

God Can Help Us Heal

Quarter 6 • Lesson 10

Focus on Life Skills

1. *Connecting*: Play a game to understand clear communication.
2. *Teaching*: Learn about sexual abuse and how God cares for each person (Luke 12:6–7; Isaiah 41:10).
3. *Responding*: Release painful experiences to God.

SUPPLIES

- Bible

Optional Supplies:

- Memory Verse Poster
- Paper
- Coloured pencils or crayons
- Board and chalk, or large paper and marker
- Student Pages

SPECIAL LESSON NOTE

IMPORTANT! Divide your children into 2 groups: 1 for boys and 1 for girls. If possible, a man should teach the boys and a woman should teach the girls. If possible, have the boys and girls meet in different teaching spaces where they cannot see or hear each other. Please do not include children younger than 8 in these sessions, although you may include older children.

This lesson deals with sexual abuse. Because this is a very difficult topic, it is important for your children. They need to feel comfortable expressing their thoughts and feelings about abuse in general as well as any abuse they may have experienced.

Here are some tips for creating a safe environment:

- Try not to respond to anything the children say with shock or discomfort.
- Listen openly in a nonjudgmental way.
- Let the children know that it is okay for them to express any feeling—even anger.
- Remember that children may respond differently to abuse, and all of their feelings need to be accepted.
- Encourage and praise the children for sharing difficult feelings or experiences. Talking about abuse helps with healing and lets abused children know that they are not alone.
- Do not push a child to talk about the abuse if he is not ready.
- Boys can also be abused and may find it more difficult to talk about than girls.

Set healthy boundaries. Male teachers should only offer verbal support to girls and counsel them only in the presence of others. Male teachers should avoid touching and being alone with girls. The same is true of female teachers and their interactions with boys—they should offer verbal support to boys and counsel them only in the presence of others. Female teachers should avoid touching and being alone with boys. All teachers should talk with children in a place that is open and where others can easily see them.

IMPORTANT! There are 4 things you need to communicate to any child who shares with you about sexual abuse.

You have heard the child.
You believe what he or she has shared.
What happened to the child was wrong.
You want to help protect the child.

If any children share with you that they or someone they know has experienced abuse, acknowledge their pain. Reassure them that what they experienced was not their fault. This is a very important message. Repeat it often! Many children blame themselves for being hurt or abused. Let the children know that talking about their hurts and telling Jesus about them can help them begin to heal them.

Do what you can to get help for the child. Be sure you inform those who are in authority over you. Unfortunately, in some places sexual abuse is not considered wrong. In some places the child may be blamed for the abuse. Whatever you do, be careful that you do nothing that will further endanger the child. If it is appropriate and safe for the child, then you should inform the authorities.

Teacher Devotion

*You keep track of all my sorrows. You have collected all my tears in your bottle.
You have recorded each one in your book. My enemies will retreat
when I call to you for help. This I know: God is on my side!*
Psalm 56:8–9, NLT

When grief and pain overwhelm our souls, we may think our tears are unseen. Yet our great God sees every tear we shed. He keeps track of every sorrow. He has recorded our weeping in His book. While it is comforting to know that He sees and cares, the next verse speaks even more to our hope—He is on our side! We are not left alone in pain. He sees. He cares. He notices. He is with us.

As you teach this difficult topic, pray that God would help you communicate clearly to your children that God sees, notices, and cares for each of them. Sharing someone else's pain is hard, yet God wants to use you to meet the deepest needs. Spend time in His Word, in worship, and in prayer that you will be filled to overflowing with all that the Spirit wants to say and do through you.

Family Connection: Let the families of your students know that you are teaching on the difficult subject of abuse. Share the Resource Article that comes before this lesson to help them understand why you are teaching on this topic. Be available to talk with any who have questions.

Teacher Tip: If any of your students' families are upset that you are teaching about this sensitive topic, share the information from the Why Are We Teaching This in the Special Unit Introduction. If they have questions or concerns that you feel you cannot answer, please refer them to your leaders.

