

God Cares When I Am Depressed

Quarter 5 • Lesson 11

Focus on Life Skills

- 1. Connecting:** Count tears and talk about sadness.
- 2. Teaching:** Listen to the story of Job to understand depression (Job 3:24–26; 6:11, 13; 11:13, 18; 30:27).
- 3. Responding:** Share peace and hope with others.

SUPPLIES

- Bible
- Small stones (2–4 large handfuls)

Optional Supplies:

- Memory Verse poster
- Student Pages
- Pencils

Teacher Devotion

Sighs have become my food every day. Groans pour out of me like water. What I was afraid of has come on me. What I worried about has happened to me. I don't have any peace and quiet. I can't find any rest. All I have is trouble.
Job 3:24–26

When life seems to go horribly wrong, it can cause us to lose hope. Focusing on the things that are bad and painful in our lives can make it difficult to think about anything else. Feelings of sadness and hopelessness can overtake us and cause us to sink into depression. For this reason, depression can be all-consuming.

Have you ever experienced something so traumatic that you thought you could never live a normal life again? If you have, it is possible that you may have experienced depression. Depression can come in many forms, but it always involves a sense of sadness and hopelessness. It is during these dark times that it is important to remember your relationship with the One who can give you hope. Be encouraged! God is your hope and your strength at all times, including when life seems hopeless. He can bring light and hope to your darkness.

Family Connection: Encourage families to talk to their children about all the good things in their lives even when they go through difficult times. Ideas may include the ability to provide for the family, using skills and talents to do good things, and knowing that God cares about them.

LESSON TIME

1. Connecting: Count tears and talk about sadness.

Teacher Tip: Today's lesson is about depression. Some cultures believe that depression is a sin or that the person experiencing it can control it. Both of these ideas are false. Throughout the Bible we see people who struggled with depression, such as Moses and Elijah. Some depression is caused by chemical imbalances in the body that affect the brain. Someone who is depressed needs support, love, prayer, and sometimes medical care.

Welcome the children to class and ask them to think about something that might make someone cry. Have the children sit in groups of 4–5.

Raise your hand if you have ever felt sad. All of us feel sad at times, right? Sometimes that sadness can cause us to cry. I will give you 30 seconds to think about a time when you felt like crying.

As the children are thinking, grab 2 handfuls of pebbles and place them in front of the class.

Let's pretend these stones are tears. The Bible tells us that God knows everything that causes us to feel sad. Listen to this verse where the writer asks God to keep track of the number of tears he has cried.

Read this verse directly from your Bible.

*Make a record of my sadness. List my tears in your book.
Aren't you making a record of them?
Psalm 56:8*

In a moment, you will come take a few stones and return to where you are sitting. Share with your group something that made you sad enough to cry. For example, you might share that you cried when someone you loved died. You do not need to share who died, why that person died, or any other details. Just share what happened to make you cry. After everyone has shared something, count all of the stones your group has. After you finish counting, make a pile of stones in the middle of your group.

Optional: If you are using Student Pages, give the children pencils. Encourage them to write the number of tears their group collected on the first blank. Then, count the total number of tears the class collected and ask the children to write this number on the second blank.

Give the children 3–5 minutes to complete the task. You will know the children are done when each group has made a pile of pebbles.

The writer of the Bible verse we read asked God to keep track of his tears.

- **How many tears does your group have?**

Ask a child from each group to tell you how many tears her group collected.

Once all of the children have completed the activity, gather the stones and place them away from the children so they will not be tempted to play with them.

Our class has a lot of tears! Sometimes things happen to us that make us very sad and we cry a lot of tears.

2. Teaching: Listen to the story of Job to understand depression (Job 3:24–26; 6:11, 13; 11:13, 18; 30:27).

It is normal to feel sad sometimes. Everyone feels that way at times. Depression causes people to feel sad, hopeless, and sometimes angry. Depression is when sad feelings last for a long time. Depression can make people feel weak, and it can make it difficult to do anything. Depression can be caused by many different situations. Most often it begins after something scary happens or after someone or something important is taken away.

