

JESUS AND STRESS

A 4-Lesson Bible Study

Lesson 3: Choosing To Choose Right

What we want students to learn: That choosing to trust God with their stress is the right decision even if they don't understand exactly what God is doing.

What we want students to do with what they've learned: To define what "surrender" looks like and to commit to surrendering one of their main sources of stress to God.

Scripture Focus: Luke 1:26-38

Supporting Scripture: Luke 1:48

Overview: This lesson is unique among the entire Jesus Studies curriculum in that it doesn't feature the actual words of Jesus, but of Jesus' mother, Mary. As we discuss dealing with the stress that life can bring, Mary's example is simply too valuable to pass up. Mary finds herself in about as stressful a situation as you could imagine. She has just found out that she will have to tell her fiancé that she is pregnant, and that the baby was not conceived through any sort of unfaithfulness but was instead conceived by God. Faced with potentially bearing the scorn of her husband-to-be and her community, plus the weight of carrying the promised Messiah, Mary could have reacted by giving in to the stress. Yet we see Mary model the exact response you studied in Lesson 1: Trusting God to both see her through the stress, and to take care of her as He executes His perfect plan.

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 3 Teacher Prep Video," click on the URL below.

- <https://youthministry360.com/jesus-and-stress-teacher-prep-videos>

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

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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.

The Setting

The city of Nazareth is now a thriving town in Israel. Just west of the Sea of Galilee, Nazareth is about 90 miles north of Jerusalem. When Mary and Joseph lived there, the city was quite different. With a population of only around 500, Nazareth was a close-knit community but of little economic or political value. It was a poor agricultural town with no trade routes and no valuable natural resources. It is from this humble city that God chose the couple who would parent and raise Jesus, the Son of God.

The Main Point

What role do choices play when it comes to the stress we face in life? That is the main question in today's lesson. Mary, the mother of Jesus, was faced with one of the most stressful situations a woman of her day could face. (Well, it would be pretty stressful for a woman in ANY day.) Not yet married, she discovered she was pregnant but an angel told her she was carrying the long promised Son of God. She could have done what most women would have done: hide in shame and become an outcast. Mary chose to trust what God said to her through the angel Gabriel and boldly continue her plans to marry Joseph. In this lesson you will help your students to see that there is peace and calm in the life of the person who chooses to choose right even though they may not understand what God is doing.

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 think about choices they make by playing the Choices Game.
- **Set-Up:** Arrange to display the "Lesson 3 Lead In Activity Sheet" contained in your lesson 3 folder, either by printing the PDF (which you'll want to do if you're doing the activity in groups) or by presenting it digitally. If you do the activity in small groups, you'll want to make sure students have a copy of the activity sheet and something to write with.

FIRST, tell your students that you want to give an opportunity to choose some of their favorite things. Say that you're going to let them play The Choices Game. Give each student a copy of the Lesson 3 "Lead In Activity Sheet" along with a pen or pencil. Explain that there are two things to choose from on each line and they are to pick their favorite from the two and circle their choice. Allow about 3 minutes to complete the activity.

If you decide to display each set answers and have them answer as a group, mark down which item from each group was the favorite choice of the group. If you hand out activity sheets, when they are finished go back over all 16 sets of choices and get a hand vote to find out the group favorite. Be sure to print a sheet for yourself so you can mark the group favorite choice from each line.

NEXT look at the favorite choice answers and say something like:

- **It looks to me like this group likes chocolate ice cream, pizza, soft drinks, shorts, winter clothes, etc.**

THEN, when you finish reading all 16 favorites, ask if there is anyone in that room that perfectly fits that profile. Then ask who the profile does not fit perfectly. (Most everyone in the room should say that profile does not fit them.) Explain that while you called out the most popular choice in each category it is difficult

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in a group of this size to match everyone perfectly. Tell them the reason is because when it comes to choices everyone has different and unique preferences.

FINALLY tell them there are some other types of choices they will face in life and many will not be as easy as picking a favorite ice cream or type of clothing. Then transition to the Main Event by pointing out that today's lesson is about choices in life and how those choices can either create stress or free you from stress.

The Main Event

- **Goal:** To help your students explore what the Bible says about stress and the choices people make in life.
- **Set Up:** None needed.

FIRST, begin the Bible study portion of the lesson by reminding the students that this is the third lesson in the series "Jesus and Stress." In case any of your students missed some of the other lessons bring them up to date with a quick refresher on the previous studies. See who can review the last two lessons. Use the following bullet points if needed.

- **Lesson 1: Jesus taught that if God could feed the ravens and clothe the lilies surely He is bigger than anything we may face in life.**
- **Lesson 1: Since God promised to take care of our necessities we do not need to worry about those things.**
- **Lesson 2: Obsessing over the demands of our day-to-day lives will only lead to stress, anxiety, and worry.**
- **Lesson 2: True peace that will calm our anxious hearts is found by staying focused on Jesus, His commands, and His teachings.**

THEN, begin the Bible study by telling your students that that passage from today's lesson is part of what we usually call the Christmas story. Point out how interesting it is that between the four Gospel writers, only Luke and Matthew mention the events surrounding the birth of Christ. And only Luke tells the story of the angel visiting Mary. Have students turn to Luke 1 and see if anyone can tell you any of the details about who Luke was. (If you choose, provide some of the context for the passage using your Bible Background.) Then, read or have a student read Luke 1:26-27.

Explain that there is a lot of history packed in these two verses so let's unpack it for your students.

