

How to handle the pressure to have it all



For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me and for the Gospel will save it. For what good is it for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? (Mark 8:35-36)

We rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. (Romans 5:3-4)

There was given me a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong. (2 Corinthians 12:7b-10)

Mindfulness is taking workplaces by storm. Meditation, yoga, colouring-in for adults; all designed to help us handle the pressures of work. And some of it is helpful.

But is it the ultimate solution to our workplace pressure? Philip Bohle, Professor of work and health at Sydney University says this of mindfulness techniques: "I am sure they often enhance people's lives and they also can be quite useful for coping with excessive demands at work, as long as those demands are short-lived".¹ But as a long-term solution to pressure, Professor Bohle describes such techniques as a "Band-aid". That's because mindfulness looks within to find the solution. But the ultimate problem is within; a problem of our hearts. And the only One who can heal our hearts is the One who made them.

For some, our pressure is the result of a **divided heart**. Our pressure is the result of chasing so many good things, but too many things. We run the risk of "gaining the whole world, but losing our soul" (Mark 8:36). Instead we need to do our non-negotiable responsibilities well; anything else is a bonus. And we can do this when we treasure God above all other things. "Teach me your ways LORD...give me an undivided heart" (Psalm 86:11).

For some, we need to remember that not all pressure is bad; God often uses it to **refine our hearts**. In the Bible pressure is not something to be avoided entirely. Rather "we rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope" (Romans 5:3-4). Let's welcome a good amount of pressure for the good it can do. "A lump of coal under pressure becomes a diamond. And the suffering of a person in Christ only turns you into somebody gorgeous".²

Nevertheless, some of us still feel under so much pressure. Let us remember that this is not a bad place to be. For "[God's] power is made perfect in weakness" (2 Corinthians 12:9). When we admit that we are weak it is an opportunity for God's strength to be seen more clearly in our lives; **our heart rests** in Him and His strength. Chances are we are not the only one in our workplace under pressure. But we might be the only one with the confidence that the Gospel brings to speak up and admit the pressure we are under. Such "boasting" in our weakness may be just the thing that opens up the opportunity for your employer and colleagues to see something of God's strength in your life.

1. What are the main factors causing pressure in your life?
2. Which "heart solution" most resonates with you?
3. Are there other Gospel truths you find helpful in addressing pressure?

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lifeatwork.org.au/watch

¹ "Mindfulness takes over the corporate world", Anna Patty, Fairfax media, published online October 30, 2015.

² Timothy Keller, *Walking with God through pain and suffering*, 181.