

1 Buying Peace

- Anyone Feeling Stressed? Then get Out Your Wallets.

2 Tonight's scripture

- Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone who loves the father loves his child as well. (1 John 5:1 NIV)
- This is how we know that we love the children of God: by loving God and carrying out his commands. This is love for God: to obey his commands. And his commands are not burdensome, for everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith. (1 John 5:2–4 NIV)

3 Introduction

- If you are feeling stressed then join the club.
- Over the last several decades, the United States has become the world champion in the stress category.
- According to the American Institute of Stress, stress-related illnesses cost the American economy \$300 billion in medical bills and lost productivity every year.

4 Introduction

- Forty-four percent of Americans feel more stress than they did five years ago, and one in five people experience "extreme stress," which includes symptoms like heart palpitations, shaking and depression.
- Three out of every four visits to the doctor are for stress-related ailments.

5 Introduction

- A lot of that stress is hitting us earlier in life as well.
- As psychologist Robert Leahy points out, "The average high school kid today has the same level of stress and anxiety as the average psychiatric patient in the early 1950s."

6 Introduction

- The numbers are shocking, especially given the fact that we live in a country that should have the least to be stressed about.
- We're relatively secure. We have a higher standard of living than most countries. We have better access to good medical care than the vast majority of other countries in the world.
- And yet many countries, places like Africa where basics like food, security and clean water are in short supply, report lower levels of stress than those of us who seem to have it all.

7 Introduction

- Theories abound as to why our stress is worse than so many others.
- Some say it's the economy and work-related stress.

- Others say our loss of community is to blame, as people spend more time with their eyes focused on screens than the faces of family and friends.

8 Introduction

- Related to this is the mind-numbing amount of information we receive on a daily basis that causes us to fear threats that aren't even related to us.
- Put those together with the general American aversion to any negative feeling and you've got a stress-induced cocktail of anxiety.

9 How Can We Beat Stress?

- Well, the classic American answer is to buy your way out of it.
- In fact, there's now a whole industry that is focused on de-stressing your life while emptying your wallet.

10 How Can We Beat Stress?

- Walk around the mall, for example, and you'll see opportunities:
 - to purchase expensive massage chairs;
 - to get a quick massage at a kiosk by Forever 21;
 - to sign up for a yoga class at the local gym and contribute to what has become a \$6-billion dollar industry;
 - to sip a relaxing drink, such as a Chill or a Slow Cow (anti-Red Bull drink)

11 How Can We Beat Stress?

- Or, you can learn from Deepak Chopra, who is arguably the chief guru of stress management in American culture.
- Chopra, who claims he himself never has stress, sells millions of books and other devices -- all designed to help us relax.

12 How We Beat Stress

- Take the Deepak Chopra Dream Weaver Light and Sound Mind Machine, for example.
- This \$299 device is worn like a set of goggles, and uses a kaleidoscope of dream-like images and sounds to help you chill out.
- No wonder Chopra feels no stress. Sitting on a dreamy pile of easy money will do that to a guy.

13 Stress Reduction Kit

- Directions:
 - Place kit on FIRM surface.
 - Follow directions in circle of kit.

- Repeat step 2 as necessary, or until unconscious.
- If unconscious, cease stress reduction activity.

14 **How We Beat Stress**

- The truth is, however, that, despite the billions of dollars we're spending on this stuff, you just can't buy peace.
- In a world that feels out of control, no amount of time spent tripping out in the Dream Weaver will ultimately make us feel better.
- Once the goggles come off, it's back to the reality that we live in a world that we can't conquer, no matter how much we spend.

15 **Children of God**

- The people to whom John was writing had every reason to be way more stressed than even we could imagine.
- While his audience isn't clearly identified at the beginning of the letter, the fledgling Christian churches of John's day were often harassed and persecuted.
- People were losing their livelihoods and their lives because of their association with the person and message of Jesus.

16 **Children of God**

- At a minimum, they would have been ostracized by their pagan and Jewish neighbors for declaring a crucified Messiah as the Lord of the world.
- But instead of rolling out the yoga mat, the early Christians actually thrived in the midst of stress and persecution.
- The first few centuries of Christianity saw it explode in numbers and influence to a point that, by the early fourth century, it was the dominant faith and worldview of the very Roman empire that had sought the church's destruction.

