

Life Connect Lesson One: No Pain, No Gain

Topic: [stress](#), [dealing with stress](#), [strengthen character](#)

Family conflict, disagreements with friends, pressure on the job, health problems, and overdue bills—stress fills every corner of life. Though we may be able to reduce the amount we are facing, we can never completely eliminate stress from our lives. But where can we find help for dealing with the stress we face? The most reliable source is God. The Bible uses such words as trials, suffering, troubles, conflict, and pressure to describe stress. This lesson will help you understand the biblical perspective on stress. You will learn that God uses stress to strengthen your character and to demonstrate his power by helping you handle the pressure.

Starter

1. *In what ways do people typically respond to stress?*
2. *What good results have you experienced from stress?*

Study

Read the following three sets of Bible passages and application notes. Answer the questions for each set before moving on to the next.

Romans 5:3-5

Paul said that Christians can rejoice when experiencing difficulties. Believers can rejoice in suffering, not because they like pain or deny its tragedy, but because they know God is using life's difficulties to build their character. The problems they run into will develop their perseverance which in turn will strengthen their character, deepen their trust in God, and give them greater confidence about the future. We can thank God for the strength he provides to handle the stress that comes each day.

3. *How can pressure and suffering produce positive rather than negative results?*
4. *How can hope affect someone's attitude toward stress?*
5. *What keeps Christians from rejoicing when they are experiencing stressful circumstances?*

6. *How can the stress you are currently facing help you develop patience and endurance?*

1 Peter 1:6-7

As gold is heated, impurities float to the top and can be skimmed off. Steel is tempered, or strengthened, by heating it in fire. Likewise, the stress that Christians experience from trials, struggles, and persecution refines and strengthens their faith, making them useful to God. Begin today to view the stress in your life as part of the refining process that is preparing you to meet Christ.

7. *How have your past trials strengthened and refined your faith?*
8. *How can a stressed-out Christian bring glory to God?*
9. *What are a few of the pressures that you are facing right now at home, school, work, or church?*
10. *What can you do now to strengthen your faith so that you will be better prepared to face stress in the future?*

Daniel 3:28-29

King Nebuchadnezzar had commanded everyone to bow down and worship the image of gold that he had set up, with the warning that whoever refused would be thrown into a blazing furnace. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego chose to stay true to their beliefs, regardless of the consequences. As a result, the king acknowledged the power of the one true God. Remember that the way you choose to handle stress serves as a testimony to others. Rely on God to help you stand strong so that others will be convinced of God's power.

11. *Under what circumstances are believers most vulnerable to life's pressures?*
12. *How does the way you handle stress affect the people around you?*
13. *When have you been encouraged through the example of a Christian friend who handled stress well?*

14. *What changes could you make in the way you deal with stress so that others can see God working in you?*

Summary

No one likes to experience hardship and pain, but these three passages reveal that the stress God allows in life can be good for Christians and helpful to others. If Christians depend on Christ's power during difficult times, their character will be strengthened. In fact, the faith of Christians is often proven genuine through suffering not through an easy life. The manner in which Christians deal with stress also testifies to the power of Jesus Christ. The next time you feel overwhelmed by life's problems, look for ways that God is bringing good out of the stress you face.

15. *In what specific ways do you need to change your attitude toward the stress in your life?*

16. *What spiritual lesson can you learn from a difficulty you are currently facing?*

Supplemental Questions

Read [Genesis 50:15-21](#).

God brought good out of all of Joseph's misfortunes. The stressful experiences in his life taught him that God brings good from evil for those who trust him. You can trust him because, as Joseph learned, God can override people's evil intentions to bring about his intended results.

17. *What misfortunes has God used for good in your life?*

18. *What is a current difficult circumstance in your life? How do you suppose God could use it for good?*

19. *How can you show that you trust God to work all things together for good?*

Read [2 Corinthians 1:3-5](#).

Many people think that when God comforts them, their troubles should go away. But if that were always so, people would turn to God only out of a desire to be relieved of pain and not out of love for him. Christians must understand that being comforted can also mean receiving strength, encouragement, and hope to deal with their troubles. The more they suffer, the more comfort God gives them. If you are feeling overwhelmed by the stress and pain in your life, allow God to comfort you.

Remember that every trial you endure will help you comfort other people who are going through similar experiences.

