

JESUS AND STRESS

A 4-Lesson Bible Study

Lesson 1: God > Stress

What we want students to learn: That God is greater than any stress or worry they may experience in their lives.

What we want students to do with what they've learned: To identify the major stressors in their lives and to consider what it looks like to give those over to God.

Scripture Focus: Luke 12:22-31

Overview: Students today live in a world of stress. Just the extreme fast pace of life in the 21st century is enough to create feelings of anxiety and uneasiness. So what is stress for today's teenager? We can think of stress as their mental, emotional, and even spiritual state as a result of the tension caused by the demanding circumstances of their lives. When you think about all the changes facing students today like a parents' divorce, moving to a new city, preparing for college, pressure to perform in school and athletics, relationships, and so on, and then add their own physical and emotional changes, it's easy to see that a series of lessons on stress is needed. But, you might ask, did Jesus address stress in the lives of His children? Yes, He did. And in this first lesson we will discover why God is definitely bigger than stress.

Teacher Prep Video

The *Jesus And Stress* Teacher Prep Videos are short videos designed to help you grasp the main points of the lessons as you prepare to teach.

To access your "Jesus And Stress Lesson 1 Teacher Prep Video," click on the URL below.

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Bible Background

The Bible Background is designed to help you provide some context for the Scripture you'll be studying. The Details gives you background info for each book, The Setting informs you what's happening in and around the passage, and The Main Point gives you an overview of how the passage will be used in the lesson.

- **What do we mean by "context"?** In every ym360 Bible study lesson, you'll notice we make a point to encourage you to provide the context for the passages you study. By "context" we mean at the very least helping students know who wrote the book, when it was written, and why it was written.
- **What's The Big Deal?** When we teach the Bible without giving context, students don't get a "big picture" understanding of the story of the Bible. But this view is vital to grasping the story of God's plan of redemption for humankind. As you teach, use the Bible Background to help summarize the context.

The Details

Luke

- **Author:** Luke was a doctor, a Gentile Christian and a companion of Paul.
- **Time frame:** The Gospel of Luke was written around 60 AD.
- **Purpose:** Luke is the only Gentile author of the Bible. His entire purpose was to write an accurate account of the life of Jesus so as to present Jesus as Savior, fully God and fully man. It is one of the synoptic Gospels, having much in common with the Gospels of Matthew and Mark.

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The Setting

Luke 12 includes teaching from Jesus intended specifically for His disciples. Jesus tells the parable of the Rich Fool in verses 13-21 then immediately follows with the passages this lesson will focus on. The teaching is on releasing our stress to God as it relates to “things in life” and comes in stark contrast to the rich fool who was obsessed with storing up more and more “things” in life. You may want to read Luke 12:13-21 ahead of time and be ready to point out the contrast to your students.

The Main Point

The main point of this lesson is to help teenagers recognize the sources of stress in their lives and why they cause worry and anxiety. With that accomplished you can move on to help them understand that God is bigger than any stress they may face in life. But just the knowledge that God is bigger than their worries is not enough. In this lesson you will challenge your students to put their trust in God when it comes to the stresses in life, and to believe that He will always take care of them. God is bigger than anything we face in life. You'll challenge your students to live out that truth each day.

Lesson Plan

The Lesson Plan contains three elements: An introductory activity called The Lead In; the Bible study section called The Main Event; an application-focused segment called The Last Word.

The Lead In

- **Goal:** To help students discover that some of their favorite things are not necessarily the most important things in life.
- **Set-Up:** Provide a copy of the Lesson 1 “Lead In Activity Sheet” (located in your Lesson 1 folder) and a pen or pencil for each student.

FIRST, ask your students if they’ve ever seen the classic movie *The Sound of Music*. If they have, they’ve no doubt heard the song “My Favorite Things.” (Even if they haven’t seen the movie, there’s a chance they’ve heard a cultural reference to it at some point.) If possible, you may want to find a way to play the song or even show a YouTube clip of the song from the movie. Tell them you want to begin the lesson by allowing them to list five of their favorite things.

THEN, pass out copies of the Lead In Activity Sheet and have them list their favorite things in the space provided. Give them a few minutes to finish the list. Then, when they’re done, lead them in a short discussion. Ask:

- **Who would like to share their favorite things list? (Allow students to share.)**
- **Look at your most favorite thing on that list. What would your life be like without this thing?**
 - o Answers will vary.
- **Look at the rest of your list? How would not having these things impact your daily life?**
 - o Answers will vary

NEXT, ask students to look at the section titled “My Needed Things” and explain that there are some things they have to have in order to just survive in this world. Instruct them to list up to five things they absolutely have to have to survive in this world.

When they’ve finished, tell the students that most experts agree on five basic needs for human survival. As you call them out, see how many students had these on their lists:

- **Water**
- **Food**

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- Shelter
- Clothing
- Companionship/Love (This last point may be a fun point of debate for your students, but don't let it get too far off track.)

