

REDUCING STRESS

George Tabac Sept. 1992

Remember the signs God gave the prophet Daniel whereby we would know we were at the time of the end?

Dan. 12:4 Daniel,.. seal the book, till the time of the end: when many shall **run to and fro**, and knowledge shall be increased.

Because of the increase of knowledge the whole world is truly running to and fro at such a pace, that stress has become one of the chief problems of our day. This is true of all of society, and as brethren we are not immune.

What causes stress?

Stress is a natural God given bodily function that is triggered by our minds reaction to what happens around us. One aspect of stress is very healthy and necessary.

When we are suddenly confronted with life threatening danger our minds make a split second evaluation and then sends signals to our bodies giving strength to flee or fight the danger. Thus it often protects our very lives.

This same type of reaction however has a tendency to occur to a greater or lesser degree in all the daily pressures of life.

How we react, is directly dependant on what our brain signals our bodies to do.

We looked into the subject of stress from a medical viewpoint and found it quite interesting to see how God designed our bodies to handle stress.

Without going into the medical terms, let's briefly consider how our bodies function in this regard. Perhaps it could help us in measure to understand and better control this marvelous function we call stress.

One part of our brain is the center of conscious intellectual functions such as thinking, memory, imagination, talking. It controls the coordination of our five senses, sight, hearing touch, taste and smell.

Another portion of the brain controls the emotional responses of our bodies as well as the reflex functions, appetites, drives, heartbeat, and breathing.

These function together. When we suddenly encounter danger or difficulties of life, the conscious intellectual part of our brain goes into what we might call a "**RED ALERT.**" This then triggers an emotional, or reflex response that sends a "**ready for action**" flow of chemicals in our body to meet the external emergency.

Our blood pressure is increased. Adrenalin is pumped into our blood stream, our cholesterol level is increased, blood clotting elements are triggered together with many other hormones, all designed to meet the emergency stress that has suddenly been encountered.

I'm sure we can all recall instances when we encountered a sudden dangerous situation, our whole bodies instantly tensed into "RED ALERT," our hearts raced as if they would burst, breathing doubled in speed, every muscle tensed to react.

This agitated "Red Alert," period often continues in measure for as long as 72 hours. And some were told live in an almost continual state of "Red Alert."

The reason being is that in addition to the initial external source of the stress that caused the "Red Alert," our fallen flesh often because of fear or imagined continued danger, prolongs the state of emergency long after the crisis is over.

The negative effect of this prolonged abnormal hormone level is what contributes to many health problems.

Such as high blood pressure, high cholesterol levels, over eating, stroke, heart attacks, and many other illnesses. Stress is not the only causes of these problems but it is a great contributor to them.

In other words, it is our own conscious thoughts, that directly control or determine what our nervous system pumps into our blood stream.

Our brain sorts out the stresses of life and controls the degree of arousal of our nervous system to trigger the chemicals necessary for each condition to give us above normal strength and ability.

What is most important to realize is that our brains control is entirely dependant upon how **we perceive** each experience.

If we **perceive** anything as a threat to our well being, our nervous system will react the same way whether the threat is **real or imagined**.

This brings added meaning to the scripture of Prov.23:7.
"As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he."

As we think about this subject of how our thoughts control our physical well being, it becomes readily apparent that many of the scriptural promises that are given to us, are for the purpose of enabling our new creatures to regulate our reaction to the threats and trials of life so that we do not keep our bodies in a continual state of "Red Alert," of readiness to flee or fight a danger.

Let's note just a few scriptures having to do with fear which often triggers our "Red Alert" response.

The height of Christian attainment is found in 1 John 4:16-18 (Phillips-NAS) "We have come to know and **trust** the love God has for us,... our love for him grows more and more filling us with **complete confidence** for the day when he shall judge all men, ... Love contains **no fear**, - indeed fully developed perfect love **expels every particle of fear**, because fear has to do with punishment. This means that the man who lives in fear has not yet had his love perfected."