20. *How has someone comforted you when you were stressed out or suffering?*

21. *What lessons have you learned from present difficulties?*

22. *Whom can you encourage with these lessons?*

Read [2 Corinthians 4:16-18](#).

Christians' troubles should not diminish their faith or disillusion them. They should realize that there is a purpose for their suffering. Stress and problems have several benefits: (1) They remind us of Christ's suffering for us; (2) they keep us from pride; (3) they prove our faith to others; and (4) they give God the opportunity to demonstrate his power.

23. *How does focusing our attention on Christ help us to get through our suffering?*

Read [James 1:2-3](#).

James does not say if you face trials, but whenever you face them. He assumes that Christians will have trials and that it is possible to profit from them. The point is not to pretend to be happy when facing pain, but to have a positive outlook. In other words, do two things to handle stress in your life: Expect it, and try to learn from it.

24. *What will be the demands of family, work, school, church, and other activities this week?*

25. *What is your usual reaction to these stresses?*

26. *How would responding joyfully make a difference in your life?*

27. *What can you do to prepare yourself to respond joyfully?*

Life Application Bible Topical Studies - Stress.

Life Connect Lesson Two: Stressed to Kill

Topic: [stress](#), [spiritual health](#), [dangers of stress](#)

If you suffer from headaches, backaches, allergies, or high blood pressure, stress could be a significant contributing factor. In fact, experts agree that most diseases are stress and lifestyle related. Beyond the physical effects, however, stress takes its toll on spiritual health. Christians must recognize the dangers of stress so they can take action before they succumb to its pressures. This lesson will help you to identify the negative effects of stress on your spiritual life and to know when to reduce the level of stress in your life.

Starter

1. *What negative side effects have you experienced from stress?*
2. *How do you know when you are under too much stress?*

Study

Read the following three sets of Bible passages and application notes. Answer the questions for each set before moving on to the next.

[Mark 14:33-34](#), [38](#)

In times of great stress, a person is vulnerable to temptation, even if he or she wants to resist. Jesus' disciples wanted to support him during this time of sorrow and pain, but they succumbed to temptation and missed the opportunity to help him in his hour of need. If you are under so much stress that you feel helpless to resist temptation, you may need to look for a way to eliminate or reduce some of the pressures in your life.

3. *How do you usually respond when you feel distressed or troubled?*
4. *What are some steps Christians can take to prevent themselves from falling into temptation when they are under a lot of stress?*
5. *How can Christian friends help each other through difficult times?*
6. *If you feel vulnerable to temptation, how could you eliminate or reduce some of the pressures in your life?*

[Luke 23:20](#), [23-25](#)

When the stakes are high and the pressure is on, it is difficult to stand up for what is right. Had Pilate been a man of real courage, he would have released Jesus no matter what the consequences. But the crowd roared, and Pilate buckled. Holding on to moral standards under social or political pressure can produce a high level of stress in us. Taking the easy way out, as Pilate did, may relieve the stress but leave us with a burden of guilt to deal with later.

- 6. Why are most people so vulnerable to peer pressure?*
- 7. What has helped you stand up for your faith despite negative pressure from others?*
- 8. In what area of your life are you most in danger of compromising your beliefs or moral standards because of stress?*
- 9. How can you better equip yourself to stand strong under this pressure?*

Mark 4:14-17

In this parable, Jesus said that the pressures of life cause some people to abandon their faith in God. They fall away because they do not have roots. Some Christians experience such tremendous stress that they get distracted from their desire to obey Christ. Do not allow the problems in your life to overwhelm you. Let your problems push you toward Christ, rather than away. Then the roots of your faith will grow stronger and deeper.

- 10. What trials or difficulties cause some believers to fall away?*
- 11. When have you felt overwhelmed by your problems?*
- 12. What pressures do you face now that could weaken your Christian commitment?*
- 13.** How can you make sure that stress does not choke out the life of your Christian walk?

Summary

You have learned from these three passages that stress can make Christians vulnerable to temptation, weaken their resolve to stand against peer pressure, and even push them to compromise their faith. To protect yourself, you must acknowledge the power of stress and be willing to take steps to reduce it when it threatens your spiritual health.

14. *What steps can you take this week to reduce or better manage the stress in your life?*

Supplemental Questions

Read [Matthew 14:6-10](#).