LESSON TIME

1. Connecting: Play a game to understand clear communication.

Greet your children as they come into class. Ask the children how they did at using healthy boundaries this week. What was easy and what was difficult about respecting boundaries?

Let's start today's class with a game we have played before. It is "Teacher, May I?" In this game you want to take steps forward and be the first one to cross the space and stand by me. You must take turns asking me if you can take steps forward. But there is something different this time! To decide if you will take any steps, you must pay attention to 2 things. You must pay attention to the words I say and to my body language. If you take a step when I do not want you to, I will tell you that you are out of the game and that you must sit down.

Have the children line up shoulder to shoulder at one end of your meeting space. You will stand on the opposite side of your meeting space. The children will take turns asking if they can take a step forward. Tell them they can ask to take different types of steps, such as giant steps, little steps, hops, skips, etc. For example, a child might ask, "Teacher, may I take 2 giant steps forward?"

When you respond, you will respond in 2 ways at the same time, with your words and with your body language. You can choose to have your words and body language say the same thing. For example, you can say yes and smile or you can say no and frown. You can also choose to have your words and your body language say different things. For example, you can say yes and frown or you can say no and smile.

You will randomly select some children who ask to move forward and tell them that they are out of the game. The children may complain that it is not fair because they do not know what your answers mean. Play for about 5 minutes.

- **Did you like this game? Why or why not?**
- **What made the game confusing?**

Most children will say that not knowing what your answers meant was confusing.

This game was confusing and frustrating because you could not tell if I meant yes or no. You were not sure if you should pay attention to my words or to my body language. You did not know if I would allow you to move forward or send you out of the game.

Sometimes our communication can be confusing, just like this game. We say yes but we really mean no. Or we say no and really mean yes. It is important for us to communicate clearly when we talk about setting healthy boundaries. In today's class, we will talk more about why boundaries are important and what happens when someone does not respect boundaries. We will learn about abuse that can happen as a result of someone not respecting healthy boundaries.

2. Teaching: Learn about sexual abuse and how God cares for each person (Luke 12:6–7; Isaiah 41:10).

Today we will talk about something that may be difficult. This lesson is about sexual abuse. Sexual abuse occurs when someone touches another person in a dishonouring way. You or someone you know may have experienced hurtful things in this area. Even if you have not experienced dishonouring touch, this lesson might help you stay safe or know how to help someone else.

There are some things that I want to be sure you understand:

Sexual abuse is never the child's fault.

Talking about sexual abuse may feel embarrassing and painful.

No one has to share any personal information during this class.

We will respect each other's privacy and feelings.

You may talk in private with another adult or me.

Talking about sexual abuse can help you begin to heal. You are very special to God, and He wants to heal your pain. He has a great plan for your life. Nothing that has happened to you will ever change that.

Optional Supplies: Write the children's answers to the following question on a large piece of paper or the board.

• **What situations are sexual abuse or dishonouring touch?**

Encourage the children's answers. Remind them of what they have learned about dishonouring touch. Share that sexual abuse usually involves the body's private parts. Emphasize that sexual abuse is never a child's fault. The final list should include the following:

Dishonouring touch, including hugging and kissing when someone says no.

Someone forcing a child to sit on his or her lap.

Someone touching another person's private parts (mouth, chest, buttocks, or genitals) over or under that person's clothes.

Someone forcing another person to touch his or her genitals over or under that person's clothes.

Someone forcing another person to take his or her clothes off.

Someone taking pictures of another person while he or she is naked.

An adult having sexual intercourse with a child. Children cannot give permission for sex; only adults can.

Allow time for any questions or comments. If any children share that they or someone they know has been abused, praise them for their courage in sharing. Tell them that no child should ever experience abuse and that you want to help them (or their friend) and will try to keep them safe. Let them know you are available after class to talk with them privately.

This is a difficult topic. We need to be sensitive and support each other. We need to show the love of Jesus to those who may be hurting. We should never tease a child who has been abused, and we should not talk about their stories with anyone outside of class.