Perhaps we will never be able to fully attain this perfect love where we will never have any fear what so ever. But we should be making continual progress towards this ideal of a life free from fear.

God gives us other scriptures to help us to overcome fear.

Heb. 13:5-6 (Phillips) "Keep your lives free from the lust for money; be content with what you have. God Has said, I will in no wise fail thee, Neither will I in any wise forsake thee. We therefore, can confidently say: The Lord is my helper; I will not fear, What shall man do unto me."

Another scripture is in Luke 12:6-7 "Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings, and not one of them is forgotten before God?"

But even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not therefore: ye are of more value than many sparrows."

It is our prayer that in our study together this morning that we can at least in some small measure help reduce some of the fears and stresses in our life.

The first aspect we would like to consider to this end is one we all know. We've all heard it countless times. But we realize it not always easy to apply.

But may we remind ourselves again of the need to face our experiences with the knowledge that we are beloved children of God.

That He will never ever permit anything to happen to us that He is not aware of and that is not within His permissive will. That everything He permits is working together for our good.

And thus remembering, to learn more how to acquiesce, to accept, life's negatives, viewing them from God's perspective, to realize every experience is permitted for a purpose.

As Sister Sundbom used to remind us so often, "Our trials are worth millions, let's not waste any of them. Each is custom designed for our individual UNIQUE development." The apostle James brings this to our attention in James 1:2-8.

(Phillips) "When all kinds of trials and temptations crowd into your lives, my brothers, don't resent them as intruders, but welcome them as friends! Realize that they come to test your faith and to produce in you the quality of (patient) endurance.

From this scripture we find an important key to help us manage the initial stress of a trial. That is, to strive to consider the trial **as a friend**.

It can only happen by our New Creature assuming control to remind our conscious brain NOT to go on "Red Alert," as it were.

To remember that it is God's love permitting this experience that we may develop patient endurance. To remember it is permitted to see if we will react with a deeper faith and

trust and be blest with an inner joy that comes from knowing we have reacted in a way pleasing to God,

-- OR -- on the other hand if our new creature is not quick to respond our flesh will REBEL with feelings of Negative frustration.

Our Well being is disturbed, we must Fight it - send out the Adrenalin!

In other words the very same experience can have a calming effect upon us, -- or make us sick because we rebel.

And it all depends upon one little thing. How we think about it.

After James admonishes us to consider our trials as friends, he continues in 1:5 "And if, in the process, any of you does not know how to meet any particular problem he has only to ask God,- who give generously to all men without making them feel foolish or guilty,- and he may be quite sure that the necessary wisdom will be given him."

The apostle James is admonishing each of us to look upon all our trials from the perspective of our ultimate goal. And if we realize we are having trouble in reacting properly to our trials, then we are to pray earnestly for God's wisdom to help us.

We believe it would be well for us to have almost as a reflex action the Habit of INSTANT PRAYER the MOMENT our well being is threatened in any way.

To STOP, TO PRAY, to consider, "Lord what would you have me to do. Does this warrant going on a RED ALERT to flee, to fight the danger, to oppose the wrong , - OR - should I calmly acquiesce, realizing you permitted this experience for my ultimate good.

And if your answer is to acquiesce Lord, help me to remember, that no trial has ever assailed me except what you have permitted to come to others, and that you are faithful not to permit me to be tried beyond my ability, but with this trial you will direct the issue that I may be able to bear it." (1 Cor. 10:13 Diaglott)

Another area that may bring great stress to our lives has to do with allowing others to decide God's will for us.

We are living in a very fast paced society where demands on our time seem to be increasing more with each passing year.

It occurs in every facet our society.

At our place of employment we are pressured that if we want to succeed to get the full potential of salary we are capable of, we must work harder, longer, put in more overtime, burn the midnight oil, get more education, travel more, take on more and more responsibilities.

As a housewife, one must be wife, mother, take care of the cooking, washing dishes, laundry, cleaning house, serve on the PTA, assists teachers for special projects, go on

field trips, provide transportation for the little league, piano lessons, and as is often the case, to make ends meet have a full or part time job as well.