Herod did not want to kill John the Baptist, but he gave the order so that he would not be embarrassed in front of his guests. How easy it is to give in to the crowd and to be pressured into doing wrong! Peer pressure often tempts Christians to compromise their faith. Determine to do what is right, no matter how much pressure you face.

16. *When are you likely to promise more than you will want to pay?*

17. *In what circumstances do you feel the most pressure to please the crowd?*

Read [Proverbs 4:14-17](#); [10:12](#); [12:16-21](#).

Relationships that cause us to fall bring only additional stress to everyday life. But this stress is unnecessary and even avoidable. By choosing our friends carefully, we can eliminate the stress caused by hanging around with the wrong crowd. And God has provided us with the wisdom we need to choose friends carefully and limit the stress in our lives. This wisdom is found in Proverbs. If you heed it, you will not add to and you may even decrease the amount of stress already in your life.

18. *Which friendships are the most stressful for you to maintain?*

19. *How can you keep the friendship but reduce the stress?*

20. *How can you bring more peace than stress to your friendships?*

Read [Hebrews 10:23-25](#).

Stress can cause people to reshuffle priorities. The pressure of a deadline can loom over every other activity. The temptation can be to skip church, ignore friends, or neglect family. Make sure you stay involved with other believers when the pressure is on.

21. *What is a way you can encourage someone to remain faithful to God, family, and friends even through their difficult times?*

22. *What is the most encouraging thing someone can do for you when you are under a great deal of stress?*

Life Application Bible Topical Studies - Stress.

Life Connect Lesson Three: Worth the Hassle

Topic: [stress](#), [accept trials](#), [trials](#)

Many people want to avoid pain and problems at all cost. But Scripture clearly teaches that there is one kind of stress Christians should not try to avoid. When they experience problems and persecution because of their allegiance to Christ, they should accept these trials as part of the cost of following him. This lesson will teach you how to handle the trials that come as a result of your faith in Christ.

Starter

1. *What tricks or techniques do children use to escape the consequences of their misbehavior?*
2. *What is something for which you were wrongly punished when you were growing up?*

Study

Read the following three sets of Bible passages and application notes. Answer the questions for each set before moving on to the next.

[Matthew 10:34-36](#)

Jesus does not bring the kind of peace that glosses over deep differences just for the sake of superficial harmony. Conflict and disagreement will arise between those who choose to follow Christ and those who do not. In saying this, Jesus was not encouraging Christians to stir up dissension. Rather, he was showing that his presence demands a decision. Because some will follow him and some will not, conflict will inevitably arise. As you follow Christ, expect to face problems and significant personal stress because of your faith in him.

3. *What is your natural response to problems and pain?*
4. *When has your faith created family problems?*
5. *How does this passage of Scripture change your attitude toward stress?*

6. *What do you want to remember the next time you encounter conflict because of your faith in Christ?*

1 Thessalonians 3:2-4

Obedying God in a fallen world sometimes brings its own kind of pressure and problems. It's difficult for many believers to accept the fact that difficulties in life may result from doing what is right. When they stand up for the truth or proclaim the gospel, some people will choose to reject both the message and the messenger. Rather than looking for a way out, accept the trials, and ask God to give you the strength to handle the stressful situations well.

7. *When have you endured pressure or rejection because of your faith?*
8. *How would you answer a Christian who wonders why God allows his people to suffer?*
9. *If we assume troubles will come, what aspects of the Christian life will become more meaningful to us?*
10. *From what Christian friend can you draw encouragement and strength in standing up for your faith under stress?*

1 Peter 4:12, 14, 16

Peter reminds Christians that suffering for their faith is unavoidable. But they can choose their response: They can find an excuse to give in to the pressure, or they can trust God through it all. When you suffer because of your loyalty to Christ, remember that God has sent his Spirit to be with you. Depend on him to help you joyfully accept and endure the pressure.

11. *Under what circumstances is it tempting to hide one's faith or be ashamed of it?*
12. *Why do you think some Christians have never had to suffer for their faith?*

13. *What price have you had to pay to stand up for your beliefs?*

14. *How can you learn to rejoice even when facing persecution or difficult pressure?*

Summary

These three passages warn us to expect trials and problems in life because of our faith in God. Instead of trying to avoid these conflicts, we should accept them and consider it a privilege to suffer for the sake of Christ. The next time you face stress because of your faith, resist the temptation to fold under the pressure. Stand strong in God's power. In light of eternity, suffering for Christ's sake is worth every minute!

