



LET ME OUT

Keys to Unlocking Stress & Anxiety

“Let Me Out” Leader Guide

You made it! Thank you so much for making yourself available to lead a Group at theChapel! You are about to create an atmosphere for people to experience Biblical community, and grow in their relationship with God. We’ve created this resource to help you facilitate discussions within your Group.

This study is adapted from a message series that was originally presented at theChapel. It’s a series all about strategies for overcoming stress and anxiety. We used the illustration of an escape room to show that the keys to getting out are found inside the stressful and anxious situations. The solutions all come from the Scripture because it’s God’s voice to us today. Everything that we deal with in life is addressed, and it shows us the way God created us to live.

Stress and anxiety are some of the most common challenges in our culture. There will undoubtedly be folks in your Group in the coming weeks who are deep in the midst of a struggle in this area. We want to encourage you to be patient, but consistent. Hold up the truth of God’s Word, and watch as the Holy Spirit transforms hearts and minds. Your discussion time together may be just the thing to unlock someone’s perspective on

God, and help them to experience the best that God has for them.

Here's how the leader guide works:

The first link in each week's guide is the full length video. This is for YOU, the leader. We don't recommend playing this in your Group time unless you've got lots of time, and the people are super into it.

Start your meeting with reading the Scripture for the week, and then praying together. There's a suggestion for that prayer to help guide you. After you say, "Amen!" Just start reading the leader guide aloud to your Group.

Each week features a short video clip. This is the one you want to play for your Group. Just hit play when you get to that spot, and AirPlay it to your TV. The bullet lists are questions. When you get to those, ask them aloud and leave space for your Group to answer. You may want to have a couple of your own thoughts ready just in case they are slow to respond, but the goal is to get your Group talking.

At the end of each week's guide, you'll see a section called "Extended Time." If your Group is still in it, and hungry for more, these additional questions can keep it going, or it's a convenient place to wrap up if you'd prefer.

Close up your meeting by sharing ideas for Next Steps and Prayer Points. These are very practical things your Group can do between meetings to apply what they learned.

We know you'll enjoy this study, and thanks again for leading!

Week 1



Watch this on your own before the meeting.

Start by reading Philippians 4:6-8 (TLB):

Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything; tell God your needs, and don't forget to thank him for his answers. If you do this, you will experience God's peace, which is far more wonderful than the human mind can understand. His peace will keep your thoughts and your hearts quiet and at rest as you trust in Christ Jesus.

And now, brothers, as I close this letter, let me say this one more thing: Fix your thoughts on what is true and good and right. Think about things that are pure and lovely, and dwell on the fine, good things in others. Think about all you can praise God for and be glad about.

Pray that in our time together, God would open our eyes to the life-giving principles of the Word, and that He would release the chains of stress and anxiety. Ask for the peace that goes beyond our understanding, and that He would be glorified as we grow. Ask Him to be present through His Spirit and His Word, and to speak to us. Amen!

Say This:

Today, we're launching into a series about stress and anxiety. We all experience

stress about external situations that are happening to us or around us. And no matter how much you've grown in God, we also know what it feels like to have an inward anxiety and broad sweeping worry even if we can't pinpoint an exact cause. Although we all experience stress and anxiety, it's not something we enjoy. I think we can all agree that when these unpleasant emotions come around, all we want them to do is stop. We want out! Let's get a little setup on the series from Pastor Q.



Play this for your Group

When we're stressed, we'll do anything and everything to get out. We'll cut corners, go beyond our own skills or abilities, beg, borrow, cheat, steal – just so that we can stop feeling that feeling.

Ask this:

- ◆ What's the most recent major stress point in your life?
- ◆ What's the craziest thing you ever did to get out of a stressful situation?

There's a great story in the Bible in Genesis chapter 26. God had brought Isaac and his family to live in the land of Gerar because there was a famine. Famines are stressful – kind of like when all the stores were out of toilet paper

and eggs for a while, but instead of toilet paper and eggs it was EVERYTHING. And instead of a few days or weeks – it was years. Nothing at the store – for years. Isaac wanted to go to Egypt because there was plenty of food there, but God instructed him to stay where he was in Gerar. God directed him to stay IN the famine, but God also promised to bless him if he stayed.

