Rey, Tita Annie, Ting, Andrew, Arnel, Tina, Ian, and Ate Jeanette, who ease my load greatly because of the tremendous ways they serve in this church. But not only them, there are others like them in this church who serve and I can't mention everyone of them but you know them. So, when something goes wrong. I don't get all the blame. I want to spread the blame around. I'm not the only one stressed in this church. They are too. And it's a good kind of stress.

God sometimes allows good stress to come into our lives so that we grow and...we can minister to others. In fact, Jesus talked about this and Jesus faced the good stressors of life. In Mark 6:31, Jesus said—*“Let's get away from the crowds for a while and rest. Why? He said this because there were so many people coming and going that Jesus and his apostles didn't even have time to eat.”*

That's the practical solution when you're stressed. You must learn to rest.

Now, here's the thing. If you don't have enough good stress in your life, meaning you're not walking closely with God, you are always going to fall into distress. Which is what bad stress is. Bad stress is distress. Bad stress is when something happens in your life as a result of doing something that is not God's will. So whenever we choose to do something that is not God's will, there are consequences. And these consequences often give us distress. Like when we start

drinking too much. It leads to health problems. Or we start holding onto bitterness and we don't forgive, that leads to relationship failure. Or when we enter into a serious relationship with someone who is not a Christian, that can lead to conflicts. Now, understand, at those moments, God hasn't left you. He still loves you and still wants the best for you.

Here's the thing. Eu-stress comes from God because he wants you to grow and he wants you to minister to others. Distress comes from us because of the bad choices we make. But even with distress, you can grow if you learn from it. And God is always faithful. In your distress, you can come to him, confess, repent and resolve to just follow him and only him.

3. Now, as you are going through stress in your life, remember number three—stick to what I know is right.

You see, stress has a way of clouding our decision making ability. And if you have been an adult for more than two years, you probably have this situation. You get under stress and because of that stress, you make a bad decision and then later you regret it. We have all been there. So what I am saying is—be very careful making big decisions in your life, when you are under stress. Don't make big relationship decisions when you are under stress. Don't make big career decisions when you are under stress. Because if you do, you might find yourself in a bad situation.

It is known that people under stress have a greater tendency to engage in unhealthy behaviors, such as excessive use or abuse of alcohol and drugs, cigarette smoking, and making poor eating choices, than their less-stressed counterparts. These unhealthy behaviors further increase the severity of symptoms related to stress, all leading to a vicious cycle of symptoms and unhealthy behaviors. This makes sense, right? So you have to be careful when there is stress in your life and you stick with what you know is right.

Here's what I've seen as a pastor. I've seen newly-married couples under stress. And by the way, did you know that one of the top ten stressors in life is getting married? I mean, trying to bring two people together into this new marriage, it can stress you out. That's why we see a lot of divorces in the early years of marriage.

So a newly-married couple is stressed and then they decide to stop going to church because they want to spend Sundays, maybe, working on the relationship. And then that just leads to even greater arguments. Another person gets a new project at work, or they get promoted and they take on a new workload. And whereas they used to get up in the morning and spend time with God and time in prayer, now they get dressed and rush out the door because they need more time in the day. Or then a third person gets overwhelmed with finances or they fall into a bad relationship, and instead of continuing to go to their home group and be around other Christians, they pull away from the group, trying to just figure it out by themselves. And in every one of these cases, the people pull away from the very thing that can help them in their stress.

Because for the married couple who is dealing with the stress of a new marriage, the best thing that they could do is go to church together. For the busy executive who had so much stuff to do, the best thing they could do is start the day in prayer so that they could get God's power to help out with all the new stress. Or the guy going through the bad relationship or maybe dealing with financial stress, the best thing that he could do is continue to go to his home group so he could be around people who care for him and will pray for him, and support him.

So it's very tempting when we are under stress to pull away from what matters most. But we have to make sure that we continue to do what is right, because it's only then that we get God's power in our lives. In fact, that's what

Peter is talking about. In I Peter 3:12, he says, *“The eyes of the Lord watch over those who do right. And His ears are opened to their prayers.”*

Did you catch that? You do what’s right, you get God’s power. “But the Lord turns His face against those who do evil.” If you start doing what is wrong, you not only hurt yourself, but you miss out on God.

So the answer is—what do you need to focus on during times of stress? Look at this passage. Philippians 4:8-9.

It says, “Fix your thoughts”, here’s what you should focus on. “What is true and honorable and right and pure and lovely and admirable, think about things that are excellent and worthy of praise.” Especially when you are under stress. “Keep putting into practice all you learned and received from me. Everything you heard from me and saw me doing.” Here’s the promise, you might underline this, “Then the God of peace will be with you.” You see, God’s promise that when you keep doing what’s right, you get His presence and therefore, His peace. So it really comes down to an issue of trust. Who are you trusting during times of stress? And that takes us to the last step,

4. Trust God completely with my future.

You know, stress is really an issue of trust. Stress is a warning light. Kind of like a warning light on a car or something. Stress tells you something is out of whack. It tells you that you’ve got misplaced trust. If you are feeling stressed out about your career, maybe it’s because you are trusting in the wrong person when it comes to your career. If you are really stressed out about your finances, maybe it’s because you’ve got trust in the wrong place. If you are feeling stressed out about relationships or marriage, maybe it’s because you’ve got your trust in the wrong place. You want to put your trust in someone who has been there in the past, will be there today, and is completely trustworthy when it comes to your future. There is a place where you can properly place your trust, and that’s in God.

God says this about your future. Listen to His words, *“For I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord. They are plans for good and not for disaster. To give you a future and a hope.”* And then God goes on to say in Proverbs 3:5-6. “Trust in the Lord with”, circle this word—all, “Trust in the Lord with all your heart.”

The reason you are stressed out is because that area of stress has not been given over to God. “Do not depend on your own understanding. Seek His will.” Here’s the word again.

“In all that you do, and He will show you which path to take.” Look, do you need to trust God today with some area of your life? With your work life, with your financial life, with some other area that I haven’t mentioned? Why not today, just take that area and say—God, I’m handing this over to You. And when you hand your stress over to God, God, in return, gives you His best. You know, maybe your situation today is that you need to hand all of your life over to God. You need to become a Christian. And the way you hand your life over to God, is you become a follower of God’s Son, Jesus Christ.

You see, it’s only in Jesus where you can find real rest. If you didn’t notice, our outline today spells REST. R-E-S-T. Rest. You’ve got to rest in Jesus. He did it all for you. He died for you. And he resurrected for you. Because he loves you and wants to give you an abundant life on earth and eternal life in heaven.

If you believe that Jesus died for you and acknowledge that he is your Lord and Savior then just make that commitment today to surrender your life to Jesus. Ask forgiveness for anything you’ve done wrong. He’ll forgive and as the Bible says, he will cleanse you and make you white as snow. You can have a new life and a great future ahead of you because of Jesus.

Let us Pray...

