



# Sensory Overload Symptoms in Adults Explained

## Introduction

Many adults today find themselves **overwhelmed by noise, crowds, and constant stimulation** in daily life. The modern world's barrage of sights, sounds, and information can push our minds and bodies past their ability to cope – a phenomenon often referred to as **sensory overload**. If you've ever felt panicky in a busy store or utterly drained after a noisy day, you're not alone. Sensory overload can affect anyone, including faithful Christians who strive to "live a joyful life" in Christ. Experiencing overwhelm is **not a sign of weak faith or moral failure**; it is a human challenge that even biblical figures faced. King David cried out, "*When my heart is overwhelmed, lead me to the rock that is higher than I*" (Psalm 61:2 NIV), and Jesus Himself understood the need to step away from the crowds for rest (Mark 6:31). In this article, we will explain what sensory overload is and its symptoms in adults, explore why it happens (with insights from neuroscience and psychology), and offer a holistic approach to managing it – one that integrates **biblical wisdom, spiritual disciplines, lifestyle changes, therapeutic strategies, and medical help**. Our goal is to provide both **devotional encouragement and practical guidance**, so that you can navigate sensory overload and continue to grow in joy and deep relationship with Jesus Christ.

## What Is Sensory Overload? (A Scientific and Spiritual Perspective)

**Sensory overload** happens when you're taking in **more input from your five senses than your brain can sort through and process** ([Healthline](#)). In other words, the brain's "filter" gets overwhelmed. Imagine your brain as a beautifully designed, complex computer: normally it receives sensory messages (what you see, hear, smell, taste, and touch) and interprets them so you can respond appropriately. But when *too many* signals flood in all at once, the system can **no longer prioritize or filter** them effectively. One medical source explains that "*when there's competing sensory information, your brain can't interpret it all at once... Your brain feels trapped by all the input it's getting, and your body starts to panic in a chain reaction.*" ([Healthline – What Is Sensory Overload?](#)).

In practical terms, multiple conversations going on in a room, a bright flashing light overhead, and loud background music might all together push a person's nervous system into overload. **Anyone can experience sensory overload** under intense circumstances. Think of being in a packed airport with announcements blaring and crowds jostling – it's not hard to feel overwhelmed! However, **triggers and tolerances differ from person to person**. Some people have a naturally higher sensitivity to sensory input. Psychology refers to these individuals as having "**sensory processing sensitivity**", often labeled *highly sensitive persons (HSPs)*. Research confirms that those with higher sensory sensitivity tend to experience higher stress levels in stimulating environments <sup>1</sup> <sup>2</sup>. In fact, a 2024 systematic review found a consistent association between being very sensitive to sensory stimuli and elevated stress in adults, highlighting that this trait can be a risk factor for overwhelm <sup>1</sup> <sup>2</sup>. From a Christian perspective, we can view this sensitivity as part of the diverse way God created people – "*fearfully and wonderfully made*" (Psalm 139:14) – albeit with unique challenges.

Importantly, **sensory overload is not "just in your head."** It has a real, biological basis. When you're overloaded, the brain's amygdala (the alarm center) may interpret the sensory barrage as danger, triggering



a **fight-or-flight stress response**. Adrenaline and cortisol (stress hormones) surge, heightening your heart rate and anxiety. Your body is essentially saying, *“Escape this overwhelming situation!”* This is why someone on the verge of sensory overload might feel an intense urge to flee the room or cover their ears. Understanding this physiological piece can be freeing – it validates that the overwhelm you feel is a **genuine mind-body reaction**, not a personal weakness. Even Jesus acknowledged the limits of our human bodies. He told His disciples to come away to a quiet place and rest after they had been surrounded by crowds, because *“so many people were coming and going that they did not even have a chance to eat”* (Mark 6:31 NIV). Our Lord designed our bodies with **needs for rest and relief from constant stimulation**.

## Common Symptoms of Sensory Overload in Adults

How do you know if you (or someone you love) are experiencing sensory overload? The symptoms can vary, but **common signs reported by adults** include:

- **Difficulty focusing or concentrating** – Your mind struggles to tune out background stimuli. For example, you can’t focus on a conversation because of other noise in the room, or you feel mentally “foggy” when too much is happening at once ([Healthline – Sensory Overload Symptoms](#)). Many describe it as **brain fatigue** or paralysis in decision-making when bombarded by input.
- **Irritability or extreme stress** – You may feel inexplicably **angry, anxious, or on edge** when in a sensory-rich environment. Little annoyances get magnified. A normally patient Christian might find themselves snapping at their spouse or children when the noise level at home crosses their threshold. This isn’t because of a lack of love or character; it can be a symptom of overload. Proverbs 14:17 says, “A quick-tempered person does foolish things,” yet when we understand the trigger, we can address the root (in this case, calming our senses) rather than simply condemn the temper.
- **Urgent need to escape or block input** – A classic sign is the **urge to cover your ears or shield your eyes** to block out stimuli. You might suddenly need to leave a crowded room or step outside to regroup. Some adults describe feeling *trapped* or panicky until they get to a quieter or darker space. In a church context, someone might step out of a loud worship service to sit in the lobby for a few minutes. Taking that break can be wise; even Jesus sought solitude when overwhelmed by crowds (Luke 5:16).
- **Feeling “wound up” or over-excited** – Some experience sensory overload not as panic but as an uncomfortable **over-stimulation**. You might feel your heart racing and thoughts speeding (almost like having too much caffeine). It can be hard to relax or sleep after an overload episode because your nervous system is still revved up.
- **Heightened sensitivity to textures or small sensory details** – Things that normally wouldn’t bother others – the tag on your shirt, the buzzing of a light bulb, a strong perfume in the room – suddenly feel **unbearable**. You may reflexively withdraw from touch or become picky about clothing because certain fabrics “hurt” or irritate your skin when you’re overloaded ([Healthline](#)). These responses can puzzle others, but they are legitimate symptoms.
- **Physical symptoms: fatigue, headaches, or nausea** – Sensory overload isn’t only mental/emotional; it often manifests in the body. Headaches or migraines can be triggered by intense sensory input (like flashing lights or loud sounds). Some individuals report feeling **exhausted** after navigating a stimulating environment – as if they ran a marathon, their muscles tense and energy drained. Others might feel dizzy or nauseous (for example, some people get motion sickness in busy places due to visual overload).



It's important to note that **each person's symptom profile may differ** <sup>3</sup>. One adult might primarily get anxious and need quiet time alone; another might become clumsy and forgetful when overloaded; yet another might break down in tears or feel emotionally numb (sometimes called "shutdown"). **Being attuned to your own warning signs** is key. Perhaps you start shaking your leg or rubbing your temples when overwhelmed – signals that it's time to step back and regroup. Paying attention to these signs without judgment can help you intervene early, extending grace to yourself as God extends grace to you. Psalm 103:14 reminds us God knows our frame and remembers "we are dust" – we have limits.

