



## **UNCERTAINTY: Bible Lessons for Families**

**Lesson:** Stress and Anxiety  
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### **Series Overview**

Uncertainty: A 6-pack of Bible lessons helping families wrestle with the COVID-19 pandemic and other uncertain times.

## **UNCERTAINTY: STRESS & ANXIETY**

**BIBLE:** John 15:4-5; Galatians 5:22-23; 2 Corinthians 12:7-10

**MAIN IDEAS:** When we stay connected to God, we experience peace, joy, and love no matter the circumstances we face.

- Put Jesus at the center of your life.
- In our weakness, God's strength is revealed.

## **SUPPLIES**

*For Family Activity:*

- 8 Inflated balloons

*For Object Lesson:*

- *Balloons (previously used for the Family Activity)*

## **FAMILY ACTIVITY**

*Before you begin, inflate eight balloons and put them aside. Choose one person to take their turn first.*

Today, we are going to tackle the topic of stress and anxiety.

So, I have a game that is going to stress all of us out a little... doesn't that sound like fun?

I chose \_\_\_\_\_ (*name of person*) to take their turn first.

*Hand one or two balloons to every other person.*

As soon as I say GO, I will toss a balloon to you, and you will hit it to keep it in the air. It can't touch the ground.

Then, whenever someone else wants to toss in a balloon, they can.

However, let's be nice. Don't throw all of the balloons in at the same time.

Every time a balloon is tossed to you, now you will have to keep it in the air too.

The goal is to be able to keep all eight balloons in the air. If a balloon falls to the ground, then your turn is over.

Everyone will have a chance to take a turn. Let's see who can keep all of the balloons in the air the longest.

*After the game, ask...* Did you feel like that game was fair?

Did everyone have the same advantage, or do you think it was too hard for some people?

Unfortunately, stress affects everyone at every age.

But, God can use those times to help us learn to depend on Him.

*Lay the balloons aside to be used for the Object Lesson.*

## **TEACH**

During these uncertain times, stress and anxiety seem to be the way we feel a lot of the time.

We're anxious because we miss our friends at school.

We feel stressed because we don't know what's going to happen next.

We have been annoyed with each other because we're quarantined at home, and we have been spending so much time together.

The list goes on.

I think you'll find this passage from the Bible to be really helpful.

### **Read John 15:4-5 (NIV).**

*Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.*

*"I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.*

In these verses, Jesus uses an interesting comparison.

He points out that a vine needs to be connected to the branches to produce fruit.

**The vine represents God, and when we (the branches) stay connected to God, good things happen in our lives. We experience peace, joy, and love no matter what circumstances we face.**

Even when we're quarantined...

Even if we lose our jobs...

Even if things get worse due to the COVID-19 pandemic...

No matter what, if we stay connected to God, we can find peace in the chaos.

**Read Galatians 5:22-23 (NCV).**

*But the Spirit produces the fruit of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. There is no law that says these things are wrong.*

These characteristics are produced in our lives because of the Holy Spirit, not because we earn these qualities if we are good enough. They are the Fruit of the Spirit.

**Peace, joy, love, etc. naturally flow out of our lives when we stay connected to God.**

These things will be produced in us, just like fruit is naturally produced on a branch that is connected to a vine that is connected to the earth.

It just happens. It's the way God made everything to function.

Often, when we experience high levels of stress and anxiety, the issue is that we're not making it a point to connect with God.

Instead, we get caught up in everything else going on around us.

So, how do you stay connected to God?

You might have heard that it all comes down to making your relationship with Jesus a priority. If you make a list of things that are important in your life, Jesus needs to be #1.

Although there's truth in that, here's another perspective that can be very helpful.

Let's look at a bicycle wheel with spokes.

(Show a picture of a bike with spokes on your phone. Or show a real one if you have it.)

Let's say that our lives are this wheel, and the things in our lives (school, friends, sports, etc.) are the spokes. Notice that all the spokes start at some point on the tire and meet at the center.

Now, let's say Jesus is the center.

Jesus touches everything we do in our lives. He's at the center of everything. He's a part of everything we do. He's always working in our lives and those around us.

**Each of us has a choice as to what we put in the center of our lives.**

When we put Jesus in the center, good stuff happens.

Instead of being overwhelmed by stress and anxiety, we experience peace and joy in the chaos.

Sometimes our circumstances change, but sometimes nothing changes.

