

TAKE IT EASY

Inspired by The Eagles' Song

Week #4 of a 6-Week "Songs of Life" Series

Rev. Richard Maraj

Sunday, Nov. 3, 2024

SONG LYRICS TO 'TAKE IT EASY'

Well, I'm runnin' down the road tryin' to loosen my load
I've got seven women on my mind
Four that wanna own me, two that wanna stone me
One says she's a friend of mine

Take it easy
Take it easy
Don't let the sound of your own wheels drive you crazy
Lighten up while you still can
Don't even try to understand
Just find a place to make your stand
And take it easy

Well, I'm a standin' on a corner in Winslow, Arizona
Such a fine sight to see
It's a girl, my Lord, in a flatbed Ford
Slowin' down to take a look at me

Come on, baby
Don't say maybe
I gotta know if your sweet love is gonna save me
We may lose and we may win
Though we will never be here again
So open up, I'm climbin' in
So take it easy

Well, I'm runnin' down the road tryna loosen my load
Got a world of trouble on my mind
Lookin' for a lover who won't blow my cover
She's so hard to find

Take it easy
Take it easy
Don't let the sound of your own wheels make you crazy
Come on, baby
Don't say maybe
I gotta know if your sweet love is gonna save me

Ooo, Ooo
Oh, we got it easy
We oughta take it easy

WORSHIP MESSAGE:

So how many people here have ever experienced a lot of stress? Anybody ever experienced a lot of stress? [Congregants laugh] How many people ever speak so much stress that it affected your sleep and your ability to concentrate? Anybody have that much stress?

The fact is: every one of us experiences stress. Because stress is the response that we have to challenge and change in our lives. It can come in various situations, various events ... but it is triggered by us experiencing something new, something unexpected, that we feel threatens our self -- our sense of self; that we feel creates pressure on us and we lose our sense of control over the situation.

So I ask you: Generally speaking, what causes the most stress in your life? And what is currently causing the most stress in your life?

Dr. Han Selye was a Canadian-born endocrinologist, who's considered the father of research in stress. In fact, he coined the word "stress," which means worry or mental tension caused by difficult situations. And he developed a list of events; he called them stressors. Top of the list is death of a loved one; divorce; major illness; relationship or family conflict; and then a big category of significant change ... like the loss of a job is a significant change. And even though it's good, marriage is a significant change. The birth of a child is a significant change. There's stress there. Winning the lottery is a big change that can be stressful. Moving from Phoenix to Buffalo in the middle of July or in the middle of January; that could be very stressful, as well.

But it's not just the events in our lives that cause us stress. He said high on the list of things that cause us the most stress is our own attitude: the quality of our thoughts and the kind of mindset that we have.

So, I ask you: Do you ever think about what you think about? [Congregants laugh] Because what we think about creates the most amount of stress in our lives. Tell me if you engage in any of these. Anybody ever do any overthinking? Anybody ever do any worrying? Obsessing? Second guessing? Negative thinking? Negative self-talk? Pessimism? Perfectionism? Comparing? Seeking approval? The need for control? Resistance to change? Fear of the unknown ... to name a few. [Congregants laugh]

And so, we sometimes need to pause and think about what we think about. Because it is not what happens to us; it is what we think about what happens to us that really has an impact. Somebody said that 90% of living happens between our ears. And it is really true!

So, on a scale of 1 to 10 -- 10 being the highest -- how stressed would you say you are on a daily basis? And, at certain times, how high is the stress level in your life? The fact is: if we are feeling constantly stressed, it is because we are constantly feeding ourselves thoughts that create stress within us. And we don't need to keep dealing with stress so consistently if we are willing to learn to take it easy; to relax; to calm down; to stay centered; and to feed our minds positive, peaceful and pleasant thoughts, despite whatever is going on in our lives.

How many people know your life would improve a little bit, and be more enjoyable and easier, if you were to take it easy a little bit and learn how to do that? So, this morning we're going to look at three things that we can do to learn how to take it easy.

So this is Week #4 of our six-week series on the "Songs of Life," where I take a famous song -- popular song -- that we really love, and extract from it a spiritual message or life lesson. Week #1 we looked at "Hallelujah" by KD Lang. Week #2, we looked at "The Happening" by Diana Ross and the Supremes. Last week we looked at "You Can't Always Get What You Want" by the Rolling Stones.

