

## A Penny For My Thoughts...



### KEEP STRESS AWAY IN 2000

Over the Christmas period, my regular lunch "kaki" told me that he has of late, experienced chest pains. I seriously advised him to see a doctor ASAP, and was glad to learn from his secretary when I called him at his office later that afternoon, that he had taken the rest of the day off to see a doctor. When we had lunch last week, he revealed that the muscles of his heart were thickening because of stress.

I thought of the many I have counselled in the church who are also experiencing some form of stress. Working with these people I have observed these three characteristics:

1. A desire to have their cake and eat it at the same time - this is not possible but many a stressed person clings on to this unrealistic aspiration. This is expressed in statements like "I want my husband to get ahead at work and spend more time with the family" and "what I'm looking for must be good and cheap". Something has got to give - prioritize what is important and let go of the lesser.
2. No margin for error - but we live in an imperfect world. Unmet deadlines, shoddy workmanship and poor service. Live with it and attribute it to a fallen world. Look at the bigger picture of relationships, goals and long-term trust. Do not give up on one another or constantly nag your children or spouse just because they are imperfect - because you are, too.
3. Busyness - the curse of modern civilisation. We try to pack more in a day than we can prayerfully handle. Then when something goes wrong, a traffic jam or slight delay, stress takes over. Even more importantly, when God leads us to divine interruptions, we are so filled with our own agenda, that there is no time for God to bless us or for us to bless others.

**Make it different this millennium. Let go. Prioritize. Let God into your plans and listen to His leading. May 1 Cor. 9:26 be your guiding light for 2000**

1. Wait on God. There can be nothing more refreshing and soul-uplifting than to wait on the Lord. I recommend that at least once a week, we find an hour that we can spend in the presence of God. Take a Bible and an alarm clock with you. Start off with a prayer. Read from the Word. Psalms, Ephesians, Philippians and John's gospels and letters are excellent starters. Meditate on verses that speak to you. Pray some more. With an least an hour available, you will take your time, relax, reflect and go away totally renewed.
2. Count your blessings. I mean this literally - list out your blessings. Do this while riding the bus or MRT, jogging or walking - clear your mind, unplug that Walkman and get in synch with God. Start by thanking God for the roof over your head, shirt on your back and 3 square meals. Go on

**to family and friends. Church and Jesus. Don't stop there. Grab a card, Filofax or PDA. Jot them down. Add to the list. Go back to it at least once each week and keep writing. A grateful heart will dispell self-pity, anger, disappointment and all manner of circumstances that add stress to our lives.**

**3. Start each day, handing your agenda over to God - Psalms 118:24. Decide on one or two major things you need to get done. With a sense of focus and an openness to God's leading, we will be more effective and less likely to be distracted by the 101 other things that may hit us from the moment we step out the door.**