

Stress-Free Living

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is pastor of Greater Grace Church located in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens is also chancellor of Maryland Bible College & Seminary and host of the international Christian radio program "The Grace Hour." This booklet was created from messages preached by Pastor Stevens.

Pastor Stevens can be seen weekly on cable television stations throughout the United States. Call us for information regarding programming in your area.

All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

Victorious, stress-free living is a way of life many believers have difficulty grasping. Doctrine must be repeated and rehearsed through prayer and godly meditation so that the truth can govern our souls. Otherwise, we have a wealth of knowledge that we cannot apply when faced with difficult circumstances.

One of the greatest things for Christians is what we learn *after* we know something. For example, we may read a book over again and be surprised by how much we didn't remember from the first reading. But when we have really learned something, we can use it involuntarily—automatically and spontaneously—under pressure.

As we will examine in this booklet, a learned response goes far beyond just knowing something. Meditating on doctrine brings power to retrieve things that we “know” and to implement them in daily life. When we lose doctrine from

our memories, it is no longer available for use involuntarily, even though we thought that we knew it thoroughly.

By looking at a courageous group of young people as they were forced into captivity, we will see how Christ's character is only truly revealed when the knowledge we receive is allowed to circulate in the streams of the soul.

Chapter One

THE NECESSITY OF A WELL-EQUIPPED SOUL

“My soul hath them still in remembrance, and is humbled in me. This I recall to my mind, therefore have I hope.

“It is of the LORD’S mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness” (Lamentations 3:20-23).

“Thus saith the LORD; Refrain thy voice from weeping, and thine eyes from tears: for thy work shall be rewarded, saith the LORD; and they shall come again from the land of the enemy.

“And there is hope in thine end, saith the LORD, that thy children shall come again to their own border” (Jeremiah 31:16-17).

In Jeremiah 31, amongst the captives from Israel were mostly teenagers being led away on a four-month, nine-hundred-mile death march to Babylon. God’s nation has reached an extreme

cycle of discipline and the people have been taken captive. These teens were Jeremiah's pride and joy for the way they received doctrine, and the prophet gave them the promise that they would return to their borders some day.

The captives would be forced to march during the day and were chained at night. Ezra, one of the teenagers on this march, later wrote Psalm 119. He used the word *zimmah*, a Hebrew word rendered "mischief" in Psalm 119:150. *Zimmah* speaks of the perverted sex and molestation they endured. At night, drunken Babylonian soldiers would come to rape the women, molest the teenagers, and then chain them up again. The food for the prisoners was mostly moldy bread, soggy rice, and an almost inedible soup—something no one would think of eating under normal conditions.

Trained to Reign

The young people were being tested because they would one day again be raised up as God's client nation. These teens would be a pivotal force in the plan that would deliver Israel back to Jerusalem.

There are no Bibles in their hands—no preaching from a pastor-teacher to refresh their

souls. All that will sustain, inspire, and bless them will have to come from the Word of God in their memories. Everything will be dependent on what they have retained and what the Spirit can bring to remembrance.

Ezra would be among the leaders, for he will keep reflecting on Jeremiah's promise. His pastor-teacher, Jeremiah, had told him not to quit because in seventy years they would return. Before they were taken captive, these teenagers had been such amazing students of Jeremiah. They took in fifteen to twenty-four hours of doctrine classes a week.

Their memories had to be well-equipped. They had no Bibles to study or find comfort in, and they faced terrible rapes and molestation at the hands of these soldiers. Imagine being chained there, wondering if you would be the one attacked this time. There had to be tremendous fear, because one negative reaction or response meant certain execution. But their souls still had God's Word in remembrance. Although the Bible wasn't in their hands, it was in their being, causing them to remember and recall truth for life.

When being tested by demons or the old sin nature, many Christians fight and defend them-

selves instead of remembering the truth. We might be fully equipped to know something as a student. But that knowledge does nothing for us—even though we can describe the doctrines fluently—until it is in the heart, controlling us and our actions.

These teens were saying, “We are being tested, but we will remember what Jeremiah taught us.” Their tests would develop a new generation of mature believers.

Chapter Two

HUMILITY, RECEPTION, AND ABSOLUTE CONFIDENCE

“My soul hath them still in remembrance, and is humbled in me” (Lamentations 3:20).