Teacher Tip: The depression that is taught about today is depression caused by circumstances. Some depression is caused by chemical imbalances in a person's body that affect the brain. That type of depression is best treated by medical professionals. If you are aware of any children who show signs of this type of long-term depression, try to get them medical help.

- **What are some examples of things that might cause you to feel sad and hopeless for a long time?**

If the children do not respond, you may suggest: Seeing people fighting. Having someone do something very hurtful to you. Having a lot of conflict in your community. Experiencing a natural disaster like a flood or earthquake.

The Bible talks about a man who became depressed after difficult things happened to his family. In a true story from the Bible, a man called Job lost everything except for his wife. His sons and daughters were killed, his animals and crops were destroyed, and everything he owned was ruined! Job was a rich man until all that he owned was destroyed.

Job was a man who loved God. When he lost everything he cared about, he spoke to God about how he felt. Listen to part of what he said.

*Sighs have become my food every day. Groans pour out of me like water. What I was afraid of has come on me. What I worried about has happened to me. I don't have any peace and quiet.
I can't find any rest. All I have is trouble.*

Job 3:24–26

Wow! Job sounds very sad! He also sounds as if he does not have any hope. This is what it is like to be depressed. Depression causes people to feel hopeless and think that things might never get better. When someone is depressed, she can only see the bad things in her life.

Let's use our words and actions to show what it might look like to be depressed. Show me with your faces what this might look like. Depression makes people look very sad and sometimes angry!

Pause for 30 seconds to allow the children to respond.

In the true story from the Bible, Job lost almost everything he cared about. He shows signs of grief in his discussion with God. Before these verses, he asks many "What if?" and "Why?" questions. Remember, when we learned about grief, we learned that asking "What if?" and "Why?" questions can be part of grief. Being sad and angry can be caused by grief as well. Depression can be part of grief.

Depression can also make you feel weak in your body. You may feel like you cannot stand. You may feel as though you cannot do anything yourself. In the true story from the Bible about Job, he explains what his body feels like when he has lost all of his hope.

*I'm so weak that I no longer have any hope.
Things have gotten so bad that I can't wait for help anymore.*

*I don't have the power to help myself.
All hope of success has been taken away from me.
Job 6:11, 13*

Job felt very weak. This is different than the physical weakness you might feel after you have been sick or when you are very hungry. Job explained that he felt weak and that he did not have the power to help himself. This is a weak feeling that makes it difficult to move. Part of the reason for this weakness is the feeling that there is no reason to do anything.

Let's take a minute to show what depression might look like again. Think about what it might look like to feel weak. I will give you a moment to show me what you think this might look like.

Give the children 30 seconds to show what it looks like to feel weak and powerless.

Job spoke with many people who only made him feel worse about his situation. Job felt horrible and hopeless. At the end of Job's true story, he spoke to God about all of the bad things that had happened to him. Job realized that the reason he felt so sad and hopeless was not just because bad things happened to him but because he had not trusted God to care for him. Listen to what Job said about how he felt.

*My insides are always churning.
Nothing but days of suffering are ahead of me.
Job 30:27*

- After hearing this verse, what emotions do you think Job felt?

Answers may include anger, sadness, hopelessness, and fear.

Job felt many emotions and even said many angry things to God. Job later told God he was sorry. Then God brought good things back into Job's life. Job had new daughters and sons who gave him grandchildren. Job was given animals and land. He

lived well for many more years after his time of depression. While our lives might not be restored the way Job's was, God can and will restore our hope.

In the true story we heard today, a man called Zophar explains this to Job.

*So commit yourself to God completely.
Reach out your hands to him for help.*

*You will be secure, because there is hope.
You will look around you and find a safe place to rest.*
Job 11:13, 18

- **How can God restore our hope?**

He is our safe place, and we can talk to Him about what is bothering us.

Remember, God is a safe place. He is your safe place! If you experience depression, you can come to the One who brings hope to the world. You can trust God to help you!

