

TEXT 1 Kings 18:17-46

SUPPLEMENTAL SCRIPTURES Daniel 3:8-30; 1 Peter 2:19-21

OBJECTIVE The students will be able to explain that God can give them the ability to keep their composure and react in a manner directed by the Lord, even in circumstances which bring great stress.

KEY VERSE FOR ANSWER God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. — Psalm 46:1

KEY VERSE FOR SEARCH I will say of the LORD, He is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in him will I trust. — Psalm 91:2

ANSWER

TITLE:

SEARCH

TITLE:

Answer to Stress

Reaction to Stress

REFERENCE INFORMATION

The story of Elijah begins at 1 Kings 17:1, a dramatic entrance on the pages of Biblical history where he confronts the wicked King Ahab with a prophecy of drought. From that time on, there is hardly a recorded event in Elijah's life that wasn't stressful. He flees Ahab and hides out by the brook Cherith where God directed him and promised to provide for him. When the brook dries up, he goes to Zarephath where God said a widow would provide for him. There he finds her supplies reduced to a handful of meal and a little oil. On Mt. Carmel, Elijah challenges the prophets of Baal to prove the true God.

Praying for rain that the drought might be ended, Elijah's faith in God is sure.

In all these occasions and more, Elijah himself is tested by God and passes the tests, proving to the generations following, that there is no circumstance or stress in our lives for which God will not provide a way of escape, just as He did time and again for Elijah. The final deliverance was by a chariot of fire when he was taken by a whirlwind up into Heaven.

YOUR OPENER

Reaction to Stress

TEXT: 1 Kings 18:17-46

KEY VERSE: I will say of the LORD, He is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in him will I trust.
— Psalm 91:2

SUPPLEMENTAL SCRIPTURES: Daniel 3:8-30; 1 Peter 2:19-21

RESPONSES

1. Elijah had to face King Ahab to tell him the rain was being stopped; he had to hide himself; his own source of water dried up; the child of the woman who befriended him died; for a second time he faced King Ahab; and then he defied all the false prophets of the land. Discuss these situations with the class and ask if any have had times in their lives that were as trying as those of Elijah. Emphasize that he met each of these stressful situations by obeying and waiting for God to answer. God answered every time. He will not fail us today. He will take us through each trial if we trust Him as Elijah did.

2. God said He would send rain upon the earth. Elijah went to the top of Mt. Carmel and prayed seven times. After the seventh time, there was a cloud "like a man's hand," and then there was a great rain. Ask your class to discuss the effect that waiting has on one during a stressful situation. How do you suppose Elijah felt when he prayed again and again and yet saw no sign of an answer until the seventh time? Your class should conclude that, though the stress may be greater when we have to wait, continued prayer will bring the answer in God's perfect time.

3. Answers may include courage, faith in God, and determination. These attributes are tested in a stressful situation. In the face of the stressful situation the three Hebrew children were confronted with, they believed that God would deliver them from the fiery furnace. But they determined they would not bow down and worship the image even if God did not save their lives. Later, Daniel had the same purpose when he was thrown into the lions' den. In both cases, God answered miraculously. God has promised to give grace for each trial, that we may be able to bear it.

4. Jesus did not fight back or threaten revenge, but followed His own teaching from the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:39). What He suffered was even more painful than our fiery trials.

Were the heroes of faith in the Bible any different from the present-day child of God? Scripture tells us in James 5:17 that Elijah was a man subject to like passions as we are. He was an example of how a Christian, even today, can react in times of stress and pressure.

1. As we read the story of Elijah, what are some of the stressful situations in which he found himself? How did he handle each of them? Particularly note 1 Kings 17:1,3,7,17; 18:17-24.

2. What did God promise Elijah when he faced Ahab after the 3-1/2 years of drought (1 Kings 18:1)? What did Elijah do when this didn't happen immediately?

3. What attributes were shown by the three Hebrew children when they refused to obey the king's edict to bow down to his idol? See Daniel 3:16-18.

4. What did Jesus do when He was falsely accused and reviled for doing good? Since He was the Son of God, do you feel the stress and pressure He went through was any less serious than what we may feel? See Hebrews 4:15 and 1 Peter 2:21-23.

ADDITIONAL DISCUSSION NOTES

5. How do most people react when they are reproofed for something and realize they may have deserved it? How do most people react if they are accused of something of which they are completely innocent? Justified or unjustified, reproof can cause stress. In what way should a Christian react to stress? See 1 Peter 2:18,20.