Receiving doctrine brings humility. A humble person is the only kind of person who can remember Bible doctrine and apply it.

In listening as a humble child, we should not think highly or lowly of ourselves; we should only think of ourselves as God thinks of us. He says we are complete in Him, and we agree. He says we are seated above; we agree. He says we are forgiven if we fail; we agree. That is humility.

When you are weak and need His promises to carry you on, *receive* His promises—that is humility in action. Accept God’s words over your feelings, God’s promises over adamic preference, and you will not live in stress.

We can be free from stress, or we can be filled with stress and never free. A divine power

system resides in our souls. We have the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit, and the Word of God in us. All of this is inside us. It is our choice whether we use these resources or not. We can leave good food in the freezer and go hungry. It is there ready to be cooked and eaten, but we don't have to use it if we don't want to. In the same way, we can ignore what God has put inside us, or we can go negative toward it.

Receive a New Capacity for Doctrine

The humble will hear (Psalm 34:2); the meek will He guide and teach (Psalm 25:9). We cannot retain doctrine unless our old lives have been crucified. Even a preacher must take up his cross daily and put away the 'old man' (Galatians 2:20; Ephesians 4:22). The Spirit's filling only comes when we let God govern our listening habits, imparting to our memories brand-new inspirational capacities for divine reality that will be needed in future trials of our faith.

Promotion never comes without trials. A client nation is never raised up without testing, which often includes unjust treatment. Promotion goes to those who are treated unjustly and yet never verbalize, communicate, or react in negativity. They don't verbalize negativity about

their treatment because they have doctrine to understand that the trials of their faith are more precious than gold that perishes (1 Peter 1:7). They understand that fellowship with the power of resurrection and the fellowship with His sufferings make them conformable to His truth.

Many believers cannot keep still under such testing, because without humility and meekness there is no provision for the transfer of doctrine into the soul. He may have had his intellect stimulated, there may be a love for knowledge, but these things have nothing to do with Christianity reaching its peak of maturity.

Unshakable Hope

“This I recall to my mind, therefore have I hope” (Lamentations 3:21).

For the children of Israel on the death march to Babylon, doctrine in their memory brought a confidence so absolute that nothing they were going through could make them forget God. The Spirit brings truth into the memory so that confidence is unshakable (John 14:26).

Consider what these young people were experiencing; they couldn't have survived without recalling God's promises. Without the promises, I am sure thoughts of suicide would have con-

sumed them. They were being whipped, raped, molested, and chained repeatedly. Yet, they revealed absolute confidence in God that did not waver because of what was coming out of their memory center.

They kept thinking: "It is of the LORD'S mercies that we are not consumed because His compassions fail not" (Lamentations 3:22). There was no change in their circumstances. No physical or emotional relief was in sight. Just the Word in their memory was quickening them. The Book became alive and absolutely real to them. All they had to look forward to was the fact that His mercies would be new the next morning.

In the teenagers' minds, they had a picture of old Jeremiah exhorting them as they went off to captivity: "Don't quit! Don't quit! Don't quit!" he told them. "You are going to come back here to Jerusalem one day." They hung on those words from the prophet; they knew he wasn't lying (Jeremiah 31:13-17).

Jeremiah had taught Israel about God's mercies. He had taught them that God's compassions fail not. And each day began with what God brought back through recall. There wasn't going to be a better breakfast. No one was going

to intervene for them. But, oh, what a future generation these young people would form as they grew into tested, proven, victorious warriors of the Word of God.

They have endured rapes and molestation for weeks now, yet they say to the Lord every morning, "Great is Thy faithfulness." They did not play the blame game, but neither did they hold themselves responsible for what was happening. This captivity came after cycles of discipline in Israel, because several generations ignored God's warnings that came in earlier cycles.

America is in the midst of a cycle of discipline too. The remnant of all the mature Christians in churches in America is staying God's hand of judgment at the moment. Christians have no power to restrain the moral decline and destructive patterns at work right now. Yet, through volitional decisions of individuals in local assemblies with pastors equipped in doctrine, the Church can hold back judgment. Remember, in Abraham's day, ten righteous men—just ten—would have restrained the judgment passed upon Sodom (see Genesis 18 and 19).

Chapter Three

FILLED WITH GOD'S FULLNESS

“The LORD is my portion, saith my soul. Therefore, will I *hope*” (Lamentations 3:24).

