

Small Group Experience

LESSON 3 - "PEACE"



Whatchagaddaknow?:

"I Will Come To God's Presence When I Feel Stressed Out!"



Power Verse:

"... 'Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest.'"

-Matthew 11:28

Retelling The Bible Story

SUPPLY LIST:

* Cotton balls (plenty for the group to share)

TEACHER INSTRUCTIONS:

Before small group begins, place piles of cotton balls around the room. Once small group begins, review the Bible Story by reading the provided lesson excerpt aloud, pausing when you say "Mary" or "Martha," so the kids can stand and collect one cotton ball. These will be used in the next activity.

Say - What do cotton balls and fruit have in common? And no, this isn't a bad joke with a corny punch line. Today we will find out just what cotton balls and fruit have to do with one another. I am going to read the Bible Story out loud. When you hear me say the name "MARY" or the name "MARTHA," you should go and collect one cotton ball. Hold on to them - we will use them in the next activity.

-Read the provided lesson excerpt aloud, pausing when you say "Mary" or "Martha"-

Say - Jesus, the Good Shepherd, leads His sheep into peace, not stress. In Luke chapter 10, we find two sisters who were very good friends with Jesus. **Mary** and **Martha**, along with their brother, Lazarus, found out that Jesus was coming to visit them. When Jesus arrived, they were so excited to welcome Him into their home.

As you can imagine, there were a lot of things to do to get the meal together. So **Martha** started rushing around - cooking, cleaning, and preparing. She was doing so much and moving so fast that she was stressed out-big-time! After a while, **Martha** started to notice that **Mary** was nowhere to be found. She was so upset when she noticed **Mary** in the living room with Jesus. How could she do this? **Martha** was not happy. While she had been stressing out, trying to take care of all the details, **Mary** was just spending time with Jesus.

Martha ran into the living room and said to Jesus, "Lord, isn't it so unfair that **Mary** is in here with You while I am taking care of everything else?" Jesus said something very interesting back to her. He basically said, "**Martha**, you have to understand something. **Mary** is exactly where you need to be - with Me. Instead of stressing out over all these details, you should be right here with Me, as well." Jesus was explaining to **Martha** a very important truth. It is the same truth that is found in Matthew 11:28. Jesus said, "Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest."

Say - The story is over, and you now have plenty of cotton balls, so it's time to get to the fruit. But first, let's talk about this story a bit.

Ask - Why do you think Martha felt stressed?

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-Allow time for the kids to respond; discuss their answers with the group-

Ask - Was it wrong for Martha to feel stressed?

-Allow time for the kids to respond; discuss their answers with the group-

Ask - How does PEACE play a role in this story?

-Allow time for the kids to respond; discuss their answers with the group-

Game/Activity

SUPPLY LIST:

- * Tomato Print Piece (provided; print one per team)
- * Cotton balls (from the previous activity, plus extra if needed)
- * Plastic spoons (several per team)
- * A way to keep time

TEACHER INSTRUCTIONS:

Before small group begins, print the Tomato Print Piece. Once activity time begins, divide the group into teams and give everyone one plastic spoon. Place all the teams on one side of the room, have them combine all their cotton balls into one team pile, and place the piles on the ground in front of the teams. Place one Tomato Print Piece on the opposite side of the room from each cotton ball pile, so each team has a cotton ball pile and a tomato picture. This game should be played “Minute to Win It” style. Give the teams 60 seconds to use the spoons to transfer cotton balls from their team pile to the tomato picture. They may only use the spoons to transfer the cotton balls - they may not pick up the cotton balls with their hands! If you want to add an extra element of challenge, make them hold the spoons in their mouths to scoop up the cotton balls. The team that piles the most cotton balls on its tomato wins. This can be played multiple rounds, as time allows, and is a fun lesson concept reinforcing activity.

Say - It's a sad day for our friend the tomato, because he's about to get a bunch of stress piled on his head. Okay, it might be cotton balls that represent stress, but you get the point. This game will be played “Minute to Win It” style. When I say “Go,” you will have 60 seconds to use the plastic spoons to transfer cotton balls from the pile to your team's stressed tomato. There are just a few rules! The cotton ball may ONLY touch the spoon. If you drop your cotton ball en route to the tomato, you cannot pick it up! Go back to the original pile and start over. The team that piles the most stress (cotton balls) on its tomato wins!