### Real-Life Example: "Sam's Story"

To illustrate sensory overload symptoms in action, let's consider a real-life scenario adapted from a testimony by an occupational therapist [Anne-Laure Jackson, OT](#). **Sam** is a vibrant, middle-aged Christian man who loves people and cherishes attending church. He genuinely desires to engage in fellowship and worship. However, every Sunday, Sam faces a battle: the **overlapping sounds** of music and chatter in the church foyer, the **bright stage lights**, and the **crowded sanctuary** all bombard his senses. He finds himself growing **anxious and irritable** during the service, even as his heart longs to focus on God. Small things – like the fabric of the pew or the person singing off-key behind him – start to overwhelm his mind. Eventually, Sam slips out to the restroom just to find a moment of quiet. He often feels guilty and confused afterward: *"I should be joyful in worship, not edgy and exhausted. What's wrong with me?"*

Sam's experience is a classic case of adult sensory overload. There is nothing "wrong" with his desire to leave; his brain simply reached a limit. Understanding this has been freeing for Sam. He's learning to share with trusted friends at church about his challenges, echoing Galatians 6:2 (*"Carry each other's burdens"*), and they're finding practical ways to help him participate more comfortably (like offering a seat in a quieter overflow room). We'll return to Sam later when we discuss coping strategies. But his story shows how **even a loving Christian in a beloved church setting can suffer sensory overload – and that recognizing it is the first step toward managing it with grace.**

## Causes and Triggers of Sensory Overload

Why do some adults experience sensory overload, either occasionally or frequently? **Triggers** can be external, internal, or a combination:

- **External Stimuli:** Any situation with **intense or competing sensory input** can trigger overload. Common culprits include environments with **loud noise, multiple conversations, flashing or harsh lighting, crowded or cluttered visuals, strong smells, or uncomfortable touch**. For example, a parent at home might face a perfect storm: the TV is on, the baby is crying, the dog is barking, someone is cooking with strong spices, and then a family member starts shouting from another room – suddenly it's "the last straw" and the parent feels they **"can't handle it anymore."** This kind of chaotic multisensory input can push the brain into fight-or-flight mode as described earlier. Similarly, a busy open-plan office with phones ringing and people walking behind you might be very triggering. Even positive events can overwhelm the senses – think of a wedding reception with loud music, flashing cameras, and crowds; some people need to periodically step outside for air.
- **Individual Neurological Differences:** Some people are simply **more sensitive by design**. God's creation is wonderfully diverse – just as we have different natural aptitudes or personalities, we have different nervous system sensitivities. About **5% to 15% of the population may have significant**

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**sensory processing differences** that make them *over-responsive* to sensory input ([Cleveland Clinic](#))<sup>4</sup>. These differences often show up in childhood (such as a child who is bothered by tags in clothing or covers their ears for moderate noises), but many adults have them too – sometimes without realizing it. You might have gone through life just “feeling more easily overwhelmed” than others, not knowing there’s a physiological reason. Modern psychology gives labels like **Sensory Processing Disorder (SPD)** or “**over-responsive sensory profile**” for extreme cases, though SPD isn’t officially in the diagnostic manual yet. Even without a diagnosis, knowing that “*I have a sensitive nervous system*” can reframe how you approach your limits. It’s akin to how some people have sensitive eyesight or hearing – not a flaw, but a factor to consider. **Scripture affirms the value of our differences:** “*the body [of Christ] has many parts*” (1 Corinthians 12:12) and each has a role. Highly sensitive individuals often have gifts of keen observation, empathy, or creativity that balance their challenges.

- **Related Health Conditions:** Sensory overload is **commonly associated with certain neurodevelopmental and mental health conditions**. If you are an adult with any of the following, you might be especially prone to overload episodes:
  - **Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)** – Many autistic individuals experience hypersensitivity to sounds, lights, textures, etc. Their sensory filtering mechanisms operate differently, making overload more likely<sup>5</sup>. (As one study noted, autistic people often experience sensory information with greater intensity<sup>6</sup>.) An adult on the milder end of the autism spectrum (formerly called Asperger’s) might have managed to mask their sensory issues, but they’re still present under the surface.
  - **Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)** – In ADHD, the brain struggles with regulating attention. Sensory inputs compete for your brain’s focus, which can lead to feeling overwhelmed by stimuli that others might ignore<sup>7</sup>. Adults with ADHD often report things like sensitivity to background noise or being easily distracted by sensations, which can culminate in overload especially when trying to concentrate.
  - **Generalized Anxiety Disorder (and other anxiety conditions)** – Chronic anxiety “turns up the volume” on your nervous system’s alertness. If you’re already anxious, your startle reflex is higher and your tolerance for busy environments is lower. During panic attacks, **senses can feel heightened** – lights seem too bright, sounds too loud<sup>8</sup>. The same is true during PTSD episodes; the brain is on high alert, so stimuli easily overwhelm.
  - **Fibromyalgia and Chronic Pain** – These conditions involve changes in how the brain processes signals, sometimes including sensory signals. Fibromyalgia, for instance, is linked to **abnormal sensory processing** – many with fibro report being easily overstimulated by noise or touch<sup>9</sup>. Pain itself is a sensory input, so if your body is already flooded with pain signals, other inputs may become “too much” faster.
  - **Migraines or Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI)** – Adults who suffer migraines or have had head injuries often experience **sensory sensitivities**. For example, during a migraine, one might need a dark, quiet room (because of photophobia and phonophobia). A history of concussions or TBI can also lower one’s thresholds for sensory input as the brain’s processing has been disrupted.
  - **Other Neurodivergent Conditions:** People with Tourette syndrome, OCD, bipolar disorder, and others may also have sensory processing quirks or heightened responses<sup>10</sup>. Additionally, **Highly Sensitive Person (HSP)** is a term for individuals who score high on a standardized sensitivity scale (about 20% of people). Being an HSP isn’t a disorder at all; it often correlates with being thoughtful and intuitive. But it does mean normal stimuli might hit you harder – for example, an HSP might find a chaotic environment more draining and need more downtime to recover.

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It's worth emphasizing that **you can experience sensory overload without any of these conditions**. Stress, fatigue, and personality all play a role too. In fact, **life circumstances and burnout can lower anyone's tolerance**. If you're running on empty (physically exhausted or emotionally stressed), you'll hit overload more easily. Think of Elijah the prophet: after a huge spiritual victory against the prophets of Baal, he "ran for his life" from Jezebel, became extremely overwhelmed, and even prayed for death (1 Kings 19:4). Why? Elijah was likely **exhausted and stressed**, so even one threat toppled his resilience. God's response was telling: He let Elijah sleep and fed him with bread and water – **addressing his physical state first** (1 Kings 19:5–8), then later spoke in a "gentle whisper" (1 Kings 19:12), not a loud voice. In our overwhelm, we often need something similar: rest and basic needs met, then God's quiet guidance. It shows how intertwined our physical and spiritual well-being are.