And today, we're going to look at "Take It Easy," the hit by The Eagles. This song was written by Jackson Brown -- started -- in 1971 and it was completed by his friend, Glen Frye, in 1972. The context that

inspired it is that Jackson Brown was going through a lot of women and trouble and relationship issues. And he was feeling very stressed, because he had seven women on his mind. [Congregants laugh] Not four; not five; and not six; but seven women on his mind. [Congregants laugh] Four that wanted to own him; two that wanted to stone him! And one said she was a friend of mine. You could see why he was experiencing a lot of stress at the moment. [Congregants laugh]

But I want to show you that stress is about context and it's also about perception. Because if I was in high school, and you told me that I had seven women on my mind: that I'd went out with seven women and four liked me, and only two didn't like me, and one was a friend of mine ... I would call that heaven! [Congregants laugh] That ain't stress; that's my dreams coming true! [Congregants laugh] But I digress ...

So that's the first thing. So, he was feeling stressed about his relationships. And then the second thing that inspired it is that his car broke down on Route 66 near Winslow, Arizona. And so, he was writing this to be the song on his debut album. And so, he got it close to completed, but he just couldn't finish it. And then his friend Glen Frye, who lived in the same apartment complex -- he showed it to him and he kept asking Jackson Brown, "*Hey, let's work on this together.*" And so, finally, Jackson Brown did and they did.

And the two contributions from Glen Frye were the lines:

**It's a girl, my Lord, in a flatbed Ford
Slowin' down to take a look at me**

And then the second contribution was he extended the "E" on easy. So instead of "*Take it easy,*" it was "*Take it e-e-e-e-easy.*" And that was his contribution. And Jackson Brown gave him credit for writing. So it was written by Jackson Brown and Glen Frye. And Glen Frye was really appreciative, because he said he only wrote a little bit of it. And that's how generous Jackson Brown was. Interestingly, the song was the first song on The Eagles' debut album, and it appeared on Jackson Brown's second album.

And so, this song -- to me -- is more than a message about women and looking for love or looking for romance. It is a message, to me, about how to live our lives more joyfully; how to live our lives more easily. And, to me, it's an overall feel-good song that that is a "don't sweat the small stuff," you know; have a laid-back attitude about life; and appreciate the moments and the simplicity of it all in a spirit of relaxation and positivity. Take it easy!

Interestingly, years later, Glenn Frye was asked what he thought the song was about. And he said, "*I think the song is about a message that you shouldn't get too big too fast.*" His perspective was: don't rush; don't try to force anything or make it before its time. Just take it easy.

And I love the two perspectives! So, Jackson Brown's was: if you're feeling stressed, and if things aren't going well, just take it easy. Glen Frye was: right off the bat, don't rush too fast; just relax, enjoy the journey, and take it easy. And I think both perspectives show what a wonderful message it is and a blessing and a lesson for how to live our lives by taking it easy.

So let's look at the three points that we can learn to take it easy, so we could live with greater peace, greater joy, greater fun, and greater ease.

The first one, I'll just use some of the lines:

Don't let the sound of your own wheels drive you crazy

How many people have ever let the sound of your own wheels drive you crazy? Anybody ever? You ever been so worked up about something you couldn't stop thinking about it? Because those wheels just keep turning. I mean, you ever had a tough time just shutting your mind off so you could just go to sleep

or do something else? You know, our minds are like the Energizer Bunny. Sometimes they just keep going and going and going.

Interestingly, Aristotle, the Greek philosopher, said, "*No great mind has ever existed without a little madness.*" He said that every one of us create a little bit -- have a little bit -- of craziness. That we think some thought that are irrational; we think some thoughts that are freaky and contradictory and just plain old weird. And it is normal! Because it is a part of having a creative mind that we explore different situations and possibilities. And sometimes they are a bit strange.

The important thing is to not let those things drive us crazy ... meaning, specifically, to not let our thoughts stop us from experiencing peace of mind; and appreciating life; and feeling a sense of ease and thankfulness and goodness.