The bodies of these teenagers couldn't respond, weak and ravaged as they were. The soul could respond, however. You can't kill a soul. A soul can't be stopped from believing, neither can it be stopped from having love. In the last month of cancer, though the body might decline, the soul can keep growing with God.

The word for “hope” in this verse speaks of having an absolute confidence in God. These young people sat under a mighty prophet who suffered as no other prophet, except for Isaiah. He imparted something to them, even while many of their moms and dads were rejecting the Truth. They learned to adjust in grace and doctrinal acclimatization, adapting to their otherwise unbearable situation, because they believed that they had eternal individual destinies.

They reached a place where they had tremendous objective love toward God, trusting Him beyond the suffering they were experiencing. Ultimately, they had subjective love toward the world, but not objective love toward it for they saw no value in the world apart from God's purpose.*

We must express subjective love from God toward everyone. Anything we say behind someone's back violates subjective love. The very first word grieves the Spirit; the next paragraph quenches the Spirit. Some don't even know that they are doing this. Have you said anything negative about someone? If you have, use recovery before God. Name it, forsake it, rebound and then go on.

Enter into Fullness

This group of teenagers had entered into *pleroma* faith. This means they were filled with the fullness of God (Ephesians 3:19). Doctrine filled every shelf, every drawer, every room of their souls. It was in the attic, in the basement, in the kitchen, in the living room, in the dining room, and in the garage—picturing the different compartments of the soul.

The difference is *pleroma*—fullness. Chris-

tians who are faithful to hear and receive the Word develop categorical substance in their storage centers. They don't get off on self-gratifying experiences. They are quick to rebound after a failure.

There isn't anything we need more than His mercies and compassions to get us through the day as we face the trials of our faith. Promotion will not come as a matter of course. We will face challenges, but we can be stress-free in every situation.

We don't have to compare ourselves with others and cry about what we're going through, or feel as if we're being used unjustly. We don't have to be immature and unscriptural. We can have this *pleroma*, this fullness of God within us, with new mercies every morning and compassions that fail not.

Deceived by Knowledge

Perhaps the most deceptive thing in all of Christianity is a believer having all kinds of knowledge without having *pleroma*. A person such as this may even fluently recite verses, quote commentaries, and rattle off the Scriptures. But it is only academic knowledge, perceived by the intellect but never operational in

that person's life. Until there is a divine transfer at the Cross and the mind of Christ takes over, the fullness of God isn't allowed to come in to impart the living Word to the soul.

For example, a couple can come to church for years and yet cannot find the resolve to keep their marriage together. It is time they confessed that they have only academic knowledge in Christianity. They are saved, but they have no ministry of reconciliation or restoration. They speak no words of reconciliation, but they have the knowledge of them. The knowledge, which came from the Holy Spirit, never went beyond perception.

"I go to church, but I can't get deliverance," someone may say. A more accurate confession would be, "I'm a Christian who chooses not to go beyond the knowledge of the Truth."

Those who are delivered and victorious take what they know and transfer it through faith and meekness into what they want to become: conformed to the image of Christ.

We really haven't learned what we "know" until it is applied spontaneously, revealing Christ under pressure. Knowing the truth but never being delivered by it frustrates grace, takes us out of an eternal purpose, and does

away with our individual sense of destiny with God.

**For more about subjective and objective love, we suggest reading The Love of God, by Pastor Carl H. Stevens, Grace Publications, 1998.*

Chapter Four
ENHANCING THE SOUL'S
VOCABULARY

To have an individual sense of destiny with God is one of the greatest things for a believer. First comes faith perception of God and of His Word, then the transfer of truth into the soul begins. It all starts with understanding vocabulary. A believer can never express himself beyond the vocabulary he derives from God's Word. Communication defines what we are and where we are, in Christianity. If someone knows only a few words of English, that is all he can communicate. When a person learns more words, his communication expands. When we know God's vocabulary and learn to implement it, we have a very beautiful way into the life and power of the ministries of Christ, whereby we are able to exercise true spirituality.

The mind develops the memory and the memory produces pathways for learning

processes. These processes develop conditioned thoughts from God, which are conditioned convictions. Conditioned godly convictions overrule anything we feel, desire, or want. Conditioned convictions resolve the empirical process of the senses that plague many Christians with human weakness of the flesh.