As students we are ever pressured to do more. Study harder, longer, read more books, do extra credit projects, join the student council, go on to take specialized courses, join the basketball or volleyball team, join this club or that one, you must take all the courses necessary to prepare yourself to go to college, even though we may not have the aptitude or the slightest inclination to go.

This is not to say that any of these activities are wrong in themselves. Many of them may truly be God's will for our lives.

But on the other hand how many do we accept primarily because of the **pressures of others?** Because it's expected of us. Because everyone else is doing it! Because you want to be well thought of by others. Because it seems to be the honorable thing to do!

And so we say yes, when deep down, we really want to say NO!

This is happening to most everyone in our society. As a result of this continued stress to conform, we hear more and more about people experiencing what is called "Burn Out." Extreme fatigue and stress that comes from working too hard, too long, under too much pressure.

The solution that is most advised by modern day health professionals is, Slow down, relax, take up a sport, do less and live longer.

But what is the answer for us as consecrated children of God?

I so much like Paul's answer in Rom. 12:2 Phillips "Don't let the world around you squeeze you into its own mould, but let God re-mould your minds from within.

"Don't let the world squeeze you into its own mould!"

Don't allow other peoples pressures, **to decide God's will for your life.**

When these pressures confront us, may we prayerfully weigh and consider them before making a decision.

And if deep within, we realize the Lord would be more pleased if we refused, may we have the courage of our convictions to say NO!

"Don't let the world squeeze you into its own mould!"

It may be difficult, for society as a whole uses the ploy of making you **feel guilty** if you refuse.

May we remember Paul's words. "Don't let the world squeeze you into its own mould!"

And even stronger persuasion comes from business management. One of their techniques is to phrase their pressure in a very subtle way, as to make you wonder whether you might loose your job if you refuse.

It's always possible that one may lose their job if they refuse, but for the most part these are only techniques the world uses to get us to do what we would rather not.

In a general way I'm convinced that most of the brethren when compared with one in the world with similar abilities is a far more desirable employee because of their conscientiousness.

Let me share an experience of mine. About 30 years ago I worked for a small office in Gary Indiana servicing temperature controls.

Because of a lack in business the office was closed. My boss went to work for another company and I came to Chicago to work for the parent company of the Gary Office.

Several years later I get a call from my old boss asking me if I would come and work for him in a new business he recently became associated with in Chicago.

I prayerfully thought about it and answered no, for I was content in the job I had. It had security for it was a rather large company and I didn't want to take the risk of moving to a small new company just starting.

About once a month for the next 6 months I received a call from him pressuring me to reconsider. I kept saying no thank you.

Then one day the Lord gave me a thought, maybe I should reconsider, only include a proposition that would be for our spiritual welfare.

The next time he called I said yes I would consider coming but on these grounds. That I would only work four days a week and no overtime without a cut in salary.

You could guess the reaction! Are you crazy? You must be out of your mind. Who ever heard of such a thing. No way. We said good bye.

About a month later the phone rings and my old boss said OK it's a deal when can you start.

For the next 20 years I worked four days a week and no overtime!

I'm not suggesting you go and make this proposition to your boss tomorrow.

But maybe it's not too far beyond the realm of possibility that you consider your worth to your company, and perhaps there is some type of proposition you could make that would afford you more time to be used in the Lord's service, rather than less.

"Don't let the world squeeze you into its own mould!"

The lesson of Paul is that we are not to be **passive** to all these pressures of the world to squeeze us into their mold.

And yet we realize so many of the responsibilities we take on in life are not what we really would prefer, and yet we accept them. **WHY!**

Have we let the world squeeze us into their mould? Yes, perhaps we all have at times.

But there's another reason. In so many decisions of life, it's hard to know what the Lord's will is. As a result we may find ourselves at times passively accepting many of these requests made upon us, reasoning it's the **Lord's providential leading**.

