



Properly Inflated Tires (Where the rubber meets the road)

Tires need to be properly inflated or it will start to lose its tread and the traction will become more hazardous. When the tire loses tread then outside elements such as wet pavement can affect your ability to maneuver the car confidently. Too much air pressure makes the tire unstable and makes the ride rough and bumping. Too little air pressure makes the steering more difficult when turning. The balance of air pressure is important for the car to travel safely and comfortably as well as helping the tires last longer.

Pressure in our personal life can have the same effect when we are not properly inflated. Too much pressure in our lives and we become rough and bumpy, making us hard to be around. Too little pressure and it becomes hard to make us turn and when we do turn it can be pretty slippery. There needs to be a balance of pressure in our life as well as our teens. We need to understand how to balance so we can travel down the path of life safely and secure. Teens often will put too much pressure on themselves when it comes to "making the grade" or "being popular". Parents often will put too much pressure on themselves when it comes to "being a perfect parent" or "being successful in their career".

The pressure is derived from stress and worry. We all need a little stress in our lives to challenge us to grow and develop. However, when we allow this stress to build up too much pressure then we can experience a blowout which becomes extremely dangerous. In this section we want to look closely at four things;

1. **We want to check our air pressure regularly and adjust the pressure as needed.**
2. **We need to know how to deal with a flat tire**
3. **We need to make sure we minimize the loss of tread by rotating the tires regularly.**
4. **We need to know when it's time to replace the tires.**

Checking the air pressure!

We must check the pressure regularly and make sure the tires are all balanced. Let's look at two kinds of stress found in the Bible that unbalances our tires. The first we will call "**Self-Allowed Stress.**" This stress is when we allow it to get to us, in other words, we choose to allow stress to bother us. The second type of stress we'll call "**Self-Appointed Stress**". This stress comes upon us because we don't know how to say NO. We feel it's important to always be the one who handles things and thus we take on too much. We don't know how to delegate because we don't believe it will get done right if we do let someone else do it. Let's look at the first type of stress called "self-allowed", and we can find this type in the person of Martha. You probably remember the story of Jesus coming over to Mary and Martha's house to dine. The story is found in Luke 10: 38-42;

The Self-Allowed Stress (Dealing with a flat tire)

As Jesus and his disciples were on their way, he came to a village where a woman named Martha opened her home to him. ³⁹ She had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet listening to what he said. ⁴⁰ But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made. She came to him and asked, "Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!"

⁴¹ "Martha, Martha," the Lord answered, "You are worried and upset about many things, ⁴² but few things are needed—or indeed only one. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her."

Now it was commendable for Martha to want to have everything just right. Can you imagine having Jesus over to YOUR house for dinner one night? How do you think you'd respond? Do you think you might be a little uptight and stressed out, especially if your teens were not cooperating and your husband was running late from work? Here's Jesus waiting in your den for dinner and you're running around trying to make sure everything is just right. What do you think all your help in the home is doing? There are your teens and your husband who just walked in sitting in the den listening to Jesus. Don't they know the table is not set up yet with the special dinner china? Don't they know the kitchen is a mess from cooking all day and you could use some help putting away the dirty pots and pans before everyone sits down to eat? How about the need for someone to fill the glasses with ice so the tea is not hot when poured? You have 5 things going on at once and the rolls are about to burn because you forgot to get over to the oven in time due to stirring the gravy. Who wouldn't be stressed out and who wouldn't want a little help?

That's Martha, and yet Jesus' response to her when she asked Him to tell her sister to get up and help was probably not the answer she wanted to hear. But it was the answer she needed to find balance in her life. There was nothing wrong with wanting everything to be perfect for the perfect ONE but Jesus was making it clear to Martha that proper priorities were critical to experiencing balance. When we get out of balance and start stressing there are usually 3 things that happen to us just like it does in this story.

1. **We make assumptions that the Lord (or those we care about) don't care about the circumstances that cause us stress.** In other words, we have a pity party. If He cared it seems like He would do something about it. When asked, I imagine we'd say we would never blame the Lord but deep in our hearts, we feel like we are on an island by ourselves. Look at what the story says Martha did, "She came to him and asked, "Lord, don't you care?" This parallels closely to what the disciples said to Jesus as they stressed out when the boat they were in was sinking from a storm that quickly came upon them. That account can be found in Luke 4:35-41 when the disciples woke him and said to him, "Teacher, don't you care if we drown?"