-Play the game; this can be played multiple rounds, as time allows-

Group Sharing

SUPPLY LIST:

- * Block Print Piece (provided; print one block per kid)
- * Scripture Block Print Piece (provided; print one per kid)
- * Crayons, markers, or colored pencils

TEACHER INSTRUCTIONS:

Before small group begins, print and cut out the Block and Scripture Block Print Pieces. Group sharing is focused on encouraging the kids to open up and discuss the lesson concepts and relate those concepts to their lives. Help facilitate and guide the discussion time.

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Say - I told you that we would explore what cotton balls and fruit have in common, so let's talk about that concept! Today's fruit of the Spirit is PEACE. You just played a game where you piled cotton balls on a tomato. It was fun and silly, but it had a point! The cotton balls represented stress. Life is full of stressful situations.

Ask - What are some things that cause stress?

-Allow kids time to respond; discuss their answers with the group-

Say - Stress piles up, and it doesn't feel like fluffy cotton balls. It feels like heavy cinder blocks crushing down. Maybe you've dealt with stress and you've felt like our poor tomato - one more thing and you might burst. Take a moment and think about a stressor you are facing or have faced. Write it on the blank block.

-Allow time for the kids to complete the task-

Say - It is inevitable - it is going to happen, no way around it...in this world you will have trouble! The Bible even says that in John 16:33. "...Here on earth you will have many trials and sorrows...." So let's think back to the stressful things that you just mentioned.

Ask - How do most people normally react when they are faced with stressful situations?

-Allow kids time to respond; discuss their answers with the group-

Say - Most people have one of two reactions when faced with stress - they worry and shut down or they worry and work hard to try to fix the situation. Take another moment and think - how do you respond to stress? Just think on it. There's no need to write anything unless you'd like to.

-Allow reflection time-

Ask - Do either of those coping strategies work well? Why or why not?

-Allow time for the kids to respond; discuss their answers with the group-

Say - We discussed the cotton ball part of the lesson, but now let's get to the fruit. If worry, shutting down, and working harder don't help with stress, what does help? How do we deal with the tough situations that can pile up and leave us feeling squashed and weighed down? This is where the fruit comes into play, specifically PEACE - the peace that comes from God.

Ask - What is peace? Why is the peace that comes from God so special?

-Allow time for the kids to respond; discuss their answers with the group-

Say - I gave you a block with a verse. Would someone like to read the verse aloud?

-Allow time for the volunteer to read the verse aloud-

Ask - What does this verse mean to you?

-Allow time for the kids to respond; discuss their answers with the group-

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Ask - What is a more effective way to deal with stress?

