



Stress - Lesson 2

Author: Chelsea Jacobs
Project Supervisor: Nick Diliberto and Robert Quinn
Artwork: Kindred Canvas

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Stress

Lesson 2: Handling Stress by Trusting God's Promises

Bible: John 14:27-28a

Description: Life can be full of stress, but the Bible is full of promises from God that will help us handle that stress. If you believe those promises, then the stressful things don't seem as significant, and you know exactly how to handle them.

Supplies

- Whiteboard and dry erase marker
- Eraser for whiteboard
- Two laundry baskets (the round kind that can easily be held on top of a student's head)
- Ten balls
- Tape

Opening Game: Shoot for the Basket!

Before the game begins, hide ten balls throughout the room.

Split the group into two teams. Select one student from each team to hold the laundry basket on their head forming a "goal" to shoot the ball in.

With tape, mark out where the student with the basket has to stand, and mark a "free-throw" line about ten feet away.

Tell the rest of the group that there are balls hidden throughout the room. Explain that when you say GO, they have to find them, and then toss them into the basket. They can't get any closer to the student holding the basket than the free-throw line.

The first team to find and make five balls into the basket wins!

Teach

We can all agree that life can be stressful, right? No matter how good your life is, there are going to be some things in it that cause you to be a little bit, if not a lot, stressed.

But if you have a relationship with God, then there's good news!

The Bible is full of promises from Him that make handling stress a lot easier. Let's look at a few of them.

Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid. You heard me say, "I am going away and I am coming back to you." – John 14:27-28a

Do me a favor and help me think of some of the things that cause us to be stressed. Go ahead and just yell some things out.

Write the things that the students yell out on the whiteboard. Add things until the whiteboard is pretty full.

Wow, if you look at all of these things, it's no wonder that we're stressed, right? These are a lot of stressful things to have to handle!

But as I'm looking at all of these things, I'm noticing something. Can anyone guess what all of these things have in common?

They all have one thing in common: they're all temporary.

You see, this verse promises us something, two things, really. First it promises us peace. And second, it promises us that Jesus is coming back for us.

And do you know what's going to happen to all of these stressful things when this life is over and we're living with Jesus?

Erase all of the things on the whiteboard.

They are all going to be gone. Just like that. All of the things you spent time worrying about, all of the things you stressed over, all of the things you let make you anxious...they're just going to be over. Done. Gone. And we'll be with Jesus!

When you think of it like that, doesn't it seem a little bit pointless to spend time stressing out over these things?

Now, I'm not saying you shouldn't care about these things. In fact, some of them are very important. I'm saying that in the grand scheme of things, if you really believe the promise that Jesus is coming back for you, then there's no need to be stressed over these. Why? Because you know how the story ends! It ends with you spending eternity with Jesus!

But the first part of that verse promises something, too. While we are living this life, we do have to deal with these things. But Jesus doesn't just leave us all alone to deal with stressful things on our own until He comes back! He promises us His peace.

Not just any old peace, either. But a real, out of this world kind of peace. Peace way greater than this world could ever give. Peace so great that there's no need to worry or to be afraid.

So who needs to be stressed when you've got that kind of peace? You definitely don't!

Cast your cares on the Lord and He will sustain you; He will never let the righteous be shaken. – Psalm 55:22

Another promise from God, another reason to not be stressed.

See, this verse doesn't say to trust in the Lord and all your cares will go away. It acknowledges the fact that you will have cares - things to be stressed over - but that you should give them over to the Lord and He will sustain you.

With all of the stress that life has to offer, it can be very easy to feel shaken. But remember the promise in this verse: cast your cares on the Lord, and He will not let you be shaken.

You have to do your part. You have to make the choice to trust God enough to give Him all of your cares, your worries, and your stress. And in turn, He will sustain you. He will take care of you. He will not let you be shaken.

At the beginning of the game we played tonight, the balls were hidden all over the room. You didn't know where they were, and you didn't know how hard they would be to find.

At the end of the game, they were all stored in the basket. They hadn't disappeared, but they were contained in one place.