- **Fast-Paced, Tech-Filled Lifestyle:** Modern adults are inundated with stimuli in a way previous generations weren't. The constant **ping of notifications, multitasking, and screen time** can put us in a state of perpetual partial attention. Over time, this can erode our ability to filter sensory input. For example, if you're constantly switching your attention between phone, computer, TV, and in-person interactions, your brain might struggle when asked to tune out one of those streams. Some experts note that adult sensory overload is often the result of "*fast-paced, challenging, and competitive work and family demands*" – we rush from one thing to another without the chance to "*take a deep breath*" ([Harkla Blog](#)). From a faith perspective, this is a reminder of the value of *stillness*. The Psalmist says, "*Be still, and know that I am God*" (Psalm 46:10). If we never allow ourselves stillness, our senses never get a sabbath. It's no wonder that constant motion can lead to overload.

## The Impact of Sensory Overload on Life and Faith

Experiencing sensory overload can affect many areas of an adult's life:

- **Work and Daily Tasks:** You might find certain work environments or chores very challenging. An office with ringing phones or a cluttered, noisy workshop could hinder your productivity or even career choices. Routine errands like grocery shopping in a fluorescent-lit, bustling supermarket may leave you drained for the rest of the day. It's not simply disliking these tasks; your nervous system is genuinely **overwriting your capacity** at those times. If this is you, realize that it's okay to seek accommodations – maybe noise-cancelling headphones at work or shopping at quieter hours. As Proverbs 22:3 says, "*The prudent see danger and take refuge.*" Taking refuge from sensory "danger" is wise, not weak!
- **Relationships and Emotions:** Sensory overload can put strain on relationships if not understood. Loved ones may misinterpret an overloaded person's behavior. For instance, if after a hectic day you become **withdrawn, short-tempered, or shut yourself in your room**, family members might feel hurt or think you're upset with them. In reality, you might just be overwhelmed and needing a quiet recharge. Clear communication is key: letting your spouse or friend know, "I had a really overstimulating day, so I need some quiet time to decompress" can prevent miscommunication. It's similar to how Jesus explained to His closest disciples that His soul was overwhelmed in Gethsemane and asked them to watch and pray with Him (Matthew 26:38). He verbalized His emotional state and need for support. Likewise, we can share with trusted people about our overload experiences so they can support rather than take offense. Emotionally, frequent sensory overload can lead to feelings of **frustration, shame, or even depression** if one starts to believe "I can't handle life like everyone else." It's crucial to counter that lie with truth: *God's grace is sufficient for you, and His power*

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*is made perfect in weakness* (2 Corinthians 12:9). Everyone has different weaknesses; yours might just be an easily overtaxed nervous system. It doesn't make you less of a person – in fact, it may be part of how God keeps you relying on Him and developing empathy for others who struggle.

- **Spiritual Life and Church Involvement:** For Christians, sensory overload can sometimes interfere with activities that are meant to be joyful, like corporate worship, prayer meetings, or fellowship events. If a church service is very loud (common in some modern worship settings), believers with sensory sensitivity might actually dread going, or force themselves and then leave feeling frazzled rather than uplifted. This can introduce spiritual dilemmas: *“Is it unfaithful that I want to skip church because the noise overwhelms me?”* or *“Why can’t I feel God’s peace during worship like others do? Am I doing something wrong?”* Let’s address these concerns with compassion and truth:
- **God is not upset with you for having sensory limits.** Nowhere does the Bible say that loving Him requires subjecting yourself to physical distress. In fact, Jesus said *“The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath”* (Mark 2:27), meaning God instituted rest and religious observances to bless people, not to burden or harm them. If a particular environment at church routinely triggers overload, it’s not sinful to find a creative workaround. Perhaps sit in a quieter area (even if it’s the lobby or an adjacent room with a video feed), or attend a smaller service or Bible study instead of the packed main service. **Your relationship with God is not measured by how well you tolerate a rock-concert-like atmosphere** – He desires mercy, not sacrifice (Matthew 9:13). What matters is worshipping “in spirit and truth” (John 4:24), which you can do in quiet as well as in loud praise.
- **Prayer and quiet time challenges:** On the flip side, some find *silence* difficult if they are used to constant sensory input (the opposite problem). Blaise Pascal famously said, *“All of humanity’s problems stem from man’s inability to sit quietly in a room alone.”* Many of us flood our senses with stimuli (music, TV, social media) and then find that in stillness, we feel restless or anxious – our minds race. This can hinder our prayer life, as we struggle to settle down and focus on God. If sensory overload has trained your brain to expect constant input, learning the discipline of silence before God can be a journey. **Christian meditation** (focusing your mind on a Scripture or an attribute of God) is a helpful practice to recalibrate this. It might be difficult at first – you might feel “overloaded by internal stimuli” (your own thoughts). But gently persist in giving yourself short periods of quiet with the Lord. *“In quietness and trust is your strength,”* says Isaiah 30:15. Over time, as you experience the still, small voice of God like Elijah did (1 Kings 19:12), you may find your tolerance for silence increases and the need for external stimulation decreases. This is the **spiritual counterpoint** to sensory overload: the cultivation of holy peace in God’s presence.
- **Ministry implications:** If you serve in ministry, be aware of your limits. Pushing yourself to attend every event or volunteer in chaotic environments might actually reduce your effectiveness due to overload. It’s okay to serve God within the bounds of how He designed you. Maybe you’re better one-on-one or in a structured setting than in a noisy kids’ Sunday school class – that’s fine! The body of Christ has many members with different gifts (1 Corinthians 12), and those who thrive in high stimulation can take those roles, while you take another. Likewise, churches as a whole are learning to accommodate sensory sensitivities. Some congregations now offer **“sensory-friendly” worship services or spaces**, equipped with things like noise-reducing headphones, dimmed lighting, or a designated quiet room for those who need a break. These aren’t indulgences; they are ways of “bearing one another’s burdens” (Galatians 6:2) so that everyone can participate in worship. In fact, a recent guide for churches stressed the importance of creating inclusive environments for worshippers with sensory sensitivities, offering tips such as providing **calming visuals, moments of silence in the liturgy, flexible seating options, and open communication about individual**

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**needs** (Samford University, *Worship Without Limits Resource Guide*, 2025). The idea is that **small adjustments by the community can make a big difference** in helping sensory-sensitive members feel welcomed and able to engage.

In summary, sensory overload can touch every aspect of life – work, relationships, and faith – but with understanding and adjustments, its impact can be mitigated. Now, let's turn to concrete strategies and solutions, integrating scientific insight and biblical wisdom.