Ask students to consider what their lives would be like without these things. (Of course, the answer is something like, "not very good.") Then ask them to think about the two lists they've made. Of those two lists, which one represents the things they truly couldn't live without? (Of course, it's the second list.)

FINALLY, transition to the Main Event section by saying something like the following:

- **Over the next four weeks we are going to be looking at what Jesus had to say about stress. I know you think back 2,000 years ago, it's easy to wonder what could have been so stressful about living back then. But people did stress out and worry just like you do today. In this first lesson you are going to find out about a little math formula and that is this: "God > Stress." The starting point for learning this valuable truth is discovering that God is greater than any need you will ever have. Since God created you He knows our needs, our "Must Have List," better than we do. Maybe part of His greatness in giving us victory over stress and worry is to help us gain an understanding what is and is not important when it comes to things in this world. Let's open our Bibles and see what Jesus had to say about stress.**

The Main Event

- **Goal:** To help your students understand that God is greater than stress because He is always bigger than any worry in our lives.
- **Set Up:** None needed.

FIRST, begin the Bible study portion of the lesson by quoting this fact from a recent study by the American Psychological Association:

- **"82% of teenagers in a recent survey admitted that they experienced extreme to moderate stress in the past school year."**

Then, lead students in a brief discussion. Ask:

- **Do you think this is a fair picture of the teenagers in your school, or do you think the number should be higher or lower? Why?**
- **What are some of the things that stress you out the most?**
- **Do you ever hear your friends talking about how stressed they are? What kind of effect does this have on you?**

After giving the students a few minutes to respond, explain the bottom line is that teenagers in America are feeling stressed out now more than ever, and that stress can be expressed by excessive worry, anxiety issues, and even lashing out at friends. Tell students that over the next four weeks you are going to help them see what the Bible has to say about stress.

NEXT, explain that the Bible passage for this lesson comes from the 12th chapter of the Gospel of Luke, verses 22-31. While they're turning to the passage, provide some context for the passage by referring to the Details or Setting sections of the Bible Background. Then, once students have found the passage, read or have a student read Luke 12:22-23. Explain to students that Jesus' disciples were just common men. And when they left their jobs to follow Jesus, they would have put themselves in a position of relative poverty. Say something like:

- **The disciples may have spent time worrying about having the necessities like food and clothing. At least that seems to be the case based on Jesus' words to them. But Jesus wanted to reshape**

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the thinking of His disciples. He starts by reminding them that life is greater than food and the body more important than clothing. The idea here is that Jesus wanted His followers to know that the human being was the greatest accomplishment in all of God's creation. Like the psalmist David said in the 139th Psalm, "I will praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made." Jesus wanted the disciples to know that they were each important to God, just like your students.

THEN, read or have a student read Luke 12:24 and have students summarize the verse by asking something similar to the following:

- **What point was Jesus trying to make when He brought up the analogy of the ravens?**
 - o Answer: Ravens don't worry about their provision. They just go find food and eat. God provides the food for them.
- **What does this say about who God is and what He does for His creation?**
 - o Answer: God is a caring provider who looks after His creation.

NEXT, read or have a student read Luke 12:25-26. Explain that Jesus now gets to the heart of the matter when it comes to stressing out. Ask a student to reread verse 25 and lead students in a short discussion. Ask:

- **What does Jesus say in these verses about the anxiety or worry His disciples might have had about the things they needed to get by?**
 - o Answer: Jesus knew that like most people, His disciples probably spent time worrying about their needs. Worrying about their stuff, and about their quality of life is kind of ironic. Because worrying won't help them find food, or shelter, or clothing. Stress only makes our situation worse.

Explain to students that you're going to come back to tie all this together and make some good application to their lives today. But first, continue by reading or having a student read Luke 12:27-31. Explain that in verses 27-28, Jesus is basically making a similar analogy to the raven analogy He made earlier. But He adds something. Ask a student to read verse 28 again and ask:

- **What does Jesus seem to point to as the chief problem when it comes to worry?**
 - o Answer: Jesus said the problem is a lack of faith.
- **Why would a lack of faith in God would cause stress and worry?**
 - o Answers may include feeling like life is out of control, believing fixing situations is in our hands, not believing God will do what He says, etc.