-Allow time for the kids to answer; discuss their answers with the group-

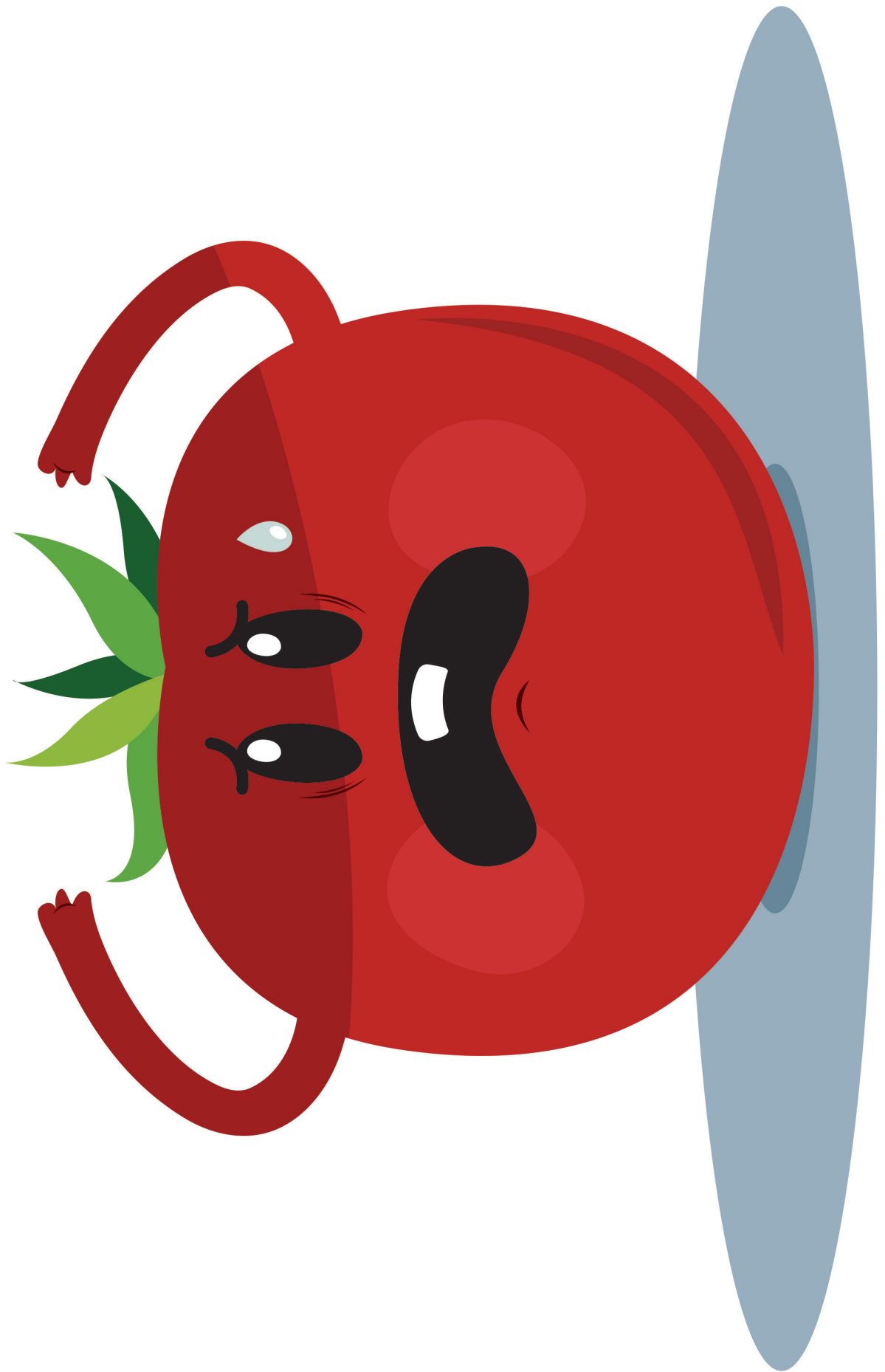
Prayer Time

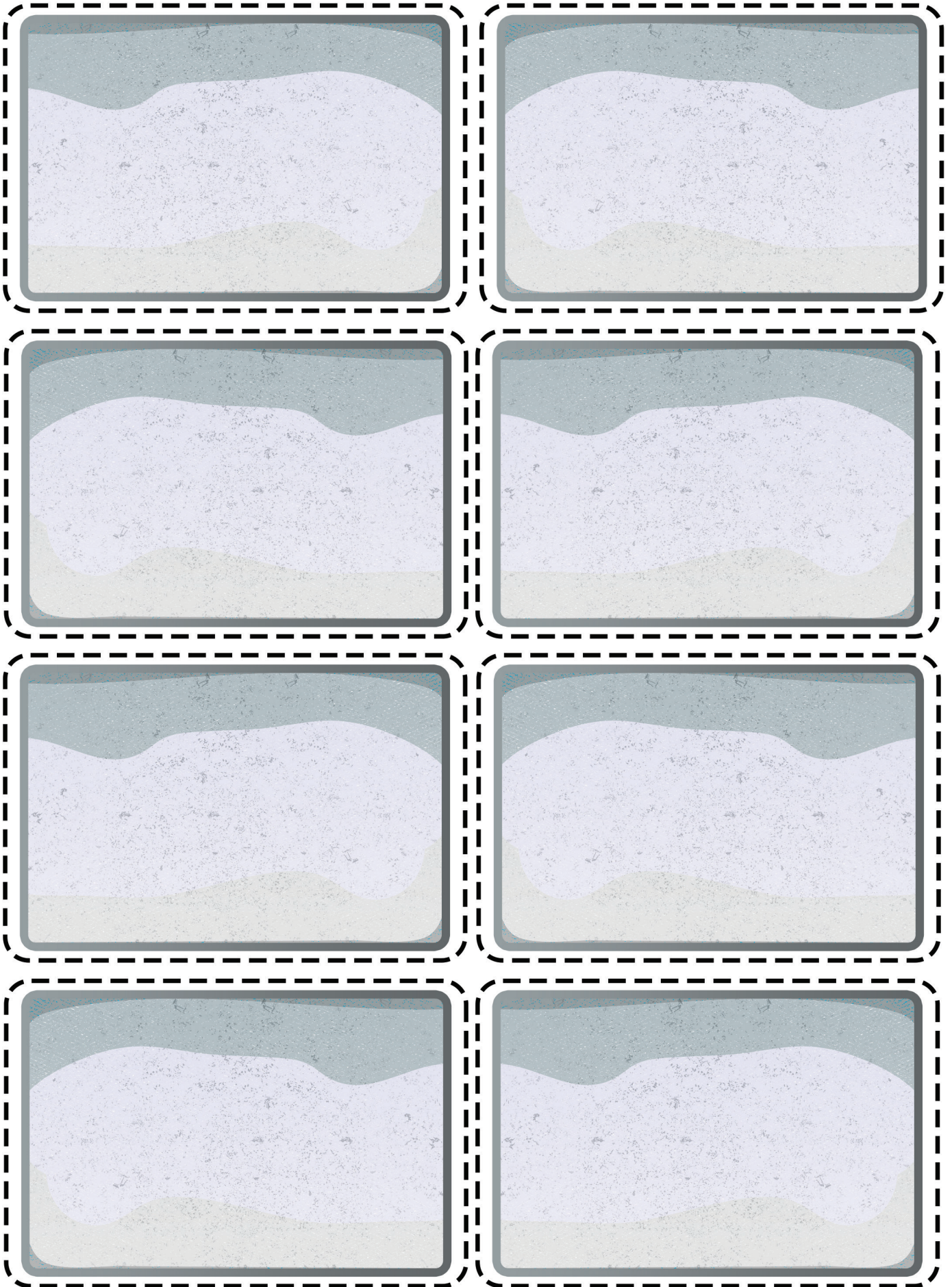
Say - I would like to pray for all of you, because all of you will, at some time or another, feel stress. I am going to pray that as you face stress, you will turn to God and allow His PEACE to give you rest.

Pray

Closing

Say - Mary and Martha faced the same situation, filled with the same potential stress points, and handled it very differently. Martha tried to conquer her stress by facing it head on and working hard to make everything perfect and fix the problems. She assumed that if she worked hard enough, and worried hard enough, she could beat the stressful situation into submission. That plan did not go well, and she learned a valuable lesson about how to deal with stress. I am thankful that she did, because it also teaches us a valuable lesson on how to deal with stress. You will face stressful times, and you might even be tempted to try and beat your stress into submission. Or maybe stress stops you in your tracks and shuts you down, crippling any forward motion. You might feel stress crushing you like heavy blocks. But to God, your cinder blocks are like cotton balls. He can lift your stress with ease and replace it with peace. Does that mean everything will always work out exactly right? NO. Does that mean you will never feel anxious or stressed? No. However, it does mean that when you do feel anxious and stressed, God is there to lift that heavy load. He grants you peace where there shouldn't be peace. He gives you calm where there should be chaos. God's peace is amazing! This week, I challenge you to practice taking your burdens to God. Let Him give you rest and PEACE. Thank you for coming today! I will see you again soon.





JESUS IS STRONGER THAN STRESS

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