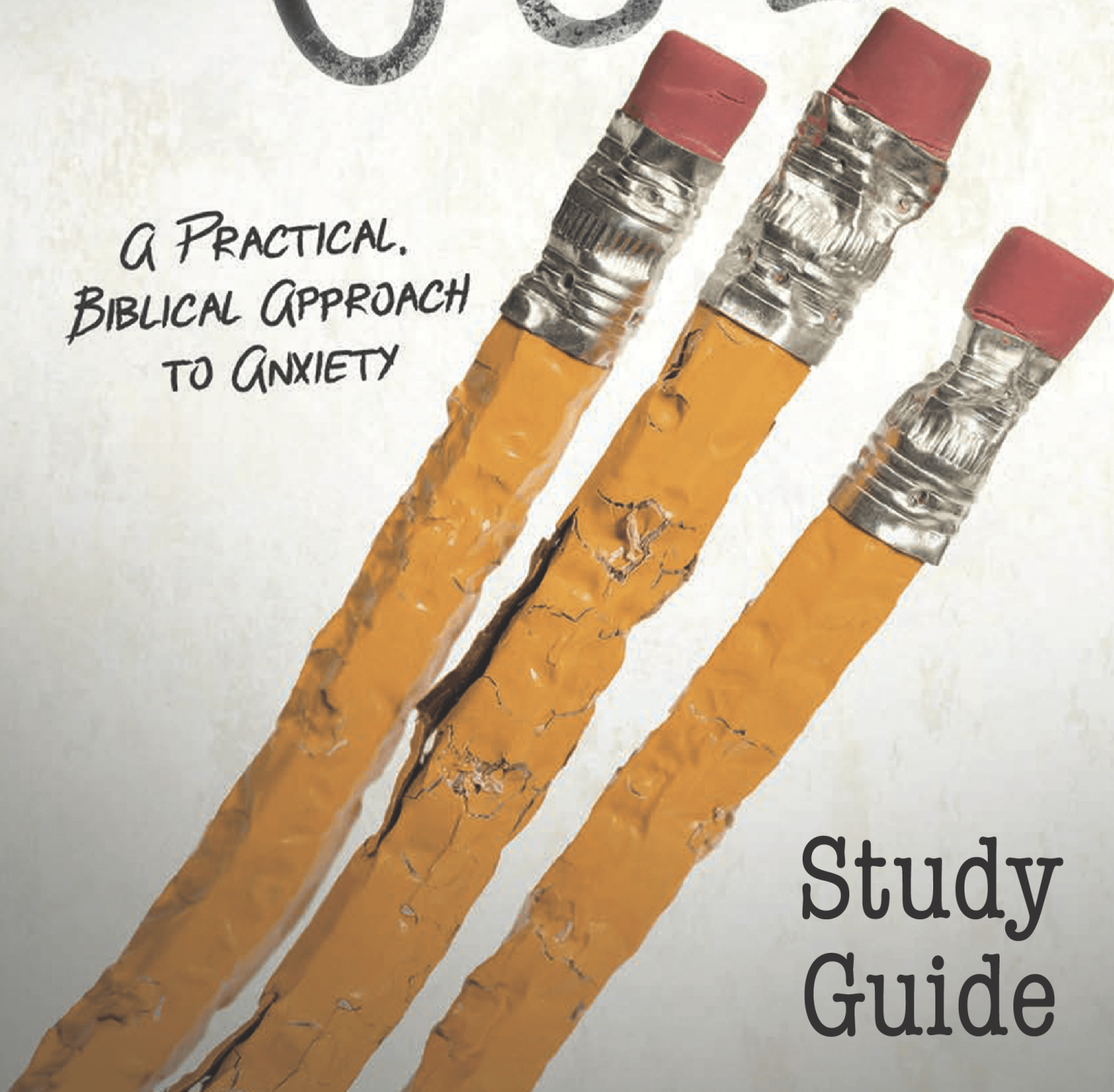


stressed OUT

A PRACTICAL,
BIBLICAL APPROACH
TO ANXIETY



Study
Guide

Stressed Out: Teacher Discussion Guide

This discussion guide is a companion to the *Stressed Out* resource available at www.Wretched.org.

