

STETCHED BUT NOT STRESSED - SERMON

15 APRIL 2018

1. INTRODUCTION

CAN BE SEEN AS PART 2 OF THE TRUST SERMON

- A sermon I preached towards the end of last year... Trust – the heart of the matter
- I shared how God helped me to come to terms with the various challenges I was facing and how he taught me to Trust Him and live in his peace

Well, I'm here to say that... Things have not gotten less challenging but there's been growth

But before I share what God has been doing in my life, let us pray...

2. OPENING PRAYER

3. DEFINITION OF STRETCHED AND STRESSED

So, what does it mean to be “**Stretched** without being **Stressed**”:

Let's look at the Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary definitions:

Stretch (verb) –

- a. to become extended in length or breadth or both*
- b. to extend over a continuous period*

In this context, I'm **not referring to Physical stretching** of the body but rather Emotional or Mental Stretching.

Stressed (verb) Used first in 1973 –

*Feeling very worried or anxious –
causing mental or emotional strain or tension.*

Synonyms: overstretch, pressure, worry, distress, burden.

Note the synonym “overstretched”

Stress - **Negative thoughts take up to much mental or emotional space**
Usually leaving you sad or depressed.

SLIDE: SHOW THE EMOJI BELOW...



This is the **GRINNING EMOJI**...

- I thought it was the Emoji used when you **FEELING STRESSED**.
- Always on my “**RESENTS LIST**” – with all the challengers I’ve been facing. This use to be at the top of my recently used Emoji list (together with the Thumbs Up)

BUT... It should actually be used to **express EXCITEMENT**

The Stressed-Out Emoji’s are:

SLIDE: SHOWING BOTH OF THESE EMOJI'S ON ONE SLIDE



THE FLUSHED EMOJI and the **VERY DISTRESSED EMOJI**

The Flushed Emoji is used to indicated either being...
Overwhelmed/Stressed or Embarrassed

4. MY STRESSES

The last few months has been filled with:

- **Work Stress –**
 - **New Director** - who was called in to “stream line” the company. Looked at **Systems, Policies and Staff** – Improve the company.
 - **My Manager was removed...**
 - **Eyes on me - Interim Responsibly** included working nearly every Saturday evening, over and above my Saturday morning work
 - **Quality Problems** – Not good for sales person
 - **Staff problems** – Disciplinary hearings, Different personalities, sickness
- **Financial stress –**
 - VAT increased;
 - Water Tariff Increases
 - School Fees
 - We actually had to **convert our main bedroom into a separate entrance** to accommodate for these increases
- **Family Stresses**
 - Caleb was in hospital a couple of weeks back with Kidney problem?

5

DIFFERENT KINDS OF STRESSES

- a) **Psychological Anxiety Disorders** e.g. Diagnosed by a Psychologist
e.g. Various Disorders:
 - a. OCD – Obsessive Compulsive Disorder)
 - b. PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder)
 - c. Social Disorder
 - d. Phobias - (Arachnophobia)
- b) **Real Concerns** - Usually things you have no control over – e.g. Death in the family, Retrenchments, Failing the end of the year.

c) Exaggerated worry – More common

Made of “What if’s” or “If only’s” We Pressurize ourselves. (**Worry about tomorrow**) e.g. From an upcoming interview, exam to “I need a dress for that event”

(**Worry about yesterday**) e.g. I should have said this in that interview or wrote that in my exam or “I should have worn that dress”