Red Flag of stress in our lives when we start thinking people don't care about our situation then the pressure will build. Our teens can fall prey to this feeling because they base so much of how life is going by "feelings". Stress and worry can and will affect feelings quickly because emotions are fragile. Teens don't like thinking about the logical side of the facts. Always remember that teens feel first then think and react logically depending on those feelings. If they feel God or no one cares then they will become out of balance and the tread on their tires of life will become worn. If that continues to happen over time then the tire will eventually wear out and blow out.

2. **We start blaming others for our stress.** She, (Martha), blamed Mary for being irresponsible. Martha said, "My sister has left me to do the work by myself?" The "anxiety-prone" person usually looks to place blame on someone else causing their stress instead of realizing that the stress is self-allowed. That's exactly what Martha did; she placed the blame for her worry on Mary. Martha didn't have to let Mary bother her but she did.

A red flag of stress in our lives is when we start blaming people or circumstances for our problems then our stress level will rise. We must realize that stress is something that can be controlled and dealt with if we approach it as being self-allowed. We don't have to let it get to us if we don't want it to. We'll talk about how you do that a little later in this section.

3. **We try to work things out OUR way as the only way.** Notice what Martha said; "Tell her to help me". Martha's priorities were a little messed up. She didn't recognize who the guest of honor was. She believed He was the master and needed to be served in a Kingly manor. However, Mary understood that He was the Master who came to seek and to save, not to be served but to serve. Her priority was to spend personal time with Him because she recognized He would rather be with her than eating a meal. God always wants our attention and devotion instead of obedience and work. Jesus knows obedience and our work for Him will be there if we spend personal time with Him and devote our heart to Him.

A red flag of stress in our lives-Remember when we try to demand our way as the only way to solve our problems then the pressure will build. When we demand things to be done our way and our way only then we add the pressure of "never being wrong". Jesus wants us to remember that being devoted to Him should be a higher priority than solving our problem. By being devoted to Him we might find a different solution to our problem that is causing us stress.

Notice three things that happened to Martha because of the pressure she allowed to be built up inside of her. She was "**distracted**". The word distracted in this case meant that she lost focus on what was important. Have you ever felt like you lost focus on what's important? I guarantee your teens don't have a proper perspective sometimes on how to focus on what's the most important. According to Jesus' words, she was "**worried**". Worry is always a joy stealer and Martha couldn't enjoy Jesus being in her home because she was being pulled in too many directions emotionally. That's exactly what the word worry means in this passage. It means she was being torn up inside because she was being pulled apart in every direction. Worry can do that to us. It can make us feel like we are being torn up inside. We don't know what we are supposed to do. When our teens worry it's because they don't know what to do and they aren't sure what direction they should go. Finally, the scriptures say she was "**upset**" or "**bothered**", which in the original language meant noise, tumult, troubled and agitated. Those are not emotions we want to hold onto for very long. Word to the wise, when a teen seems to be making a noise that shows they are troubled and agitated then more than likely they are worried about something.

Very important point:

Worry and stress steal away our perspective of the situation. We often lose sight of what is important. The important got replaced by the urgent and the urgent oftentimes is not what is most important. There are lots of urgent things that have to be done but they may not be that important. Remember, if everything is a priority then nothing is a priority.

Self-Appointed Stress

(Learning to spread out the Work Load by rotating the tires)

Do you know why we rotate our tires? So the wear and tear on the tread get spread out and last longer. Since the front tires do all the turning and back tires often are involved in the stopping they need to share the burden of those responsibilities by rotating. In a way, the tires are lifting a burden from the other tires by trading places. Self-Appointed stress is the type of stress that we bring on ourselves because we only have confidence in ourselves and don't trust anyone else to do the job right. We don't want to make any changes and we certainly don't want to "share a burden". This stressed-out person also has a very difficult time saying no to any job because they hate to disappoint and they get stretched too thin. Just like it's commendable for Martha to want everything to be just right it is also commendable for this person to never want to disappoint anyone so they always say yes. However, just like Martha missed what was important over the urgent, this person does the same thing differently.

Rather than wanting help they believe that help will only add to their burden which of course will add to their stress. Our example of this type of person would be the great leader Moses. That's right, someone as great as Moses had a problem with stress. Doesn't it make you feel great to know that great people of the Bible often have the same problem you do?

