

ASK TO BE HEALED

He said to her, “Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your disease.”

—MARK 5:34

How many of us live in “dis-ease,” a state of feeling uneasy, uncomfortable, distressed, or just “not right”? Sometimes we don’t know why we feel this way, but at other times it may be because we’re living with an ongoing low level of stress that we don’t know how to release. Are we open to believing that this dis-ease we live with doesn’t have to be? If we do as the woman in the Scripture with the hemorrhage and tell God the “whole story,” believing that we can be healed, perhaps we can surrender ourselves to healing. Ask and believe!



“Dear God, our great physician, I know that you can heal me, but I struggle with whether I really want to be healed. It’s so easy to get used to stress and living in ways that aren’t helpful to me. And yet it’s so hard to change! I do want to be healed—help me to want it all the time, even if it requires me to make changes in my life. Help me to be whole and at peace, healed of all the ways I work against myself.”

I WILL GIVE YOU REST

“My presence will go with you, and I will give you rest.”

—EXODUS 33:14

One of the most difficult experiences of being stressed is the feeling of being alone and even isolated in our struggle. For most of us, there’s no substitute for the support we receive when someone who cares about us is close by. While we know in our minds that we are always in God’s presence, we also need to experience it. We can intensify our awareness of resting in the real presence of God by closing our eyes and quieting ourselves. With each breath, we can imagine that God is holding us close and giving us rest from all that is distressing us. As we exhale, we might imagine letting go of all of our tension and watching it dissipate in the air around us.



“O God in whom I live and move and have my being, I know that you are with me. I am especially aware now of resting in your presence as I release through my breath all the tension and tightness I have been carrying. With each breath I take in, help me to know that I’m filling myself up with your love and blessing. Every once in a while throughout this day, help me call to mind the image of myself resting in your presence. I see myself being held by you as each breath brings me the serenity of your presence.”

PEACE I LEAVE WITH YOU

*“Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you.
I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts
be troubled, and do not let them be afraid.”*

—JOHN 14:27

Too often in our lives, we see ourselves as victims. We feel traumatized by life and look for the causes of our distress outside ourselves. How interesting that Jesus reminds us that his gift to us is a gift of peace. With a real belief in that gift to support us, we can then listen to the words that follow, when he points out what our responsibility is in finding peace—not allowing our hearts to be troubled or to be afraid. So we may be able to surrender our stress when we make a real decision to *not* allow trouble and fear into our experience.



“God of peace, remind me that you’ve given me the gift of peace at every moment. I can choose to ignore your gift and wallow in my fear and distress, or I can open my mind and heart to receive it—it’s up to me. When I’m feeling stressed and upset, I will pray, ‘God of peace, I rest in you,’ and repeat it until it becomes my experience.”

THE LORD WILL GUIDE YOU

*The LORD will guide you continually,
and satisfy your needs in parched places.*

—ISAIAH 58:11

So often life feels like a “parched” or desert place for us—dry, without consolation or comfort, and even dangerous at times. We may feel trapped, without direction, and helpless to change things. Sometimes our situations scare us, and we don’t know where to find help. We might remind ourselves that real desert places are full of life, full of creatures that have learned to thrive in the dryness. God lives in desert places as well as in darkness. It’s often in those dark and parched times, when we recognize our need and ask for help, that we find the healing that God is offering us.



“Jesus, I give you my hand as I stumble through the hard places of my life. Please don’t let go of me, even if I seem at times to pull away from you. Help me know that you are close and that you always offer me the gifts of growth and healing that I need in these hard times. I may need to seek help from others to find my way and to learn from the stresses in my life. Please work through these people to guide me.”

GIVE THANKS TO THE LORD

I will give thanks to the LORD with my whole heart.

—Psalm 111:1

Each event and experience that life offers us is an opportunity for growth in holiness. However, we do have the choice of refusing the new life that presents itself to us. God never forces anything on us. It takes some effort to begin to see difficulties as potential blessings. We must be willing to change our ways of thinking and judging. Of course, it's easier to be grateful for things we enjoy, but our challenge is to be able to find the gift in those things that are difficult.



“I want to be able to thank you for everything, Lord, even those hard things in my life. Help me see the value of those gifts that I would rather give back to you—how they challenge me and force me to depend on you and my brothers and sisters in Christ. I know that you are hidden in these challenges, so help me to be even more grateful for them than I am for all those gifts I so eagerly accept from you. I do thank you with my whole heart.”