The things that we're stressed about in life are all over the place, and often we have no idea about how to handle them. But when we cast those things on the Lord, we don't feel so all over the place anymore. Instead, we know that all of those things are exactly where they should be: in God's hands.

If you truly believe that promise from Him, doesn't that make things seem easier? Of course there's going to be stress - you're only human, and stress is something that comes with life. But if you believe this promise, then you know exactly how you are supposed to deal with this stress: By giving it to God.

And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose. – Romans 8:28

It's amazing how we can work ourselves into a frenzy so quickly when we're stressed, isn't it?

For example, let's say you're stressed about homework. You've got a lot of homework, and you don't know how in the world you're going to finish it all. So you start to worry that you won't finish it and that you'll get a bad grade. Then you start to worry that the bad grade is going to make you fail the whole class, which makes you worry you may not ever graduate high school.

Pretty soon, you've convinced yourself that you're going to be a high school dropout with no job, living on the streets and begging for food, all because you were a little overwhelmed about some homework.

It seems silly, right? But be honest with yourself - how often do you think things like that?

Or maybe the things you get worked up over are much more serious than homework. Maybe your parents are getting a divorce, and you're worried that you're going to have to pick one over the other. Then you start to worry that neither one of them will love you, and if your parents don't love you, then no one else ever will and you'll be alone for the rest of your life.

See? We take things that are stressful and just run with them in our minds making them more and more stressful the more we think about them. But that's why this promise from God is so amazing. It says that in all things, God works for the good of those who love Him - that's you!

So whether you're causing yourself to worry over small stress like homework, or large stress like a divorce in the family, know this: God has a plan for you, and He will work in everything - even the stressful things - for your good.

Small Group Questions:

1. When you feel stressed, are God's promises what you think about? Why or why not?
2. Do you think that knowing these promises should make you feel less stressed? Why?
3. Does knowing that you will spend forever with Jesus make the stressful things in your life seem like less of a big deal?
4. How does it make you feel to know that Jesus promised to leave His peace with you?
5. Do you really believe that God can work in everything for your good?
6. How would your life be different if you handed your stress over to God and trusted that He will sustain you?
7. Do you sometimes start to worry about stressful things so much that you make them into a much bigger deal than they are? How would that change if you trusted God more?
8. Do you talk to God about the things in life you're stressed about? If so, does it help?
9. How would a normal day in your life be different if you looked at everything that happened as if God were working for your good?
10. Why do you think it's hard to trust God with the things that cause us stress?

Teach Closing

There's no magic formula that can make stress go away. If you are a human that lives on this earth, stress is something you're just going to have to learn how to handle. Lucky for you, you have some amazing promises to help you handle that stress.

To close tonight, we're going to do something a little different.

Have the students all line up.

I want you guys to think of something that's been causing stress in your life. It can be big or small; it doesn't matter. If it's something you're stressed about, write it on the board.

Let the students write on the board, but have them stay in a line.

If you believe in God and His word, and you believe that His promises are true, then that should drastically change the way you handle the stress of life, right? Before we leave, why don't you take one more look at the promises of God that we talked about today:

1. He gives us peace so great that we should not be worried or afraid.
2. He's coming back for us.
3. He will take our cares and sustain us.
4. He will not let us be shaken.
5. He works in all things for our good.

Those five amazing promises are completely life changing, if you believe them. And those are all just from three verses!

Now, I want you to think about those promises and what they mean to your life. This time, instead of writing something else on the board, choose one thing to erase from the board. Choose something that, after hearing those promises, doesn't seem so stressful. Or choose something that you think you will be able to handle much better after hearing these promises.

Let the students erase words until the board is empty again. Then they can sit down.

The Bible is full of amazing promises from God. It's full of His loving words toward you.

The next time you're stressed, stop yourself from worrying and spiraling into a panicked frenzy. Instead, open up the Bible and take a look at all of those promises. Then, just imagine yourself erasing the stress, one promise at a time.

There is no better way to handle stress than to remind yourself of the amazing promises of God.