Ask this:

- ◆ Why do you think God wanted Isaac to stay where he was?

- ◆ Why do you think sometimes God wants us to stay in uncomfortable and stressful circumstances?

So we know that our mindset in a stressful situation can't JUST be about getting out of it. Oh, we're going to get out, but maybe there are some things that need to happen first. First, we need to be encouraged that difficult times are not an indication of God's absence. Because I'm going through a stressful situation doesn't mean God isn't in it. Difficult times are opportunities to know God deeper. When all we are concerned about is getting out of the situation, we might miss out on what God is trying to reveal to us, or what God is trying to do through us.

Ask this:

- ◆ Tell us about a time when you learned something about God in the middle of a

difficult situation.

- ◆ When was the last time God worked through you in the middle of a difficult situation?

When we find ourselves with our back up against the wall, wrestling with stress and anxiety, we may go to the wrong people for help to get out, or we might go to the wrong places just to get out, or try the wrong things just to get out. All the while, we know that we can't just be thinking about getting out, we need to think more about letting God in. God wants to come into our stress and anxiety and bring a blessing.

Ask this:

- ◆ What is the current stress or anxious pattern of thought that you haven't yet invited God into?
- ◆ What are you doing instead to try and get out on your own?

EXTENDED TIME

Read Philippians 4:7 (TLB) aloud:

If you do this, you will experience God's peace, which is far more wonderful than the human mind can understand. His peace will keep your thoughts and your hearts quiet and at rest as you trust in Christ Jesus.

If we're going to stay in a stressful or anxious situation, we should at least know what to do while we're there. The Scripture says, "If you do this." Well, what is "this"? We go to verse 8 for that:

'Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.

We have to filter what we allow into our minds. In the midst of stress and anxiety, we choose what we think about. The standard is clear. Whatever is true, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent or praiseworthy.

Ask this:

- ◆ What are the thoughts that are dominating your mind in your area of greatest stress right now?
- ◆ What is the true, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent or praiseworthy thought you will choose to replace them?

PRAYER POINT

Let's pray this week for God to bring to our minds the stressful and anxious places we have not yet allowed him into. Ask for the courage to stay as long as He leads, and not run looking for the exit. Pray for the Holy Spirit to help you choose

thoughts that are life-giving, and to reject those that keep us bound up.

NEXT STEPS

Try something new. Here are a few ideas to help you apply God's Word to your stressful situations.

- ◆ Pick a stressful or anxious part of your life, and keep a thought journal for the week. Review it each night, and locate Scripture that speaks to each one. Reinforce the life-giving thoughts, and oppose the lies.
- ◆ If you're on the verge of forcing your way out of stress or anxiety, pause and consider staying in it, and inviting God in.
- ◆ Choose a mentor, a Pastor or friend to share your anxious thoughts with. Allow them to speak God's Word into your life.

Week 2



Watch this on your own before the meeting.

Start by having someone in your Group read Isaiah 43:2 NLT aloud:

When you go through deep waters, I will be with you. When you go through rivers of difficulty, you will not drown. When you walk through the fire of oppression, you will not be burned up; the flames will not consume you.

Pray for the courage to cling to God's promise even in the midst of our most stressful and anxious situation. Ask God to comfort us through His presence and His Word. Thank Him for being a God that is trustworthy. Amen!

Say This:

We've been in the middle of this conversation about the keys to unlocking stress and anxiety. It's like being in an escape room where the desire is to get out – to leave the situation, but all the clues that can help us get out are found right there **IN** the escape room. We learned that when we're facing a stressful situation, or when the anxious thoughts and feelings come over us like a flood, we would do well to focus less on getting out, and more on letting God in.

Ask this:

- ◆ What are the most effective ways that you've learned to invite God into the details of your life?
- ◆ How does knowing that God is present in the midst of your situation make things better?
- ◆ What current stress or anxiety exists in your life, that you have not yet invited God to enter?

