

## Study Guide

Series: Antidotes for an Out of Control Life  
“Finding Peace in a Stressful World”

**Monday** - Exodus 14:5, 9-16. As scary situations go, being an unarmed former slave on the edge of an inland sea, and seeing your former master’s mighty army closing in on you, would have to rank high. Pharaoh had chariots, horses and trained troops. Israel had their bare hands, and God. Then Moses spoke the extraordinary words we’ll see often this week: “Do not be afraid.” The terrified Israelites saw only two choices: “It would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the desert!” God said, “March through the sea,” which they didn’t think was possible. Faced with a choice you saw as hopeless, when have you found a way through that you had ruled out? Can you see God’s hand in that? This passage highlights the paradox Christ-followers often face. In verse 14, Moses said “You need only to be still.” In verse 15 God told Moses, “Tell the people to move on.” Both messages were needed. How have you learned to discern when God is calling you to be still and trust, and when God’s call is for you to “move on” and take action?

**Tuesday** - Psalm 37:5-11. When we read Bible verses that say “Do not fear,” we’re often inclined to think, “Yeah, but they didn’t know what I’m facing!” But the Bible writers did not live in some movie fairyland. This psalmist knew well that “people succeed in their ways” and “carry out their wicked schemes.” In spite of that he said, “Trust in the Lord—be still before the Lord.” When we read “[God] will make your righteous reward shine like the dawn,” we tend to ask, “When?” The psalm hints at an answer we may struggle with: “Wait patiently for him.” How can God’s promise to renew us inwardly give us strength to press on in faith even at times when our lives seem broken?

**Wednesday** - Isaiah 43:1-7. Far from promising us that trust in God ensures that nothing bad can ever happen in this life, Isaiah knew that, sooner or later, bad things come to all of us. In John 16:33, Jesus said, “In this world you *will* have trouble.” Isaiah wrote, “When [not “if”] you pass through the waters ....When you walk through the fire.” But he began with familiar words: “Do not fear.” An ancient tradition said King Manasseh killed Isaiah. Jesus was crucified. The Romans beheaded Paul the apostle. Does that history belie the truth of this passage’s promises? Hebrews 2:15 said Jesus’ resurrection can “free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.” In what ways can the fear of death limit your ability to live for God and others? To what extent has faith in Jesus freed you from that fear?

**Thursday** - Mark 6:34-52. Scary situation #1: a large crowd was hungry. The disciples said, “Send them to get food,” but Jesus said, “You give them something to eat.” Then his power provided lots of food for them to share. Scary situation #2: a strong wind blew across the Sea of Galilee. The disciples were struggling. Jesus came, said “Do not be afraid,” and stopped the wind. The disciples were amazed. Both episodes gave insight into human fear and heavenly sufficiency. Imagine facing that many hungry people and Jesus says, “You give them something to eat”! Jesus gave the disciples the privilege of serving as a channel through which his power could feed the crowd. How is God calling you to be conduit through which God’s power can work? In your own words, how would you state the lesson(s) the disciples could have learned if

they *had* understood about the loaves? How can taking these stories seriously increase your freedom to lead a more hopeful, worry-free life?

**Friday** - Luke 12:22-32. We may not face marching armies, or huge crowds who need food. But every day we face cars that wear out, bills that need to be paid, and the question of “What’s for lunch?” Jesus asked us not to worry about those things. Even in this world, he said, those needs are usually met, for the birds and for us. But he sought to raise our sights beyond this world, saying, “Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom.” What would it look like if you applied Jesus’ wisdom (“life is more than food, and the body more than clothes”) to your everyday activities? What would rise higher on your list of priorities, and what might drop to a lower rung? Do you believe that changing your priorities in that way would increase or decrease your worries?

**Saturday** - Isaiah 30:15-18. In Isaiah’s day, the Assyrian Empire threatened Israel from the north. King Hezekiah was worried, and sent emissaries southwest to ask Egypt for help. It was futile—Assyria’s army was far stronger than Egypt’s. On God’s behalf, Isaiah pleaded with Israel to turn back from these missions. Trust in God, who loves you and longs to show you mercy, he begged. There’s no help in Egypt’s swift horses. Instead “in repentance and rest is your salvation.” Make this Scripture personal. Have there been times when God could have said to you, “In repentance and rest is your salvation, in quietness and trust is your strength, “but you would have none of it? To what extent are you willing to lay aside striving and worry, and live in quietness and trust? Do you believe Isaiah’s words apply to your life: “The LORD longs to be gracious to you....Blessed are all who wait for him”?