17 **Children of God**

- How did Christians conquer the world?
- The apostle John gives us a clue, and he offers it free of charge!
- John was no guru, but he was a witness to the life of Jesus.
- For John, the way to peace didn't involve swiping a credit card to get what we need; rather, it involved remembering the free gift of our calling and the grace that's ours when we (through faith) walk out His word.

18 **Children of God**

- Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, . . . (1 John 5:1 NIV)

- If our ceaseless striving for security and solvency is the source of much of our stress, John reminds us that the one thing we really need is the one thing we can never buy or earn, and that is our calling and election as children of God.
- In other words, if the Spirit of God lives in you, it is because he first chose us—making us not only special (holy), but predestining us to be overcomers of the world through our faith in Him.

19 **Children of God**

- When we believe that Jesus is God's Son, we believe that Jesus is Lord of lords, and King of kings and is worthy of all our adoration, devotion, and love.
- Every child of God who loves the parent, then, also loves the rest of his children (1John 5:2 NRSV).
- If isolation and overwork are the causes of much of our stress, John reminds us that God has brought us together by giving us the gift of Jesus Christ and offering us a whole new community in which we can both give and receive the love God has shared with us.

20 **Obedience Sets us Free!**

- It's out of that love, then, that God gives us guidance about how to conquer the world and the stress that comes with it.
- When we love God and obey his commandments, says John, it becomes the way in which we can love the other children of God.
- Obedience to God's commandments sounds, at first, like another burden about which to be stressed. Another rule to obey!
- John, however, emphasizes that this obedience is what actually sets us free from worry and stress.

21 **Obedience Sets us Free!**

- When we experience the gift of God's love and grace, it becomes the gift around which we orient our lives.
- We focus on what we have, rather than what we don't have.
- We focus on the present, rather than worrying about the future. We know that our future is secure in Christ.

22 **Obedience Sets us Free!**

- In a world in which a fire hose of information bombards us constantly, obedience to God is the secret of a life of freedom.
- John says, that the commandments of God are not “burdensome,” and it's through our obedience to God, we “conquer the temptations that are in this world” (v. 4).

- So many of the de-stressing devices that people are buying today are all about escaping from the world not overcoming it.

23 **Ostrich Pillow**

- Take the Ostrich Pillow, for example.
- This is a pillow that fits over the head, leaving just a small opening for the mouth and nose, and puts the wearer into a head-in-the-sand kind of posture on a table while a busy airport bustles around him.
- (You really should Google this. It's hilarious.)

24 **Overcoming the world**

- The Bible, however, wants us to look up and see the world, not as a place from which to escape, but as a place to be claimed in victory.
- Who is it that conquers the world but the one who believes that Jesus Christ is the Son of God? (v. 5).
- When we believe that Jesus has already conquered the world, we have nothing to fear from it!
- To tell you the truth: No one can sell you that kind of peace!

25 **More than Conquerors**

- Paul echoes John when he reminds the Roman church that nothing, not even the stress-inducing spirits of hardship, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril or the threat of violence, can separate us from the love of God in Jesus Christ.
- Indeed, Paul says, we are more than conquerors through him who loved us (Romans 8:37).

26 **More than Conquerors**

- We are more than conquerors through Christ because . . .
 - if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! (2 Cor 5:17 NIV)
 - the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death. (Rom 8:2 NIV)
 - the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world. (1 John 4:4 NIV)
- I can walk out God's commands and keep a clear conscience before God and find rest for my soul.

27 **Peace from God**

- God knows how stressful our lives are in this world.
- He knows that things are getting more stressful not less.
- 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. (John 14:27 NIV)

- However, we must listen to His word and apply it or that peace can be frustrated.

28 **Peace from God**

- Take this lesson from the Israelites.
- This is what the LORD says — your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel: “I am the LORD your God, who teaches you what is best for you, who directs you in the way you should go. If only you had paid attention to my commands, your peace would have been like a river, your righteousness like the waves of the sea. (Is 48:17–18 NIV)
- Because of the stubbornness of the Israelites hearts, they missed out not only of peace, but on a “river of peace.”

29 **Conclusion**

- Let us not be like them and miss out on a “river of peace” because we refused to listen to God’s commands.
- Life is too frustrating and stressful not to have God’s peace in our lives.
- We can try it, but it may cost us much of our hard earned money trying to get it.
- Therefore, let us abide in Jesus’ words, so that His peace can abide in us.
- Jesus says, “I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.” (John 16:33 NIV)