Introduction:

- What is stress?

- Where does it come from?

- How does it affect us?

Preview:

1. Relational conflict and stress

2. How to tame the anxiety monster

3. How to stop stress before it starts
How to diffuse relational conflict:

Philippians 4:1-5

The Context:

Therefore, my brothers, you whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, that is how you should stand firm in the Lord, dear friends!

Philippians 4:1 (NIV)

The Plea for unity:

I plead with Euodia and I plead with Syntyche to agree with each other in the Lord.

Philippians 4:2 (NIV)

The Request for competent counsel:

Yes, and I ask you, loyal yokefellow, help these women who have contended at my side in the cause of the gospel, along with Clement and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the Book of Life.

Philippians 4:3 (NIV)

The Command concerning relational focus:

Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!

Philippians 4:4 (NIV)

The Command concerning personal responsibility:

Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near.

Philippians 4:5 (NIV)
Five ways to diffuse relational conflict:

1. Resolve to stop procrastinating.

2. Re-evaluate your expectations...
   ...of the issue in question
   ...of the solution


4. Refuse to allow one relationship to ruin your life.

5. Remember a right relationship is more important than getting your rights.
Personal Application/Discussion Questions:

1. On a scale of one to ten, rank the level of stress you are currently experiencing and share why.

2. Why is relational conflict so stressful?

3. What specific steps does the Apostle Paul give to help diffuse relational conflict? List them and discuss each.

4. Is there a relationship in your life that calls for you to follow this pattern? When and how will you diffuse the pressure in your problem relationship?

Resources for further growth:

*Margin: How to Create the Emotional, Physical, Financial & Time Reserves You Need* by Richard A. Swenson, M.D.

*The Overload Syndrome: Learning to Live Within Your Limits* by Richard A. Swenson, M.D.

*Boundaries: When to Say YES, When to Say NO, To Take Control of Your Life* by Dr. Henry Cloud and Dr. John Townsend

*We Are Driven: The Compulsive Behaviors America Applauds* by Dr. Robert Hemfelt, Dr. Frank Minirth, and Dr. Paul Meier
Introduction: “There’s a Monster Under My Bed”

- A lesson from our little ones

- What exactly is anxiety?

- What causes anxiety?
  - Fear of the future
  - Conflict in the present
  - Regrets over the past

- How does anxiety affect us?

How can we overcome anxiety?
Taming the Anxiety Monster:

6 Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.

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

Philippians 4:6-7 (NIV)

Nothing be anxious about… but in everything…

➢ by prayer

➢ by petition

➢ with thanksgiving

➢ the requests of you let be made known to God.

And the peace of God…

↓

surpassing all understanding…

↓

will guard the hearts of you and the thoughts of you…

↓

in Christ Jesus!
Personal Notes:

- **The Commands:** The What?
  1. Negatively
  2. Positively

- **Four Key Words:** The How?
  1.
  2.
  3.
  4.

- **The Promise:** The Why?
  1.
  2.
Summary:  **Prayer** is God’s antidote to anxiety.

To tame the anxiety monster we must remember the following word picture…

*When* **anxiety** pounds
*at the door of your heart,*
*let prayer* answer it!

**Discussion Questions:**

1. Discuss the opening illustration concerning “monsters under the bed.” What is it that our children need from us, which we, likewise, need from God?

2. How does anxiety produce stress? What are the issues in your life that are “strangling” and “stressing” you mentally and emotionally?

3. Discuss God’s antidote to anxiety. Discuss how each **key word** directs us to respond to stress and anxiety.

4. How will you put this message into practice? Who will help/encourage you in your battle to tame the anxiety monsters in your life?
Introduction: University of Tennessee: 12 Year Study

- Physically – “We are what we eat”
- Psychologically – “We are what we eat”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Wrong Thinking</th>
<th>Negative Emotions</th>
<th>Unwise Behavior</th>
<th>Devastating Consequences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>OR</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Right Thinking</td>
<td>Positive Emotions</td>
<td>Wise Behavior</td>
<td>Fruitful Consequences</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Summary:
1. We are a product of our thought life.
2. Our emotions flow from our thought life.
3. What we allow to enter our mind is the most important decision we make each and every day.
Question: How can we stop stress before it starts?

Answer:

6Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, let your mind dwell on these things.

9The things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things; and the God of peace shall be with you.

Philippians 4:8-9 (NASB)

Command #1: Dwell on these things . . .

- **True**: Objectively true, that which conforms to reality vs. things that are deceptive, illusions that promise peace and happiness.

- **Honorable**: Translated “grave”, “worthy of respect”, “dignity of holiness” - it refers to those things which reflect the seriousness of purpose of a believer’s life (inspires “awe”).

- **Just**: “Righteous”; used in N.T. to refer to the Father, Jesus, God’s actions, God’s character. It pictures duty faced and duty done vs. seeking comfort, pleasure and easy ways.

- **Pure**: From the same root word as “holy.” It means pure from defilement, moral purity and internal integrity; not contaminated.
Less Stress     How to Stop Stress Before It Starts
            Philippians 4:8-9

- **Lovely**: Translated “attractive”, “winsome”, “beautiful”; it pictures those things that call forth a response of love and warmth within us vs. bitterness, criticism and vengeance.

- **Admirable**: Translated “of good report”: (KJV), “gracious”; it literally means “fair speaking.” It describes the things which are fit for God to hear vs. ugly words, false words, impure words.

- **Virtue and/or Praise**: A summary of sorts to “lift up” anything that has moral excellence; i.e., that which will motivate us to godliness; it is worth commending to others.

**Why?**

**How?**

**Command #2: Habitably practice these things...** Philippians 4:9a

- Learned . . . Received

- Heard . . . . Saw

**Promise: The God of Peace (blessing) will be with you.** Philippians 4:9b
Summary/Application:

Discussion Questions:

1. How does our thought life affect our emotions?

2. How would you describe the quality of your thought life? What adjustments do you sense God would have you make in what you view, read, and think?

3. Why is habitual practice of the truth so vital if we are to experience God’s peace? Why does “duplicity” create stress in our lives?

4. What insight has God given you today to help you “stop stress before it starts” in your life? How will you choose to cooperate with God’s process in your life?