Responding to **Stress**

Many of the most inspiring people in Scripture faced incredibly difficult circumstances. And many of them were young people—just your age—when they faced those difficult situations. Although you are separated by thousands of miles and thousands of years from these people, in some ways your circumstances may be very similar. We can learn much from their stories—by observing how they responded in difficult situations, and even more importantly, how their faith in God stabilized them in the most stressful times.

How to do this study:

Choose one of the Bible characters in the chart below. Prayerfully read his or her story from the selected Scripture passage in your Bible. Use a personal journal to work through the following meditation prompts. Ask the Lord to help you apply what you are learning to your own stressful situation. You can use the same process to study another passage. Remember, even as you consider the life of the person facing stress, the most important character in each story is God Himself. What do you learn from each passage about who God is (His character), what God said (His promises), or what God did (His actions) for this person? Consider discussing what you are learning with a trusted mentor who can help you live out what you are learning.

Meditation Prompts:

1. Think about what this person went through and how those circumstances overlap with yours.
2. Where do you see God in this person's story? What aspect(s) of God's character is displayed in this story? What does God say to this person? What does God do for this person?
3. Consider this person's response. For example,
    - How did this person respond? Was the response good, bad, or complicated (a mixture of both)? What did this person say or do that makes you come to this conclusion?
    - Did this person know what the outcome of the situation would be?
    - What about this person's knowledge or faith in God affected his or her response?
    - Notice themes of *prayer*, *obedience*, and *trust*. Write down anything you learn about these themes from the passage.
4. Are there similar ways that you should live out your faith in God?
5. Use the specific discussion questions in the chart below to examine each situation further.

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Responses to Stressful Situations in Scripture

1. *Noah*

Passage	Genesis 6-8
Summary of Situation	God told Noah that there would be a great flood and that Noah should build a massive boat to escape the flood.
Stress Then and Now	Long-lasting test, peer pressure, natural disasters
Key Verse	Genesis 6:22 *Noah did this; he did all that God commanded him*.
Key Response	Noah trusted God and therefore obeyed Him.
Discussion Questions	How did Noah's obedience reflect his faith in God? How does our faith in God affect our obedience today?

2. *Abraham*

Passage	Genesis 12:1-4
Summary of Situation	God called Abraham to leave his homeland.
Stress Then and Now	Leaving the familiar, facing uncertainty, being an outsider
Key Verses	Hebrews 11:8-10 *By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place that he was to receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going. By faith he went to live in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, heirs with him of the same promise. For he was looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God.*
Key Response	Abraham believed God's promises and obeyed.
Discussion Questions	How did Abraham demonstrate trust in God's promises? Was Abraham's decision to leave his homeland a wise one? (Why or why not?) In what ways can we demonstrate trust in God's promises today?

3. *Joseph*

Passage	Genesis 37, 39-45
Summary of Situation	Joseph was sold into slavery by his brothers, falsely accused, and imprisoned.
Stress Then and Now	Betrayal, relentless temptation, injustice, fear for lost future, fear of unknown
Key Verse	Genesis 50:20 *As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today.*
Key Response	Rather than becoming bitter, Joseph maintained his faith in God's sovereignty and goodness. Joseph faithfully obeyed despite great trials and temptations.

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Discussion Questions	In what ways did Joseph face injustice and betrayal? How did he respond? How do you think Joseph's faith was challenged or strengthened through his trials?

4. Moses

Passage	Exodus 3-4
Summary of Situation	Moses was called by God to confront Pharaoh and lead the Israelites out of Egypt.
Stress Then and Now	Self-doubt, fear of the past, fear of the future, fear of unreasonable authorities, fear of failure, feeling inadequate
Key Verses	Exodus 3:11-12 *But Moses said to God, "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the children of Israel out of Egypt?" He said, "But I will be with you, and this shall be the sign for you, that I have sent you: when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall serve God on this mountain."*
Key Response	Moses ultimately trusted in God's presence and guidance despite his own insecurities.
Discussion Questions	What details about Moses's past or his current abilities do you think caused him to feel inadequate or fearful? How can his trust in God's commands apply to situations where we feel inadequate or fearful?

5. Ruth

Passage	Ruth 1-4
Summary of Situation	Ruth was widowed and then left her homeland to support her mother-in-law in a foreign land.
Stress Then and Now	Death of loved one, grief, poverty, being an outsider
Key Verse	Ruth 1:16 *But Ruth said, "Do not urge me to leave you or to return from following you. For where you go I will go, and where you lodge I will lodge. Your people shall be my people, and your God my God."*
Key Response	Ruth showed loyalty kindness to others, trusting in God's provision.
Discussion Questions	What economic, cultural, or social challenges do you think Ruth faced as a Moabite widow in Israel? How did Ruth's commitment to Naomi reflect her faith in God?

