

Pressure Points: Life Under Stress

“The stress of TIME”

Part 1

Intro: I am a recovering workaholic. And, because of this, the issue of time has always been the major point of stress and contention in my life and marriage. There just never seemed to be enough time. My job seemed to dominate the majority of my time and took the best part of my time. When I wasn't working, the time I gave my family certainly wasn't my best. In fact, for years Lisa would make comments about her getting the leftovers. How do I find the time to grow a church, be a good husband, raise a family, coach the kid's sports, maintain a home, do anything fun?

- The stress of time shows up in a host of different ways. We feel the stress of time with deadlines at work / with running kids to practices and games / trying to get dinner on the table / homework / sitting in traffic on the freeway / home projects that never get done / serving somewhere /
- No matter how much I check off the list in a typical day it never seems to be enough to relieve any stress. I simply do not have enough time! Ever feel this way?
- Welcome to our new series called Pressure Points: Life Under Stress. During this series what we are NOT going to do is project the myth that we can live stress free lives. That's ridiculous. Stress will always be part of life. BUT, stress doesn't have to be suffocating...stress doesn't have to be damaging. We can learn to do this stress thing better.
- One of the biggest stressors we all feel is the stress of time. How do we find the time to get it all done? How do I live without the nagging weight of always feeling like time is my enemy? Today I want to give you some practical tools to grow in this area. If you are feeling the pressure that comes from the stress of time, today is for you.

Let me give you 3 stress reducing steps.

1. Determine your values

What do I mean?

- Determine what values you are living

Our lives reflect our true values not what we say we believe. Therefore, the place to start is with self-awareness. We must be willing to be brutally honest with ourselves and ask the question: What does my lifestyle reveal? Why is this significant? Because our values will dictate how we invest our time.

- I would always say that things like God and my family were my highest values BUT my lifestyle proved otherwise. Truthfully, my highest value was productivity. Getting things done at any cost was my highest value. WHY? Because I would sacrifice anything to do so. WHY? Because my self-esteem

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was attached to this value. The more I could get done the better I felt about myself.

- You may not be the typical workaholic. That's not your issue but your life is still out of control. Your biggest value may simply be to address the biggest need at the moment. You are driven by the tyranny of the urgent. You operate more like a trauma nurse in the ER. You give your time to what you perceive is the greatest need of the moment.
- Some of you, your highest value is to never disappoint someone. Why do I say this? Because you can never say NO to anything or anybody. You hate conflict / you fear rejection / you worry about what others think of you. You and your time is driven by the expectations of others.

Prov. 14:8 "The prudent understand where they are going, but fools deceive themselves."
(NLT)

- We all have areas of self-deception. We all have blind spots in our lives. Therefore, growing in self-awareness is critical for life change. Self-awareness helps us navigate where we are going. We have to stop and take inventory.

HOW?

- Ask God for clarity

Ps. 139:23-24 "Investigate my life, O God, find out everything about me; Cross-examine and test me, get a clear picture of what I'm about; See for yourself whether I've done anything wrong—then guide me on the road to eternal life." (Message)

God points out areas of our lives that are wrong / unhealthy / not to condemn us but to show us how to get the most out of the life He created. Allow God to show to you what values you truly live. Sure it's painful. I didn't like what God showed me about my life either.

- Be willing to change how you think

*Rom. 12:2 "Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by **changing the way you think...**"* (NLT)

Unless we allow God to change our thinking our lives will not change. Unless you allow your thinking to change in regards to how you spend your time your stress level will never change. Our lives do not change because we simply changed behaviors. Our lives are transformed because we change the way we think. Thinking controls behavior! Some of you have engrained thinking that tells you nothing can change in your life right now.

Here is a foundational question for this series: Are you willing to admit you may need to change how you think about the usage of time in order to make your stress better?

- Determine what values you should live

In other words, what are the most important things in your life? What are your top 5 priorities? What areas of your life will determine your greatest joy / satisfaction /

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fulfillment / What life priorities will allow you to not have regrets when you get to the end of your life?

- Let me give you a hint in thinking through values. Values that enhance and foster relationships will fulfill your life and leave you without regrets. Values that enhance and foster the acquiring of things, will create regrets.
- Let me give you some of my values I try to live.
 - My relationship with God / my relationship with my wife / my relationship with my family / my relationship with my church / my relationship with money – use money to make memories not simply acquire things.
 - I think through my values with a relational grid... a relational lens. WHY? Because the greatest value as a follower of Jesus are relationships.
 - How we invest our time will either enhance relationships or it can destroy relationships. If you are damaging relationships by how you use your time you will have more stress.
 - Let me give you an assignment many of you will think is very strange. Go up to Adam's cemetery and think through values. (explain)

Ps. 39:4 "Lord, remind me how brief my time on earth will be. Remind me that my days are numbered— how fleeting my life is." (NLT)

To reduce your stress, determine your values first.

