



## LESSON 2 // PRACTICE RELEASE—PART 1

**Big Idea:** As followers of Jesus, we're called to endure through, not escape from, this crazy world—but that doesn't mean it's easy. How do we stay sane and maintain our spiritual and emotional health in the midst of the turmoil around us? Properly handling stress is key. Distress ("bad" stress) is real—especially when the pressure is on—so we need to recognize its presence, causes and symptoms and how to respond to them in biblical ways.

**1 Thessalonians 5:1-6 (NIV)** *Now, brothers and sisters, about times and dates we do not need to write to you, for you know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. While people are saying, "Peace and safety," destruction will come on them suddenly, as labor pains on a pregnant woman, and they will not escape. But you, brothers and sisters, are not in darkness so that this day should surprise you like a thief. You are all children of the light and children of the day. We do not belong to the night or to the darkness. So then, let us not be like others, who are asleep, but let us be awake and sober.*

**James 1:2-4 (MSG)** *Consider it a sheer gift, friends, when tests and challenges come at you from all sides. You know that under pressure, your faith-life is forced into the open and shows its true colors. So don't try to get out of anything prematurely. Let it do its work so you become mature and well-developed, not deficient in any way.*

**2 Corinthians 1:8-9 (NIV)** *We do not want you to be uninformed, brothers and sisters, about the troubles we experienced in the province of Asia. We were under great pressure, far beyond our ability to endure, so that we despaired of life itself. Indeed, we felt we had received the sentence of death. But this happened that we might not rely on ourselves but on God, who raises the dead.*

### Start Talking:

What are some practical ways you try to relieve stress in your life?

### Start Thinking:

**Read 1 Thessalonians 5:1-6.** How do these verses exhort us as believers in Jesus to respond in dark and difficult days? How is this different than the ways other people might respond? What application of this do you see for your life in today's crazy world?

**Read James 1:2-4.** In what ways are tests and challenges good for you? How can this perspective help you endure through hard times and reduce stress?

**Read Proverbs 3:5-6; 2 Corinthians 1:8-9.** According to 2 Corinthians 1:8-9, how did the Apostle Paul learn to rely "on God, who raises the dead" rather than relying on himself? How does Proverbs 3:5-6 speak to you about the value of relying on (trusting in) the Lord rather than leaning on "your own understanding"?

### Start Praying and Doing:

Pray for God's strength to endure through the challenges you face right now, knowing that "the testing of your faith produces perseverance" (James 1:3). Determine what it will take to stand firm for Christ in these challenges so that He receives honor and praise from your obedience to Him (see 1 Peter 1:6-7).