CHOOSE LOVE

*Above all, clothe yourselves with love,
which binds everything together in perfect harmony.*

—COLOSSIANS 3:14

Love is a choice. Too often we wait for love to come, and usually expect to know it by the feelings it evokes rather than by the choices and decisions we make. We may never have thought of love as an antidote for stress. And yet, here is St. Paul, telling us that if we choose to love, even when stress is pulling us apart, we are on our way to perfect harmony. Who wouldn't want to make a choice like that?



“God, whose name is love, help me to choose well. But first, help me to know that I can make a choice for love in my life. I can be a loving person each day—choosing always for the highest good for myself and others. May I think of you each morning as I awake, and ask for your help in choosing to clothe myself in love. May that love then mean blessing for others, and harmony and blessing for me.”

WAIT IN SILENCE FOR GOD

*For God alone my soul waits in silence;
from him comes my salvation.*

—PSALM 62:1

One of the most powerful methods of coping when stress is running high is to sit quietly in God's presence. As we empty our minds, we can stop the frenetic worries and thoughts that battle for attention. It's been said that silence is God's primary language. When we are willing to encounter God in such a manner, we find ourselves calmed by the silence we share. Then we know that we are now with God, speaking the same language.



I sit comfortably, preferably upright, and close my eyes to minimize distractions. I take a deep breath to fill my lungs and heart, exhale, and then let my breathing become even and regular. I recall that God is already here, simply waiting for me to be consciously aware of that truth. Instead of telling God how to manage my problems, I simply say, "God, you love me more than I can imagine. Teach me and show me the way." I may repeat this prayer several times as I sit and breathe quietly, or I may simply sit in silence, aware that I am in the loving presence of God.

TURN FEAR INTO TRUST

*In God, whose word I praise,
in God I trust; I am not afraid.*

—PSALM 56:4

Pervasive and all-consuming fear can wreak havoc in our lives. When it is our constant companion, then everything worries us and begins to take on the guise of a threat. Fear can paralyze us as we attempt to avoid everything distressing. When we find ourselves avoiding even those challenges that are important to our growth, then fear has become a major obstacle for us on our personal journey. Instead of giving way to fear, perhaps we will take reasonable cautions as wisdom teaches us, and then affirm the profound truth that “in God I trust; I am not afraid.”



“My Lord and my God, when I feel afraid, guide me to turn that fear into trust in you. Teach me to notice when fear begins to arise in me, and then remind me that I can use it as an opportunity to draw closer to you. Show me if there is anything I need to do to deal with those things that frighten me, and then help me hand the situation over to you, my God. I will affirm over and over the words of the psalmist: ‘In God I trust; I am not afraid.’”

GOD'S PEACE SURPASSES UNDERSTANDING

*And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding,
will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*

—PHILIPPIANS 4:7

We live in a world that becomes more frenetic day by day, in which we find ourselves running around trying to do more and more. So we pride ourselves on our ability to multitask. What about priding ourselves instead on our ability to create a peaceful environment in our beings? What about giving our hearts and minds an occasional break from the frenzy? How often do we hear ourselves saying something like “If only I could have a little peace”? What about making that a priority? What about choosing to take a few minutes when we “rest” in the peace of God within us?



“Here I am, my God of peace, simply closing my eyes and resting in you. Here I am, aware of your renewing me with every breath I take and release. May I be as good at resting in your peace with you as I am at being efficient and productive with my day. I will try to turn to you periodically throughout the day as I take a deep breath, close my eyes, and ask that my heart and mind be renewed in you.”

THE SPIRIT HELPS US IN OUR WEAKNESS

Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words. And God, who searches the heart, knows what is the mind of the Spirit.

—ROMANS 8:26-27

Imagine how much relief we would find from our stresses and worries if we took these words from St. Paul to heart. The fact is that even when I don't know what I need, the Spirit of God does know, and is asking for just such a gift for me. And God, who hears the Spirit, is providing what the Spirit is asking for me. What a blessing to us! We only have to agree to what the Spirit is asking. Can we say yes to whatever that gift might be?



“God of love, so many times I place the whole responsibility for my life on my own shoulders. At such moments I feel such a heavy burden and wish that I knew what was best for me. I crave some direction—someone to tell me what to do and how to proceed—and then for help to do it. I tend to forget that you and the Holy Spirit are right now within and all around me, moving me in the way I should go. I choose right now to say yes to you and your plan for my life. And my God, I count on your help as I ‘live and move and have my being’ in you” (see Acts 17:28).