2. Define life by these values

Now you have a clearer picture of your values, it is time to think about what your life would look like if you lived out these values? If you can't see the goal, it will be impossible to navigate there.

- **Illustrate with a puzzle.** If I dumped out this puzzle on the floor and asked you to put it together without looking at the picture, how much more difficult would it be? In fact, it would probably take you a lot of extra time. BUT, if you had the picture to work off of, it would allow you to arrange all the pieces much faster.
- Our lives are like this. What do we do with all these pieces of your life without a picture of what we are trying to create? You don't even know how to prioritize the pieces.
- BUT, once we have identified our core values, we can now create a picture of what life can look like if we lived out these values. If we allowed our values to dictate our time what could life be like?
- What would your marriage look like if you gave it the time it needed? What would your family look like if it was given priority? How would you use money differently? How would you plan free time differently? Values help us chart the course.

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- Values should determine the usage of our time. If we allow needs to determine the usage of time, we will always be stressed. WHY? Because the needs will always be greater than the time we have. Is this not the reason we are always stressed out?

A great example is the story of Mary and Martha in the bible.

Luke 10:38-42 (Story of Mary and Martha) As Jesus and the disciples continued on their way to Jerusalem, they came to a certain village where a woman named Martha welcomed him into her home.³⁹ Her sister, Mary, sat at the Lord's feet, listening to what he taught.⁴⁰ But Martha was distracted by the big dinner she was preparing. She came to Jesus and said, "Lord, doesn't it seem unfair to you that my sister just sits here while I do all the work? Tell her to come and help me."

⁴¹ *But the Lord said to her, "My dear Martha, you are worried and upset over all these details!*

⁴² *There is only one thing worth being concerned about. Mary has discovered it, and it will not be taken away from her."*(NLT)

- Martha's time was dictated by the needs while Mary's times was dictated by a value. Jesus said that Mary made the better choice.
- Knowing that you lived out your values even if all the needs didn't get met is a stress reducer.

Will you try to define your life by your values.

3. Develop a plan to live these values

You can't simply create a picture of what life could be like. You have to begin walking in that direction. You have to get your values into your everyday life. Good intentions will not help your stress level.

HOW?

- Leave the victim mentality

I can't begin to tell you how many people over the years have said to me; "I don't have a choice." Whenever you give up your power to make choices you now have become a prisoner to this world / circumstances / other people / We always have choices. The real issue is most people do not want to pay the price to make the choice. God designed us with the capacity to make choices. He did not create helpless beings driven by circumstances. (explain context) Moses was explaining to the people of Israel that living these values would be life to them!

Deut. 30:19 "Today I have given you the choice between life and death, between blessings and curses. Now I call on heaven and earth to witness the choice you make. Oh, that you would choose life, so that you and your descendants might live!" (NLT)

- Three times he uses the word choice/choose. You and I are not victims to time. Let go of your thinking you have no choice. It is a lie that is keeping you in bondage.

- Make value based hard choices

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If we want to get better at managing stress we have to submit our decision to our values. Values must drive decisions not needs. This is how Jesus lived. Jesus made decisions based upon His values.

Summarize story Mark 1

Mark 1:35-38 “Before daybreak the next morning, Jesus got up and went out to an isolated place to pray. ³⁶ Later Simon and the others went out to find him. ³⁷ When they found him, they said, “Everyone is looking for you.”³⁸ But Jesus replied, “We must go on to other towns as well, and I will preach to them, too. That is why I came.” (NLT)

- Even though the entire town was looking for Jesus and expected round two, Jesus’ values drove His decisions. He knew why he came and made decisions about His time based upon those values. So must we!
- 7 years ago, I began this process of making hard decisions. I wanted my wife to believe she was the most important earthly commitment I have. I needed to make some hard time choices. I started the journey of becoming a better husband / but that decision meant I needed to also become a better Pastor / better leader. I needed to become more of a trainer and less of a doer.
- The result of that value based choice has been a renewal in our marriage and a leadership movement in our church. AND...less stress.
- What value based hard choices do you need to begin considering?

I know some of you still aren’t convinced. Let me leave you with an illustration putting all this together that may help you. I want to show you why making decisions about your time based upon values is so important.

- **Illustration** – Jar – golf balls / gravel / sand / coffee
- This jar represent my life / my time capacity / all that I can fill my life with.
- Golf balls represent my values – the most important commitments of my life
- The gravel and sand represent things of lesser value
- If you fill your life with the gravel and sand first, there is no room for the most important things of your life.
- Coffee? No matter how full life is, there is always room for a good cup of coffee.

How is God asking you to grow in the way you use your time?

Prayer time.

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