

EMOTIONAL MARGIN



RECALL

Discuss Your Experience:

Our lives are busy and fast-paced. The lack of restful margin increases our stress and shortens our tempers. It can distract us from the most important things in our lives... and our relationships suffer. This week's message presented several spiritual truths that help us control stress and provides rest for our souls. Which truth is most difficult for you to put into practice? Why?

Icebreaker:

Distribute a small cut up sheet of paper and a writing utensil to each person. Instruct them to anonymously write a fear or worry that causes them stress in their life. Tell them to be as specific and honest as possible, but not in such a way that they could be identified. After everyone is done writing a fear collect each sheet into a large hat. Shuffle the sheets and pass out one per person. Take turns reading each fear aloud. What were some of the common fears?

Introduction:

Life is too complicated, and we are too vulnerable in our human condition to escape the inevitable battles with anxiety, fear and stress. Jesus even warns in John 16:33 that we "will endure suffering in this world". But stress does have a positive side. It can be a reminder that our lives have drifted away from God. It might be an indicator that we have stopped depending upon him for our daily strength. Perhaps we have forgotten the many promises in His word as Jesus continues to say in John 16:33 "Be courageous! I have conquered the world." Scriptures like this and many more give us the tools we need to confront the battle over stress. This lesson strives to build our confidence in trusting the promises given in God's word.

REVEAL

Pray For Guidance:

Now take a few moments and ask God to help you understand, grasp and apply the spiritual truths of this week's selected Bible passage.

Matthew 11:28-30 (HCSB)

²⁸ "Come to Me, all of you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. ²⁹ All of you, take up My yoke and learn from Me, because I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for yourselves. ³⁰ For My yoke is easy and My burden is light."

REFLECT

Understand the Context:

As a group, utilize your study bibles or on-line resources to help you answer as many of the following questions about the selected passage as you can. Keep in mind, these questions are intended to be a guide and you may not be able to find all of the answers or have time to address each one in the group.

- 1) Who? Who is the author of this gospel? Who was the intended audience?
- 2) What? What was the author's occupation before he trusted in Christ? What kind of work did he do after trusting Christ?
- 3) When? When was this gospel written?
- 4) Where? Where did Matthew's Gospel story take place?
- 5) Why? Why was this book written?

RECOGNIZE

Know the Truth(s):

Keeping in mind the context of the selected passage (see Reflect), read the Scripture as a group and carefully take note of the truth(s) and/or promises God provides. Look for God's promises, plans, provisions, & purposes. What did it mean? What does it mean? What meaning is unclear?

- 1) The HNTC Commentary explains that the phrase, "weary and burdened, conveys the idea of continual weariness and exhaustion, without a minute of relief". The audience Jesus was speaking to was completely loaded down and stressed out. The ongoing pressure they experienced was caused by religious expectations and legalities placed on them by their false religious leaders. Jesus recognized their need and said "come to me all who are weary and I will give you rest". To whom was Jesus offering rest? In what way is the stress we face today similar to the stress experienced by the original audience?
- 2) In the selected scripture Jesus talks about yokes. We all carry some sort of yoke. Alone, the yoke of responsibility becomes overwhelming because we were never meant to carry it by ourselves. We are responsible to provide for our family, maintain our career, serve at church, file our taxes and keep the house clean, just to name a few. Our yoke is huge and the result is unhealthy stress. Jesus says leave your yoke behind and take up my yoke for it is easy and My burden is light. In the Greek language the word for "easy yoke" is chrestos, meaning not only easy, but gracious, so the word signifies; it is sweet and pleasant. If this is true why are we so reluctant to trade our yoke for His? Discuss the difference in our yoke and the yoke Jesus offers.
- 3) Farmers will yoke young ox with the old experienced ox to train them. The old ox will take the major load and the young one would walk along and learn from him. Yokes were designed for two. What happens when we decide to wear our own yoke alone? Jesus instructed his followers to proactively take His yoke. Jesus will not put it on us without our consent. When we put on Jesus' yoke, how does that change our daily decisions?
- 4) Jesus says to "learn from me, because I am gentle and humble in heart". What Jesus is communicating to us in these words is that he desires to teach those who are the outcasts of society, those who are uneducated and unlearned. Jesus chose His disciples, not from the schools and universities, but from the community. How should this encourage you to want to learn from Him? What effect does Jesus' example have on the way we respond to the people in our lives?

RESPOND

Take Action:

You've now prayed asking God to Reveal Himself and help you understand the selected passage; you've Reflected on the context in which the passage was written; you've Recognized God's timeless truths; and now you must Respond. To help determine your response, read the following verses and answer the questions for each passage as a group.

1) What actions do these passages ask us to take?

Philippians 4:6-7

Hebrews 13:5-6.

1Peter 5:7-9

Deuteronomy 31:6-8

2) What kind of attitude are we asked to display?

Philippians 4:6-7

Hebrews 13:5-6.

1Peter 5:7-9

Deuteronomy 31:6-8

3) What do these scriptures promise?

Philippians 4:6-7

Hebrews 13:5-6.

1Peter 5:7-9

Deuteronomy 31:6-8

This Week:

Your assignment is to read Luke 10:38-42, applying the five (5) spiritual learning steps (Recall, Reveal, Reflect, Recognize, & Respond).