

Sermon Series: **How Then Shall We Live**
Sermon Title: **Becoming Healthy Relationally**
By: **Kelly Kinder**

Scripture Text: Mark 3:7-21

Jesus withdrew with his disciples to the sea, and a great crowd followed, from Galilee and Judea⁸ and Jerusalem and Idumea and from beyond the Jordan and from around Tyre and Sidon. When the great crowd heard all that he was doing, they came to him.⁹ And he told his disciples to have a boat ready for him because of the crowd, lest they crush him,¹⁰ for he had healed many, so that all who had diseases pressed around him to touch him.¹¹ And whenever the unclean spirits saw him, they fell down before him and cried out, "You are the Son of God."¹² And he strictly ordered them not to make him known.

¹³ And he went up on the mountain and called to him those whom he desired, and they came to him.¹⁴ And he appointed twelve (whom he also named apostles) so that they might be with him and he might send them out to preach¹⁵ and have authority to cast out demons.¹⁶ He appointed the twelve: Simon (to whom he gave the name Peter);¹⁷ James the son of Zebedee and John the brother of James (to whom he gave the name Boanerges, that is, Sons of Thunder);¹⁸ Andrew, and Philip, and Bartholomew, and Matthew, and Thomas, and James the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus, and Simon the Zealot,¹⁹ and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him.²⁰ Then he went home, and the crowd gathered again, so that they could not even eat.²¹ And when his family heard it, they went out to seize him, for they were saying, "He is out of his mind."

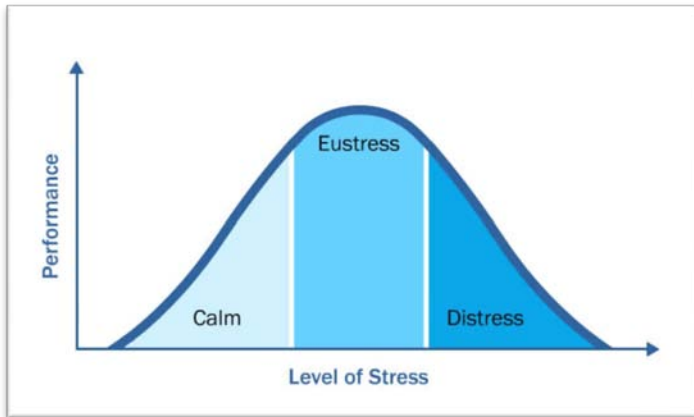
I may be the worst possible person to deliver this message. Or maybe, since I struggle with this topic, I can readily identify with it as much as anyone. When they asked me about sharing in this series I told them I would rather sit and listen. I struggle just like everyone else. When people ask how I'm doing, invariably I respond with, "I'm doing ok, but I'm really busy." As one tired soul observed, "I suppose there must be a six-year-old somewhere out there who doesn't have anything to do and some dear folks at the nursing home who could use a few more interruptions, but for almost everyone in between there is a pervasive sense of unrelentingly being filled up and stressed out."

Stress Levels of Americans

- Fewer than 4 in 10 adults report doing an excellent or very good job at managing stress
- 44% of Americans feel more stressed than they did 5 years ago
- Stress is the basic cause of 60% of all human illness and disease (3 out of 4 doctor's visits are for stress-related ailments)
- 1 in 5 Americans experience "Extreme Stress" (shaking, heart palpitations, depression)
- Work Stress: There has been a 60% increase in productivity over the past twenty years, but wages have not increased. People are working harder for less. Work stress causes 10% of strokes.
- Some 83% of American workers say they feel stressed out by their jobs due to unreasonable work loads, annoying co-workers, and commuting to and from work.
- Stress shrinks the brain

When we talk about stress, what are we talking about?

Stress.org says: “There has been no definition of stress that everyone accepts. People have very different ideas with respect to their definition of stress.” So I could give you a list of different definitions of stress because it the topic has been studied so thoroughly. But I’ll give you this one: “Stress is the emotional and physical way in which a person responds to pressure”



- Defining Stress is difficult but we all know when we are stressed.
- Not all stress is bad, some pressure tends to strengthen us for God’s best work in our lives.

‘Eustress’ is good stress. It might include things like getting married, getting a promotion, having a baby, meeting new friends, or graduating from college. **‘Distress’** is the stress in daily life that’s negative and harmful and might typically come from things like marriage problems, a bad boss, losing a job, having surgery or sickness, or experiencing financial hardship. Distress happens when the pressure increases to a level we can’t sustain. And the longer we are under the pressure, the more damaging it becomes. Pressure or a trial is what happens TO me (circumstances). Stress is what happens IN me (my response to the pressure). “People are disturbed not by a thing, but by their perception of a thing” (Epictetus). **We can live peace-filled lives when we respond to pressure like Jesus did!**

In our text this morning we see that Jesus models for us life under pressure and grace under pressure. Jesus, by this point in his ministry, is wildly popular with the common people and they follow him everywhere. He is performing miracles, eating with the tax collectors and sinners, forgiving their sins, and teaching wonderful truths about the kingdom. And they love him. ***His following is incredible ... And so is the pressure!***

Jesus: Life Under Pressure (vv.7-11)

I. The Crowds Nearly Crush Him (7b-9)

⁷ “Jesus withdrew with his disciples to the sea, and a great crowd followed, from Galilee and Judea ⁸and Jerusalem and Idumea and from beyond the Jordan and from around Tyre and Sidon. When the great crowd heard all that he was doing, they came to him. ⁹And he told his disciples to have a boat ready for him because of the crowd, lest they crush him...”