6. What are some of the situations that may arise in our present-day society that can induce stress and tension in one's life?

7. What are some ways people have tried to combat stress in their lives, as compared with what a Christian can do?

8. What does the Bible instruct us to do when the cares, anxieties, and pressures of life come upon us? See Matthew 6:25; Philippians 4:6-7 and 1 Peter 5:7.

9. What kind of Christian witness are we displaying when we meet the crises and tests of life as God would have us meet them?

10. The outcome of giving in to stress can be physical distress and in some cases a total breakdown. According to Philippians 4:7,8, there is something we can do to counteract the pressures and stresses of this life. List several stressful-type situations that might come to us and, using this Scripture, explain what you could do to lessen the stress.

5. Have your students share their answers. Show that God is able to give us patience to take criticism, even if it is completely unjustified. Peter said that as Christians we should follow Christ's steps, and God will bless us as we do.

6. Discuss with the class the different answers received. Some may seem of a minor nature, such as rush-hour traffic or a long supermarket line, but these can be very real if there is a time deadline awaiting you. With the student, it may be an important test in a hard subject. With a child it may be difficulties in the home between the parents or siblings. With the parents it may be the threat of unemployment or other financial problems. Explain that many stressful situations can be avoided, but that which is unavoidable can be taken to the Lord in prayer.

7. Some use depressants, sedatives, tranquilizers or stimulants; others go to psychiatrists; a few take their own lives. A Christian has the privilege of going to the Lord, of fixing his mind on the Lord and finding in Him peace and tranquility. See Isaiah 26:3. Discuss how the Christian's method is far superior. See next question.

8. The Bible tells us plainly that we need not let these things overcome us, but that we can take all our anxieties to the Lord. As we trust Him, He will give us victory over all of our cares. See Hebrews 4:16.

9. Ask the students for their impression of a Christian who goes through the hard places without losing his patience or composure. Explain that they can react to similar situations in the same way if they look to the Lord for His strength in their lives. The class should conclude that this kind of witness is one who will attract others to Christianity.

10. You may want to read this Scripture aloud to your class and then ask for some of your students' answers. Your discussion should conclude that God has promised that His peace will keep their hearts and minds as they look to Him and think on those things which are uplifting. God's promised peace is the exact opposite of worry and anxiety.

YOUR WRAP-UP

SUPPLEMENTAL QUESTIONS

How many false prophets did Elijah have to face on Mount Carmel? What was the purpose of that confrontation?

Can we be prepared in advance for stressful situations? If so, how?

How would you define stress?

How can stress affect you?

Stress is very much a part of the modern world. How do you feel a person should cope with it?

What are some avenues that the world uses to try to relieve stress? Psychiatry, alcohol, tobacco, tranquilizers, drugs. Are any of these solutions, or do they compound the problems?

In the ANSWER story, what were Jim's two secrets for handling stress?

Can you think of situations you sometimes face where Jim's first secret would help you? Is there any situation where the second one wouldn't help? Explain.

THINGS TO DO

Present to your students some names from the Bible where godly persons were calm in stressful situations. Some examples might be: Daniel, the three Hebrew children, Paul and Silas, and Elisha. Have students volunteer what the situation was. This could be followed with a list of ungodly persons and how they responded to stressful situations.

On strips of paper, write down some of the main events from the text of this lesson. Mix up the pieces of paper and have the students put them in the correct sequence.

List some situations that could cause stress. Have the students give ways to handle the situations from the world's and also from the Christian's point of view. Give examples of things that cause stress. You may use the following list, or compose your own, using suggestions from students. After reading each situation, discuss how a person might ordinarily react and how the Lord can help one to respond in the right way.

1. Someone knocks books out of your arms as you go down the hall at school.
 2. Your teacher gives you an unfair grade on a paper you turned in.
 3. Someone very close to you is lying at the point of death.
 4. When you pick up your paycheck, your boss tells you not to come to work the next day.
 5. Your "friends" are making fun of you because you won't attend a party where drugs will be used.
 6. Kids in the lunchroom make fun of you because you prayed over your lunch.
 7. A very close friend or relative is having spiritual trouble and you know you must reach out to them.
- Another way this could be done is with role playing, revealing the non-Christian reaction to these situations. Then discuss how to handle the situations as a Christian, using God's Word as your reference.

Answers for ANSWER