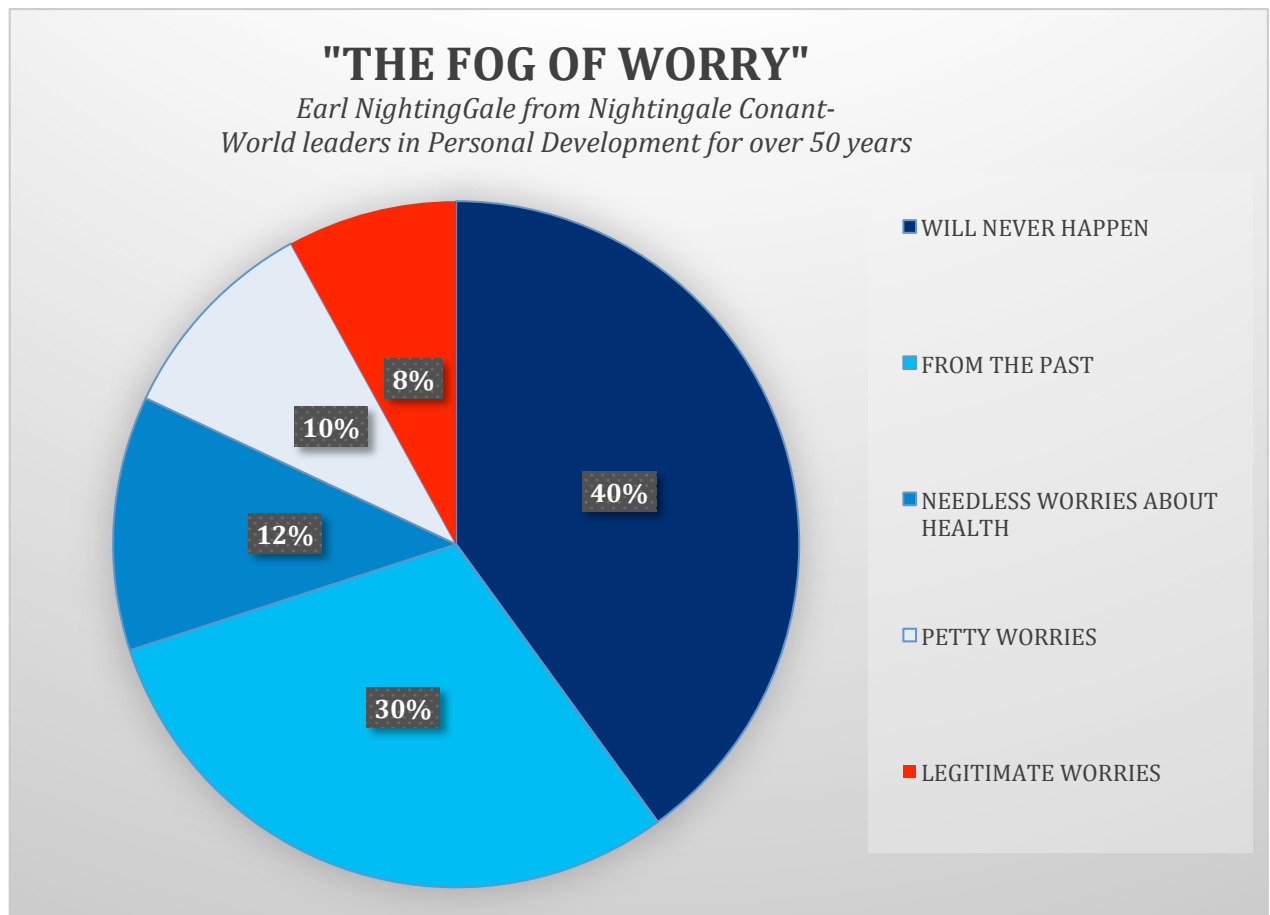
SHOW SLIDE: THE FOG OF WORRY

Discuss Pie Chart using –

Earl Nightingale from Nightingale-Conant Stats

World leaders in Personal Development for over 50 years

<http://www.nightingale.com/articles/the-fog-of-worry-only-8-of-worries-are-worth-it/>



5.

WHY DOES GOD STRETCH US SO MUCH?

Because...

1.

GOD IS CONCERNED ABOUT OUR CHARACTER (WHO WE ARE BECOMING)

God wants to grow us... Especially our Character...
And only sufferings can get us there.