At work, since it's our livelihood our family depends on, it's easy to feel we should accept what ever is requested of us feeling it's the Lord's providence.

As a mother we feel obligated to do what ever the school authorities request feeling it must be the Lord's providence, for they will then think more highly of us and our children's education will be enhanced a little.

As a student we feel we must go along with every suggestion feeling it must be the Lord's providence showing me what to do, for if we don't we'll be thought less of by our teachers, and would then loose out in our education in some way.

This is not to say that it is wrong to look for the Lord's providences in our lives. But it should probably be the least influential in our decision making not the first.

Throughout our life we will experience various doors opening to us, beckoning us to enter, and often they will appear to be positive, good, wholesome opportunities. Should we accept these automatically feeling it must be the Lord's providence?

NO! How do we know it isn't Satan who has opened the door and is beckoning to us knowing it will be a time consuming activity that will take us away from "this one thing I do."

Before we ever accept anything as God's providential leading, we must always weigh every decision to see if it passes the criteria the Lord has enlightened us with.

1. Is it in complete harmony with the principals of God's word.
2. Would it completely pass the test of our conscience. Or does it take a bit of rationalization to remove a little feeling of guilt.
3. Is it in harmony with the consecration vows we have made.
4. Is it in the realm of practicality, bearing in mind our abilities, weaknesses, knowledge and time available realizing our chief vocation in life is to do God's will, to be His Ambassadors, His stewards?
5. Have we taken it to the Lord in prayer and are watching for His leadings.

I think we can see, when making a decision, if the matter doesn't first pass the TEST of these and other parameters, the Lord has shown us,

then outward circumstances which may appear as providences should have no bearing on our decision, no matter how conclusive they seem to be.

"Don't let the world squeeze you into its own mould!"

Another area we would like to touch upon is the feeling we may sometimes have that we should accept every opportunity of service requested of us in the service of the Lord if it is at all possible.

Our thinking being that since it's in the Lord's service it must be the Lord's providence showing me what he wants me to do, so we should accept.

Is this a proper criteria to use to decide what the lord would have us to do? We think not!

We do not believe God's will is shown to us in a mechanical fashion. If it were it would be somewhat like making our decisions by putting out the fleece. Lord if tomorrow morning thus and so happens then I know your telling me the answer is Yes or whatever.

No! Just as every parent wants to teach their children to make decisions on their own so it is with our Heavenly Father.

He wants us to use the sum total of our consecrated lives instruction, experience, together with watching for His providence, to decide what is best.

We believe part of our stewardship is to evaluate our pluses and minuses and then make those decisions which with the Lord's help, will render us the most effective, the most efficient, in accomplishing the most good, by using our God given attributes to perfect ourselves, to help our brethren, and to be the Lord's ambassadors in the earth.

Life is short! We have such a few years to do the things the Lord wants each of us to do. We don't have time to accomplish all that we would desire that only the kingdom will accomplish. So in the interim we must carefully decide how we will use our time.

May we not allow the pressures of others to decide God's will for our lives.

May we remember the words of James 4:17 NAS "Therefore, to one who knows the right thing to do, and does not do it, to him it is sin." and we might add it will bring stress.

But often our flesh asserts itself and we tend to evaluate life's dangers and threats on the basis of our own ability, our own efforts, our own adequacy.

Rather than trying to discern God's will and purpose in allowing the experience, we try to control and alter the people and life around us.

And often just the opposite happens. The pressures of life and the values and opinions of other people end up controlling our thinking.

Our peers, our culture overall, have a tremendous effect upon us, that often influences us as to what we think is important and how we act and react to life. And we might add, this includes our Truth Movement Culture as well.

As a result we can become overly dependent on other people's approval and often feel we must shape our lives to please them.

This too, can add much stress to our lives.

The next aspect of stress we would like to consider has to do with controlling our anger.

What causes anger? All of us have certain needs of what we believe are necessary for our overall well being.

They include safety, security, affection, respect, self fulfillment. These in turn generate desires, goals plans for ourselves and our loved ones, beliefs and convictions about what should happen to us and around us.