We've been following a story from the Bible about Isaac. The story is in Genesis 26, and there's a famine in the land where Isaac is living. There's no food available, and Isaac just wants to get out. He wants to go to Egypt where there are still resources for his family, but God directs him to stay put, and not leave. Let's catch up on the next part of the story with Pastor Q.



Play this for your Group

Isaac's **spiritual perspective was greater than his earthly situation.**

Why? Because he clung to a promise from God.

Ask this:

- ◆ What is one promise from God that you cling to?

- ◆ What are some passages of Scripture that give you strength or comfort when times are tough?
- ◆ Is there a situation in your life that needs a promise from God applied to it?

When we think of God's promises, like the one we started our meeting with from the book of Isaiah, it may lead us to some faulty conclusions. We might think we're just supposed to sit around and wait on God to do something to get us out of our situation. That's not what a promise is for. The promise focuses more on our spiritual perspective than our natural abilities. The promise gives us a sense of power, peace and perspective **WHILE** we search for clues, and take quality next steps.

Ask this:

- ◆ What current situation in your life has you stuck – not moving forward? Why?
- ◆ What current mindset or anxious feelings have you stuck – not moving forward? Why?
- ◆ What is the next right thing for you to do?

EXTENDED TIME

Read aloud: Proverbs 21:1 (NKJV):

The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord, Like

*the rivers of water; He turns it wherever
He wishes.*

One of the things that makes stress and anxiety so difficult to face is that they often come with people or circumstances that are beyond our control. And while that may be true, this promise from Proverbs 21 reminds us that there is nothing – no government, no boss, no spouse, no law, no diagnostic – nothing that is beyond God’s control.

Ask this:

- ◆ What currently feels beyond your control, and how are you reminding yourself that God is in control of that thing?

In Jesus’ name we do carry spiritual authority beyond our natural ability. The Holy Spirit working through us is one of the ways God exerts HIS authority over our world. In other words, because God is powerful, and we belong to Him, we are powerful through Him. It happens in a number of ways:

- ◆ By prayer we can change the spiritual atmosphere of every situation into alignment with God’s Will.
- ◆ Through worship in the midst of our situation, we turn what the enemy meant for evil into a victory to the glory of God.
- ◆ We control what we allow close – what

gets permission to shape, mold and guide our thoughts, feelings and actions.

- ◆ We actually **HAVE** earthly authority in areas that can create a breakthrough for someone else. Our professions, resources, relationships and skills all are available to display God's goodness to others.

Now then, think back about that situation that feels beyond your control, and in Jesus' name let's recover our sense of authority and power in that area:

Ask this:

- ◆ What is one way that you can exert spiritual authority in the area that is beyond your natural control?
- ◆ What is one thing that God has put in your hands that He can use to bless someone else? (ie, a unique talent, a position of earthly authority, resources, time, etc.)

PRAYER POINT

This week, let's pray the promises of God as though God himself has forgotten! (I assure you, He hasn't.) Pray with a sense of power knowing that the God who holds the universe, also holds us. Pray God into details of our lives – especially those that feel out of control. And be thankful for the way out even if you can't see it yet.

NEXT STEPS

- ◆ Our team has put together a resource that outlines many of the promises of God and sorts them by topic. Visit the website <https://thechapel.cc/promises/> and find a promise from God about your situation that you can cling to, commit it to memory, and say it over and over each day.
- ◆ In whatever area you feel stuck, ask God for a next step, and take it. Even if it turns out not to be a clue that gets you out, movement can lead you to another step that does.
- ◆ Extend God's blessing through you to someone else. Be part of helping someone else out of their stress and anxiety.

Week 3



Watch this on your own before the meeting.

Start by having someone in your group read 2 Kings 4:1-6 (MSG) aloud:

One day the wife of a man from the guild of prophets called out to Elisha, “Your servant my husband is dead. You well know what a good man he was, devoted to God. And now the man to whom he was in debt is on his way to collect by taking my two children as slaves.”

Elisha said, “I wonder how I can be of help. Tell me, what do you have in your house?”

“Nothing,” she said. “Well, I do have a little oil.”

