

God's Help to Overcome Stress

The Penn State Nittany Lions played the Memphis Tigers in the 2019 Cotton Bowl. Penn State's running back, Journey Brown, did not know it at the time, but it was to be his final football game. He played incredibly well, rushing 16 times for 202 yards and scoring two touchdowns. He led the team to a decisive 53-39 victory.

Sports reporters, NFL scouts and coaches all talked about Brown's amazing future in football. They predicted a high ranking for him in the player's draft and a massive financial contract.

Then, before the start of the 2020 season a routine medical exam revealed Brown had hypertrophic cardiomyopathy, a condition which causes the muscle wall around the heart to thicken. The heart must beat harder to pump blood. It is serious for everyone, but especially dangerous for athletes and is the most common cause of sudden cardiac death for those 35 and under.

Brown retired from football saying, "The pain of not being able to play the game I love hurts... however, I can walk away from the game knowing I truly gave my all at every practice, on every down..."

His head coach, James Franklin, said though Brown's medical condition was "heartbreaking" he immediately volunteered as an assistant coach for the team's running backs. The coach commented, "I don't know if he wants to stay in football or whatever he decides to do, but he's going to be unbelievably successful."

Brown's remarkable story was used by author Vance Pitman to begin his book, *The Stressless Life*. How we deal with stress is important but tragically, most of us do not handle it well. Consider these troubling statistics from his book and originally reported in a March 2014 Miami Herald article by Deborah Hartz-Seeley entitled, *Chronic Stress Linked to the Six Leading Causes of Death*.

- 43% of adults suffer adverse health effects from stress.
- 75% to 90% of all visits to doctor's offices are for stress-related ailments and complaints.
- Stress costs American industries more than \$300 billion each year through health-care expenses. (That's more than the gross domestic product of over 160 nations!)

It seems tragically obvious that most people do not deal with stress nearly as well as Journey Brown did. I am unaware of whether Brown turned to God for help during his crisis, but I know many people have sought God's help in handling their stress.

During a stressful time in his life after being betrayed by a friend, King David wrote, "Give your burdens to the LORD, and he will take care of you." (Psalm 55:22, NLT) That advice is just as true today as it was thousands of years ago. Everyone eventually faces stress whether it comes from a health issue, a friend's betrayal, a financial crisis or a

painful family situation. Overcoming stress is never easy, but when we give our “burdens to the Lord,” we can with his help get through them.