

High Blood Pressure, Stress and Anxiety in the Bible

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*"Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself.
Each day has enough trouble of its own." – Matthew 6:34*

The Bible has a lot of things to say when it comes to healing, health and wellness. Medical or scientific studies even affirm what the Bible teaches on this subject. In Matthew 6:33 Jesus admonished his listeners/followers not to "worry or become anxious" about life and things of this world as this won't be good for them both spiritually and physically. I realized that Jesus would not preach about high blood pressure and stress as his listeners would not have been able to understand him if he used such medical terminologies.

One of the many serious health challenges we are facing today is high blood pressure. This is the biggest risk factor for heart disease, heart attack, stroke and other cardiovascular conditions. Interestingly enough, the cause of these diseases in some way had already been addressed by our Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus is fully aware that due to our sinful nature, people are prone to worrying a lot, stress and anxiety, and if uncontrolled or not managed well, those things will cause blood pressure to rise and create cardiovascular diseases. In other words, this internal process (stress and anxiety) put heavy pressure or burden on the heart and thus make the heart work harder causing blood pressure to rise, eventually leading to heart disease, heart attack, stroke and other cardiovascular problems. The good news for followers of Christ is that we have been given the fruits of the Holy Spirit such as peace, joy, love, self-control and others (see Galatians 5:22). These are divine internal medicine available for every believer in Jesus Christ. Therefore, followers of Jesus Christ will be in a better position to live a healthy, happy and long life. What an amazing gift of God!

Furthermore, medical research confirms that anxiety and worry are not good for your heart health. According to B. J. Shen, Ph.D., a clinical/health psychology professor at Ohio University in Athens:

'Almost every person experiences anxiety periodically and that can be beneficial,' he says. 'An occasional burst of anxiety can help you respond effectively to life's challenges. But prolonged, severe anxiety can harm physical health and may even be associated with an increased risk of heart disease. We know that what happens in the mind affects the body... Shen further added that 'What's clear is that anxiety is an emotional process that creates physical responses....when a person is under stress, there are a lot of things happening in the body....Blood pressure and heart rate increase as part of the stress response and the stress hormone levels of epinephrine, norepinephrine and cortisol all increase, too.' (*Heart Insight*, American Heart Association Publication, February 2012)

My hope is that you would take Jesus' word to heart not to worry so much. Do not be anxious and learn how to manage your stress through the grace of God and fruits of the Holy Spirit. And while there is still time, I hope you will consider participating in our Heart360 cardiovascular program that aims to reduce and manage your blood pressure and other important health data. (*to be continued*)