High Blood Pressure - Its Causes

Mao Xu Gang was a man who lived in Shanghai. He had not felt well for several months. He was walking along one day when one of his friends, Wang Ping, noticed he looked very tired. When asked why, Mao Xu Gang did not know what to say. He just replied he had not felt well for several months. Several days later he developed a headache and then suddenly one day his right arm became weak. Mao Xu Gang knew something terribly wrong was happening. He was terribly frightened, as he knew that in several weeks he would have to harvest his corn. He had remembered his mother's father had died of a stroke and he wondered if this is what was happening. He knew there was a big problem. Mao Xu Gang called his brother on the phone but had trouble talking. His brother knew something was wrong so he came right over to see him. His brother took him right to the hospital. Upon arriving at the hospital the nurse who saw him first took his blood pressure. She noticed that his blood pressure was very high, about 220/120. She took it several times. She asked him how often he had his blood pressure taken and his told her this was the first time. The nurse and then later the doctor told him that they were sure he was having a stroke from a long history of poorly controlled blood pressure.

Mao Xu Gang was surprised, angry and later depressed about these events. He asked the doctor if he would be well enough to harvest his corn in several weeks and the doctor told him that we would not be able to harvest his corn. Someone else would have to do this. This surprised him. He was also angry, as his whole family would now have little money to live on. This also caused him to be depressed. As Mao Xu Gang sat in the hospital thinking about his work he wondered why he did not know about this think called blood pressure. Also why does it cause so much harmful problems?

Mao Xu Gang is like many people, not only in China but around the world who do not realize that high blood pressure is a 'silent killer.' All people have blood pressure. Blood pressure is simply the pressure the blood has in the artery as it goes from the heart to the rest of the body. If the blood pressure were zero you would be dead. Thus having a blood pressure is not only important but also needed. However, if the blood pressure is too high or low then we can have problems. Generally blood pressure that is too low is caused by serious medical conditions and is usually life threatening at that moment if not treated.

Why though is blood pressure, which is too high a problem? Why is it caused? Finally what can we do to treat high blood pressure? Let us answer the first of these three questions, which is why is high blood pressure a problem at all?

First, we must understand what is normal and what is too high of a blood pressure. The blood pressure is generally taken in the upperarm of either arm. It can also be taken in the leg but the pressure is different in the leg. The normal convention worldwide is to take the blood pressure in either the left or the right upper arm. The blood pressure generally has two numbers, which are assigned to it. The first or the top number is called the systolic. This is generally between 90 to 140. The second or bottom number is called the diastolic. This is generally or normally between 60-90. The average normal blood pressure is 120/80.

High blood pressure causes problems because over time that higher pressure can damage several organs of the body. What is important is that this damage does not as ordinarily occur quickly but rather slowly. Most of the time over years. The problem is that no one knows there are severe problems from high blood pressure until the damage has been done and it is too late. What are some of the organs, which are affected? The heart, kidney, blood vessels themselves and the brain are the primary ones affected.

Mao Xu Gang did not realize that there had been slow damage done to these organs over many years. Yet there is also another similar thing which causes a slow death and is a silent killer. That thing is the sin in our lives. What is sin? Sin means literally going against what God wants us to do. The Bible says that the 'wages of sin is death. (Romans 6.23).' That is the result of the sin in our lives is that we will die. However, we often do not realize that we do wrong. The same is true of our blood pressure. That is we do not realize that we have high blood pressure until a doctor or nurse takes it. In the same way we do not know we sin until our 'spiritual blood pressure' is taken. How is that done? The Bible shows us that we have sinned. The Bible itself says that 'the Word of God, (the Bible is the Word of God), is living and sharper than any two edged sword, piercing down to the dividing of bone and marrow and is a discerner of the hearts and intents of the heart (Hebrews 4.12).'

What difference does it make if we sin or not? As mentioned above 'the wages of sin is death (Romans 3.23).' Why this is important is that if we die we will face the judgment of God. All of us will be called into account for what we have done in life. Why? Because God cannot tolerate this sin and must separate himself from this sin. The Bible elsewhere says in the same book written to the city of Rome, 'all have sinned and fall short of God's glory (Romans 3.23).' One difference between blood pressure and sin is that not all people have high blood pressure, but all people who have ever lived and will live in the future have sinned and will sin.

Let us go back to Mao Xu Gang and his blood pressure problems. Specifically what causes high blood pressure? First is your family. That is you could have inherited it from your father or mother or both. This is called inheriting bad genes. This is important to know because if both of your parents have high blood pressure you are more likely to get this and you should be very careful to have your blood pressure checked very regularly. Second is your how you take care of yourself and your physical body. What does this mean? How we eat and exercise over time has a great effect on our blood pressure.