Jesus is followed by a crowd from geographical regions that extended in every direction and included both Jews and Gentiles from diverse ethnic groups. “The fame of Jesus is far reaching and all encompassing” (James Edwards).

This is like a rock concert or a European soccer match, where people are caught in a stampede. And so Jesus sees what's happening and puts a plan in place to put some distance between himself and the pressing crowd.

2. The Sick Press Around Him (10)

¹⁰ "...for he had healed many, so that all who had diseases pressed around him to touch him."

The word here for "pressed around" him in the Greek suggests the idea of 'mobbing' or 'falling upon' Jesus. They all try to touch him to get healed (imagine). Think about it, sick and diseased people putting their hands on you. I'm just saying ...If you're sick today, don't hug me. The crowds nearly crush him, the sick press around him. Everyone, it seems, wants a piece of Jesus. This is pressure.

3. The Demons Seek to Disrupt Him (11)

¹¹ And whenever the unclean spirits saw him, they fell down before him and cried out, "You are the Son of God."

Whereas the crowds 'falls upon' Jesus, the demons 'fall down before him' because they know who He is. They scream at him, "You are the Son of God!" They know who He is. So He has these demon-possessed people screaming at him. Now this is pressure.

The crowds are nearly crushing him, the sick are falling all over him, the demons are screaming at him. And maybe the worst pressure of all comes from his family.

4. His "Family" Goes to Stop Him (20-21)

²⁰ Then he went home, and the crowd gathered again, so that they could not even eat. ²¹ And when his family heard it, they went out to seize him, for they were saying, "He is out of his mind." (See also v.32 – his mother and brothers eventually get there to pick him).

Goes home ...the house is so crowded that Jesus and his disciples "could not even eat" (essentials). The word here for "family" is literally, "the ones around Jesus" – his inner circle. His biological family is not there. But they hear about it and they come to get him. He's gone nuts.

The point in all of this is that my pressured life and your pressured life is nothing compared to what Jesus experienced. And this is not the worst for Jesus, for He will soon be pressed by the weight of the world's sin at the cross.

¹⁵ This High Priest of ours understands our weaknesses, for he faced all of the same testings we do, yet he did not sin." (Heb. 4.15)

Jesus: Grace Under Pressure (vv.12-19)

4 practices of Jesus ...

1. He Protected His Priorities (12)

¹² "And he strictly ordered them not to make him known."

“Them” refers to the demons, in verse 11 who are screaming out his identity when they see him. They know who He is, “You are the Son God” - This would easily be interpreted by those who heard it as a threat to Rome – because everyone saw Jesus as a political figure. **Jesus knew and protected his priorities.** Several times in the gospels we see him keeping this “Messianic secret” regarding who He is.

What is His motive? Jesus does not want them to blow his cover. He does not want them to force the timing of his work. **Jesus set boundaries, established priorities and took control of his schedule.** Jesus separated **the urgent** from **the important**. His Priority was the Father's business vs. busyness.

2. He Lived With a Rhythm (7, 13a, 6.31)

What does that mean? Jesus knew when to step out of the pressure. The gospels tell us that Jesus *took time away*. He made time to retreat out of his current environment to a private place of rest. Jesus spent time at the beach and in the mountains.

⁷ “Jesus withdrew with his disciples to the sea...”

^{13a} “And he went up on the mountain ...”

³¹ And he said to them, “Come away by yourselves to a desolate place and rest a while.” For many were coming and going, and they had no leisure even to eat. ³² And they went away in the boat to a desolate place by themselves” (Mark 6.31).

We are created to have a rhythm to our life of work and rest. When we violate that rhythm our relationships suffer.

"For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth and the sea and all that is in them, and he rested on the seventh day..." (Exodus 20:11a NET).

"You, Lord, are my shepherd. I will never be in need. You let me rest in fields of green grass. You lead me to streams of peaceful water, and you refresh my life. You are true to your name, and you lead me along the right paths" (Psalms 23:1-3 CEV).

3. He Talked With and Trusted the Father

^{13a} “And he went up on the mountain ...”

“And rising very early in the morning, while it was still dark, he departed and went out to a desolate place, and there he prayed” (Mark 1.35).

¹² “In these days he went out to the mountain to pray, and all night he continued in prayer to God” (Luke 6.12).

We need time to reflect, take time to talk and listen to the Father. Here are some things I pray under pressure:

- That He will give me wisdom
- That He will give me grace (favor)
- That He will give me opportunity to reveal Christ
- That I put my trust in Him

4. He Chose Others to Share the Load (13-19)

^{13b} “[He] called to him those whom he desired, and they came to him. ¹⁴ And he appointed twelve (whom he also named apostles) so that they might be with him and he might send them out to preach ¹⁵ and have authority to cast out demons.”

Conclusion

We know the greatest pressure ever experienced on earth, came on the night Jesus prayed in Gethsemane (“sweat became as great drops of blood”), and then the greatest pressure of all times came the next day as He bore the sin of the world on the cross. ***By Him giving his life under pressure, we can live with a peace that passes understanding.*** Today, what pressure are you living under? Are you stressed out? Learn from Jesus and trade your stress for his peace.

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The questions below are for House Church Group Discussion.

- 1. What are the main contributing factors to stress in America?***
- 2. Define stress. Is all stress bad? Explain.***
- 3. What is the difference between pressure and stress?***
- 4. Name 4 pressures Jesus faced and how Jesus dealt with it.***
- 5. What 4 practices did Jesus employ that demonstrate grace under pressure? Name them and give examples.***
- 6. How can you personally embrace the 4 practices Jesus demonstrates to better manage stress in your own life?***