When ever there is a frustration of our needs, whether they are blocked or challenged or delayed the flesh begins to feel anger. A message is sent to our nervous system and our bloodstream again begins "to boil," with harmful chemicals as we go on red alert.

How can we minimize our fleshes reactions? The apostle James continues to admonish us in chapter 1:19-20 NIV.

"Therefore my beloved brethren, let every man be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to become angry: for mans anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires."

Quick to listen implies that we **be sure** what we think we hear and observe is the real intent of the one speaking to us.

So often our flesh is quick to jump to conclusions the moment we here the first disturbing negative comment that we don't really hear the actual true intent of what's spoken.

A suggestion that may help us to be "quick to listen," and "slow to speak," is to ask those who say or do disturbing, anger-producing things to **repeat** what they've said, or to request that they explain to us **why** they did what they did.

This will often help to reduce their anger to be more calm, but it will also give us time not only to listen carefully, but to pray inwardly, Lord help me to respond in a way that will be pleasing to thee, guide both the tone and the intent of my words.

This brief moment of prayer will keep us from blurting out an angry response that often we will be sorry for later.

There are times that anger is justifiable, but how we express it can mean all the difference in the world.

As Paul said in Eph. 4:26-27 "Be angry, and yet do not sin, do not let the sun go down on your anger.

Often the unchecked expression of anger breaks relationships and causes distress, feelings of bitterness and confusion in the lives of others. If our words make us feel guilty before God then it would be sin.

It's important that when we express our feelings that we avoid any tone or feeling of condemnation. In other words it may be in order to tell another how we feel they are wrong, provided we do in a way without causing them to feel rejected.

If we can do it in a way that the person knows we care for them and their situation, that we are willing to help them, even though we may strongly disagree, it will have a far greater affect for good than just blurting out a denunciation.

May the example of our lives find us having more and more the spirit of love, and forgiveness, and less and less of hostility and fault finding in others.

If and when we recognize we have sinned, that we lost our emotional composure, may we be quick to go to the one involved and apologize.

This brings us to the next aspect of stress which is the guilt we feel because we put off doing what we know we should do!

We experience stress when we are confronted with other peoples needs and for what ever reason we put off doing or saying what love would require.

It happens to us in marriage, in the family, among our friends, at work.

We will be filled with distress when we are forgiven, but we do not forgive.

We will have stress of guilt when we have good intentions but do not follow through to fulfill them.

When we refer to stress caused by guilt we would like to differentiate between true and false guilt. False guilt is what we continue to feel after we've been forgiven for what we've done. It is wrong. Once we have confessed and have been forgiven we should go on with our life not feeling guilty over it.

But true guilt is what we feel when the Lord reminds us of what we should have done or need to do, and we are refusing to do it.

The stress of this guilt, of knowing what we should do and not doing it produces spiritual and emotional sickness.

James again brings to our attention 1:22 "BE doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves."

And in 2:17 "So faith by itself, if it does not have works is dead."

We cannot separate faith from works, they must work together, as equal parts of a well balanced life.

We often hesitate to do what we know the Lord would be pleased for us to do, because we are afraid. Afraid we might fail. Afraid we don't have what it takes.

And it's true in our own selves we don't have what it takes but the Lord has promised to help us. He will make up the difference as long as we show the willingness to try.

You know the world has a remedy for stress. You will often hear how we must learn to relax, to slow down, avoid conflict and tensions.

But the Lord may be telling us the exact opposite. Our stress may be because of what we know we should do but are not.

"Ye are my chosen ones, my representative Ambassadors in the earth. Ye are to be my city set upon a hill sharing with others a ray of hope of my wondrous plan.

You are to be my examples of love and concern for others. You are the one I want to help that brother or sister through their trial. Get involved, get busy, show me your love, FAITH WITHOUT WORKS IS DEAD.

The Tongue

The apostle James brings to our attention another source of stress (Jealousy and envy) in James 4:1-3 Phillips.

