

LIFE GROUP LESSON February 11 to February 17, 2018

God's Stress Remover

Matthew 14:22-23

● **WELCOME** God's People (15 minutes)

● **WORSHIP** God (10 minutes – song, reading of Psalms or prayers of thanks/praise). You can use prayers of thanksgiving or adoration as your time of worship

● **Live by God's WORD** (45 minutes)

Stress is a killer, but we can't escape it since we're surrounded by distressing situations of all kinds. The question is, how are we going to handle it? Many people try to escape their anxious feelings with medications, drugs, alcohol, sex, gambling, or anything that brings relief. But none of these methods are truly effective. The ultimate solution only comes from God, and He has freely provided it to every one of His children. Don't try to do more than God intended. The answer is not found in a bottle of pills, but in times of solitude with the Lord

Jesus also experienced stress, but He knew exactly how to handle it. Once, after feeding a multitude of five thousand, Jesus sent His disciples away in a boat and went up on the mountain by Himself to pray (Matt. 14:22-23). In fact, seeking solitude with His Father was His customary practice, especially after dramatic situations. We also see this same example in the apostle Paul's life. After he was dramatically saved, he headed for Arabia to seek solitude with God (Gal. 1:17). Time spent alone in prayer with God is vital.

The practice of solitude Spending time alone with the Lord sets us free from stress. This kind of isolation is not the same as loneliness. Solitude is a choice to be alone, to voluntarily separate ourselves from others. But loneliness is a painful inner emptiness that results from feeling disconnected from others. It involves a sense of not belonging and being alone in a universe of uncaring people.

The purpose of solitude is to privately commune with God. The goal is not to study the Bible or bring our petitions and concerns to Him, but to simply be with the Lord. That's when the chokehold of stress is broken, and all our tensions subside. This doesn't mean we'll never experience stress again, but solitude teaches us how to deal with it in God's way when it comes.

The Lord wants us to be alone with Him for two primary reasons: For a relationship. God created us in His image because He wanted to have a relationship with us for all eternity (Gen. 1:26). No other creature on earth was given this privilege. In fact, God loved us so much that He was willing to send His Son to die for us in order to break down the barrier which sin created (Rom. 5:7-8). Yet despite all this, many Christians don't have time for Him. However, we won't be able to relate to the Lord if our minds are preoccupied, and our schedules are full. Solitude is the only way this intimate relationship with our Creator becomes a reality. For preparation. Solitude is also God's way of preparing us for the day ahead. That's why we should begin each morning with time alone with Him. Although reading the Word and spending time in prayer are very important, the primary purpose of solitude is to experience God's presence. He wants to be alone with each one of us because that's when He's able to reveal Himself in awesome ways so we can know Him intimately and feel a sense of belonging.

How do we experience solitude? By opening God's Word to focus on Him. Although solitude is not synonymous with Bible study and prayer, we do need to spend a short period of time reading the Word so

our thinking will be God oriented. This is not the time to focus on our needs and prayer requests. The point is to become more sensitive to the Lord's presence. By eliminating distractions. To prevent our minds from drifting, we need to find a dark and quiet place that is free from distractions. The goal is to be still and quiet so we can give the Lord our undivided attention. As we enjoy sweet fellowship with Him, all our worries, fears, and stress drain away, and we're strengthened to handle whatever comes.

Suggested Questions for Discussion and Growth

1. How do you normally handle stress in your life?
2. In what way is solitude different from another form of stress relief you've experienced?
3. What benefits have become evident from your practice of solitude?
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•Impact God's WORLD (20 min)

1. Think about ways to grow your group and give birth to a new group.
2. Pray for your lost relatives, co-workers. Ask the Lord to help be a good example.
3. Your group might think about visiting an elderly person or couple during the holiday.

ANNOUNCEMENTS – 3 minutes:

1. Share: •any planned group activity •important church announcements •next meeting time
2. Keep a copy of the church bulletin to help remind the group of important events.

CLOSING –

Please turn in your attendance each week. It helps us evaluate our progress.