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Do you ever experience stress with your wife? My wife Susan and I just finished discussing how each of us often focuses on the negative which creates stress in our family. Our discussion began when I noticed her stress and asked if she had missed the corresponding positive for every negative that she seemed to be white-knuckling. I asked her to describe for me every negative perception in her heart, and I would respond with the corresponding, positive perspective. Here they are:

Susan: “I’m fat,” (negative perspective).

Mitch: “You just had a baby,” (positive perspective). “Besides, I’m the only judge you need to be concerned about, and I think you are perfect. You are athletic, in-shape, and very attractive,” (really positive).

Susan: “I want to tan, and I can’t because of the doctor’s orders” (negative perspective).

Mitch: “You are free from creating further damage to your skin, and you should be thankful for the doctor” (guy-like positive perspective).

Susan: “I have to pack everyone’s suitcases for our trip,” (negative perspective).

Mitch: “You are going on spring break with your family to one of the best vacation areas on earth” (auctioneer’s positive perspective).

Susan: “I have an open wound on my hand, and it hurts,” (negative perspective).

Mitch: “You just had something removed that you didn’t want on your hand,” (perhaps positive perspective, perhaps common sense).

Susan: “I want to be a better mom to our oldest daughter,” (negative perspective, although I should remind you that she is 13).

Mitch: “You have an awesome daughter,” (positive perspective, overlooking the affects of hormonal changes).

Susan: “I’m worried about Haley’s (our five-month-old baby) behavior on the trip” (negative perspective).

Mitch: “We have a healthy, beautiful baby girl” (positive, fatherly—I just get to deal with the good stuff with the baby—perspective).

I have to admit that one has to strategically select his timing for this kind of conversation with his wife, and I am not always on the positive side of it. However, you will notice that she and I discussed the same exact issues; we just did so from different perspectives. Here’s what the Apostle Paul says:

*Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! 5 Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. 6 Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. 7 And the peace*



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*of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus (Philippians 4:4-7 NIV).*

Paul teaches us that our *passion* determines our *perspective* which determines our *priorities*. *Perspectives* are how we *see* the circumstances of our lives. They flow from the *passions* of our *hearts*. When God is our *passion*, when our joy truly comes from Him, then our *perspective* sees that He is near, and we begin to see our circumstances from God's perspective, *prioritizing* what God prioritizes. We become gentle (power under His control); we become thankful (in all circumstances); and we become intimate with God (presenting our requests to Him). The result is peace (the antidote to stress) that guards our hearts in Christ.

We do this by what Susan and I did. When we worry (negative perspective) we should pray (positive perspective). Prayer is our response to God's initiative on the passions of our hearts. It is the process of God shaping our hearts to be like His. Soren Kierkegaard said, "Prayer is listening." Remember that we cannot listen in a hurry.

Petitions are the individual requests that we make to God during prayer. When we take our anxieties to God in prayer, He gives us peace that comes only from Christ who guards our hearts like a military fortress.

Try it this week. Whenever stress arises, pray and discover the peace.

Mitch