## Holistic Strategies for Managing Sensory Overload

The challenges of sensory overload may be complex, but there is **hope**. God, in His grace, has provided many avenues of relief and strength – from the spiritual practices taught in Scripture to the knowledge gleaned from neuroscience and psychology. A holistic approach acknowledges that we are **body, mind, and spirit** (1 Thessalonians 5:23) and thus effective management will address all three. Below are strategies grouped into **four categories**: spiritual practices, lifestyle adjustments, therapeutic techniques, and medical interventions. These complement each other; you can mix and match what works best for your situation. And remember, *“Ultimately, God is the great physician”* who brings true healing, but He often works through the means of grace available to us (Jeremiah 30:17, Exodus 15:26).

### A. Spiritual Practices for Peace and Resilience

- 1. Prayer and Casting Your Cares on God** – This is our first line of defense and comfort. When you start feeling overwhelmed, **turn it into a cue to pray**. Philippians 4:6-7 encourages us, *“Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.”* And what's the promise? *“The peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”* This isn't a trite platitude – many believers can testify that even a quick whispered prayer for help (“Lord, give me Your peace right now”) in a chaotic moment can bring a measure of calm. It may not remove all the sensory noise around you, but it **invites the Holy Spirit** to strengthen you internally. Jesus Himself frequently withdrew to pray (Luke 5:16), especially after intense periods of ministry (which likely involved a lot of sensory and emotional stimulation). In those prayers, He realigned with the Father's presence. We can do likewise. Additionally, **casting your cares** (1 Peter 5:7) means actively telling God what is overwhelming you – “Lord, this noise is too much for me, please help me find relief.” He cares for you, as that verse assures. Some Christians find it helpful to use *breath prayers* in overload moments: a short phrase you repeat slowly while breathing deeply (for example, breathing in: “Jesus, Son of David,” breathing out: “have mercy on me”). This combines prayer with a calming physiological technique (breath control), grounding you in God's love.
- 2. Meditation on Scripture** – The practice of meditation, in the Christian sense, means to **focus your mind intently on God's truth**. When sensory input is overabundant, refocusing on a single calming truth can steady you. Try memorizing a few key verses that you can bring to mind when needed. For instance, *“Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you... Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid”* (John 14:27 NIV) is a promise from Jesus you can repeat and reflect on when you're in a frazzling situation. Psalm 94:19 says, *“When anxiety was great within me, Your consolation brought me joy.”* Pondering such words is like putting noise-cancelling headphones on your soul – it filters out lies like “I'm not safe” or “I can't handle this,” and replaces them with God's voice of comfort. Some practical tips: carry a small Scripture card in your pocket or set a Bible verse lock-screen on your

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phone. If you start feeling overloaded, take a moment to read or recite that verse slowly. Let it bring your racing thoughts back to **God's steadfast presence**. Joshua 1:8 links success in life with meditating on God's law "day and night." Overcoming overwhelm is certainly an area we need success in, and meditating on His word can help achieve that.

3. **Worship and Music** – Interestingly, while loud or dissonant music can be a trigger, **soothing and worshipful music can be a remedy**. Music has direct access to our emotional brain. David played the harp to calm King Saul when an evil spirit tormented him (1 Samuel 16:23), demonstrating music's therapeutic effect. Create a playlist of gentle worship songs or instrumentals that steady your heart. When you feel sensory overload building, if possible, pop in earbuds and listen to something peaceful. Singing along softly can also regulate your breathing and shift your focus. The lyrics of worship remind us of God's power and love, which can shrink the perceived threat of our surroundings. For example, a hymn like *"It Is Well with My Soul"* or a chorus like *"Turn Your Eyes Upon Jesus (look full in His wonderful face, and the things of earth will grow strangely dim)"* directly speaks to our situation – that by looking to Christ, the intensity of "the things of earth" can fade. **Corporate worship note:** If the standard music at your church is too stimulating (common in some contemporary services), it's okay to find alternative ways to worship. Perhaps attend a smaller, acoustic service if offered, or use earplugs designed for concerts (they lower the volume without distorting sound, allowing you to sing without pain). You might also supplement Sunday mornings with personal worship times at home where you can control the volume and environment. Remember, God accepts worship in many forms; what matters is it's in spirit and truth.
  
4. **Fellowship and Transparency** – One of the great blessings God gives us is **the community of believers**. Don't battle sensory overload alone or in secrecy. Share your struggle with a trusted brother or sister in Christ, or a small group, and invite their prayers and practical support. Sometimes just knowing that people *know* and accept your limitations reduces the pressure you put on yourself. It also opens the door for them to help – maybe a friend can run an errand with you to ease your anxiety in a busy place, or your spouse can handle the chaotic bedtime routine with the kids on days you're maxed out. Galatians 6:2 calls us to *"carry each other's burdens,"* and that includes being patient and understanding when someone is overwhelmed. If your church has a **prayer team or counseling ministry**, consider reaching out. As Proverbs 11:14 says, *"in an abundance of counselors there is safety."* There may be others in your congregation with similar challenges; connecting with them could encourage you both. Even beyond church, online Christian support groups exist (for example, there are Christian forums for anxiety, autism, ADHD, etc., where sensory issues are discussed). Just ensure any advice aligns with Scripture and doesn't veer into unbiblical coping mechanisms.
  
5. **Rest and Sabbath Rhythm** – From the beginning, God modeled a rhythm of work and rest (Genesis 2:2-3). Regular rest is **not optional**; it's essential for our well-being. Make sure you are observing a form of *Sabbath* in your life – a time each week where you unplug from the busyness and allow your **senses to be refreshed**. For someone prone to overload, your Sabbath might involve very minimal stimuli: perhaps a quiet morning with a cup of tea, a leisurely prayer walk in nature, or simply extra sleep. Jesus said, *"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest"* (Matthew 11:28 NIV). Consider that command seriously. Sometimes the most spiritual thing you can do when overwhelmed is to **take a nap or go to bed early**. Elijah needed sleep and nourishment more than a sermon when he was burned out (1 Kings 19). Likewise, allow yourself that physical reset. By keeping a healthy rhythm, you may prevent some overload episodes from occurring in the first place, as

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you're less likely to be running on fumes. During your rest times, practice *"the ministry of presence"* with God – simply sit or lie in His presence, perhaps listening to quiet worship or enjoying His creation, without any performance or productivity. This trains your soul to experience God's peace in stillness, which will fortify you for the louder moments of life.