In Exodus 18 we see Moses Father-in-law witness the load of stress that Moses was under.

"And it came to pass about the next day that Moses sat to judge the people, and the people stood about Moses from the morning until the evening. Now when Moses' father-in-law saw all that he was doing for the people, he said, 'what is this thing that you are doing for the people? Why do you alone sit as judge and all the people stand about you from morning to evening? And Moses said to his father-in-law, 'because the people come to me to inquire of God. When they have a dispute, it comes to me, and I judge between a man and his neighbor and make known the statutes of God and His laws.' And Moses' father-in-law said to him, 'the thing that you are doing is not good. You will surely wear out, both yourself and these people who are with you, for the task is too heavy for you; you cannot do it alone.'" (vs. 13-18)

A quick question: Are you the type that has extended yourself too much? Are you close to burning out? What about your teens? Are they close to burning out because they are taking on too much just to impress certain groups? Do you refuse to pass some of the burdens along?

Listen to the counsel of Moses' father-in-law Jethro when he said, "The thing that you are doing is not good."

So Moses wisely listened to his counsel and applied what he learned. He didn't just drop everything but he learned to delegate. In verse 21 he specifically listed the characteristics of the type of men that he needed to help him judge the people properly. They needed to be men who fear God, were men of truth, they hated dishonest gain, and they were leader types. This was crucial because if Moses chose the wrong type of people to help him lead then obviously they would have brought more problems to the situation and added to his stress. So in vs. 25-26, we read;

"And Moses chose able men out of all Israel and made them heads over the people, leaders of thousands, of hundreds, of fifties, and tens. And they judged the people at all times; the difficult disputes they would bring to Moses, but every minor dispute they would judge."

What about you?

We see that Moses was close to burn out and had to come up with a solution. How about you? What about your stress fractures? What is it that makes you think you (or your teen) are capable of handling more than you should? Why carry the extra burden of anxiety and stress when you can share the burden and spread the work around? Find family and friends who can help you carry some of your burdens. Christ set the example by telling us that we needed to let Him carry some of our burdens. Learn to say no sometimes to people. It's okay not to do some things that people ask you to do. Pray for wisdom and guidance on when to say yes and when to say no. Parents of teens can get so involved in every activity under the sun that they get stressed out on how they are going to make each activity, especially if there are multiple teens.

Jesus' Perspective on Stress and Worry

(When is it time to get new tires?)

Would you like to know Jesus' perspective on worry? Think about this- While he was in the garden praying right before He knew He would be arrested, beaten to a pulp, and eventually crucified He said the following;

"I glorified you on the earth, having accomplished the work which you have given me to do." John 17:4. Really? He accomplished everything God wanted Him to do and now He could die for our sins? What about all the people that still needed healing from blindness, sickness, and were lame? There were still regions that still had not heard about Him and the Good News? There were millions of slaves under Roman authority that still were being mistreated and killed; didn't He want to help set them free?

Jesus understood the secret of a content life without stress and worry. All of those things indeed still needed to be done but not by Jesus. He knew that He had trained up men who would take the reins of leadership for the soon to be birthed Church. He knew that God would send a Helper, the Holy Spirit, to set into motion the greatest spiritual awakening ever known to man. Jesus knew He was only responsible for those things He could be responsible for. He learned and lived the great truth found in Proverbs 3:5-6.

"Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight."

Learning to overcome worry and stress!

If you want to overcome worry and stress and make sure you have balance in life you must understand how to interpret Proverbs 3:5-6 properly. This passage is a great promise but only if we understand our part and responsibility and God's part and His responsibility. Let's take a closer look at this passage so we can learn the secret that Jesus learned that night in the garden.

MY PART, GOD'S PART

Let's first look at the key verbs that are words of action.

- Trust
- Do not lean
- Acknowledge
- Make straight

The first three verbs are our part and responsibility. We are to *trust...do not lean...acknowledge*.