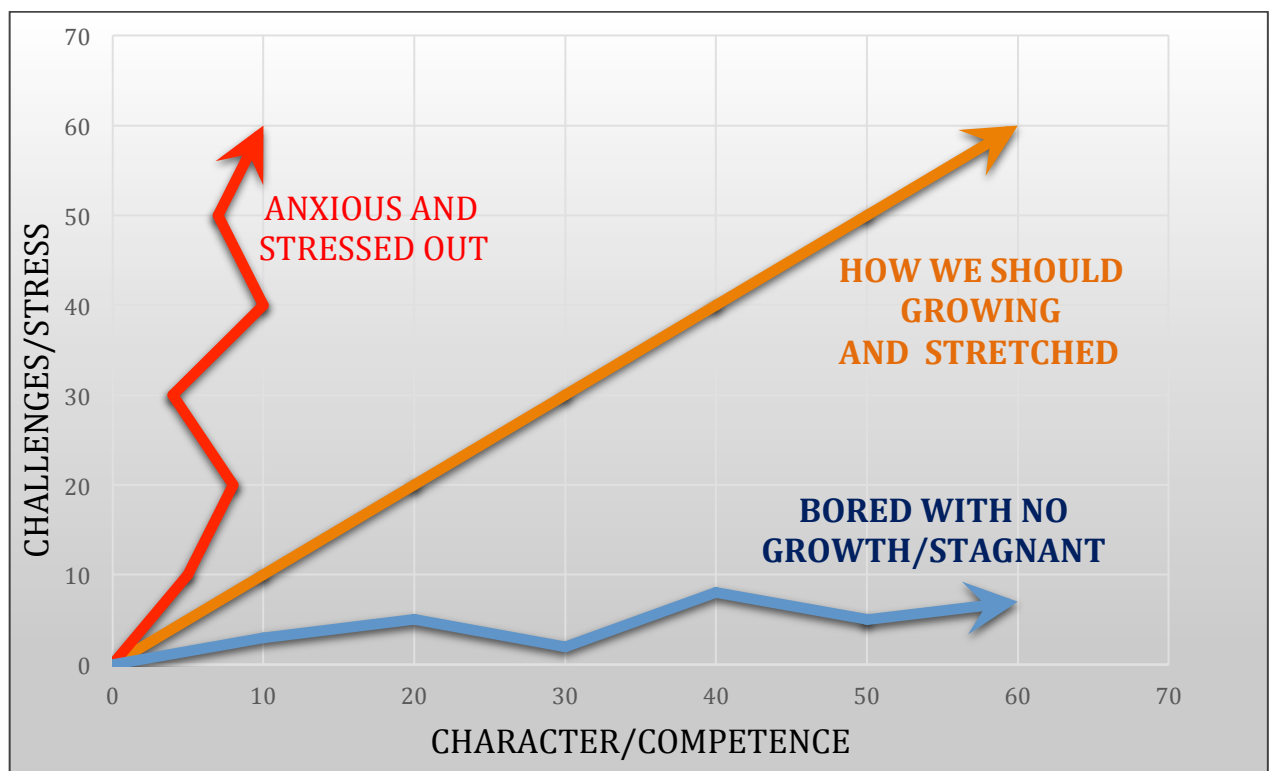
SLIDE: Scripture reference:

Romans 5:1-4,

*Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, ² through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we boast in the hope of the glory of God. ³ Not only so, but we also **glory in our sufferings**, because we know that suffering produces perseverance ⁴ perseverance, character; and character, hope.*

I've grown closer to God in the last year than ever before...

SHOW SLIDE: GROWTH GRAPH



Challenges vs. Character/Competence (Anxiety vs. Boredom)

TALK THOUGH JAMES LAPPEMANS GRAPH:

From his sermon "Living Water" sermon – 26 March 2018

Horizontal Axis – Character growth

Vertical Axis – Stresses of life

Orange Arrow – Ideal. What God wants (Challenges come and our Character growth accordingly)

Blue Arrow – Just Character growth, with no challenges (Eg. Brilliant Surgeon with a doctorate who can't find work and works as a Janitor)

Red Arrow – Not growing in Character, just stressing out (Which is who this sermon is meant for)

ELASTIC BAND OBJECT LESSON

Shoot the elastic bands –

Once semi stretched and then fully stretched

Lessons learned from the Demonstration:

- Only when the elastic band is stretched does it have the Potential (energy) to **move from "HERE TO THERE"** –

God wants us to move and not be stagnant (Blue Graph).