## B. Lifestyle and Environmental Adjustments

1. **Create a Sensory Safe Space at Home** – It's important to have at least one environment where you can retreat and recalibrate your senses. If possible, **designate a corner or room in your home as a calming haven**. Keep the décor and lighting gentle (soft lamps or natural light rather than harsh fluorescents). You could include items that soothe you: a comfy chair or weighted blanket, pleasant gentle scents (if you like aromatherapy, e.g. lavender oil), and minimal clutter to rest your eyes. Consider this space your "prayer closet" or refuge when you're overloaded. When you come home after a taxing day, spending even 15 minutes in your quiet corner reading a devotional or just breathing can help dissipate residual stress. For some, the bathroom with the door locked, a warm shower, and quiet is the only sanctuary – if that's the case, use it! The idea is akin to Psalm 91:1, *"Whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty."* Let your space, however small, be a physical symbol of that spiritual truth – a **shadow of the Almighty** where you find rest.
2. **Sensory-Friendly Tools** – Don't hesitate to use **practical aids** to reduce sensory input when needed. These aren't crutches; they are wisdom tools, much like wearing glasses to see clearly. Some examples:
3. **Noise-canceling headphones or earplugs:** If noise is a big trigger (and for many adults it is), invest in quality earplugs or headphones. You can wear subtle earplugs in public if you need to dull down the volume (there are high-fidelity earplugs that just lower overall noise without making you feel "underwater"). If you're commuting or in a noisy office, noise-canceling headphones with calming music or white noise can be a lifesaver. This isn't anti-social; it can help you remain **loving and calm** instead of frazzled.
4. **Blue-light filters or sunglasses:** For those bothered by bright lights or visual chaos, using tinted lenses can reduce strain. Many people in tech jobs use blue-light filtering glasses to reduce eye fatigue. If fluorescent lights are an issue, a baseball cap or brimmed hat indoors can shield some overhead glare (it might sound odd, but some find it very helpful). When outdoors or driving, polarized sunglasses can cut the visual "noise" of bright reflections.
5. **Weighted blankets or deep pressure items:** These have gained popularity for anxiety and insomnia, and there's research suggesting they can help **calm the nervous system through deep pressure stimulation**. One study found that weighted blanket use for a few weeks **reduced insomnia severity in adults with high sensory sensitivity**, and even helped those with anxiety sleep better <sup>11</sup>. The pressure from a weighted blanket or lap pad can encourage your body's relaxation response (akin to how a firm hug can feel calming). Using a weighted blanket during prayer or while winding down at night might improve your overall resilience to next-day stimuli.
6. **"Sensory diet" activities:** An occupational therapist could formally design this for you, but you can also experiment. The concept is to give your body **appropriate sensory input throughout the day to keep your nervous system regulated**. For example, proprioceptive input (heavy or resistive muscle work) is often calming – this could be doing some push-ups against the wall, carrying something moderately heavy for a short walk, or even chewing gum (the jaw pressure is regulating

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for some). If you find you get overloaded mid-afternoon at work, try taking a 5-minute break to do a few stretches, roll your shoulders, squeeze a stress ball, or step outside for fresh air. These little sensory snacks can prevent a big overload later. Ephesians 5:29 notes, *“No one hates his own body but feeds and cares for it, just as Christ cares for the church.”* Think of sensory self-care as part of caring for the body God gave you.

7. **Mindful breathing and grounding techniques:** These are simple yet powerful. When panic or overwhelm hits, intentionally **slow your breathing** – inhale for 4 seconds, exhale for 6-8 seconds, repeatedly. This signals your vagus nerve to tell the brain “we are safe, we can calm down.” You might also try grounding yourself by noting things you observe with each sense (“I feel the chair under me, I hear the clock ticking, I see the blue wall,” etc.). Such techniques are often taught in cognitive-behavioral therapy for anxiety. They align well with a biblical principle: *“Be still”* (Psalm 46:10) is essentially what you’re helping your body do. By stilling the body, you make it easier for the mind and spirit to be still in God’s presence too.
8. **Healthy Lifestyle Habits:** It’s amazing how much **diet, exercise, and sleep** influence our sensory tolerance. These may sound like general wellness tips, but they have specific effects on the nervous system:
9. **Exercise:** Regular physical activity can reduce stress hormones and increase endorphins, which in turn raises the threshold for overload. Even a brisk walk can modulate an over-active fight-or-flight response. Many Christians find that *prayer walks* serve double duty – the rhythmic movement calms their body while they cast cares on God. Find an activity you enjoy (gentle yoga, biking, swimming, etc.) and aim for at least 20-30 minutes most days. If you feel overwhelmed during the day, a short burst of exercise (like walking the stairs or doing jumping jacks) can reset your system. The Apostle Paul analogizes physical training to spiritual training (1 Timothy 4:8) – both have value. Training your body can actually help train your mind to be more steady under sensory assault.
10. **Diet and Hydration:** What and when you eat can affect sensory processing. **Low blood sugar** or excessive caffeine can make you much more jittery and less tolerant of stimuli. Try to eat balanced meals with protein and complex carbs to keep blood sugar stable. Omega-3 fatty acids (from fish, flaxseed, etc.) have been shown in some studies to support brain health and possibly mood regulation. Staying hydrated (drink water throughout the day) helps avoid fatigue and headaches that make overload worse. Also, notice if certain foods trigger you – some people find that too much sugar or processed food leaves them more irritable. Treat your body as the “temple of the Holy Spirit” (1 Corinthians 6:19) by giving it wholesome fuel. On the flip side, **moderation with stimulants:** If you consume caffeine, notice if it heightens your sensory sensitivity. It might be wise to cut back or avoid it on days you know you’ll face a lot of stimulation. Instead, rely on natural energy from rest and the joy of the Lord (Nehemiah 8:10).
11. **Sleep:** We can’t overstate the importance of sufficient, high-quality sleep. Fatigue is a known amplifier of sensory overload <sup>12</sup>. When you’re tired, your brain’s filtering capability drops. Prioritize sleep as part of your battle plan. This might mean enforcing a stricter bedtime, creating a wind-down routine (dimming lights, no screens 30 minutes before bed, maybe reading Scripture or a devotional to quiet your mind). If racing thoughts keep you up, try journaling your worries and giving them to God before bed; then do some deep breathing. **Protect your Sabbath sleep** too – occasionally allow yourself a nap or a longer night’s sleep if your body is in deficit. Psalm 127:2 gently chides those who “in vain” stay up late and rise early, “for He grants sleep to those He loves.” View your sleep as a *gift from God* to be received, not an obstacle to productivity.