"But what about the feuds and struggles that exist among you, -- where do you suppose they come from? Can't you see that they arise from conflicting passions within yourselves?

You crave for something and don't get it; you are murderously jealous of what others have got and which you can't possess yourselves."

Perhaps, we have all had a touch of envy one time or another. Our flesh has a natural craving for recognition and success. It likes to think it's doing outstanding at all times. To this end it likes to compare itself with others.

And when others excel us in their possessions or achievements our flesh doesn't like it for it wants to be the best. At this point it is so easy to begin finding fault with them in order to elevate ourselves.

Stress results from the war within ourselves, between the flesh and the new creature.

James goes on in 4:6-7 to show us this spirit is wrong. God resiseth the proud, but gives grace to the humble. Be humble then before God.

One of the underlying root causes of envy is a lack of self esteem. We see others that excel in so many ways that we develop an inferiority complex longing that we could have the same skills opportunities or what have you as they.

The answer to overcoming this problem is to recognize that we are all unique, one of a kind children of God. God chose each us because he saw a quality He desired to fill a special place in His Royal Temple.

This is the whole concept of the sin offering. Each member beloved, chosen because their experiences, their life, their qualities were unique, different from all others, so that

together the church united could understand and be sympathetic high priests to each and every human being that ever lived.

So may each of us rejoice in the privileges, talents, skills, opportunities we have using them to the fullest potential we are capable of.

May we redirect the energy our flesh would like to use in making comparisons with others, to rejoice with the accomplishments of others, especially those we might be tempted to envy wishing we could be like them. Do the opposite rather than criticize, bless them, encourage them hold up their hands as it were.

As we do we will become free from this stress and together rise to new heights beyond what we thought we had.

May we always remember God's will for our life is not to match or exceed others accomplishments, but to do the very best we can enjoying being our unique selves, ever reaching to the highest potential that we can accomplish with God's grace and power to assist us.

Stress of allowing others to decide God's will for our lives.

We are living in a very fast paced society where demands on our time seem to be increasing more with each passing year.

It occurs in every facet our society.

At our place of employment we are pressured that if we want to succeed to get the full potential of salary we are capable of, we must work harder, longer, put in more overtime, burn the midnight oil, get more education, travel more, take on more and more responsibilities.

As a housewife, one must be wife, mother, take care of the cooking, washing dishes, laundry, cleaning house, serve on the PTA, assists teachers for special projects, provide transportation for the little league, piano lessons, and as is often the case, to make ends meet have a full or part time job as well.

As students we are ever pressured to do more. Study harder, longer, read more books, do extra credit projects, join the student council, go on to take specialized courses, join the basketball or volleyball team, join this club or that one, positively go to college to get a BA degree, and then you know you really should go on to get your Masters, and often we may not have the slightest idea of what we want to do with our lives.

This is not to say that any of these activities in themselves are wrong. Many of them may truly be God's will for our lives.

But as a result of all the countless pressures surrounding society each day, we hear more and more about people experiencing what is called "Burn Out." Extreme fatigue and stress that comes from working too hard, too long, under too much pressure.

The solution that is most advised by modern day health professionals is, Slow down, relax, do less and live longer. But is that the true answer to relieving stress?

Before we answer, we realize that as brethren we are not immune from these pressures. In addition to those we've just considered that the whole world goes thru, - we have others that come from our relationship to the Lord the truth and the brethren.

We desperately want to be pleasing to the Lord, to make our calling and election sure.

Our flesh at times would have us believe that our worth is related to how much we do. But we realize we could never ever do enough that will make us worthy.

Or at other times our flesh would have us believe that no one can do the job as well as ourselves.

So what is the answer on how to prevent extreme fatigue and stress called "burn out?"

I think one of the most important, is simply, **not allowing others to decide God's will for our life.**

So many of the responsibilities we take on in life are not what we really would prefer, but we do them anyway because we feel we must, it's expected of us, others will think less of me if I don't.