15. *What are you willing to risk to stand up for your faith in Christ?*

16. *How do you want to respond the next time you have to endure stress or conflict for the sake of Christ?*

Supplemental Questions

Read [Acts 5:27-42](#).

The apostles knew their priorities. While we should try to live at peace with everyone, conflict with the world and its authorities is sometimes inevitable for a Christian. There will be situations where you cannot obey both God and man. Then you must obey God and trust his Word.

17. *Who was the ultimate authority in the apostles' lives?*

18. *When you are forced to choose between obeying God or people, what makes it easier to obey God rather than people?*

19. *What are you willing to sacrifice in exchange for sharing the gospel? your life, your friends, your job?*

Read [John 15:18](#).

Christians will get plenty of hatred from the world. Sometimes this hatred will come from authorities who are angry at those Christians who refuse to do wrong. Such authorities may punish Christians for obeying God rather than them. Despite the stress the authorities may cause in our lives, we should not be swayed to compromise our obedience to God. Let Jesus' words in [Luke 6:22](#) encourage you to

be obedient to him under the threat of punishment: Blessed are you when men hate you, when they exclude you and insult you and reject your name as evil, because of the Son of Man (NIV).

20. *When have you had to disobey someone in authority in order to be obedient to God?*

21. *What were the consequences of your choice?*

22. *Is it easier or harder to obey God instead of human authorities when you are unsure of the consequences you will face? Explain.*

Read [Luke 12:51-53](#).

In these strange and unsettling words, Jesus revealed that his coming would result in conflict. That is because there is no middle ground with Jesus. Loyalties must be declared and commitments made, sometimes to the point of severing other relationships. Are you willing to risk your family's disapproval in order to serve Christ?

23. *Why is following Christ worth risking even family relationships?*

24. *How can you encourage another Christian who has been disowned by family or friends?*

Life Application Bible Topical Studies - Stress.

Life Connect Lesson Four: Face the Facts

Topic: [stress](#), [stress](#), [causes stress](#), [self-inflicted stress](#)

Not all suffering is the result of good Christian conduct. Sometimes a person may grumble, He's just picking on me because I'm a Christian. However, it may be that it is the person's own unpleasant behavior that is the cause of the problem. It often takes careful thought or wise counsel to determine the real cause of suffering. This lesson will help you recognize when your own mistakes are the cause of your stress. It will also teach you how to guard against self-inflicted stress.

Starter

1. *What do you think are the most common causes of stress?*
2. *When have you ever felt like you were getting more than your fair share of problems and pressures?*

Study

Read the following three sets of Bible passages and application notes. Answer the questions for each set before moving on to the next.

Genesis 20:1-2

When Abimelech took Sarah to be his wife, God revealed to him in a dream that he was in danger of committing adultery because she was already married. Abimelech confronted Abraham, demanding to know why Abraham had brought guilt on the kingdom. Abraham had to admit his sin and ask the Lord to reverse his punishment on Abimelech's household. Abraham caused a whole kingdom to suffer and put himself and his wife in great danger because of his lack of trust in God. Fortunately for Abraham, Abimelech treated him kindly, returning Sarah along with gifts of cattle and slaves. Disobedience to God can also bring tremendous stress today. People need to recognize when their problems are the result of their own mistakes and quickly confess their sin to the Lord.

3. *How can a Christian know when stress is caused by his or her own sin?*
4. *Why do believers often choose to do what is wrong, even when they know the risks and potential consequences?*

5. *Why do you think God sometimes protects people from the consequences of their mistakes?*
6. *What steps do you need to take this week to reduce your risk of suffering unnecessarily?*

Exodus 16:2-3

The Israelites should have known from past experience that God would provide for their needs. Instead, they complained bitterly about the dangers, shortages, and inconveniences of desert life and longed to be back in Egypt. In the pressure of the moment, they did not trust God. Instead, they wished for the quickest way of escape. Refusing to trust God when we face difficult circumstances usually makes matters even worse for us and increases our stress.

7. *What problems or pressures can result from a person's lack of trust in God?*
8. *Why is it especially difficult to trust in God when we are under pressure?*
9. *How do you respond to stress caused by your own sin?*
10. *What would help you to trust God more when you are under pressure?*

James 4:1-2

Conflict with others causes much of the stress that people experience. James explains that quarrels and disputes result from evil desires battling within. People want more possessions, more money, higher status, and more recognition. So they fight with others to fulfill these desires. When you cannot seem to get along with anyone, ask yourself if unrealistic expectations or selfish desires could be causing

some of these problems. If so, you need to deal with your sin before you can begin to resolve the conflicts and reduce your level of stress.