By Todd Friel

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Course Overview



Dear Teacher:

Let me congratulate you for your willingness to help people battle the common malady of anxiety. Most people limp through life feeling the anchor of anxiety chained to their ankle. You are endeavoring to help fellow believers lead the joy-filled Christian life that Jesus promises. You are to be applauded.

Let me share a few suggestions on how to maximize your time with this study.

- Please read the appropriate chapters in the book BEFORE each class. If not, read it after the class, but whatever you do, read it! It is suggested that participants have the book, *Stressed Out*, prior to beginning the study. If you fail to read the assigned chapters for the week, don't stress out and don't quit. You will still get a lot out of the class. I promise.
- Discussion questions have been provided to help structure your conversations. Space has also been provided for you to take notes, add questions, and customize the session to your preference.
- There is a time and place for sharing long stories, but discipline yourself and everyone else in the class to not turn each question into lengthy diatribes. Stay focused on the question.
- Use Scripture to address questions, disagreements, or confusion. Ask questions like, "How does your comment/position/understanding align with this verse?"
- It is not only possible but likely that someone in your class is anxious because he or she is simply not saved. It would be wise to regularly remind your class about the gospel and repentance and genuine saving faith.
- Watch your time! Keep the class on schedule so you can get through all of the prescribed chapters for the week. Should you miss a chapter, don't worry.
- Pray before and after each class based on the Bible verses and content of the chapters covered. If you have time, you will find it helpful to write out your prayers in advance. The more you load your prayers with Bible truth, the more powerful your prayers will be.

May God bless you as you dive into the Bible to see the power of His Word at work in the lives of His saints. And one more time: way to go!

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SESSION 1

UNDERSTANDING ANXIETY

2 CORINTHIANS 12:9-10

9 And He has said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness." Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me. 10 Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ's sake, for when I am weak, then I am strong.





1. Does knowing you are not the only anxious person on the planet help you feel less anxious?

2. What does God want to do with your anxiety?

3. There are four reasons some people never want to get well: they don't think they are sick, they like the attention illness brings, they are comfortable, or they are not willing to try to get better. Do any of these excuses apply to your anxiety?

4. Please take the time with the book to thoughtfully consider if you might have a genuine (albeit rare) organic depression (a black dog that howls) or if you are simply struggling with the issue the Bible calls "being troubled."

5. Can you explain why the person with organic depression still needs to battle anxiety even if he or she takes medication?



1. Do you think you might have done a better job than Adam in representing the entire human race?

2. Thomas Watson's quote is a very difficult and profound statement. Do you agree with him that God actually afflicts you with difficult situations in order to "draw Christ's image more distinctly on us"?

3. Based on 2 Corinthians 12:9-10, do you agree with the statement, "God never gives you more than you can handle"?

4. Here is another profound and difficult statement: Anxiety, at its core, is nothing more than garden-variety sinning. Do you agree or disagree? Explain.

5. As difficult as it may be to accept that your anxiety is a "sin problem," why should that truth not crush you, but actually give you hope?



1. Has anyone ever told you to stop mourning a loss? Were they right or wrong to tell you to “just get over it”?

2. If someone you know is sad because of the loss of a loved one, do you need to make their sadness go away?

3. If a friend or loved one is sad because of the loss of a loved one, can you see how simply “mourning with those who mourn” might be the best thing you can do?

4. Can non-sinful mourning ever become sinful? If so, how?

5. There are many things that can cause us to be sad (death, loss, unfulfilled hope, prodigal children). Where is the line between non-sinful mourning and sinful mourning?