Perhaps the major cause of extreme stress, is not doing too much, but of being unsure of what we really want to do, of doing things we don't want to do but feel we must because others desire it, - and lastly not doing other things that we really want to do.

People do not burn out from doing too much of what they really delight in doing.

But what so often happens is we allow others to decide what direction our life will take.

Often we really don't know what the Lord would have us to do and as a result we may passively accept most any request made upon us as the Lord's providential leading.

At work we feel were obligated to do what ever is requested of us feeling it's the Lord's providence.

As a mother we feel obligated to do what ever the school authorities request or what ever our children would like to do, for we love them and don't want them to be disappointed, and again we feel it must be the Lord's providence..

As a student we feel we must go along with every suggestion for if we don't we'll loose out in some way and be thought less of by our teachers or parents, or friends, and besides this must be the Lord's providence showing me what to do..

This is not to say that it is wrong to look for the Lord's providences in our lives. But it should probably be the least influential in our decision making not the first.

Throughout our life we will experience various doors of what appear to be positive good opportunities opening to us. Should we accept these automatically feeling it must be the

Lord's providence. NO! NO! How do we know it isn't Satan who has opened the door and is beckoning to us.

We must always weigh every decision to see if it passes the criteria the Lord has enlightened us with.

1. Is it in complete harmony with the principals of God's word.
2. Would it completely pass the test of our conscience. Or does it take a bit of rationalization to remove a little feeling of guilt.
3. Is it in harmony with the consecration vows we have made.
4. Is it in the realm of practicality, bearing in mind our abilities, weaknesses, knowledge and time available realizing our chief vocation in life is to do God's will, to be His Ambassadors, His stewards?
5. Have we prayerfully taken it to the Lord in prayer and are watching for His leadings.

I think we can see, when making a decision, if the matter doesn't first pass the TEST of these and other parameters, the Lord has shown us,

then outward circumstances which may appear as providences should have no bearing on our decision, no matter how conclusive they seem to be.

Another area we would like to touch upon is the feeling of some brethren that they must accept every opportunity of service presented or requested of them. The thinking being this must be the Lord's providence showing what he wants me to do, so I must accept.

Sometimes it may be literally impossible, and we may have feelings of guilt feeling we let the Lord down.

Is this a proper criteria to use to decide what the lord would have us to do? We think not!

As God's children we are not under a law of thou shalt, and thou shalt not. God's will is not shown to us in a mechanical fashion where by He expects us to accept every opportunity of service.

No we are creatures of free will. Just as every parent wants to teach their children to make decisions on their own so it is with our Heavenly Father.

He wants us to use the sum total of our consecrated lives instruction and experience to decide what is best. He leaves us free to make decisions ever longing to see our motivation to be more and more for the benefit of the new creature.

We believe part of our stewardship is to evaluate our pluses and minuses and then make those decisions which with the Lord's help, will render us most effective and most efficient, in using our all in perfecting ourselves, in helping our brethren, and being the Lord's ambassadors in the earth.

Life is short! We have such a few years to do the things the Lord wants each of us to do. We don't have time to accomplish all that we would desire that only the kingdom will accomplish. So in the interim we must carefully decide how we will use our time.

May we not allow the pressures of others to decide God's will for our lives.

May we remember the words of James 4:17 NAS "Therefore, to one who knows the right thing to do, and does not do it, to him it is sin." and we might add it will bring stress.

But often our flesh asserts itself and we tend to evaluate life's dangers and threats on the basis of our own ability, our own efforts, our own adequacy.

Rather than trying to discern God's will and purpose in allowing the experience, we try to control and alter the people and life around us.

And often just the opposite happens. The pressures of life and the values and opinions of other people end up controlling our thinking.

Our peers, our culture overall, have a tremendous effect upon us, that often influences us as to what we think is important and how we act and react to life. And we might add, this includes our Truth Movement Culture as well.

As a result we can become overly dependent on other people's approval and often feel we must shape our lives to please them.

This too, can add much stress to our lives.