- **Mary and Joseph were engaged or some versions of the Bible use the word betrothed. This means a year before the marriage they participated in a formal ceremony to declare the intent to marry.**
- **Joseph was a descendent of King David, once the most respected bloodline in all of Israel. Some say the reference here is that Mary and Joseph were both from the house of David. Commentator John Gill says that the bloodline of David must have been in bad shape if the best representatives were, "a carpenter, and a poor virgin; and both residing in so despicable a place as Nazareth in Galilee."**

NEXT read or have a student read Luke 1:28-29. Then, ask:

- **Describe Mary's response to the angel.**
 - o Answer: Point out that when the angel Gabriel visited Mary, she was confused and disturbed.
- **Put yourself in Mary's shoes. Why do you think she was bothered by this visit?**
 - o Answers might include it scared her, she was caught off guard, it freaked her out, etc.
- **Why would she be so bothered by it? And if you were in her shoes, what would you think?**
 - o Answers may vary. But help students see that, you know, when an angel appears to you it's kind of a big deal.

THEN, read or have a student read Luke 1:30-33. Note that the angel calmed Mary's fear by telling her not to be frightened, then got right down to the business of telling her why he was there. You may find it interesting to note that what the angel was about to tell Mary may have charged her up all over again. Ask:

- **Let's list out all the things the angel said to Mary in verses 30-33.**

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- o Answer: You are blessed of God; you are going to be pregnant and have a son; you will name Him Jesus; He will be called the Son of the Most High; He will reign over Israel forever; His kingdom will never end.
- **So, consider Mary was already a little freaked out. How do you think she must have felt here?**
 - o Answer: Here you really want to convey to your students the magnitude of what the angel was saying to Mary and help them get a sense of the awe and stress she must have felt after the visit from Gabriel.
- **On a scale of 1-10, what would you guess Mary's stress level was?**
 - o Answers will vary.

NEXT, read or have a student read Luke 1:34-37. Engage your students by asking for their responses to the following questions:

- **What did Gabriel say would be the source of this miracle of the virgin birth?**
 - o Answer: The Holy Spirit and the power of God.
- **What other miracle did the angel tell Mary about?**
 - o Answer: That her barren relative Elizabeth was going to have a child.
- **What did Gabriel say in verse 37 that is the key to all the things that were happening?**
 - o Answer: The angel said that nothing is impossible with God.
- **Why do you think we experience stress over choices God leads us to make?**
 - o Answer: The bottom line is that we really don't believe that nothing is impossible with God.

THEN, read or have a student read Luke 1:38. This is where you want to camp out for a bit. Ask your students if they can think of a word that sums up this verse. After some responses lead them to see that the verse is about surrender. Tell them that even though Mary did not understand why she was chosen or how any part of the whole situation was going to work out, she still surrendered her life to the will of God. Say something like:

- **In the face of what was surely one of the most stressful events imaginable, Mary had a choice. She could choose to freak out, and to worry about the unknown. Or she could choose to trust. To surrender. To let God be bigger than her stress, even though she had NO idea how her situation would work out. Our challenge is to make the same choice Mary made when we face life's stressors, especially when we face an unknown future.**

NEXT, quickly turn over to Luke 1:48 and read this verse to your students. You want to show them that Mary has come to grips with what God called her to do and is at peace with what is happening. What you want the teenagers to get from this is that choosing to choose right can seem very scary at first, but as we allow God to have control over our lives He gives us peace about our decisions.

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

- **Mary was faced with an incredible situation. Giving birth to the Son of God could have created some very stressful experiences for her. Instead of rebelling against God's call, she decided to surrender her life to what God wanted her to do. You may be feeling stress just from the struggle of fighting against God's calling on your life. When you surrender to Him and believe that nothing is impossible with God, you will discover the most stress free place on earth is being safe in His love and care.**

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

The Last Word

- **Goal:** To define what "surrender" looks like and to commit to surrendering one of their main sources of stress to God.
- **Set-Up:** This activity is best utilized using colorful card stock (or note cards in a pinch) and students' phones or tablets. It can be done without the electronics if that doesn't work for your group. But the phones/tablets add an extra element of creativity and accountability. You'll need enough card-stock/note cards for each student to have one. Also provide some pens or markers.

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FIRST, remind your students that this lesson is about finding help for stress by making the right choice. When we make a good choice and choose to surrender our stress to God, He meets us and leads us through. When we make a bad choice and choose to get wrapped up in our stress, we rob ourselves of God's peace and comfort.

THEN, have students think of the main source of stress in their life. Distribute the note cards and pens. Instruct students to write the main source of their stress on the cards. The more creative, the better. It would be great if they wanted to draw a symbol or picture that represents the stressor. Initials would work too. When they've finished, have students who'd like to share do so.

NEXT, instruct them to flip their card over. Have each of them write the phrase, "Surrendering this to God means . . ." on the back of their card. Then, challenge each student to answer the question. What does it mean to surrender this stressor to God? How does it look practically? Encourage them to think about real, "doable" ways they can give this up to God. Have them finish their sentence. When you've allowed enough time to go by, have students who'd like to share tell the group what they've written.

THEN, encourage students to use their phone or tablets to take a picture of the card. (They can take the front or the back or both.) Challenge students to make this the screensaver on their device so every time they look at it they will be reminded of what it will take for them to follow Mary's lead and surrender their stress to the Lord.

FINALLY, close by reminding the students that our lives will inevitably cause us stress. But like Mary, we have two choices. Challenge your students to choose like Mary chose: to trust God to be bigger than their stress and to help them journey through the tough spots in life.

If you don't have any more questions or thoughts from your group, close in prayer.

- **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.