The fourth verb is part of a promise that is God's part and responsibility...*"He will make your paths straight."*

Okay, now look for a word in the passage that repeats itself four times. Can you see it? It's the word "your". What is so important about this is you are the only person who can determine if you are going to let life's situations make your worry and stress or not. The passage says your responsibility in your circumstances is to **"trust in the Lord with all YOUR heart...and to refuse to lean on YOUR own understanding...acknowledging Him in all YOUR ways...so that He might make YOUR paths straight."**

I repeat, this all about the choice YOU want to make in your circumstances. No one else can do it for you. You are the only one who can decide how you want to handle things that make you worry and stress. Jesus knew how personal His walk with the Father had to be for Him not to worry and be stressed out.

Another observation about this verse: This passage was written in Hebrew in a particular way where the first part of the passage is linked to the last part of the passage which is supported by one positive and one negative admonition. Let me explain:

We are to TRUST...HE WILL MAKE STRAIGHT. So we are to trust in Him with all our heart without hesitation or reservation, why? So that He can step in and take control, making my way straight and meaningful. What's involved in trusting with all my heart? Two particular decisions we have to make-one negative and one positive.

- Negatively, I am not to lean on my own understanding
- Positively, I am to acknowledge Him in all my ways, (which is the battleground I'm fighting causing me stress and worry)

So let's dig even deeper into what this verse is promising us.

Trust-The Hebrew meaning for this word implies the idea of throwing oneself down and lying extended on the ground, casting all hopes for the present and the future upon another, finding shelter and security there, In other words, we are COMMANDED by our Lord to cast ourselves fully and absolutely at His feet. Remember, we are to do this with all of our hearts as well.

Heart-The Hebrew word refers to one's "inner person" ...that part of us which is the very center of our intellect, emotion, and will. In other words, we are COMMANDED by our Lord to cast upon God our total trust, not holding back in any area of our mind or feeling or volition. There should be no reservations whatsoever. It's like the child who jumps in the pool expecting the parent to catch them with no reservations about jumping.

Understanding-the idea in the Hebrew is stated like this, "and upon your understanding do not lean". This is referring to human understanding. The thought is this; "Don't turn first to your own limited viewpoints; don't try to work things out on your own."

Lean-The Hebrew term means "to support oneself, as though leaning on assistance." The best way to understand this is to think about resting your weight on a crutch. It's that way but in the negative-"don't do that. Don't put all your weight (lean) on YOUR understanding. Stay out of the way, guard against fear and panic, scheming, and manipulating, worrying, and hurrying.

Acknowledge-Here's the positive part. It means "recognize", amid the whole scene, recognize, mentally call to mind, God's presence and control.

Make Straight-It's the thought of making something smooth, straight, and right. It includes the idea of removing obstacles that are in the way, as when a road is being built through a mountain pass. The Hebrew word denotes

intensity. In other words, when the Lord is fully relied upon to handle a given situation, He will do a thorough, complete job of smoothing out our part.

Chuck Swindoll has a great way of paraphrasing this passage according to the Hebrew language and meaning. Here's the Swindoll Amplified Version along with his application of this verse taken from his book, "Avoiding Stress Fractures."

Throw yourself completely upon the Lord-that is, cast all your present and future needs on Him who is your intimate Savior-God-finding in Him your security and safety. Do this with all your mind and feeling and will. To make this possible, you must refuse to support yourself upon the crutch of human ingenuity. Instead, recognize His presence and concern in each one of our circumstances. Then He (having taken full control of the situation) will thoroughly smooth out and straighten your paths, removing each obstacle along the way.

Applying This Passage (Driving on new tires)

- ***This is a personal promise for any anxiety-prone person to claim right now. God has preserved this statement just for you. Claim this promise!***
- ***God will do His part, but first, we must do our part. He will keep His promise if we obey His commands. Keep in mind that our response to His commands precedes His part in the transaction.***
- ***God wants our total trust. Yes, total truth. Nothing held back. No games. No empty, pious-sounding words. No, He commands our absolute confidence.***
- ***There is no area which He is unable to handle. Did you notice the twice-repeated "all"? God is a specialist in every circumstance. That includes yours. Today.***
- ***Since this promise is to be personally applied, how about filling in the blank with your current stress right now? Instead of reading;***

"In all your ways recognize Him, and He will smooth out your path, removing all obstacles."

You fill out the following:

In _____ recognize Him.

At this moment take the very thing that is giving you so much stress and worry and write it down and give it to Him. Refuse to brood over it any longer. Cast aside doubt and fear and leave it all with Him. Then stand back and watch Him work.