1. When God says He is for us, is that a promise that only good things will happen in this life?

2. Here is another difficult statement: “God does not give you the life you want; God gives you the life you need.” Do you agree with this statement? If so, how might that bring you comfort the next time God does something difficult for you?

3. Consider the statement, “If you are in Christ, your biggest problem has been solved: all of your sins are forgiven.” Why is that statement true?

4. How might that statement comfort you the next time a temporal difficulty arises?

5. When was the last time you pondered that God is for you? When was the last time you pondered how amazing grace is? How might you spend more time remembering those things in the future?

SESSION 2

ANXIETY

RELIEVERS

1-4

2 PETER 3:10-13

10 But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up. 11 Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, 12 looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be destroyed by burning, and the elements will melt with intense heat! 13 But according to His promise we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells.





1. Ouch. Does it sting a little bit to know that your anxiety is actually a lack of faith?

2. Do you see the connection between anxiety and lack of trust?

3. Does “having little faith” mean you are not saved?

4. Can you recreate the secular versus the Christian train of thinking?

5. Peter sank because he lacked faith in Jesus. Similarly, when we are anxious, we are not trusting God the way we should. Think of the last time you were stressed out. What were you trusting? Self? Spouse? Children’s success? Money? Personal skills? Luck? Personal attributes? An investment firm? A strong economy? Other?



1. Be honest -- were you thinking about the glories of heaven the last time you were worried about a future event?

2. How can our anxiety help us know where our priorities are?

3. Do you see how thinking about our future hope can help us cope with our temporal struggles? Imagine what life would be like without heaven to look forward to,

4. You are going to reign with Christ (2 Timothy 2:11-12). How could you apply that truth the next time someone shames, slanders, hates, or disappoints you?

5. How could you think about heaven more?



1. How does it feel to know God?

2. How does it feel to be known and loved by God?

3. Take a look at your contacts in your phone. Do any of those names compare to the name of Jesus Christ?

4. How could you use this knowledge the next time you are anxious about not living a glamorous life, or being famous, or knowing celebrities?

5. How could you use this knowledge the next time you are feeling the weight of peer pressure?



1. Based on 2 Timothy 3:16-17, do you agree that the Bible is absolutely, unquestionably the only source of communication we need from God for life and godliness?

2. What are the two major themes we see in Psalm 119?

3. Can leisurely activities like a day at the spa, a cruise, or a weekend at the beach actually turn your anxiety into joy?

4. Based on 2 Corinthians 3:18, Colossians 3:9-10, 2 Peter 1:2-4, and 2 Timothy 3:16-17, what is God's authorized means for growing us in holiness, peace, and joy?

5. How does studying Jesus make us more like Jesus?

SESSION 3

ANXIETY

RELIEVERS

5-8

1 JOHN 14:26-27

26 But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring you to your remembrance all that I said to you. **27** Peace I leave you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Do not let your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful.





1. What are some of the ways different Bible versions translate the word “Helper” in John 14:16?

2. According to John 14:16, when does the Holy Spirit leave you?

3. Knowing that you have the same power in you that worked in Jesus Christ to fulfill all righteousness, have you been accessing that power when you feel anxious?

4. How does the Holy Spirit typically work to comfort or counsel you?

5. When Romans 8 tells us that we are to be led by the Holy Spirit, does the context of that chapter tell us what that means?



1. Take a moment to consider how it feels to know that you are not really going to die.

2. Take another moment to ponder what it will be like to get a new, improved body that will last for all eternity without a single ache, pain, or malfunction. Ever.

3. Take a third moment to consider the amount of pain you would have suffered if Jesus had not taken the judgement of God on your behalf.

4. What absolute assurance do you have that you are going to get an amazing new body that will never wear out? With knowledge, should you ever fear death?

5. How can Jesus's promise of a new, resurrected body help you through your next bout of the flu, chemotherapy, a stiff knee, tennis elbow, headaches, or fibromyalgia?



