

YOUR LIFE IN THE **RED ZONE**

DEALING WITH STRESS

REPLAY

You've never had so much to do as now. Coach has always been one to press you forward, but He's really pouring it on now. The next three weeks have the hardest opponents of the year. Two of your best teammates are benched with injuries this whole month. Everyone is pulling extra weight to make it to the championship. That's the goal. But with everything going on, you feel stressed out. After every practice, you collapse on the locker room floor just trying to breathe.

GAME BOOK

The Bible never uses the word stress in the way we think of it. However, the pieces of stress are all there. People in the Bible fret and worry. Some of them are imprisoned (certainly a cause for stress) and even executed. Trials, temptations, disasters, all of these lead to negative stress in a person's life (there is such a thing as good stress that leads a person to become better than before, but we won't be talking about that here). The Bible does give instruction on working through such times in your own life.

- If you don't have faith, you are sinning (Romans 14:23). You have to look at the item causing stress in the right attitude. Few people in the Bible experienced the stress of David hiding from Saul, but in those times, David leaned on God and made it through with his devotion to God stronger than ever. This is because David knew who to turn to in faith.
- Rest in God's sufficiency. God makes a wonderful promise in Psalm 37:25. Writing through the Spirit, David says, "I was young and now I am old, yet I have never seen the righteous forsaken or their children begging bread." The whole Psalm deals with why those who love God shouldn't "fret." Fretting was the ancient way of stressing out. Read it and be blessed. See also Matthew 11:28.
- Keep going. If you stop trying, you lose big time. Stress won't defeat you unless you let it. Paul was imprisoned, beaten, shipwrecked, and stranded (not to mention bitten by a poisonous snake), and after all that, when about to be executed, he wrote an encouraging letter to his protegee Timothy. At the end, Paul wrote "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day-- and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing" (2 Timothy 4:7-8).
- Find His peace (John 14:27). "The peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:7). That's a promise you can rely on. God comes to help you, to give you the

peace that you can't find anywhere else. Peace in the heart is the opposite of stress.

TAKE-AWAY

Even though the word "stress" does not appear in the Bible as we have used it here, the concept does. As with all other issues men face in life, faith is the key to overcoming. Over and over in the Bible, God commands us to "fear not." Stress is part of fear and when we fear we are not being obedient to God. When stressed, you have got to relax. Nothing will improve when in that condition. Relax and rest in God. Let Him take away your stress. Find the contentment that comes with being filled by God's Spirit.