

Lesson 4

When Less is Definitely Better

I hope you will agree that the principles we've discussed so far – His ownership and sovereignty and our responsibilities as His manager – are foundational as we move forward managing resources, specifically money.

Now that we have a better understanding of our responsibilities, I also hope you will agree it might be a good idea to take an assessment of where we are before we continue our role as manager. A popular song when I was younger contained the lyrics “I just dropped in to see what condition my condition was in”. So, let's take an assessment to see what condition **our** condition is in. I call this a financial stress test, and we'll be using the Financial Condition and Stress Meter you see on the next page. This meter should give you a good awareness of your preparedness to be an effective manager. As is true with many medical scores and all golf scores, we want to score on the Financial Condition and Stress Meter to be **as low as possible**.



Scriptural Foundation

There are countless scriptural references that support a low score on such a test. On numerous occasions, the scriptures encourage us to unload the stress. I could fill the page with them, but here are just a few:

- **Cast all your cares on Him** - 1 Peter 5:7
- **Come to Me all who are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest** - Matthew 11:28
- **Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you** - John 14:27
- **It is the blessing of the Lord that makes rich, and He adds no sorrow to it** - Proverbs 10:22
- **Therefore do not be anxious for tomorrow** - Matthew 6:34
- **I came that they might have life, and might have it abundantly** - John 10:10

It is clear from Scripture that the Lord wants us to take our manager role seriously, but at the same time, do it in a way that doesn't raise our blood pressure. Let me say that another way – our Lord wants us to be a faithful, accountable, trustworthy, and stress free manager!

The action step below will have you determine your rating or score on the meter. When you rate yourself, **be brutally honest**, and don't be surprised if you have a higher score than you want. **I regularly talk with people who are practically pegging the meter**. If you happen to be one of those, seek counsel soon, but also take comfort, because help is on the way in the weeks and lessons ahead.

Due to the nature of this lesson, we will reverse the order of the Action Step and the Reflection Time. (Note, however, the second Action Step at the end, which will help you prepare for future practical activity.)

Before you score yourself, let's analyze the scoring system on the Financial Condition and Stress Meter:

- 0 Completely relaxed; calm; no significant financial issues; sufficient reserve for major emergency
- 1 Fairly relaxed; occasional issue; liquid reserve in place for six months of monthly living expenses
- 2 Finances are under control, but potential problems possible; three months reserve
- 3 Managing ok on a monthly basis, but sense need to build more reserve; 1 month reserve
- 4 Some anxiety; getting by on a weekly basis; discretionary funds limited; little reserve
- 5 Unsettled; can pay the bills, but just getting by; minimal reserve (less than \$500)
- 6 Pressure is building; barely making payments; living pay check to pay check; no reserve
- 7 Stressed; behind on at least one payment; definite need for more income/fewer expenses
- 8 Losing sleep; behind on multiple payments; uncertain of how to proceed
- 9 Need immediate help; one pay check away from disaster; don't know where to turn
- 10 At the breaking point; stress is unbearable; bankruptcy imminent; humiliation

Financial Condition & Stress Meter



RUN WITH IT

ACTION STEP: First, *honestly* rate yourself on the Financial Condition and Stress Meter. Use the scoring description as a tool to help assess your scoring. If married, each spouse should rate themselves individually, then come together to discuss each other's assessment. Once you have selected a score, **determine the first step** that needs to be taken to **begin** to move the meter to the left. If you have a high score and are at a loss where to turn, seek counsel from members in your group and/or look on page **A-6** for help from accredited, non-profit agencies. If you are "in the green", congratulations! However, don't think you can't benefit from the

remainder of this study. You will discover many additional principles, practices, and techniques that will make things even better!

My score: _____ **First step to take to lower score:** _____



REFLECTION: Slowly read again the scriptures referenced in the third paragraph of today's lesson. What is the common denominator? How can you appropriate (use in your daily life) the scriptures in your current situation? Is it possible the Lord could begin to reduce your stress level, even before changes are made to your financial condition? If so, how? Identify and prepare to discuss with your group the scripture, statement or concept that was most meaningful to you in this lesson. **Record your thoughts:**



ADDITIONAL ACTION STEP: To facilitate implementing your financial plan which will be discussed in Week 3 of the study, it is necessary to begin to track your daily expenses.

Reasons and Process:

- You need to account for the money you are spending within the areas of expenses.
- Use the spending areas listed on the form on page A-4.
 - example, assign a utility bill expense to "housing"; gasoline to "transportation"; burger at fast food to "eating out", etc.

The form will be completed during Week 3, so don't attempt to complete the form now, just use the spending areas referenced for your tracking categories.

- Techniques for tracking:
 - pocket size notebook and write a spending area on each page.
 - numerous phone apps available (Mint.com, for example)
 - keeping the receipt works best for me - record when I get home - takes no more than two or three minutes.

Please don't skip this step - it will be critical in developing your plan as you move forward. The benefit as we will see later, cannot be overstated.