1. If Jesus is the only way to true peace, is it appropriate to consider every other promise of peace a lie?

2. Do you agree with this statement? “If you are not happy in a 1,500 square foot home, you won’t be happy in a 15,000 square foot home.”

3. Could pondering your crimes against God, which were paid for by Jesus, help you appreciate the peace you have been given? How?

4. Does knowing about the cup of wrath that Jesus drank for us give you perspective on earthly woes? How?

5. Can you explain how true peace is directly linked to your salvation?



1. Think about the people who have sinned against you throughout your life. Who has wounded you in such a profound way that you cannot get over it? Do you harbor anger toward that person or even God?

2. What is God going to do with the unsaved sinners who have hurt you?

3. Do you think you could do a better job than God of avenging the wrongs committed against you? Should this give you the ability to stop harboring bitterness or hatred?

4. Take some time to think about the fate of your enemies. What will it be like for them on the Day of Judgement? What will it be like for them after ten thousand years of eternal conscious torment? Can you see how spending time pondering the fate of the ungodly could actually move you from anger to pity and even love for your enemies?

5. Imagine that your enemy repents and trusts Jesus Christ for his/her salvation. Can you be satisfied in knowing that the sins that have been committed against you were absorbed by Jesus when He died on the Cross for those sins?

SESSION 4

ANXIETY

RELIEVERS

9-12

HEBREWS 12:7-11

⁷ God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom his father does not discipline? ⁸ But if you are without discipline, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. ⁹ Furthermore, we had earthly fathers to discipline us, and we respected them; shall we not much rather be subject to the Father of spirits, and live? ¹⁰ For they disciplined us for a short time as seemed best to them, but He disciplines us for our good, so that we may share His holiness. ¹¹ All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness.



Begin Session 4 - Anxiety Relievers 9-12

Study Time: 60 Minutes

Welcome! We are about to begin Session 4 of our five-part study on stress and the biblical approach to anxiety. So far we have looked at eight anxiety relievers. They were:

- 1. You have a diagnosis.
- 2. You have a future.
- 3. You know God.
- 4. You can hear from God.
- 5. You have a Comforter.
- 6. You are going to get a new body.
- 7. You have real peace.
- 8. You have an Avenger.

In this session, we are going to look at four more anxiety relievers.

In preparation for this session, each participant should read Chapters 13 - 16. As you read, take notes and highlight important content that sticks out to you.

Notes:



1. Does God ever discipline you in anger?

2. Think about a recent trial you endured. Did you learn anything from it? Why or why not? Did you grow in holiness because of it? Why or why not?

3. Who gets the responsibility for the non-sinful calamities that happen in your life? Who gets the responsibility for the sinful calamities that happen in your life?

4. This may be one of the most difficult statements in the entire book: “God causes all non-sinful calamities, and He permits sinful calamities. Either way, all events are ultimately under God’s sovereign control.” Do you agree with that statement? Please support your position with specific Bible verses. Do you see how this knowledge can better help you respond to tragedies?

5. If God were capricious, mean, or short-tempered, the doctrine of sovereignty would be horrifying. But our loving God only disciplines in love, because He knows what is absolutely best for us. Can you live with that truth? Can you embrace that truth? Can you find comfort in that truth?



1. How can acknowledging our complete dependence on Jesus for everything actually be a comfort?

2. Does God ever get informed about a hurricane, tornado, or earthquake?

3. Imagine your neighbor's home has no roof damage from a recent hailstorm, but your roof needs to be replaced. How can the doctrine of God's perfect sovereignty help you accept the bad news?

4. Can you think of a time when you, like Joseph, went through something very difficult but could look back and see that God had His hands all over it?

5. If God does not give us the life we want, but only the life we need to become more like His Son, Jesus Christ, can you live with the lot that God has tailor-made for you and your family? Could this knowledge help you and your children not grumble, be embarrassed, or covet a fancier lifestyle?



1. When something goes wrong that can lead to stress, who is the first person you typically talk to? Who should be the first one you go to?