11. *What are some typical causes of conflict between friends and family members?*

12. *When have your unrealistic expectations or selfish desires caused tension in your relationships with others?*

13. *How do you know when it is right or wrong to fight?*

14. *Where can you turn to find help to deal with unhealthy expectations and desires?*

Summary

These three passages reveal that stress is often needlessly caused by a person's own actions. When someone chooses to disobey God, refuses to trust in him, or succumbs to his or her own evil desires, it usually results in unnecessary stress. When pressure comes your way, ask God to help you identify the cause of your stress. If it is the result of your own sin, take responsibility for your actions. Face the facts and make things right!

15. *For what pressures in your life can you take responsibility?*

16. *What can you do to reduce or eliminate these pressures?*

Supplemental Questions

Read [John 5:44](#); [Galatians 1:10](#); and [1 Thessalonians 2:4](#).

It is only natural for people to want to make their friends, family, and bosses happy. But much of the stress people suffer comes when they focus their efforts on pleasing others instead of God.

17. *What have you done recently to please or impress others?*

18. *What have you done today to please the Lord?*

Read [Colossians 3:23-24](#).

Since the Creation, God has given people work to do. Regarding our work as an act of worship or service to God would reduce some of the stress and pressure we experience on the job. Christians could work without complaining or resentment if they would treat their job-related problems as the cost of discipleship. The right perspective could also protect them from overcommitting themselves simply to impress others.

19. *What should be a believer's ultimate goal on the job?*

20. *To what degree do you exhibit this goal in your life?*

Read [Galatians 6:4-5](#).

Comparing yourself with others causes unnecessary stress. People make comparisons for many reasons. Some point out others' faults in order to feel better about themselves. Others simply want reassurance that they are doing well. When you are tempted to compare yourself with others, look to Jesus Christ. His example will inspire you to do your very best, without worrying about what others have done.

21. *Who are you likely to compare yourself with on the job? at home? in the church?*

22. *What are your motivations for comparing yourself with others?*

23. *Why is it better to compare yourself with Christ rather than with other people?*

Life Application Bible Topical Studies - Stress.

Life Connect Lesson Five: Outer Stress, Inner Peace

Topic: [stress](#), [peace](#)

Like it or not, we face some level of stress in every area of life. Thankfully, stress on the outside need not mean stress on the inside. Contrary to popular belief, true peace is not found in positive thinking, in absence of conflict, or in good feelings. It comes from knowing that God is in control and trusting him with all of your heart. This lesson will motivate you to turn to God for help during your trials, instead of relying only on your own strength to get you through.

Starter

1. *What is some of the popular advice today for dealing with stress?*
2. *What advice, if any, have you found most effective for reducing stress?*

Study

Read the following three sets of Bible passages and application notes. Answer the questions for each set before moving on to the next.

[Psalm 3:1, 3-6](#)

Sleep does not come easily during a crisis. David could have had sleepless nights when his son Absalom rebelled and gathered an army to kill him. But he slept peacefully, even during the stress of a rebellion. What made the difference? David cried out to the Lord, and the Lord heard him. The assurance of answered prayer brings peace. If you are lying awake at night worrying about matters that you cannot control, pour out your heart to God, and thank him that he is able to control what you cannot.

3. *What often prevents Christians from turning to God in prayer during stressful times?*
4. *Some people blame God for their hardships. What happens when they do this?*

5. *How has knowing Jesus Christ helped you handle the stress in your life?*

6. *How can you rely more on God instead of yourself during difficult times?*

John 14:25-27

The end result of the Holy Spirit's work in a person's life is deep and lasting peace. Unlike worldly peace, which is usually defined as the absence of conflict, this peace is confident assurance in any circumstance. With Christ's peace, the Christian has no need to fear the present or the future. If your life is filled with stress, ask the Holy Spirit to fill you with his peace.

