



### **Stress - Lesson 4**

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## **Stress**

### **Lesson 3: Combatting Stress - Confidence or Fear?**

**Bible: Romans 8:31**

**Description:** When there is stress in our life, we get to choose how to deal with it. We can either deal with it with fear and worrying or with confidence. The confidence we can have in God, knowing He is on our side and will take care of us, is the best way to face stress head-on.

#### **Supplies:**

- A box of froot loops or some type of circular cereal
- A large bowl
- Ten Oreos
- Ten chocolate chip cookies
- A flat plate
- Two “dart” guns that shoot foam darts (you can find these at the dollar store)
- A bunch of coins

## **Game: Run or Hide**

Before the game begins, scatter all the coins on one side of the room. Have students line up on the opposite side of the room.

Choose two students to handle the dart guns. Have them stand on either side of the group.

Explain that this game is like dodgeball but with foam darts instead of balls. The students must avoid getting hit with the darts. If they get hit, they are out.

Each coin is worth 5 points. The students must run and grab a coin, bringing it back to the other side for it to count.

The winner is either the first person to 20 points OR the last one standing.

## Teach

Have you ever felt so stressed that you just felt frozen with fear? Let me give you an example that probably everyone can relate to.

Let's say it's the first day of school, and your teacher is going over what the year is going to look like. She tells you about a big report that's going to be due at the end of the year, and that it counts for a big portion of your grade. It seems so simple - you have months and months to complete it, and you know it will only take you a week or two, tops.

So you kind of push it out of your mind - you have all semester to do it! You think of starting it a couple of times, but you have more important things to do so you push it off just a little longer. As long as you finish it by the end of the school year, you'll be fine!

Well, we all know how this ends up, don't we?

Suddenly, it's the night before the last day of school, and you haven't even *started* the big project.

If you've ever been in this position, then you know the kind of "frozen fear" I'm talking about. Really, you need to spend every second of the next twelve hours working on this project to try and finish in time. But it's so overwhelming and stressful, and you're so afraid you won't finish it, that you just sit there in fear - you can't even bring yourself to start it.

Now, that's a pretty good reason to be stressed. It's also a good reason to have your priorities in the right order, like we talked about. But think about it - how often does that same type of fear happen in your life over other stressful things?

You're stressed about what other people think of you, so you let fear over their opinion control the way you dress or act. You're stressed about having friends and if people will like you or not, so you let fear keep you from being yourself.

There are way too many times in our lives where we react to stress with fear.

Let me ask you a question; have you read anything in the Bible lately? If you have, has anything you've read pointed to letting fear control you?

Of course not! In fact, the Bible is full of reasons to *not* be afraid!

In the game we played, you had two options. You could have faced the fear of getting shot and kicked out of the game by trying to get enough coins to win, or you could have faced the fear by hiding from it, trying to just stay in the game long enough for everyone else to get out first.

See, when there is stress in your life, you can react one of two ways. You can react with fear or you can react with confidence. Why don't we look at some verses and see which one they point to.

**What, then, shall we say in response to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? - Romans 8:31**

Seriously...how amazing is this? God is **for** us! And since He's for us, who can be against us?

With God on your side, what do you have to be afraid of? Nothing! Because nothing is bigger than God. Nothing is more powerful than God. And there is nothing that God can't handle.

Think of the things in your life that make you feel stressed. Is any one of those things bigger than God? Is there anything at all that you're stressed about that you think God cannot handle? No! So why be afraid?

If there's anything at all that should make you feel confident, it's knowing that God is on your side.

No matter what this world throws at you, no matter how stressful or nerve-racking it may be, you can look it straight in the face with the confidence that God is on your side. How cool is that? It's pretty amazing!

**Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life? – Matthew 6:26-27**

So not only can you have the confidence of knowing that God is on your side, you can also be confident that He will take care of you.

Imagine this: imagine if, whenever anything stressful happened, you stopped and thought, "I'm not going to be afraid and worry about this because I know that God thinks I'm valuable and He is going to take care of me." Can you imagine how different life would be?

Here's the thing...that's already true. God *does* think you're valuable, and He *is* going to take care of you. So the only difference is whether or not you choose to act like that when things get stressful.

This verse also tells you that worrying isn't going to change anything - it cannot add so much as a single hour to your life. So it's whether you want to waste time being afraid and worrying or believing that God thinks you are valuable and He will care for you.

I need two volunteers!

*Pour out the cereal on the ground and place the empty box on the other side of the room. Tell the first volunteer it's their job to gather all of cereal and put it back in the box using just their hands. Give the second volunteer the bowl, but have them just stand there quietly.*

Okay, go ahead and get started. That's a lot of cereal; it may take you awhile.