2. Does God promise that we will not be anxious if we pray to Him?

3. Do you have a tendency to cast your cares on God, but reel them back in and keep worrying about them? Should you? How could you stop doing this?

4. What is the difference between prayers and supplications? Are we supposed to do both?

5. Why do you think praying with praise and thanksgiving actually gives us joy when we are worried?



1. Spend some time thinking about how you have been loved throughout your life. Have you felt truly loved? Have you experienced more animosity than love? Do you wish you had been loved more?

2. How do we know, beyond the shadow of a doubt, that God loves us?

3. Here is another saying that can wound our pride: God does not love us because we are lovable. How can this knowledge bring us comfort and security?

4. We should appreciate God's love more as we ponder how sinful we are. How much time have you spent pondering your own depravity? Would it help to know you are loved profoundly by considering your own wickedness? Might that knowledge help you grow in your appreciation for God's love for you in Christ?

5. If you are in Christ, can God's love for you ever waver based on your performance?

SESSION 5

LET THE HEALING BEGIN

PROVERBS 3:5–8

5 Trust in the Lord with all your heart
And do not lean on your own understanding.

6 In all your ways acknowledge Him,
And He will make your paths straight.

7 Do not be wise in your own eyes;
Fear the Lord and turn away from evil.

8 It will be healing to your body
And refreshment to your bones.

**Begin Session 5 - Let the Healing Begin****Study Time: 45 Minutes**

Welcome! We are about to begin the last session of our study on stress and the biblical approach to anxiety. So far we have looked at twelve anxiety relievers. They were:

1. You have a diagnosis.
2. You have a future.
3. You know God.
4. You can hear from God.
5. You have a Comforter.
6. You are going to get a new body.
7. You have real peace.
8. You have an Avenger.
9. You have a Father who lovingly disciplines.
10. You have a pre-arranged plan.
11. You can talk to God.
12. Your God loves you.

In this session, we are going to wrap up our study with an action plan for overcoming stress and anxiety.

In preparation for this session, each participant should read Chapters 17 - 18. As you read, take notes and highlight important content that sticks out to you.

Notes:



1. Were you surprised to learn that the goal of this book was not simply to remove your anxiety, but to give you biblical reasons to love Him, serve Him, and glorify Him better?

2. In John 15:9-11, Jesus said that if you keep His commandments, your joy will be full. Do you see how focusing on glorifying God replaces anxiety with joy?

3. Sanctification is a process, not an event. Should you expect to lose all your anxiety overnight? Should you be discouraged the next time you are anxious? If you are in Christ, should you ever feel guilty?

4. What does it mean to “continue in Jesus’s Word” (John 8:31-32)? How should this knowledge change how much and how often we read our Bibles?

5. Can you expect to have peace when you do not read your Bible, listen to biblical sermons, have fellowship with believers, take communion regularly, witness baptisms, and pray? Why or why not?



1. Would you be willing, right now, to spend some time thinking about how you need to change your language and repent of past sins of anxiety? Would it be a good idea to talk to your God about these issues right now?

2. May I challenge you with a rather strong statement: if you do not hunger and thirst for God's Word, something is horribly wrong. You are either not saved, or you have been sinning and you need to repent. Do you?

3. Take some time to consider your life and your schedule. What would be the best time to commit to reading your Bible every day? Do you have to adopt someone else's Bible reading plan and schedule?

4. Ray Comfort likes to say, "No read, no feed." In other words, if you are eating three meals a day but not reading your Bible, then your priorities are out of whack. Take a moment right now to consider if you need to repent of esteeming food more than the nourishment that comes from God's Word.

5. This may sound a little radical, but I encourage you not to get an accountability partner. It is easy to lie and fall into the ditch of simply explaining away your lack of discipline. Instead, ask God for His help to get started and stay faithful. He is willing and able to complete that good work within you. Do you need to talk to Him now and ask Him for His help?