“Here’s what you do,” said Elisha. “Go up and down the street and borrow jugs and bowls from all your neighbors. And not just a few—all you can get. Then come home and lock the door behind you, you and your sons. Pour oil into each container; when each is full, set it aside.”

She did what he said. She locked the door behind her and her sons; as they brought the containers to her, she filled them. When all the jugs and bowls were full, she said to one of her sons, “Another jug, please.”

He said, “That’s it. There are no more jugs.”

Then the oil stopped.

Pray that God would reveal something to us about His sufficiency. Ask him to open our eyes to what He has already given us especially when stressful situations come our way. Thank him for the opportunity to connect with other believers for strength and spiritual growth. Amen!

Say This:

As we continue down the road looking for keys to overcoming stress and anxiety, today's final installment is focused on the unexpected stress. We know there are going to be stressful moments in a day. We can see many of them coming. They might be a meeting with your boss, or running into a frustrating neighbor. Working out our budget can be stressful, or trying to get kids out of the car line. We know these things are coming our way, but then there are other kinds of stress that hit us out of nowhere.

Ask this:

- ◆ What was the last stressful situation that caught you by surprise, and did you like the way you handled it?
- ◆ What do you usually do when you get blindsided by stress?

Our passage of Scripture this week from 2 Kings is all about a family that was caught off guard by a stressful situation. Let's look at a couple of keys – the clues that helped

them to get out. We'll start with a clip of the message from Pastor Kyle.



Play this for your Group

What's in the house? That's the big question that often drives God's provision in our lives. We use it in the areas where we feel the most insufficient. Let's first talk just a little bit about what these areas might be in our lives. It might be in our parenting, on our job, in our marriages or even in our own ability to cope with what life is throwing our way.

Ask this:

- ◆ In what areas of your life do you feel the most insufficient?
- ◆ Is there anything in your inventory that gives you even a little bit of power in that area?
- ◆ Why do you think we lose sight of the inventory when unexpected stress comes our way?

It's important to take note that verse 5 of that Scripture gives us a key to overcoming stress and anxiety. **She did what she was told.** The steady obedience to just do what we know to do is so hard to find when a wave of stress or anxiety comes along. Sometimes it feels like all of our training flies out the window, and suddenly

we can't even remember the instructions we have been given. It's a good thing that God has put great leaders and mentors in our lives who can give us direction in times of increased stress.

Ask this:

- ◆ Does obedience come easily for you? Why or why not? What is your typical response when you get an instruction that is the opposite of your preference?
- ◆ Who have you allowed in your life to give you direct instructions that you will follow?
- ◆ Where do you lack the mentors and coaches you need to help guide you through your stressful situations?

EXTENDED TIME

Read Genesis 26:3-5 (NLT) aloud:

Live here as a foreigner in this land, and I will be with you and bless you. I hereby confirm that I will give all these lands to you and your descendants, just as I solemnly promised Abraham, your father. I will cause your descendants to become as numerous as the stars of the sky, and I will give them all these lands. And through your descendants all the nations of the earth will be blessed. I will do this because Abraham listened to me and obeyed all my requirements, commands, decrees, and instructions.

Back here where we started this series in Genesis 26, God says that he will bless Isaac because his father, Abraham, listened and obeyed what God had told him to do. Our obedient response to unexpected stress not only attracts God's blessing for us, it can actually have a generational impact.

Ask this:

- ◆ What do you hope the next generation will see through your example navigating stressful and anxious situations?
- ◆ What needs to change in your responses or behavior to make that example even more impactful?

PRAYER POINT

In our prayer this week, let's ask God to increase our vision about what He has already put in our hands. Thank Him for the leaders and mentors in our lives who can give us direction when unexpected stress clouds our sight. Ask for the courage to follow well, and trust Him in every situation.

NEXT STEPS

- ◆ This week, before you worry about an unexpected situation, pause and list the inventory of the resources you have that God could use to get you out.

Ask your kids what they notice when you get stressed. Make some adjustments in your approach to ensure that the next generation sees a great example of obedience and faith.

- ◆ Identify a current stressful or anxious situation, and seek some wise counsel. Ask the right people the right questions, and then here's the kicker – actually do what they tell you to do.

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