THEN, direct students' attention to Luke 12:29-31. Ask the following questions:

- **Most of us probably don't worry about having enough to eat or drink. So, think about the things in your life that might show up if Jesus were advising you not to worry or get stressed out. What are some of the things in your life that Jesus might include in verse 29?**
 - o Answer: Wearing the right clothes, having the best cell phone, driving a new car, taking a cool vacation, etc.
- **Jesus knows that we have concerns in this life that we have to pay attention to. There are things that we have to plan for and think about. But the key to what Jesus is saying seems to be in verse 29. What do you think is the difference between planning for and thinking about something (like a test or an interview) and "setting your heart" on it (some translations may say "do not seek")?**
 - o Answer: It's about priority and place. When we give the things that stress us out top priority in our life, we're missing it. When we give our stressors a place of prominence in our hearts and minds, we're giving our worries the place that is rightfully God's. Which brings us to our next question.
- **What does it mean to seek the Kingdom of God?**
 - o Answer: Seeking the Kingdom means making God a priority. It means bending your life to live God's way. We do this by focusing on living out the Gospel, seeking to love others, and seeing the world around us through God's eyes.
- **Why did Jesus propose this as a solution to how we view the things that cause us stress?**

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- o Answer: When we seek God first, we align ourselves with God's heart and God's plan. We begin to see that He is greater than the things that cause us stress. We see Him as provider and comforter. And we begin to see all the ways He leads us through the things in life that stress us out.
- **Last question from this passage: What did Jesus mean when He said "all these things" will be given to you?**
 - o Answer: God will take care of our real needs. He wants us to worry less about the messy stuff of life and to focus more on Him.

FINALLY, transition into The Last Word by saying something similar to the following:

- **Jesus' followers worried about things like having enough food to eat and having adequate clothing to wear. These were and still are the very basic necessities of life. Today most of us don't worry about the basics but we do stress out over the extras in life like our list of favorite things. While our circumstances are different from those 2,000 years ago, the message of Jesus is just as relevant today. He said don't worry because God is greater than stress. In fact, God is greater than anything we face in life. Maybe God is calling you to live a more simple life or focus more on Kingdom living. Maybe He just wants you to grab on to the truth that you are the very best of His creation and He loves you beyond your ability to comprehend. God certainly wants you to live a life of peace not stress and anxiety. That journey begins by remembering the simple formula: God > Stress.**

Make sure no one has any questions then move to wrap up the lesson with the Last Word.

The Last Word

- **Goal:** To help students look at some examples of times in the Bible when God was greater than what people were facing and realize God is still that great today.
- **Set-Up:** You will probably want a dry-erase board to help with the activity, but it's not essential.

FIRST, tell your students that in today's lesson you helped them see that God is greater than stress. Explain that it might help their faith to look at some people in the Bible who got to see this truth displayed first-hand. Explain that you're going to look at a few passages of Scripture that depict God intervening in a stressful situation. For each passage, you'll want students to answer the question: "What was God greater than?"

THEN, choose a few of the following passages to read, preferably at least two or three of them. Read or have a volunteer read the passage. At the end of the passage, ask the question listed below.

Passage 1: The Parting of the Red Sea, Exodus 14:19-22

- **Moses and the Israelites discovered that God was greater than _____?**
 - o Answer: Nature (or maybe even something like "circumstances" or "limitations.")

Passage 2: 300 Versus an Army, Judges 7:19-22

- **Gideon and his 300 men discovered that God was greater than _____?**
 - o Answer: Overwhelming odds

Passage 3: God Versus A False God, 1 Kings 18:35-38

- **Elijah and the people of God discovered that God was greater than _____?**
 - o Answer: False gods

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Passage 4: Giant Killer, 1 Samuel 17:42-49

- **Saul and his army discovered that God was greater than _____?**
 - o Answer: Giant obstacles

Situation 5: Not Even Death, John 11:39-44

- **Lazarus and his family discovered that God was greater than _____?**
 - o Answer: Death

THEN, once you've read the passages, ask students to think of some the things they mentioned earlier that stress them out. Help them see if God is greater than nature, giant men, and even death God is also greater than any worries they may struggle with each day. This is an amazing promise they can take with them as they go through their daily lives. Challenge students to consider what it looks like in their lives to release to God the worry and anxiety of the things that stress them out, and instead trust Him to see them through it.

FINALLY, close by reminding the students that stress is a part of everyone's life but too much stress can distract us from living the victorious life God intended. Say something like:

- **Learning to put our faith in God and turn our worries over to Him is an act of faith. The more we do it now the easier it will be later in life. Putting our faith into motion by trusting God is the answer to finding peace in life. It is also the way to help conquer stress.**

Close the session by allowing students some time to consider things that stress them out. Have a time of guided prayer and ask the students to think of what stresses them out the most. As each thing comes to their minds have them declare that God is greater than their stress then thank Him for His greatness.

Close with your own prayer for your students, declaring that God is greater than anything in this life.

- **Don't forget to distribute the devotions to your students this week. If you're printing them, have them available for students as you wrap up class. If you're texting a link, posting them on Facebook, or some other means of electronic distribution, make sure you inform students of when they will be receiving them.**
- **Use the Social Media guide to stay in touch with students via text or Twitter, and to encourage them to follow through with reading their devotions and with being mindful of the choices they make during the week.**

We Want To Hear From You . . .

- Do you have questions about a lesson?
- Something that worked particularly well you want to share?
- Something that didn't work you want to bring up?

We value your feedback! Please do not hesitate to email us with your questions, comments, or concerns, at **feedback@youthministry360.com**.