7. *When have you been comforted by the Holy Spirit?*

8. *What were the circumstances surrounding your experience of his comfort?*

9. *How did this peace differ from that of the world?*

10. *In what area of your life would you like to experience more of God's peace?*

Philippians 4:4, 6-7

It seems strange that a man in prison would be telling a church to rejoice. But Paul's attitude teaches an important lesson: Circumstances do not have to affect one's inner peace. Paul was full of joy because he knew that no matter what happened to him, Jesus was with him. As Christians, we can easily get discouraged about the pain and stress we have to endure. But remember that God wants you to depend on him during those difficult times instead of relying on yourself or others to get you through.

11. How is it possible to have joy in the middle of a difficult situation?

12. How can prayer reduce stress?

13. What keeps you from experiencing God's peace during difficult circumstances?

14. How can you overcome these barriers to experiencing God's peace?

Summary

How can a person find peace in the midst of stress? These three passages reveal that God is the only source of true peace. Instead of buckling under the pressures of life, Christians can turn to God in prayer and depend on the Holy Spirit to help. Let God's peace guard your heart against anxiety and stress. Then you will be able to relax in life's most difficult moments, knowing that God is in control and that he will take care of you.

15. During times of stress, what will help you turn toward God instead of away from him?

16. How can you increase your dependence on God during times of stress?

Supplemental Questions

Read [Psalm 62](#).

David expressed his feelings to God and then reaffirmed his faith. Prayer can release tensions in times of emotional stress. Trusting God to be your rock, salvation, and fortress will change your entire outlook on life. When you are resting in God's strength, even the greatest stress cannot shake you.

17. *What is your first reaction to stress?*
18. *What role has prayer played in dealing with your stress?*
19. *How can you learn to rely on God's strength rather than your own?*

Read [Psalms 18:16](#); [31:9](#); [55:17](#); [69:29](#); and [102:2](#).

Many Christians turn to the psalms during stressful times. In them, they take comfort from the fact that God cares for and protects those he loves. When you are stressed, read through some of the psalms, and let God comfort you through his Word.

20. *How do the psalmists respond to stressful times?*
21. *What can you learn from their responses?*

Read [John 15:9-11](#).

When things are going well, people feel elated. When hardships come, they may sink into depression. But true joy transcends the rolling waves of circumstances. Joy comes from a consistent relationship with Jesus Christ. When your life is intertwined with his, he will help you walk through adversity without sinking into debilitating lows. The joy of living with Jesus Christ daily will keep you levelheaded, no matter what your situation.

22. *Which commands of Jesus are the hardest for you to keep?*
23. *What could possibly be joyful about keeping these commands?*
24. *What steps can you take this week to start obeying these commands?*

Read [Romans 8:28](#).

God constantly works in the circumstances of Christians. We can have confidence that he orchestrates events as he desires.

25. *Can anything thwart God's plans?*
26. *What should be your response to stressful circumstances that are beyond your control?*

Life Application Bible Topical Studies - Stress.

Life Connect Lesson Six: Tense Relationships

Topic: [stress](#), [reduce conflict](#), [decrease stress](#)

Scripture is filled with stories of people who faced conflict with others. In fact, some of the great heroes of the Bible suffered from broken or strained relationships. In the same way, much of the stress that Christians experience comes from disagreements with friends or relatives. By examining biblical examples, this lesson will help you reduce conflict in your relationships and thereby decrease unnecessary stress.

Starter

1. *To what degree do relationships raise your stress level?*
2. *What are some of the typical approaches people use to resolve conflict or disagreements?*

Study

Read the following three sets of Bible passages and application notes. Answer the questions for each set before moving on to the next.

Genesis 13:5-9

Facing a potential conflict with his nephew Lot, Abram took the initiative in settling the dispute. He gave Lot first choice, even though Abram, being older, had the right to choose first. Abram also showed a willingness to risk being cheated. Abram's example shows how to respond to stressful family situations: (1) Take the initiative in resolving conflicts; (2) let others have first choice, even if that means not getting what you want; and (3) put family peace above personal desires. Following these guidelines will help to eliminate much of the stress from family conflicts.

3. *What often prevents people from getting along with others?*
4. *What personal sacrifices sometimes have to be made to resolve conflict?*
5. *In what situations is it most difficult to take the first step toward resolving conflict with others?*

6. *To what relationship do you want to apply the principles from this passage?*

Genesis 26:19-22

Three times Isaac and his men dug new wells. When the first two disputes arose, Isaac moved on. Finally there was enough room for everyone. Rather than start an argument, and possibly a huge fight, Isaac compromised for the sake of peace. When disputes and disagreements with others have you feeling helpless and discouraged, consider letting go of some of your wants, desires, or even rights in order to reduce the stress.