- The **FURTHER ELASTIC BAND IS STRETCHED** is stretched the further it will go – **More stretch means more growth.**
- The elastic band itself will **GROWS PERMANENTLY** (stretches) when it is pulled more and more – **The same as our character growth**

1 Corinthians 10:13

No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it

DEFINITION OF CHARACTER

"Character is the ability to consistently make God-glorifying choices irrespective of feeling, circumstance or cost."

Character growth happens when we choose the God-Glorifying choice when presented with a challenge.

E.g. Failing and Exam – Feel sorry for yourself or Accept that it happened and learn from your mistakes.

Hebrews 12:11

No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.

2

STRETCHED TO REVEAL JESUS

2 Corinthians 4:7-10

⁶ For God, who said, “Let light shine out of darkness,” made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of God’s glory displayed in the face of Christ.

⁷ But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us. ⁸ We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; ⁹ persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed. ¹⁰ We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, **so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body.**

“Perplexed” – baffled, not sure what’s going on

“Despair” – hopeless

- The Treasure offered to here is found in vs. 6 – **“the light of the knowledge of God’s glory displayed (manifested in the person of) in the face of Jesus” – Knowing Jesus**
- **Explain what Jars of Clay** was used for – *Earthen Vessels*
 - To hold precious things e.g. The Dead Sea Scrolls.
 - Different types of Jars
- We need to **reveal this precious gift we have in Christ** and his power when we are Hard pressed, perplexed (baffled, not sure what’s going on), persecuted or struck down.

There is **no better testimony** than someone who faces Real concerns but with “Gods peace.”

6.

BUT HOW DO I DO THIS?

Next slide:

1. CHANGE YOUR THINKING

Look further down the same passage... 2 Corinthians 4:...

2 Corinthians 4:16-18

*16 Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. 17 For our light and **momentary troubles** are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. 18 So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.*

**FIX YOUR EYES ON WHAT IS UNSEEN AND ETERNAL –
NOT ON THE TEMPORARY TROUBLES**

1.1

GODS VIEW vs YOUR VIEW

GOD SEES THE BIG VIEW – WE SEE THROUGH A GLASS DIMELY

I attended my first MTBS this year -Support Bryan, Jason, Micayla and family.

- High Schoolers do what is called flashes
- MTBS stands for - **Malan, Tygerberg, Bellville & Stellenberg High School**

SLIDE: Small View – MTBS



Small View – MTBS

SHOW SLIDE: BIG View – MTBS



SHOW SLIDE: BIG VIEW CROCODILE



1.2

FILL YOUR MIND WITH WHAT IS GOOD

Philippians 4:8

“Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.”

What are you filling your mind with?

Example of a Squeeze container –

What you put in will come out when the pressure is on

1.3

PRAY AND BE HONEST WITH GOD

Psalm 42:5

Why, my soul, are you downcast? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Savior and my God.

Prayer during difficult situations needs to become a “**Conditioned reflex**”

Difference between a Natural and Conditioned Reflex

Natural reflex – Pull your hand from a hot plate (automatic)

Conditioned reflex – requires developing and becomes natural after doing it over and over again. – This is how character is grown.

We can't control our World, whether, deadlines, politics, family, bosses, children but we can pray about it.

2. GIVE GOD PERMISSION TAKE CONTROL

This is very difficult...

Isaiah 12:2

2 Surely God is my salvation; I will trust and not be afraid. The Lord, the Lord himself, is my strength and my defense; he has become my salvation.”

Worry is a sign that you're not trusting God!

Worry is a sign that you're in control!

NOTES:

- There will ALWAYS be something to worry about!
- Worry is not productive (Waste of time);
- Worry weakens you mentally, physically and spiritually

7. CONCLUSION

Psalm 94:19 (NIV)

When anxiety was great within me, your consolation brought me joy.

Last slide:

Psalm 94:19 (KJV)

"In the multitude of my thoughts within me thy comfort delights my soul"

LAST THOUGHTS AND QUESTIONS:

- **Are you letting your thoughts take you on a negativity trip?**

CONDITION YOURSELF:

- Not to Panic
- Accept the situation
- Ask What is Gods view – Remember Gods goal
- Think Good and pure thoughts (Positive)
- You still have God (your treasure) in your Jar of Clay
- If it's too much – **Speak to a person** that will help you see Gods perspective.