6. Hannah

Passage	1 Samuel 1
Summary of Situation	Hannah was childless and deeply destressed largely due to the taunting by her husband's other wife.
Stress Then and Now	Personal grief, shame, bullying, disappointment

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Key Verses	1 Samuel 1:10–11 *She was deeply distressed and prayed to the LORD and wept bitterly. And she vowed a vow and said, "O LORD of hosts, if you will indeed look on the affliction of your servant and remember me and not forget your servant, but will give to your servant a son, then I will give him to the LORD all the days of his life, and no razor shall touch his head."*
Key Response	Hannah poured out her heart to God in prayer.
Discussion Questions	What does the story of Hannah teach about the compatibility of grief and faith? Where does Hannah ultimately take her grief?

7. David (against Goliath)

Passage	1 Samuel 17
Summary of Situation	David faced the giant Goliath, despite being young and inexperienced.
Stress Then and Now	Facing intimidating challenges, being alone in doing the right thing, being disrespected for youth or inexperience
Key Verse	1 Samuel 17:45 *David said to the Philistine, "You come to me with a sword and with a spear and with a javelin, but I come to you in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied."*
Key Response	David relied on the Lord's power and glory rather than his own strength.
Discussion Questions	Do you think David's decision to face Goliath an act of bravery or bravado? Why? How can we demonstrate faith as we approach challenges?

8. David (fleeing Saul)

Passage	1 Samuel 19-24
Summary of Situation	David was pursued by King Saul, who sought to kill him out of jealousy.
Stress Then and Now	Betrayal by a friend or authority, living constantly on edge
Key Verse	1 Samuel 24:12 *May the LORD judge between me and you, may the LORD avenge me against you, but my hand shall not be against you.*
Key Response	David chose to trust in God's control, promises, and justice rather than take matters into his own hands, demonstrating restraint and faith.
Discussion Questions	Do you think David's decision to spare Saul's life multiple times showed weakness or strength of character? How? In what ways can we trust God's timing and protection during difficult seasons?

9. David (and Bathsheba)

Passage	2 Samuel 11-12; Psalm 51
Summary of Situation	David committed adultery with Bathsheba and arranged the death of her husband. When confronted by the prophet Nathan, David repented.

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Stress Then and Now	Temptation, guilt from sin, consequences of sin, fear of humiliation
Key Verse	Psalm 51:10 *Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.*
Key Response	David sincerely repented, seeking God's mercy and forgiveness, and accepted the consequences of his actions.
Discussion Questions	What lessons can we learn from David's humility and willingness to accept the consequences of his actions? What about the Lord's character enabled David to cast himself on the Lord for mercy?

10. Elijah

Passage	1 Kings 19
Summary of Situation	After a great victory over false prophets, Elijah fled the wrath of Jezebel. Elijah runs away feeling overwhelmed and depressed.
Stress Then and Now	Exhaustion, feeling alone, depression
Key Verses	1 Kings 19:11-12 *And he said, "Go out and stand on the mount before the LORD." And behold, the Lord passed by, and a great strong wind tore the mountains and broke in pieces the rocks before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind. And after the wind an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake. And after the earthquake a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire. And after the fire the sound of a low whisper.*
Key Response	The Lord's remedy for Elijah's stress was rest and a renewed focus on God's voice: His words describing his care, power, and purpose. Elijah saw God's power, heard his voice of comfort, and obeyed.
Discussion Questions	Why do you think the Lord didn't directly reveal himself in the powerful acts of nature, but in a low whisper? How or where do you think you can hear the voice of God when you need it most?

11. Nehemiah

Passage	Nehemiah 1-2
Summary of Situation	Nehemiah undertook the daunting task of rebuilding Jerusalem's walls despite opposition.
Stress Then and Now	Overwhelming tasks, opposition from popular people, leadership pressures
Key Verses	Nehemiah 2:4–5 *Then the king said to me, "What are you requesting?" So I prayed to the God of heaven. And I said to the king, "If it pleases the king, and if your servant has found favor in your sight, that you send me to Judah, to the city of my fathers' graves, that I may rebuild it."*
Key Response	Nehemiah prayed and trusted in God's help, leading with determination.

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Discussion Questions	How did Nehemiah demonstrate his dependence on God? How can we similarly demonstrate dependence on God? What situations do you need to pray about?

