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## Stress: Making the Crooked Straight, and Other Impossible Tasks

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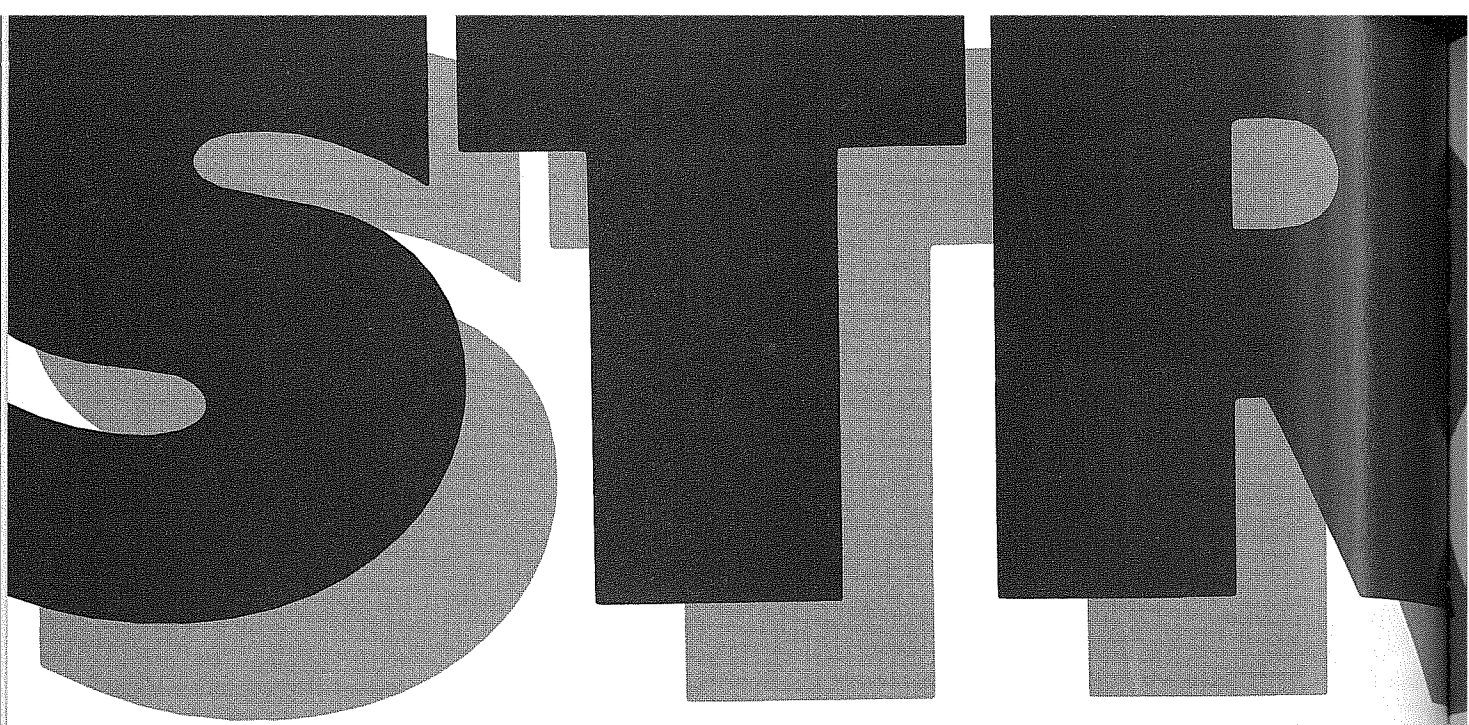
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## Making the Crooked Straight

by Ronald E. Hawkins

**S**olomon, ancient writer of wisdom, observed that we live in an arena where the crooked often cannot be made straight and the number of wrongs is too great to total up (Eccl. 1:15). Job, uttering a similar mind-set, exclaimed that man is born unto trouble as the sparks fly upward (Job 5:7). Jesus reminded His disciples that in the world they would experience tribulation (John 16:33). Paul concluded that the whole creation groaned and travailed in pain, waiting for the redemption of the body (Rom. 8:22-23). Unsettling realities, innumerable wrongs, troubles, tribulations, and groanings are a source of great stress for God's people in all generations.

As a counselor I see many people who complain of experiencing too much stress. Generally most of them are in that position for one of two reasons. First, they are burdened over their inability to deal with others. They have done all they know how to do. Their fathers, mothers, husbands, wives, children, pastors, parishioners, and the list goes on, are

### **Stress is the lot of those who feel impotent to change themselves and others.**

not responding to their actions. Coming to see me as a "last resort," they express their frustration at failing to achieve their desired end.