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12. **Time Management and Scheduling:** How you structure your day or week can either mitigate or exacerbate sensory overload. **Build margin into your schedule.** If you know back-to-back meetings or events will overwhelm you, try to space them out or at least plan a quiet break in between. For instance, if you have a hectic workplace, spending your lunch break alone in a park or a quiet corner (rather than a noisy cafeteria) could recharge you for the afternoon. Learn to say “no” or “not now” to some invitations or tasks if your plate is too full. It’s not selfish; it’s stewardship of your God-given energy. Jesus Himself did not say yes to every demand – sometimes He left crowds waiting while He went to pray (Mark 1:35-38). Similarly, **prioritize what matters most** and don’t guilt yourself over declining less crucial activities that would push you over the edge. It can help to educate those around you: e.g., telling your family, “I need 30 minutes of quiet after I get home from work, then I’ll be able to engage more.” If you have young kids and can’t get that easily, see if your spouse or a relative can cover you for that decompression time. Planning ahead for potentially overstimulating events (like a shopping trip or a party) can also help – perhaps go at off-peak hours, or drive separately so you can leave early if needed, etc. The **Proverbs 31 woman** is praised in part for planning her affairs wisely (Prov. 31:27). It’s godly to plan your life in a way that accounts for your limits.
  
13. **Time in Nature:** God’s creation has a remarkable calming effect on our frazzled systems. Studies (and personal testimonies) show that spending time in natural settings – even just a quiet backyard or a short walk among trees – can lower stress and sensory overload. The colors, sounds, and smells of nature are generally soothing and rhythmic, a stark contrast to the jarring stimuli of urban life. Make it a habit to get outdoors regularly in a peaceful environment. Use that time to pray or simply to enjoy God’s handiwork. Jesus often taught outdoors and used nature in His illustrations, perhaps because He knew how it draws us to God’s heart (Matthew 6:26-29). Romans 1:20 says God’s qualities can be understood from what has been made. So a hike, gardening, or sitting by a stream can be both therapeutic and spiritually enriching. Some Christians refer to this as “creation therapy” – letting the beauty of the earth remind you of the Creator’s power and care, which puts your current overwhelm into perspective. When overwhelmed, look up at the sky, observe the birds (as Jesus advised in Matthew 6), and let your soul calm down.

## C. Therapeutic and Psychological Strategies

1. **Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy (CBT)** – CBT is a widely used therapy approach that can be very helpful for managing the *thoughts and behaviors* associated with sensory overload. While CBT won’t remove the physical sensations, it helps you address the **anxiety or catastrophic thinking** that might accompany those sensations. For example, if you start to panic in a crowded store, your mind might spiral into thoughts like, “I’m going to lose it, this is unbearable, I have to run!” CBT techniques would train you to challenge and replace those thoughts: *“I’ve felt this way before and I got through it. I can step outside for five minutes if I need to. I am not in real danger; this will pass. God is with me.”* By reframing the internal dialogue, you reduce the emotional amplification of the sensory input. A Christian therapist might incorporate scriptures into this reframing – like reminding you of 2 Timothy 1:7 (*“For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.”*) Claiming that promise (“God has given me a spirit of a sound mind – I can handle this with His help”) while breathing steadily can arrest the panic cycle. **Behavioral** techniques in CBT for sensory issues might include gradually exposing yourself to tolerable levels of stimulus and practicing coping skills, so your brain learns that it can endure without panic (much like physical therapy for a tolerance). If therapy is accessible to you, consider a few sessions focused on anxiety management – it can



provide personalized tools. If not, there are self-help books and online resources from a Christian CBT perspective that can guide you.

2. **Occupational Therapy (OT) and Sensory Integration** – Occupational therapists specialize in helping people function in daily activities, and some have additional training in **sensory integration therapy**. For an adult who has long struggled with sensory issues, a few consultations with an OT could be enlightening. They can assess your sensory profile – identifying which senses are most sensitive and which might be under-sensitive – and then work on a **sensory diet and coping strategies tailored to you**. For instance, if you are over-responsive to touch and sound, the OT might teach you and your family ways to ease tactile input (like warning before touching, using firm pressure rather than light touch which is often more irritating, etc.) and recommend noise dampening strategies we discussed. They might also improve your tolerance through graded exposure in a safe setting. Some clinics even have “sensory rooms” where individuals can experience different stimuli in a controlled way to build tolerance or find what calms them. While much of sensory integration therapy is geared toward children, adults can benefit too – especially those who only discovered in mid-life that they have SPD or are autistic/ADHD. If you suspect a lifelong pattern, it’s never too late to seek help. Remember, **wisdom seeks counsel** (Proverbs 15:22). Seeking a specialist’s help is an act of wisdom, not defeat.
3. **Stimming and Self-Soothing Behaviors** – In the autistic community, “stimming” refers to self-stimulating behaviors (like hand-flapping, rocking, fidgeting) that help regulate sensory input. Neurotypical adults stim too – think tapping your foot, twirling your hair, doodling when anxious. These behaviors often get a bad rap as distractions, but in moderation they can be **healthy outlets to discharge sensory overload**. Don’t be ashamed if you have some quirky self-soothing habit (maybe you rub a smooth stone, squeeze your fingers, hum quietly, etc.). Use them when you need to, ideally in a way that doesn’t harm or significantly disturb others. If you need to step into a restroom stall to do a little happy dance or shake your hands out, do it. One Christian reflection by an autistic believer noted that **David danced before the Lord with all his might** (2 Samuel 6:14) – an uncontrolled movement that others criticized as undignified, yet it was accepted by God. In moments of intense overload, some physical movement or vocalization might be your way of coping, and God understands that. That said, it’s good to have **replacement behaviors** if your natural stims are socially challenging. For example, instead of biting your nails, maybe carry gum to chew. Instead of rocking visibly at your desk, maybe do subtle chair isometrics (pressing your feet into the ground). **Fidget gadgets** (spinners, stress balls, putty) can be useful if you’re the type who calms down by touching or fiddling. These are not childish – many professionals keep stress balls or worry stones. It’s a tangible way to release the internal pressure.
4. **Counseling and Support Groups** – Sometimes sensory overload is intertwined with other emotional issues or past trauma. Talking with a counselor (especially one who shares or respects your faith) can help unpack these layers. For instance, if crowds make you feel unsafe because of a past bad experience, therapy can address that trauma and thereby reduce the overload response. Or if being overwhelmed triggers deep anger or despair (“why am I like this?!”), a counselor can help you process those feelings and move toward acceptance and positive coping. **Biblical counseling** can also remind you of your identity in Christ and God’s sovereignty, giving spiritual tools to fight despair. Additionally, connecting with others who experience similar challenges can be very validating. You might find a local meetup for adults with sensory processing issues or an online forum (there are Christian ones too). Even if the group members are not all Christians, you can still gain practical tips

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and encourage each other, while you personally filter everything through your faith. Sometimes hearing someone say “Me too” lifts a burden of isolation you didn’t realize you were carrying. **Bear one another’s burdens** (Galatians 6:2) applies here as well – and you can also be a light of Christ’s hope in those communities by sharing what helps you spiritually.