7. *When is it better to give up or give in for the sake of peace?*

8. *How can a person know when to give up his or her desires or rights in a bad situation?*

9. *What can a person do to resolve a conflict with a friend who is not interested in reconciliation?*

10. *What rights or desires are you willing to give up to make peace with a friend?*

Numbers 12:1-2

People often argue over minor matters, conveniently missing the real issue. Such was the case when Miriam and Aaron came to Moses with their complaint. Since they could not find fault with the way Moses was leading the people, they chose to criticize his wife. The real issue, however, was their growing jealousy of Moses' position and influence. Rather than face the problem squarely by dealing with their envy and pride, they chose to create a diversion. When you are involved in a disagreement, stop and ask yourself if you are arguing over the real issue or if you have created a diversion by attacking someone's character. Then ask God to help you identify the real issue and deal with it appropriately.

11. *How do jealousy and pride create conflict?*

12. *Why do people often avoid dealing with the real issues behind their broken relationships?*

13. *In what relationship have you created a diversion instead of working on the real problem?*

14. *What are you willing to do to resolve the conflict in this particular relationship?*

Summary

These three passages give practical advice on how to resolve conflict in relationships: Take the initiative in resolving disagreements, value the relationship above your own desires, and confront the real problems instead of arguing about secondary issues. By following these biblical principles, you can reduce much of the stress that comes from strained or broken relationships.

15. *In light of these verses, what specific changes do you need to make in the way you relate to your friends and family?*

16. *What biblical principle do you think will help you the most to avoid or reduce the stress caused by strained relationships?*

Supplemental Questions

Read [Joshua 22:9-34](#).

When the tribes of Reuben and Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh built an altar at the Jordan River, the rest of Israel feared that these tribes were starting their own religion and rebelling against God. But before beginning an all-out war, Phinehas led a delegation to learn the truth. He was willing to negotiate rather than fight if a battle was not necessary. When he learned that the altar was for a memorial rather than for pagan sacrifice, war was averted and unity restored. Christians would benefit from a similar approach to resolving conflicts. Assuming the worst about the intentions of others only brings trouble. Instead, stop and listen to what others have to say, and do not react until you have heard the whole story.

17. *Would you say that you are quicker to condemn someone or give that person the benefit of the doubt?*
18. *When you hear a divisive rumor about someone, what can you do to determine if the rumor is true?*

Read [2 Samuel 2:13:1](#).

The events recorded in this passage led to a long war between David's followers and the troops loyal to Ish-bosheth and Abner. This war occurred because Israel and Judah had lost sight of God's vision and purpose. Instead of uniting to accomplish the same goals, they fought each other. When you face conflict, step back from the hostilities and consider whether you and your enemy have common goals that are bigger than your differences. Appeal to those interests as you work for a settlement.

19. *In this passage, what was the cost of unchecked conflict?*
20. *What can this kind of conflict do to a church?*
21. *How can you work to keep peace at church even though different groups have different opinions?*

Read [Matthew 18:15-17](#).

These are Jesus' guidelines for dealing with conflict. They concern (1) Christians, not unbelievers, (2) sins committed against you, not others, and (3) conflict resolution in the context of the church, not the community at large. Jesus' words are not a license for a frontal attack on every person who hurts or slights you. They are not a license to start a destructive gossip campaign or to call for a church trial. They are designed to reconcile those who disagree so that all Christians can live in harmony.

22. *When someone hurts you, how would you prefer to respond?*
23. *How does Jesus' teaching differ from that?*

Read [2 Corinthians 13:11](#).

Paul closed this letter to the Corinthians with an admonition to live in peace (NIV). Living in peace does not come through glossing over problems, conflicts, and difficulties. Peace is also not produced by neglect, denial, withdrawal, or bitterness. Rather, it is the by-product of hard work and problem solving. Just as Paul and the Corinthians had to hammer out difficulties to bring peace, so you should apply these principles to your relationships with others.

- 24.** *Who destroys your efforts to be peaceful?*
- 25.** *To what degree do you regularly ask the God of love and peace to help you maintain peace with that person?*
- 26.** *What steps can you take to initiate and keep peace?*

Life Application Bible Topical Studies - Stress.