You know, there's a Buddhist concept, and it's called "monkey mind." And it states that our human minds are like monkeys; they jump from branch to branch and tree to tree. You can get distracted very easily. And sometimes our minds can be busy, and we can get nothing done. Our minds can be busy, and yet we don't feel a sense of peace or a sense of enjoyment.

In the Book of James, it kind of warns about not having a monkey mind. And here's what it says. It says, "*Someone who is being double-minded*" – or monkey-minded; jumping around – "*is unstable in every way and should not expect to receive anything from the Lord.*" You know, our minds need to be relaxed; it needs to be focused; they need to be open, you know. Because a monkey mind is really a distracted mind. It is a worried and an anxious mind. And it is not the kind of mind we need to live our lives more joyously and to be able to take it easy.

And so, what we need to do is to **LEARN HOW TO QUIET OUR MONKEY MIND BY RESTING IT AND IMMERSING IT IN THE CHRIST MIND.**

You know, Psalm 46, Verse 10, tells us how to do it. It say, "*Be still and know that I am God.*" One of the greatest things we could do to get the use and the power of our mind is to learn how to quiet it; how to calm it and soothe it; how to rest it and help it just relax. Because one of the things is: the more still and silent that we quiet our monkey mind in the Christ Mind, you know what happens? It renews our minds. It refreshes our minds. It restores and revitalizes our minds. It replenishes our minds and helps us realign with the allness, the oneness, and the goodness of God.

The 23rd Psalm -- I love it! It says:

*"The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.
He makes me to lie down in green pastures.
He leads me besides the still waters.
He restores my soul."*

And what this is saying is that stillness restores us. Quietness replenishes us. It renews us. And the question is: How much time are we willing to spend quieting our mind and resting our mind and just being still?

In Isaiah 30, Verse 15, it says, "*In quietness and in trust shall be our strength.*"

And so, the question is: Are you willing to quiet your monkey mind and to immerse it in the Christ mind so that it can renew us; it can refresh and revitalize; refocus and reconnect us with the fullness and the goodness and the allness of God?

The first step to take it easy and to not let the sound of our own wheels drive us crazy is to quiet our mind; to spend more time in that silence so we can restore and renew the power of the Christ Mind within us.

The second thing we learn, and here are the next lyrics:

**Lighten up while you still can
Don't even try to understand
Just find a place and make a stand
And take it easy**

Dr. Joseph Wilmont had a heart attack at the age of 40 and he was really stunned because he didn't have any history of heart issues in his family, and he was in good health. And he was lying in the hospital bed trying to figure out: How did he get here? How did this happen to him? Him as a doctor? Him as healthy? Him with no history of heart issues?

And then he realized it was all the long hours that he put in, and that he was always tense; he was always worried. He always had so much on his mind; he never took time off. And then he found that he was always serious; that he didn't laugh or joke around or play or take very much time for himself. He didn't stop and smell the roses. He didn't stop and really enjoy and appreciate his life.

And he realized what got him in that bed was: he took life too seriously. He took himself too seriously. And he realized that life is too short to spend it being so serious. And so, he began to change his life. And it was only at the age of 40 did he begin allowing himself to allow his life to be fun; to allow his life to be easy and joyful.

So, how many people here have ever taken yourself or life too seriously? Anybody? Okay.

And so, what we need to do is: **WE NEED TO LIGHTEN UP**. We need to brighten up a little bit and not just be so serious; not just be so tense all the time. So here are some bloopers from church bulletins to see if it'll lighten us up a little bit. Here we go; the church bloopers:

"For those who have children and don't know it, we have a nursery downstairs." [Congregants laugh]

"The low self-esteem support group will meet Thursday at 7 p .m. to 8 .30 p .m. Please use the back door." [Congregants laugh]

"This being Easter Sunday, we will ask Mrs. Lewis to come forward and lay an egg on the altar." [Congregants laugh]

"Barbara C remains in the hospital and needs donors for more blood transfusions. She is also having trouble sleeping and requests tapes of Pastor Jack's sermons." [Congregants laugh]

"Missionary from Africa, Bertha Belch, is speaking at Calvary Memorial Church. Come tonight and hear Bertha Belch all the way from Africa." [Congregants laugh]

I saw this one; this is from a cemetery in England on one of the gravestones. It says, *"Here lies an atheist. All dressed up and no place to go."* [Congregants laugh]

You know why angels can fly? Because they take themselves lightly. [Congregants murmur] And we all need to just lighten up a little bit. You know, it may not change all the circumstances of life, but it'll make us feel lighter, brighter, and more joyful.

