

BE BLESSED TO BE STRESSED

- Do you feel stress is affecting you negatively? How so?
- What was one of the most stressful times or experiences in your life? Describe it.
- How do you typically handle stress in your life?

Stress can literally kill us. There is plenty of scientific and medical data to support this. One thing is for certain; we cannot avoid stress. Stress is a reality in our lives.

There are however positive and negative types of stress. In order for us to handle stress we must be able to understand the difference. There are two types of stress: Life-based and Gap-based. Life-based stress creates perseverance, growth and maturity. Gap-based stress creates anxiety, fear and unhealthy physical side effects. Although the distinctions may seem pretty straight forward, they can be tricky.

- Can you describe positive and negative stresses in your life? Why do you think they are positive or negative?

Gap-based stress occurs when your body, mind and spirit are not in alignment with Life. This typically happens when one, or all, of our actions, thoughts and hearts are motivated by the Gap. It is like a car that has its wheels out of alignment. No matter how much gas you give that car, it has a very difficult time moving forward until the stress on the tires and transmission grinds everything to a halt.

How can you tell if you are not in alignment and experiencing Gap-based stress? You simply ask yourself, *are my actions, thoughts and heart motivated by a Gap?* If yes, you are out of alignment.

For example, let's say you were a student in university or a professional at work. Let's say that all your actions and thoughts reflected the proper student or office worker. But let's also say deep down in your heart you just knew you were really called to be doing something else. This would cause a great deal of stress in your life whether you could identify it or not. At this point you need to identify the motivations behind your thoughts and actions.

- Can you give a personal example of Gap-based stress using our description?

The good news is all stress can be turned into Life-based stress. Doing this is very easy if you reframe your view of any stressful situation. The trick is to ask, *is there a Life-based blessing I can receive from this stress?* If you cannot find any blessing that could help you grow in Life, then you should strongly evaluate how or whether or not you should be in that situation in the first place. If you can learn how to do this effectively, you can actually begin accepting and even pursuing Life-based stress. This is how we can be really transformed!

- Can you use a previous example of stress and turn it from the Gap to Life? Work it through.
- What have you recognized and reframed about stress today and how will you practically respond to this?

This week reflect on the areas of stress in your life. Are they Gap or Life-based? If they are Gap-based can you make a plan to turn them to Life? Remember that you cannot eliminate stress altogether but you can be blessed to be stressed.