When you feel sad for a long time, try doing one of these things:

- 1. Pray and ask God for help. Talk to God about what is happening in your life. Ask Him to help you to feel better and get through what is happening.**
- 2. Spend time with people who are kind and caring. When Job spent time with people who were not kind, they made him feel worse. In the same way, spending time with people who are kind and caring may help you to feel better.**
- 3. Laugh and play. Find things that make you laugh like telling jokes to friends, watching funny TV shows or movies, or reading funny books. When you run, do jumping jacks, or even stretch, you will feel better because this helps reduce stress.**
- 4. Talk with a trusted adult about how you feel and the difficulties in your life. This can help you feel more hopeful. That person may be able to offer some good advice and support for you.**
- 5. Focus on the good things in your life. When you are depressed, it can be difficult to find things that are going well in your life. Hold up 1 hand. Stretch out your fingers so that none of them are touching. Can you think of this many good things that have happened to you or around you?**

- **If you can think of something good in your life or something that you have seen happen around you, raise your hand.**

Choose 5 children to name something good that has happened to or around them. If they struggle to respond, remind them that good health, a place to live, and people who love them can all be good things.

By working to focus on these things, it will help you to be hopeful and know that there are good things happening to you and around you.

Teacher Tip: If a child wants to talk with you about depression, let her know you are available to talk after class. If a child or someone she knows is dealing with depression, pray with that child and seek appropriate help if possible.

3. Responding: Share peace and hope with others.

Ask the children to sit in a circle.

Let's end our lesson today with an activity to help us focus on the good things in our lives. Think about something that makes you smile, laugh, or feel at peace. This could be a happy memory that made you feel as though everything in your life was good, or it could be something you enjoy seeing in nature such as a butterfly.

Pause for 30 seconds to give the children time to think.

Now, try to think of something that could make you very sad or angry. This could be a memory of someone you miss because you do not see him anymore. This could be something that happened that made you really scared or something that made you hurt inside.

Pause for 30 seconds to give the children time to think.

In a moment, I will call on children to share things that make them very sad and angry. These children will stand outside of the circle.

Ask the children to stand up in the circle. Call on 5–7 children. Once all 5–7 children are standing outside of the circle, ask the rest of the class to help with the next part of the activity.

Remember, in the story of Job we learned that God can restore our hope. He can help us to remember the good things that are happening in our lives. Let's ask Him for help! God, please help us to restore hope to those who are thinking of sad things. In Jesus' name, amen.

Those of you who are still standing in the circle, I need your help to restore the hope of those who are outside of our circle. Raise your hand if you can think of something that makes you smile, laugh, or feel at peace.

Select a child to name something that makes her happy or feel at peace. Ask her to go to a child standing outside the circle and to bring him back into the circle. Continue asking 1 child at a time to name something hopeful and bring a child back into the circle until all of the children are standing in the circle.

Things happen to us that take our hope away. When these things happen, it can cause us to feel very sad. It is during these times that it is important to ask God to help us find hope and find peace. When we look for hope in our lives, He will encourage us. Our memory verse this week talks about what happens when we put our hope in God.

Show the Memory Verse poster if you are using it.

*My spirit, why are you so sad? Why are you so upset deep down inside me?
Put your hope in God. Once again I will have reason to praise him.
He is my Savior and my God.*

Psalm 42:11

Read each of the following parts of the verse again as you show the children the motions for this verse. Then, repeat the motions with the children 3 times.

My spirit, why are you so sad?—Motion to yourself. Then frown.

Why are you so upset deep down inside me?—Shrug your shoulders. Then pull your arms toward your heart.

Put your hope in God—Smile and point up to the sky with your hands.

Once again I will have reason to praise him—Motion yes. Bring your hands together as if in prayer.

He is my Saviour and my God—Point up to the sky with your hands. Bring your hands down and point to yourself.

End class by saying this blessing, based on Job 11:13, 18, over the children.

Blessing: May you ask God for help when you are feeling hopeless. May you trust in Him to restore your hope.

Lead the teens in singing this quarter's song, if possible.

"Great Are You Lord" by All Sons and Daughter: <https://youtu.be/vQLMnPYoR9k>