5. **Mindfulness and Grounding (with a Christian focus)** – Mindfulness has become a buzzword in psychology for good reason: it helps break the cycle of anxious reactivity by training individuals to stay *present* and observe their experience without judgment. As Christians, we can adapt mindfulness in a theistic direction – sometimes called “**Christian mindfulness**” or “practicing the presence of God,” as 17th-century monk Brother Lawrence described. Instead of emptying the mind, we fill it gently with awareness of God’s nearness and the immediate sensations of the moment, without jumping to panic about the next moment. For example, a mindfulness exercise in an overload situation could be: Stop, take a slow breath, and say internally, “**God is here with me now.**” Then systematically notice one thing you see, one thing you feel, one thing you hear, thanking God for each (“Thank You Lord for the blue sky I see out the window, thank You for the chair supporting me, thank You for the sound of that bird chirping outside”). This gratitude-oriented grounding can short-circuit the overwhelm. You’re essentially training your brain to not be carried away by the avalanche of stimuli, but to anchor on a few and stay present with God in it. Over time, practicing this can increase your resilience. Psalm 131:2 comes to mind: “*But I have calmed and quieted my soul, like a weaned child with its mother.*” That calm and quiet soul is what we seek; techniques like these are simply ways to get there, under the Holy Spirit’s guidance.

## D. Medical and Pharmacological Interventions

1. **Professional Evaluation** – If sensory overload is a frequent, disabling issue for you, it can be very helpful to get a **medical or psychological evaluation**. Sometimes what we think is “just” sensory overload is part of a larger condition that is diagnosable and treatable. For example, an adult might discover they meet criteria for ADHD, autism spectrum, an anxiety disorder, or PTSD. Getting that clarity can open doors to targeted treatments (and also self-understanding). It’s not about labeling for its own sake; it’s about understanding how your brain operates. A diagnosis (if applicable) might also help you access workplace accommodations or therapy resources. On the physical side, sometimes issues like **hormonal imbalances, thyroid problems, or vestibular disorders** can contribute to sensory sensitivities, so a check-up could rule out or address any underlying medical issues. Approach this step prayerfully, asking God to give the doctors insight. Proverbs 3:5-6 reminds us to trust God and not lean solely on our understanding – include Him in the process of seeking an explanation for your struggles.
2. **Medication (when appropriate)** – In some cases, medication can greatly improve quality of life by reducing the frequency or intensity of sensory overload. **This is not unspiritual**. As one Christian resource points out, “*God has chosen to allow the practice of medicine to progress, and there is no biblical reason not to avail ourselves of it.*” ([GotQuestions – Christians and Mental Health Medicine](#)) Indeed, Scripture portrays Luke as “the beloved physician” (Colossians 4:14), and Jesus said the sick need a doctor (Mark 2:17). We don’t hesitate to treat a migraine with medicine; likewise treating an overtaxed nervous system can be a gift from God. The type of medication would depend on the root issues:



3. If **anxiety** is a big component, a doctor might prescribe an *SSRI* or other anti-anxiety medication to lower your baseline anxiety. Many individuals find that once their general anxiety is managed, their sensory overwhelm threshold rises (because they're not constantly on edge). These medications are typically taken daily and work gradually.
4. If **ADHD** or attentional issues are present, stimulant medications (like methylphenidate or amphetamines) or non-stimulant alternatives can improve the brain's filtering ability. Interestingly, people with ADHD often report that on medication, they are *less* bothered by background noise or distractions, because their brain can prioritize better. It might seem counterintuitive that a stimulant can reduce overstimulation, but by targeting the executive function in the brain, it can.
5. For **autism spectrum** individuals (and sometimes others), certain medications can help with specific symptoms like severe irritability or meltdown frequency. For instance, aripiprazole and risperidone are two medications that have been shown in research to help autistic children with irritability and could indirectly reduce sensory overwhelm by stabilizing mood <sup>13</sup>. These are heavy-duty medications though (antipsychotics), usually not first-line for adults unless there's a severe issue.
6. If **depression or PTSD** co-exist, treating those (via therapy and/or medication) can indirectly improve sensory processing by alleviating the mental load.
7. Some people use as-needed medications for acute moments: e.g., a low-dose benzodiazepine for panic-level situations or beta-blockers to reduce the adrenaline effects (beta blockers are more for physical symptoms like heart pounding and might be used in performance anxiety situations).

Always consult a trusted healthcare provider to discuss risks and benefits. And importantly, **view medication as one piece of the puzzle**, not a standalone cure. As GotQuestions wisely notes, it's best seen as part of a complete plan – addressing body, mind, and spirit together <sup>14</sup> <sup>15</sup>. If medication helps clear the fog, you can then more effectively practice your coping strategies and engage spiritually. Some Christians worry that taking a psychiatric or neurological medication indicates a lack of faith. But consider this: If you had diabetes, would you refuse insulin? Likely not, because you know it's a provision from God for healing. Similarly, if your brain chemistry needs support, it's within God's providence to use medicines. Thank Him for the provision, use it responsibly, and continue to pray for healing. There are indeed testimonies of God miraculously delivering people from anxiety or sensory issues without meds, and He can do that – but there are equally testimonies of God delivering people *through* the gift of medicine and skilled doctors. Both are acts of God's grace. Our ultimate trust remains in Him alone, not in pills (Psalm 20:7 says some trust in chariots... we trust in the Lord), yet we humbly receive help that He makes available.

1. **Adjunctive Medical Therapies** – Depending on your situation, you might explore specific treatments. For example, if migraines or headaches are a result of sensory overload, migraine prevention medication or biofeedback therapy might be warranted. If you have sensory processing issues due to a past head injury, vestibular therapy or neurotherapy might help. There are also emerging treatments like **neurofeedback** (training your brain waves) that some claim improve sensory processing, though evidence is mixed. Another area is **nutrition and supplements**: some people report benefits from magnesium (known to have calming effects on nerves), vitamin B complex, or omega-3s for brain health – but always research and perhaps talk to a doctor before starting supplements, especially in higher doses. The key is to remember that **science and faith are not enemies** here. God can lead you to helpful interventions that complement your prayer life. A balanced Christian view is that we treat physical problems with physical remedies and spiritual problems with spiritual remedies – and many issues like this overlap, requiring both <sup>16</sup>. Sensory overload has physical triggers, so physical solutions (earplugs, meds) make sense; it also has emotional/spiritual dimensions (fear, frustration), so spiritual solutions (prayer, renewing the mind) are vital too.

