



Stressed.

HOW JESUS GIVES US AN EDGE

Overview:

Life is full of stress. Find out how God can use those stresses to make you a better person.

Lessons:

1. Pros + Cons of Stress
2. Hectic Stress: Pulled in 1000 Directions
3. Relational Stress: Stressed by People
4. Future Stress: Stressed by What Might Happen



PROS + CONS OF STRESS

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TALKING POINTS

God can use stress in the Christian's life to teach dependence - if you'll let him.

- Being a Christian doesn't just affect our Sunday mornings or our theological beliefs. It has many _____ benefits in our everyday lives, and managing _____ is one of those _____ benefits. **Philippians 4:6**

Stress isn't all bad. Short periods of stress are good for people, motivating us to lead _____ and _____

- lives. Stress hormones are generated in the adrenal glands, and God put those hormones in our bodies for a reason

For followers of God, there's something more we need to recognize. God uses stress to teach us _____ upon him. 2 Chronicles 20:12

DISCUSSION

1. *What kinds of things typically stress you out? Make a list.*
2. *If you're a pursuer of God, how has your faith affected the way you deal with stress? Give an example.*
3. *What effect does "bad stress" have on your body? On the other side, what are the pros of "good stress"?*
4. *One of the defining characteristics of Christians is their trust in Jesus. Describe what this means. How should this affect the way they handle stress?*
5. *Read 2 Chronicles 20:12. Share a time when you prayed like that to God.*
6. *What are some typical ways people try to escape stress? How does that shortcut the plan of God for our lives?*

HECTIC STRESS

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TALKING POINTS

For Christians, the cure to hectic stress is to take on Jesus' yoke and let go of our burdens.

- _____ makes you feel like you're being pulled in a thousand directions. You chose to put those things on the _____ so they must matter to you.

- We take on a new _____ in Christ. When we follow Jesus, that choice re-defines us. Instead of looking to your list of stresses as the place where you find your identity and worth, you find it in _____. **Matthew 11:28-30**

We take on a new _____. You start caring about the things Jesus cares about and your priorities begin to change. We take on a new pulling partner. Jesus wants to help us carry our load and wants to help us complete our _____. **John 15:5**

DISCUSSION

1. *What's on your stress list? Write it down. Which of these things do you consider to be "good"? Which are "bad"?*
2. *Read Matthew 11:28-30. When was the last time you felt rested? What was it like?*
3. *Which items on your list are there because your identity or self-esteem is wrapped up in it? How can finding your identity in Christ take the pressure off of you in that area?*
4. *What would Jesus keep on your list? What would he take off? Are you carrying around baggage that is only stressing you out, but is not ultimately valuable? Explain.*
5. *Read John 15:5. What percentage of your "load" do you feel like you're pulling? What percentage are you letting God pull? How can you change the percentages?*

RELATIONAL STRESS

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TALKING POINTS

Relational stress is inevitable because we're all imperfect, but God's perfect love is the solution.

- Loving people – warts and all, apparently – is the second most important thing we can do, next to loving _____. This means that God does not let us opt out of relational stress. We don't have to like people, but we are _____ to love people.

Matthew 22:37-40

- Love is _____ and _____ and that can be hard to do when you're trying to love someone who is selfish and demanding. **1 Corinthians 13:4-7**
- The ungodly are free to bail on their relationships when it gets too stressful. The godly are called to settle in for the long haul, allowing their love for God to _____ them into more loving people. **1 John 4:17-19**

DISCUSSION

1. Read Matthew 22:37-39. How does this sum up the entire teaching of the Bible, Old Testament and New?
2. Why is loving someone more selfless than liking someone? Give an example.
3. Read 1 Corinthians 13. Which item in the list is your strongest point? Which is your weakest?
4. If you're a Christian, how has your love grown over the years? Give an example.
5. Read 1 John 4:17-19. In your own words, explain how perfect love outweighs fear and anxiety.

FUTURE STRESS

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TALKING POINTS

Jesus offers three simple steps for overcoming fear of the unknown.

- We're focused on the wrong things when we stress about the _____. What we're afraid of isn't reality yet, but our obsession with it makes it seem real in our minds – so we act on it through anxiety. In essence, “future stress” is a _____. Matthew 6:25-27
- 3 Steps for dealing with stress according to Jesus:
 - Seek _____ first. “Seek the kingdom of God above all else...” Focus on the right things, and try to care about what God cares about.
 - Live _____ now. “... and live righteously...” Don't let your fixation on what's coming tomorrow excuse you from honoring God today.
 - _____ - what God gives you. “... and he will give you everything you need.” Trust that the future is in God's hands, whatever comes.

DISCUSSION

1. *Make a list of your top worries about the future. Are there any common themes to these worries?*
2. *Read Matthew 6:25-27. According to Jesus, why is worrying about the future a waste of our time?*
3. *What is the root cause of our stress about the future?*
4. *How does worrying about the future prevent us from depending on God?*
5. *List the three steps for dealing with future stress. Which step is hardest for you? Why?*