I believe the key to lightening up -- the first one -- is to have a more positive perspective. You know, the fact is: we're not going to have all the answers all the time. Life isn't going to work out the way we want all the time. And we can't just keep trying to understand why every single thing happened. We need to

just accept life and roll with it; and still be able to smile and to laugh at ourselves; and see the bright side and still keep enjoying our lives.

Proverbs 17: 22 says, "A joyful heart is good medicine." And so, a part of lightening up is to not only have a positive perspective, but have a joyful heart in all that you do.

And so, I want you to look at your life and ask yourself the question: Where in my life am I being too serious? Where in my life do I need to lighten up? Where in my life could I express a more joyful heart and joyfulness in all that I do? In your work life, in your family and relationship life, and how you treat yourself, are you too serious? And are you willing to lighten up and brighten up a little bit more?

So the second way to take it easy is to lighten up and don't take ourselves too seriously by choosing to live with a positive perspective and to have a joyful heart.

The last lines from the verse -- I love! -- it says:

**We may lose and we may win
Though we will never be here again
So open up, I'm climbin' in
So take it easy**

And I think, in this part of the song, he is yearning for something deeper. He doesn't want to live a superficial life anymore. He wants more. He wants to go deeper than he's ever gone before, and to experience more love in a greater way. And he's willing to take a risk. He's willing to take a chance. He's willing to open up and climb in to allow his life to go to another level.

And as good as any of our lives are currently, I know every one of us would like our lives to go to a higher level of joy, or peace, or happiness, or meaning, or a sense of fulfillment. And the truth is: we're not going to be here forever, you know; and we're not going to always win. But the question is: Are we willing to try? Are we willing to go for it? Are we willing to put it out there? And whether it's love -- or for whatever goal or dream it is -- are we willing to do that?

So, where in your life are you willing to try? Where in your life are you wanting to go deeper or experience more? Where in your life are you willing to just give it a shot and take a risk? Take a chance and open up and climb in?

On April the 23rd, 1910, Theodore Roosevelt gave a famous talk in Paris, and it is known as "Man in the Arena." I was inspired by those words in preparing this song to share this with you:

"It is not the critic who counts; not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles or where the doer of deeds could have done them better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly; who errs, who comes short again and again because there is no effort without error and shortcoming; but who actually does strive to do the deeds; who knows great enthusiasms, the great devotions; who spends himself in a worthy cause; who at best knows in the end the triumph of high achievement, and who at worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly, so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who neither know victory nor defeat."

And this is saying: **IF YOU WANT TO LIVE, YOU'VE GOT TO TRY.** You've got to be in the arena. You've got to put it out there and not let anything stop you from living ... you know, from trying and enjoying your life. But we can't be afraid to go after our dreams. We can't be afraid to live the life we want. We can't be afraid to live the life we are here to live.

So, the question is: are you willing to take a chance on your dream? Are you willing to open up and climb in? Are you willing to allow your life to be fun and easy?

You know, something else I kind of like about this song; it's about driving out there! There's something about driving on the open road that, you know, is about moving your life forward to some greater possibilities and experiences; searching for something better; wanting to break free. There's something powerful about that experience, and that is available for us wherever we are. We can drive forward.

We can move forward to something greater and better, but we need to do these three things:

Don't let the sound of your own wheels drive you crazy. Learn how to quiet your monkey mind and immerse your mind in the Mind of God.

And the second is: lighten up while you still can. You don't need to understand. That we don't need to take life or ourselves too seriously. We've got to be willing to have a positive perspective on our lives and to be willing to have a joyful heart.

And then, finally, we need to take a chance. We need to open up and climb in and go after our dreams, and to give it a shot. Because we all want to take our lives to another level. There's more for us, but we have to be willing to put it out there.

Don't stress. Don't let your monkey mind or negativity stop you from living; from trying; from going after your best life. That is the beautiful message of the song, "Take It Easy." God bless you all.