12. Job

Passage	Job 1-3, 42
Summary of Situation	Job lost his wealth, his family, and his health. Still, he remained faithful to God.
Stress Then and Now	Extreme physical and emotional suffering, loss of good things, questioning life's fairness
Key Verses	Job 1:21 *And he said, "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return. The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD."* Job 19:25-26 *"For I know that my Redeemer lives, and at the last he will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has been thus destroyed, yet in my flesh I shall see God."*
Key Response	Despite not understanding his own suffering, Job trusted God's sovereignty and remained faithful.
Discussion Questions	How can Job's example teach us to trust God's sovereignty even when life seems unfair? In what sense was Job's attitude toward God right or wrong? What about the attitudes and responses of Job's friends and his wife?

13. Daniel

Passage	Daniel 1
Summary of Situation	Daniel and his friends were captured and exiled in Babylon. They faced pressure to conform to cultural practices that opposed God's law.
Stress Then and Now	Unwanted move to new place, loss of family, pressure to blend in, peer pressure, pressure from authorities, standing up for beliefs
Key Verse	Daniel 1:8 *But Daniel resolved that he would not defile himself with the king's food, or with the wine that he drank. Therefore he asked the chief of the eunuchs to allow him not to defile himself.*
Key Response	Daniel remained steadfast in his commitment to God's laws, showing courage and faith in God's provision and protection.
Discussion Questions	What situation challenged Daniel's beliefs? What was the foundation for Daniel's actions? What was the risk he took? Are there any situations that challenge your obedience to the Lord? How does your attitude prepare you for success?

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14. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego

Passage	Daniel 3
Summary of Situation	Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego faced the threat of being thrown into a fiery furnace for refusing to worship King Nebuchadnezzar's golden image.
Stress Then and Now	Peer pressure, facing severe consequences for faith, openly standing against sin
Key Verses	Daniel 3:17-18 *If this be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of your hand, O king. But if not, be it known to you, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up.*
Key Response	Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego demonstrated unwavering trust in God's power to save, regardless of the outcome.
Discussion Questions	Did Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego know that the Lord would deliver them? Was their decision an act of bravery or foolishness? Why? What can we learn from their courage?

15. Jonah

Passage	Jonah 1-4
Summary of Situation	Jonah ran away from God's call to preach to Nineveh and was swallowed by a fish before reluctantly obeying.
Stress Then and Now	Avoiding unwanted responsibilities, difficulty forgiving
Key Verses	Jonah 2:1-2 *Then Jonah prayed to the LORD his God from the belly of the fish, saying, "I called out to the LORD, out of my distress, and he answered me; out of the belly of Sheol I cried, and you heard my voice."*
Key Response	Jonah sought God's mercy and then (however reluctantly) obeyed God's call.
Discussion Questions	How did Jonah's reluctance reflect his understanding of God's mercy? How should we respond to God's commands when they are uncomfortable? Do you think Jonah's experience in the belly of the fish was punishment or rescue?

16. Mary

Passage	Luke 1:26-56
Summary of Situation	An angel comes to Mary and announces that she will be pregnant with Jesus.
Stress Then and Now	Social rejection, family rejection
Key Verses	Luke 1:46–47 *And Mary said, "My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior."*
Key Response	Despite the challenges that lay ahead, Mary found great joy in the Lord's kindness to her.

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Discussion Questions	What were the cultural and social implications of Mary's situation in her community? How does Mary's joy demonstrate her faith and trust in God's promises?

17. Peter

Passage	Matthew 14:22-33
Summary of Situation	Peter walked on water toward Jesus but began to sink when he feared the wind and waves.
Stress Then and Now	Excitement and ambition giving way to fear, seeing impossible circumstances
Key Verse	Matthew 14:31 *Jesus immediately reached out his hand and took hold of him, saying to him, "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?"*
Key Response	Peter called out to Jesus in his moment of fear, and Jesus guided Peter to grow in his faith.
Discussion Questions	How was Peter's decision to walk on the water an act of faith? What does Jesus's rebuke of Peter reveal about His expectations of faith? How is this liberating, not oppressive?

18. Paul

Passage	2 Corinthians 11:24-28
Summary of Situation	Paul endured many trials for the sake of the Gospel, including beatings, shipwrecks, and imprisonment.
Stress Then and Now	Persecution, physical suffering, rejection, natural disasters
Key Verses	2 Corinthians 12:9-10 *But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong.*
Key Response	Paul relied on God's grace and strength, viewing his hardships as opportunities for God's power in the gospel to be displayed.
Discussion Questions	Describe some of the categories of Paul's suffering. Do you think Paul's trials ultimately weakened or strengthened his faith? How?

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