Second, they are burdened about themselves. They see no way to experience forgiveness for past deeds. They believe their futures to be bleak and see no bright tomorrow filled with meaning and purpose. Hence, they are restless, sleepless, and stressed to the point where they complain that life no longer holds any great meaning.

Luke, the physician-author, offered timely and excellent advice for the treatment of stress. His advice, if heeded, can do much to alleviate the suffering of God's people and assist us with the maintenance of joy, a

believer's most valuable treasure.

In Luke 5 we read a touching story of friendship, faith, and forgiveness. Several men were greatly exercised over a sick friend. Having exhausted all other human means, they sought to lay him before Jesus. Undoubtedly, they reasoned that the greatest thing they could do for their friend was to get him to the feet of Jesus. Faith for them was no ethereal theological construct. Simply, it was the settled conviction that if they could get their friend to the feet of Jesus, the Lord would meet the deepest need in his life. You know the rest of the story. That is exactly what Jesus did. He healed the man inside and out. Their ministry of intercession and undiminished resolve to get their friend into the presence of Jesus should inspire us to do likewise.

Stress can be greatly reduced if we would practice putting the cause of our stress at the feet of Jesus. As I counsel with people I frequently see them doing many things to coerce others into compliance. I seldom hear the overstressed talk of committing those for whom they are burdened to the care of Jesus.

# Stress

## Straight and Other Impossible Tasks

uable treasure. I had a touching faith, and forgiveness were greatly expected. Friend. Having a human means, they before Jesus. Unreasoned that they could do for their own was no ethereal act. Simply, it was a vision that if they went to the feet of Jesus would meet the need of his life. You know the man that is exactly what he needed the man inside the ministry of intercession. I resolved to get the presence of Jesus to do likewise. My stress was greatly reduced if I put my feet at the feet of Jesus. Many people I frequently find any things to coerce. I seldom hear talk of committing they are burdened to

In my own life I have recently experienced the joy of such a commitment. Our oldest son went for a year and a half with a broken wrist. Scores of casts and one painful operation later, it remained unhealed. Finally we scheduled a second surgery and asked Christian friends to join us in placing his need daily at the feet of Jesus. A wonderful peace filled us during those days of intercession. The stress from worrying and waiting left us. We did the best thing we could possibly do. We prayed. The pronouncement from the doctors that the wrist was healed came one week before the scheduled second operation. God did that! We helped by placing the boy before the feet of the only One in the universe who could meet his need.

A second source of real stress is uncertainty over what to do about the past or the future. Luke introduces us to a woman in chapter 7 who was a prostitute. She falls in love with Jesus Christ and is marvelously saved. This woman shares two experiences in common with many.

### **Our stress over others can be greatly reduced if we would practice putting them at the feet of Jesus.**

First, she has an infamous past over which she feels great sorrow. Jesus tells her that, without equivocation, her sins are all forgiven. Every day and night of her sinful past is gone under the obliterating power of divine forgiveness. To be in Christ is truly to be a new creation with all of the old sins passed away. At the feet of Jesus she learns of a free and total pardon—total forgiveness for the past, rooted in a vibrant relationship with Jesus in the present.

Second, she sees no future. As an ex-prostitute, she feels that no man will take her for a wife. How will she support herself if she no longer practices the sins of her past? Where will she live? I am certain that these fleeting thoughts crossed

her mind as she made her journey to the house of the Pharisee and placed herself in full repentance and worship at the feet of Jesus. All of these stresses, burdens, and questions dissipated as Jesus gave to her the greatest of all possible gifts. He bestowed salvation and peace upon her as He said, "Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace." The woman, like the friends of the sick man, was motivated by one overriding thought. *If I can just get to the feet of Jesus, the deepest needs in my life will be met and my stress will be resolved.* What was true for these biblical characters is true for us as well.

Stress is the lot of those who feel impotent to change themselves and others. Undiminished and abounding stress is the lot of those who reason that the greatest thing they can do is to rely on their own wisdom and strength.

What is your burden? The past, the future, a husband, wife, son, daughter? As disciples of Jesus Christ, when we have done all we can, we have only just begun. We can then go to the greatest resource we have available and lay others and ourselves at the feet of Jesus, who is the Christ, the Lord of glory. ■