We often have no control over what happens in our lives.

But we do have control over what we put in the center.

Let's take a moment and really think about these questions:

**Ask:** What do you put in the center of your life?

How can you put Jesus in the center?

Do you think other people can tell if Jesus is in the center of everything? How?

*Take turns giving responses to those questions.*

Okay, now let's move on to another idea we can talk about.

**Read 2 Corinthians 12:7-10 (NCV).**

*So that I would not become too proud of the wonderful things that were shown to me, a painful physical problem was given to me.*

*This problem was a messenger from Satan, sent to beat me and keep me from being too proud. I begged the Lord three times to take this problem away from me.*

*But he said to me, "My grace is enough for you. When you are weak, my power is made perfect in you."*

*So I am very happy to brag about my weaknesses. Then Christ's power can live in me.*

*For this reason I am happy when I have weaknesses, insults, hard times, sufferings, and all kinds of troubles for Christ.*

*Because when I am weak, then I am truly strong.*

Now, we don't know what Paul's "painful physical problem" was. Other versions of the Bible call it a "thorn in the flesh."

Paul had an issue that he wanted God to remove.

However, God told him 'no.' He said that...

*"My grace is enough for you. When you are weak, my power is made perfect in you."*

So, what does that mean?

**God's definition of strength is complete dependence on Him.**

In fact, if we read the last two verses, we see that Paul decides that his weakness is a good thing!

Can you believe that?

How can Paul be weak and strong at the same time?

**In our weakness, God's strength is revealed! We find His strength in our weakness.**

If you think about it, the uncertainty we are living with right now is a form of weakness.

Life is no longer predictable. We don't know what will happen in a week or even a month.

**Paul is encouraging us to rely on God's strength right now. Humble yourself by recognizing you are weak. Know that God is strong and learn to lean on him.**

This is a really great example of how we can put Jesus the center of our lives—recognizing that we are weak. He is strong. And we are asking him to strengthen us in the midst of the circumstances we face.

It's the only way for us to experience peace and joy rather than stress and anxiety.

## **OBJECT LESSON**

*Utilize the balloons from the Family Activity. Give one balloon to each person.*

*Make sure to talk slowly for the next portion. You want it to become progressively more challenging to hold the balloon over their heads.*

As we finish up our talk, I want all of us to hold our balloons over our heads... starting right now. Don't take them down until I tell you to.

We can definitely agree that stress is not a fun feeling. In fact, most of us try to avoid stress, but it is always going to be part of our lives.

Through everything, we can learn to lean on God and trust in Him.

As long as we stay connected to God like a branch is connected to a vine, God will fill us with love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.

Now, I want to ask you a question... how are you doing holding that balloon?

Is it starting to feel heavy? Balloons aren't heavy!

But your arms are getting tired... you're losing your strength.

So, I want you just to release your balloon – let it go.

Do you feel relieved now? All you had to do to get rid of the tired, burdened feeling was just let it go.

When we feel stress and anxiety, it can feel like a heavy weight, but all we have to do is let it go.

Give it to God and allow His peace to replace our stress.

Take a minute and think about something that's weighing down on you, and then we will pray together.

*Pray together and then end the lesson.*

*Take a few minutes to discuss the following questions.*

## **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

- What causes you the most stress and anxiety right now?
- What situations do you think cause the most stress in our family?
- How do you usually deal with stress and anxiety? In other words, what helps you feel better when you experience those emotions?
- What does it look like for you to put Jesus the center of your life? What is confusing or difficult to you about that idea?

## **FAMILY CHALLENGE**

As a family, we need to support each other as we give our stress and anxiety to God.

So, we are going to put a “Stressed Out” notebook in a central location in our house.

When you start to feel anxiety about anything, even if you think it’s small, I want you to write it down – or even draw a picture that shows how you are feeling.

Everyone in the family is allowed to read it. However, if you read it, you have to pray for that person and their needs.

Whenever you pray about something in the notebook, put a checkmark beside it.

There might be times that you even take the time to pray for yourself – still put a checkmark.

God put us together to love and support each other. This gives us the opportunity to do that and learn to depend on God.

*Note to parents: It’s important to take a few minutes to look at the notebook every once in a while. It would also be meaningful to write down something that is causing you stress.*

*Be mindful that your kids will take what you write down to heart. Refrain from writing down anything that would increase their stress level, but still be transparent with some of the smaller stresses you experience.*