The Holy Spirit is a gift to every believer, but true spirituality is learned through these processes. Jesus Christ *learned* obedience by the things that He allowed the Father to work into His life (Hebrews 5:8). The rate of learning determines the development of a person's potential. If I were to ask someone to name the presidents of the United States in order, only those who had a learning process that consistently included those names would be able to do it. Our learning is determined by how we develop new pathways or memories. But unless we exercise what we have learned by reviewing it often, those conditioned thoughts will decrease.

Conditioned for Right Thinking

The Jewish captives on the long death march to Babylon had learned that thinking with God was more important than what they were feel-

ing, seeing or tasting. These teenagers had no Bibles in hand, but they did have the Bible in their hearts. They entered into a brand-new life of drawing from the Word of God in their heart. The Word became assimilated truth that went beyond knowledge. Remember, what we *learn*—beyond what we *know*—is our provision for living each day.

The mind develops these memory pathways through the learning process of developing conditioned thoughts. These conditioned thought pathways stabilize the memory. When my learning rate exceeds my forgetting (providing it is experiential and established in a process of metabolizing, assimilating, and circulating the Word, as in Jeremiah 15:16), then truth becomes the ultimate pathway—beyond sight, feeling, and taste. Lamentations 3:23 teaches the value of a harmonious rapport with God that exceeds any rapport with people. This rapport with God brings an appreciation for God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. When we fail, if we use the principle of recovery with integrity, we begin to live in a pathway of having and receiving the mind of Christ again.

In Bible study and in church services, we receive information. Then we are quickened in

what we know, develop in what we learn, and faith perception comes in with assimilation and application in situations. At times, however, new memories become old and begin to deteriorate because we haven't had an opportunity to use them. As a result, when a situation comes, the "new" information that was never applied is difficult to remember, though it may have been what we needed.

Therefore, as we begin to develop memories with the Word of God and apply them, the Bible tells us we have the mind of Christ, which is received from the preciseness of the Word of God (1 Corinthians 2:15-16). We are not to live by feelings, projections, and private interpretations of truth. These result in empiricism, preoccupation with self, and divided doctrines (partial truths that never operate under pressure). The truth must be *applied* to become operational.

Matthew 6:33 tells us to seek the Kingdom of God first and His righteousness. No matter what our situation, we are to seek the Kingdom first. We shouldn't accept the demands of the world, letting them take us away from seeking the Kingdom of God.

We submit ourselves to God and honor those who pastor the local assembly with the

Word of God (Hebrews 13:7-17). We will then develop a single eye, and our whole body will be filled with light, as opposed to those without a single eye who have bodies filled with darkness (Matthew 6:22-23).

Living in the New

Jeremiah wrote in Lamentations 3:24, “The LORD is my portion.” In verse 22 he said, “It is of the LORD’S mercies that we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not.” The only reason we are not consumed is that His mercies and His compassions are new every day. “New”—*chadash* in the Hebrew—implies that nothing exists outside of what is new. This means that every single relationship is made completely new every morning.

God’s mercies have the power to bring in an ability to totally think, confess, and live in His newness. Anything outside of this newness needs to have a grace adjustment and doctrinal rehabilitation.

See the Goodness of God

“The Lord is good unto them that wait for Him” (Lamentations 3:25).

What were these captives waiting for? De-

liverance from rape and molestation. But that deliverance would not happen for a long time. Things did improve because God blessed Ezra, and he found a measure of favor in the land of captivity. But here is the question: If that were you, would you still seek God? If you had to watch loved ones and neighbors endure such brutal treatment, would your soul seek God? Or, would you just self-destruct in your superficial Christianity?

After all they had been through, these young people could say, "The reason we hope in God with absolute confidence is because He is our portion." They understood the situation and waited for the Lord to fulfill His plan. The process of discipline upon Israel left the youth as innocent victims who were treated unjustly because of the sins of their fathers. Such unjust treatment, however, would bring them rewards that they will enjoy for all of eternity (2 Timothy 2:12). What was happening was not their fault and they refused to blame themselves for the molestation and rapes.

Waiting on the Lord

"It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the LORD. It is

good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth" (Lamentations 3:26-27).