So, let's pretend that all of those little froot loops are the things that stress us out in life. Just like *volunteer's name* is having to scramble to pick them all up by hand, it can be super difficult to try to handle it alone.

*Wait until the volunteer takes at least two trips to the box of cereal, then point out the volunteer holding the bowl.*

It looks like you're having a really hard time getting all of that with your hands. Why don't you ask *second volunteer's name* to help you with this bowl?

*Have the two students gather all the cereal into the bowl, then put it back in the box.*

See how much easier it was to complete that task when you used the bowl? They were standing there the whole time; all you had to do was ask for their help.

That's exactly how it is with God. He's there no matter what. And He wants to take care of you. But if you never acknowledge that He's there and you just go on trying to do things on your own, it's just like *volunteer's name* trying to carry all of the cereal with only their hands when there was a giant bowl they could use right behind them.

It just doesn't make any sense to try and do it alone!

**There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love. -1John 4:18**

*Get out the plate and cookies.*

So for the sake of this example, we're going to pretend that these Oreos represent fear, that the chocolate chip cookies represent the perfect love of Jesus, and that this plate represents your life.

*Put all the Oreos and the plate—don't stack them, just put as many as will fit.*

On our own, life can be pretty fearful. There's so much to be stressed about that sometimes the only way we know how to react is with fear.

That's where the perfect love of Jesus comes in.

*Hold up the chocolate chip cookies.*

Now at this point, your life is totally full of fear. We can't stack these, because there's just no more room. So what happens?

*Start putting the chocolate chip cookies onto the plate, pushing the Oreos off in the process.*

See, there's no room for both perfect love and fear. You can't have them stacked on top of each other, because they don't mix well together.

*Continue putting the cookies on the plate until all of the Oreos have fallen off and the plate is full of chocolate chip cookies.*

Here's the good news: perfect love - the love that can only come from Jesus - pushes fear right out of there.

## Small Group Questions

1. When you're stressed, do you react more with fear or with confidence?
2. Do you think that you sometimes take all that Jesus did for you for granted?
3. Why do you think it's so easy to take such big things for granted?
4. Do you think that Jesus wants you to react to stress with fear or with confidence?
5. Do the verses we read just now make you feel more confident? Why?
6. Is there anything you're stressed about that is bigger than God? Are there things that you *act* like are bigger than Him?
7. Does knowing God will take care of you make you feel less stressed about life?
8. What are some ways you can work on being less afraid and more confident?
9. Do you really believe God is for you, on your side? If so, how should that change the way you react to stress?
10. The verse we read says "perfect love drives out fear." Do you think that if you let Him, the perfect love of Jesus can help you to not be afraid of stressful things?

## Teach Close

At the end of the day, we have the perfect love of God. No matter the stress that may be in our lives, that perfect love is still there. No matter what. And if you are living in fear due to stress or any other reason, then you're not taking advantage of that perfect love.

For some reason, it is so easy for us to take this for granted. For example, how many of you believe that Jesus died for you so that your sins could be forgiven and you could experience the perfect love of God?

Okay, now how many of you remember that on a daily basis? How many of you actually think about the fact that Jesus died for you every single day?

It's a really big deal, right? I mean, come on! This is Jesus we're talking about! And He died for you, saving your life in the process. It's such a big deal, you would think that we would be so thankful it would be all we ever thought about.

But it's not, is it?

It's something we've grown used to. We hear things like "forgiveness" and "perfect love" and we don't stop to think about what they truly mean because we have taken things like that for granted.

Let's imagine something for a second.

Let's say you move to a new town and start a new school. You don't know anyone there, and you're stressed about making friends. In fact, you're so stressed, you can't even sleep the night before your first day. You lie awake all night, worrying about what others will think of you.

You're so afraid that no one will like you that you wear something you normally wouldn't because you think they will like it more. And you decide to act in ways you normally wouldn't so maybe people will want to be your friend. The day goes by, and you aren't yourself at all!

Let's just imagine what Jesus thinks about that.

Does He care about you and all of your problems? Yes! Absolutely! From the biggest thing to the smallest thing, He cares.

However, do you think that if He could knock on your door and come in to talk to you that He would give you advice on how to make everyone like you? Or that He would say something more along the lines of, "Why are you so afraid? I died for you and forgave your sins! I'm looking out for you! I'm on your side! There's no reason to be stressed and fearful over something like this!"



Based on what the Bible says, I think it would be more along the lines of the second.

So why not act that way? If Jesus physically showed up while you were stressed about something and said all of those things to you, would you still be afraid when He left? Or would you feel more confident and not as worried about what you were stressed about?

The thing is, He DOES tell you these things! They are all right there in the Bible, right there in the verses we read tonight.

You just have to choose to believe them.