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2. **Defending the Use of Medicine Biblically** – Because this is a common area of struggle for Christians, let's reinforce it with a few more biblical principles:
3. *God's sovereignty over knowledge*: Daniel 2:21 says God gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to those of understanding. The advances in neuroscience and medicine didn't happen apart from God; He granted humans the ability to discover them. Using that knowledge thankfully honors the Giver.
4. *Jesus' ministry of healing*: Jesus often healed with just a word, but once He also used a physical medium – He made mud from spit and applied it to a blind man's eyes (John 9:6-7). Why did He do that? Perhaps to show that He can work through means. Medicine can be like that mud – powerless on its own, but used by Christ for healing.
5. *Anointing with oil*: In James 5:14, the church elders are instructed to pray over the sick *and anoint them with oil*. Oil had medicinal uses in ancient times (e.g., as a salve). So prayer and “medicine” were combined as a holistic approach. We can similarly pray over our medication that God will use it for good and guard us from side effects or dependency.
6. *Temple of the Holy Spirit*: 1 Corinthians 6:19 calls our bodies temples of the Holy Spirit. That's often cited to avoid harmful substances (rightly so), but it also implies we should take care of our bodies. If a medication or supplement genuinely helps your body-brain function more normally, it could be seen as repairing the temple. Just as we'd fix a broken bone, we can “fix” neurochemical imbalances under God's guidance. It's part of good stewardship of the vessel He's given you.

## Embrace Your Uniqueness and Find Strength in Christ

Throughout this journey of understanding and coping with sensory overload, it's crucial to maintain **the right perspective on yourself**. You may be one of those people who naturally experiences the world with intense vividness – the upside is you likely also experience beauty, art, music, and empathy deeply. The downside is the overwhelm. Society often makes those on the sensitive side feel odd or weak, but **God highly values the sensitive and tender-hearted**. Isaiah 66:2 says, *“These are the ones I look on with favor: those who are humble and contrite in spirit, and who tremble at my word.”* Trembling at God's word could be metaphorical for reverence, but think of it: a person who *literally* trembles at a loud sound or a powerful word is not despised by God. He sees the humility inherent in knowing one's limits. In fact, Jesus pronounced, *“Blessed are the meek”* (Matthew 5:5). There's a meekness that can come with being easily overwhelmed – you know you're not superhuman, and that's actually fertile soil for reliance on God.

Instead of viewing your sensory sensitivity purely as an affliction, you might prayerfully seek to view it as part of your calling. How might God use it? Perhaps your acute awareness means you notice the person sitting alone in church who is upset, when others miss it. Or you create art or music with nuance that others couldn't. Or you are the one to insist on more compassionate, inclusive practices in a group because you feel what others might eventually feel. Your **sensitivity can be a gift** when tempered by the Holy Spirit. It says in 2 Corinthians 1:4 that God comforts us in our troubles so we can comfort others in any trouble. Once you learn to manage your overload, you become a **testimony to others** and can share both practical tips and how Christ meets you in it. You might find yourself comforting a young mom who feels guilty that she finds parenting overwhelming, or a new Christian who is startled by how anxious a loud service makes them – you can reassure them that they are not alone and guide them to help.

Moreover, your journey can deepen your relationship with Christ. Paul had a thorn in the flesh (some think it could have been a physical ailment or some bodily struggle) that he begged God to remove. God's answer was, *“My grace is sufficient for you, for My power is made perfect in weakness”* (2 Corinthians 12:9). Sensory



overload might be a thorn that God hasn't fully removed, but through it you can experience His sufficient grace. Each time you run into His arms in an overwhelmed state, you're building that intimate reliance. And one day, **ultimately**, we have the hope that *all* our frailties will be healed. In the coming resurrection life, there will be no painful overstimulation – our resurrection bodies and minds will be perfectly tuned, and the environment of the New Jerusalem will be one of peace and joy. Revelation 21:4 promises *"There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain"*. I like to imagine that means no painful noise, no glaring lights, no chaos – or if there's a glorious noise, we'll have glorified ears to receive it as pure joy! Until that day, we walk by faith.

Before concluding, let me share an encouraging quote from St. Augustine that many have found true: **"You have made us for Yourself, O Lord, and our heart is restless until it rests in You."** Our nervous systems may be restless and overactive, but in God we find true rest. While we employ the techniques and tools discussed, we recognize that the deepest rest comes from trusting in Jesus, who says *"I have told you these things, so that in Me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."* (John 16:33 NIV).

### Conclusion

Sensory overload in adults is a **real and challenging phenomenon**, but it can be understood and managed through an integrated approach. We have seen that it involves genuine neurological processes – our brains trying to cope with too much input – and it produces tangible symptoms that can disrupt our lives. Yet we've also seen that **God's Word and wisdom speak into this issue**: offering comfort (that He is with us when our heart is overwhelmed), offering guidance (to seek rest, practice peace, and use sound judgment), and offering hope (that His grace is enough and His power works through our weakness). By combining **spiritual disciplines** (prayer, Scripture, worship, rest) with **practical strategies** (environmental adjustments, healthy habits, therapy, and yes, sometimes medicine), adults who struggle with sensory overload can not only cope but even thrive.

You do not have to live perpetually at the mercy of your surroundings. There will still be hard days – we won't sugarcoat that. But with each small victory (staying calm in a situation that used to unravel you, or recovering faster than before, or finding joy in a once-overwhelming setting), you can *"give thanks to the Lord, for He is good"* (Psalm 107:1). Remember that improvement often comes gradually. Be patient with yourself as God is patient with you. Celebrate progress, and don't beat yourself up for setbacks. Keep a journal if it helps, noting triggers and what coping methods worked or didn't. Treat it as a learning process guided by the Holy Spirit, your Counselor (John 14:26).

Finally, know that **you are not alone**. Not only are many others dealing with similar struggles (far more than it might appear – recall that maybe 1 in 6 people have sensory processing challenges to some degree), but also your Lord **Jesus understands**. While on earth, He experienced the crowds pressing, the noise, the constant demands – at one point so intensely that He had to climb into a boat to get a bit of space (Mark 3:9). Hebrews 4:15 assures us that Jesus can empathize with our weaknesses, because He was tested in every way. I believe that includes the human experience of feeling overwhelmed. When He withdrew to lonely places to pray, it wasn't just for show – it was His genuine need. So when you withdraw to your quiet place, you are following in His footsteps. When you ask for the cup to pass (as He did in Gethsemane, Luke 22:42 – a moment of being extremely emotionally overwhelmed), and yet seek the Father's will, you are united with Him in suffering and obedience. And when you emerge and continue loving God and others despite these challenges, you bring glory to Him, because it shows His sustaining power.



Take heart, dear reader: **sensory overload might be part of your story, but it isn't the end of your story.** By God's grace, you can live a joyful life and deepen your relationship with Christ even with this "thorn". In fact, it may become a conduit of grace, driving you to the "Rock that is higher than I" (Psalm 61:2) over and over. And as you climb into the shadow of that Rock, you'll find shade from the blinding sun, a hush from the clamor, and a firm foundation that cannot be shaken no matter how intense life gets. May the Lord bless you and keep you, granting you **His peace that surpasses understanding** as you trust in Him (Philippians 4:7).

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