Let us first talk about our diet. Our diet can affect blood pressure and make it go up in several ways. First, is our salt intake. Taking in a lot of salt will cause our blood pressure to go up. People often ask how much is too much. First, after food is cooked do not add extra salt. Second, during the cooking we should not add too much salt. Simply eating in moderation is good. Too much salt can make our blood pressure go up. The second aspect of eating which can affect our blood pressure is how much food we eat. If we eat too many bread and sugar products that can cause us to gain weight. Excess weight can cause us to have higher blood pressure. Thus it is important not to eat too much. Most people tend to have more weight problems after they reach thirty years old. This is because after this time our bodies change. Thus if you are overweight before you become thirty years old then you will also be

overweight after thirty or more likely to be. A good diet has a lot of fruits and vegetables and less bread and sweet foods.

Second, is how we exercise. How we exercise is very important to if we will get high blood pressure. Certainly there are many more people overweight who have high blood pressure than those who are not overweight. However, even if you keep your weight down does not mean you will not have high blood pressure. Why? Again, many people have bad genes from their family. But also many people who do not exercise have high blood pressure. How much do we need to exercise to prevent high blood pressure? Most experts believe that at least 20 minutes of walking 2-3 times a week is a good start to prevent high pressure. More is also helpful. Certainly those people who exercise strenuously daily for over thirty minutes are less likely than other people to get high blood pressure.

Thus there are family causes, being overweight and not exercising as causes of high blood pressure. Also there are two other causes. One is stress. People who have a lot of stress have a lot of high pressure. The body releases certain chemicals, which help us to cope with stress. However, those same chemicals also cause the blood pressure to go higher. The Bible tells us to 'be anxious about nothing.' This was written by Paul to a church in Phillipi about 80 AD. It is still important today. However, people ask, 'how can I not be anxious about anything?' They think I have lost my job. I do not have enough money when my parents get sick and must go to the hospital. My child does not have enough money to go to college. However, we must realize that Jesus Christ is the Sovereign God of the entire universe. The Bible goes on to say, 'Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which passes all understanding, will guard your heart and your mind in Christ Jesus (Philippians 4.6,7). However, we can only have this type of peace through a saving relationship with Jesus Christ.

How can you and I have a saving relationship with Jesus Christ? We must first admit that we are sinners and have done wrong before God. Second, the Bible says, 'that if we confess with our lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in our hearts that God raised him from the dead we will be saved (Romans 10.9,10).' What does this mean? If we are willing to say publicly before other people that Jesus Christ is the Lord and God of the Universe and also that God raised Jesus from the dead to show that he had conquered the sting of death because of sin, then we will be saved. Being saved means that we are saved from an eternity of living torture and enabled to live an eternal life with Jesus Christ forever. Wow what a promise!

There is one final cause of high blood pressure, which is rare. There are some rare hormones or chemicals in the body, which can cause the blood pressure to go up. We will not talk about these but just mention them. These rare chemicals only cause about 2-3% of all high blood pressure. The rest comes from our family inheritance, what we eat how we exercise and how we handle stress. Thus we see that we are able to control our blood pressure by eating and exercising well and also handling stress well.

One final note about growing old. By the time most people reach 70 years old many have some level of high blood pressure. Plus many people in this age group are not able to exercise as much

as they need to; thus they may need to take blood pressure medicine to control their blood pressure.

High Blood Pressure is caused primarily by what we eat how we exercise and how we handle stress. High Blood Pressure causes problems after being high for many years in our body. It affects our brains and can cause strokes, our kidneys and cause them to not work well and our hearts and cause them to grow big and not work as well. Thus it is 'the silent killer.' However, it does not have to be that way. High Blood Pressure can be taking care of well by eating well, exercising well and controlling our stress. This will take care of most people with high blood pressure.

The same is true of our sin problem. It is also a silent killer. It can kill us slowly without us ever really knowing it. The Bible is that book which can show us how and why we sin and do wrong. It can also show us how to find life both now and for eternity. That is through Jesus Christ. The Bible points us to Jesus Christ through him we can life now and in great abundance. The Bible says about Jesus, 'I have come that you might have life and have it more abundantly (John 10.10).' If you want to have eternal life through Jesus Christ right now then you may pray the following pray, that is if you really believe this message of truth and hope about Jesus Christ:

'Dear Jesus, I know that I am a sinner and I admit this to you. I ask that you come forgive me of my sins. I believe that you did on the Cross for my sins and that you were buried and three days later rose again from the grave to show that you conquered sin and death and that you are alive today. I place my trust in you for eternal life. Amen.'

If you prayed this prayer, you are a child of God and will live forever.