This passage means that the man who hopes has absolute confidence and quietness in the midst of terrible things going on around him. Referring to the teenagers, these verses talk of how it is good for them to bear the yoke of testing in their youth. Very few could even begin to accept such a situation. Yet, there weren't any options for this group. If I am in a place without options, it would be well for me to put Christ first. When we can't find an explanation for what is going on, we need to have absolute confidence that God is going to make it into something far better than we could ask or think throughout all eternity.

The precious thing revealed here is how with the Bible in their hearts, these young people only had what they could recall to sustain them on the journey of death. The Word had become resident in their heart as it was transferred through the human spirit, down into the five parts of the soul. Under pressure, they would find value in the character of God's Word and His promises. Now they were expressing objective love toward God such as they had never done before.

They were now seeing God's value as the object of their love. Not only can we have subjective love when we are filled with God's love within our essence, but also we can see God's tremendous value as the object of our love. He is love, He is compassion, His mercies are new. He gives us joy and peace in our souls.

Even when our bodies are in a terrible condition—weak, frail, with only God knowing how we will make it—our soul can control us through our free volition as we make right decisions to have the mind of Christ. We simply have to accept His provision for our bodies.

At Last, Rest and Refreshment

When they reached Babylon, the leaders there had compassion and the teens and many other captives were treated surprisingly well. After all of the mistreatment, they were finally cleaned up and given proper food. Medical doctors made sure they were nourished before they did anything else, because of their frailty. God had a provision for these slaves because he was going to use them.

Jeremiah told Ezra, "You're going to be coming back, so don't you quit" (see Jeremiah 31:17). He and other teens kept reflecting on that

promise. They were trusting the Supreme Court of heaven as they had never trusted it before. Then, they were shocked to see how the leaders of Babylon were led by God to help heal them.

The Babylonians knew what they were doing. They wanted to get these frail youngsters strong. "We want these Jews to serve us because we know that they have special gifts," was their thinking. Finally, these battered bodies were shown some mercy after four months of merciless treatment.

Still, God's mercies were new every morning, every step on the march, because these believers had the ability in their souls to make them new by their choices. Great is His faithfulness. The name of God is faithful (Deuteronomy 7:9). We fellowship with a faithful God (1 Corinthians 1:9). He is faithful to deliver us from all temptation no matter what it is (1 Corinthians 10:13). He is faithful to do it for us and in us. He will always be faithful to us even when we don't believe (2 Timothy 2:13).

God's faithfulness reaches to the clouds (Psalm 36:5). It also reaches to the heavens and into the congregation of the saints (Psalm 89:5), no matter what goes on in the congregation. His faithfulness will not fail (Psalm 89:33). Some-

times, His faithfulness afflicts us (Psalm 119:75). This is what Ezra and the others understood beyond knowledge—“We know You are faithful, Lord. We have affliction, but we know You are faithful.”

Even in the midst of extremely trying times, these believers set their minds above the stress and upon the Lord. The result was victory, with outstanding character. These believers were truly free.

CONCLUSION

God always answers us in His faithfulness (Psalm 143:1), and His faithfulness is great (Lamentations 3:23). If you sit down with a single eye, seek God's Kingdom first, and ponder these verses in Jeremiah and Lamentations, you will begin to thank God that your heart is beating. Linger a while with the Holy Spirit's filling, take every verse on faithfulness and store them in your soul. Soon you will realize that there has always been a provision for your life, and there will *always* be a provision. *God is so faithful*. He was faithful to call you, He will be faithful to keep you. He is faithful to forgive, cleanse, and renew you.

More than acknowledging truth, we have to let the truth be transferred to our souls. Then, the power of God is manifested through us in several ways. He enables us through His power (*dunamis*). The process of transfer (*energeia*) allows the words that I have heard to possess

me in learning a precise category of doctrine (*ischus*). Next, comes the manifestation of what I have learned under pressure (*kratos*). In the midst of these pressures, we will find God's special angels strengthening us in the battles (Daniel 10:18).

It must be so frustrating for the one who only has knowledge of God's truth to live in stress because he has nothing to recall in his soul. He becomes a weary person, tired and in spiritual decay. His wandering mind never permits doctrine to go beyond knowledge. Yet, the one who meditates and allows doctrine to be transferred into the five parts of his soul will be surprised at the victories won with Christ. This one will manifest to the world what is alive in his soul.