Boys and girls can both be victims of sexual abuse. We will review a list of some of the ways that sexual abuse hurts children. Many children who have been sexually abused have some of the hurts on the list, but they can have different hurts, too.

Teacher Tip: The list below includes common effects of sexual abuse among children. However, sexual abuse can affect each child differently. Children may show some of these symptoms or none of them. They may also show symptoms that are not on the list. Some children who have not been sexually abused may show some of these symptoms. The purpose in reviewing the common symptoms is to help abuse victims feel normal and understood and know that they are not alone. Pay attention to any abused children who report flashbacks or try to harm themselves. They may need professional help.

Here are some ways someone may respond if he or she has been sexually abused. Someone who has been sexually abused may have some or all of these symptoms. Or she may have other symptoms.

The abused person may experience pain, headaches, and bad dreams. Some children who are sexually abused may develop sores on their genitals. Some may get HIV/AIDS. If you or someone you know has been sexually abused, please tell an adult that you trust. If you decide to tell me, I will help you or your friend as much as I can.

- **How would you describe the way a person who has been sexually abused might feel?**

The children will come up with some of the following. Add any they miss.

Sad	Scared	Ashamed	Embarrassed
Self-hatred	Guilty	Dirty	All alone
Tricked	Unlovable	Unloved	Hopeless
Helpless	Unsafe	Distrustful	Emotionally numb

When a child has been sexually abused, he sometimes has flashbacks. This means he will picture the abuse in his mind, even when he is awake. It can feel as if he is experiencing the abuse all over again.

Sometimes someone who has been sexually abused will cry a lot or start taking drugs or alcohol to take away the pain. Some may isolate themselves and not want to be around people. Others try to hurt themselves. Some eat or sleep too little or too much. Some touch others' genitals. These are all warning signs. If you or someone you know has been sexually abused, telling a trusted adult will be the first step in getting help. God wants to heal you so you can be healthy again.

Here are some things children who have been abused might say to themselves. After each statement I will tell you the truth.

"It is all my fault!"

That is not true! Sexual abuse is never the child's fault.

"It felt good at the time."

Sometimes the touching or attention does feel good, but what happened to this child was still wrong. This does not mean the child is bad or that the child was not hurt.

"I cannot tell anyone this secret. I will get in trouble."

A child who has been abused needs to talk to a trusted adult. It is not the child's fault.

"I will never have any value."

Every child is very special to God. He can help this child heal from the abuse and have a great future.

"I am no good. I am an outcast."

No! This child is very valuable to God. He loves and cares about this child very much.

"I am only good for sex."

No! This child has many special gifts, talents, and strengths inside.

"All men are bad."

No! Some men do bad things, but there are good men who love and protect children.

"I am not safe. I will never be safe again."

If this child is away from the abuser, he is safe. I care about this child and want to help protect him.

"People will not want to be my friend when they find out."

It is not this child's fault that someone hurt her. This child's real friends will love her for who she is and for all of the things that make her special.

Teacher Tip: This lesson may cause some children's pain to come to the surface. If any children seem to be deeply affected, you can pause and pray for that child. Be sure to talk with that child privately after class. It is possible that he or she may need professional help to heal from abuse.

- **Children who are abused experience a lot of hurts. What should you do if you or someone you know has been or is being sexually abused?**

Allow the children to respond before sharing the information below.

Tell a trusted adult. Even though you may feel scared or embarrassed, talking about what happened can help the healing begin. It is a hard thing to talk about, but it becomes easier after you take the first step. Remember that abuse is never the child's fault.

If the adult does not help or does not believe you, tell someone else. What you say is important. By telling someone, you may stop another child from being abused. Also, your bravery may help another abused child to have the courage to tell what happened to her. Remember that you are loved and valued by God. He wants you to get help!

Even if the abuser threatens to hurt you or people you care about if you tell anyone, you should still tell a trusted adult. The adult will do what he or she can so that you and others are kept safe. The trusted adult will take steps to try to make the abuse stop.

Even if you are not sure if what is happening to you or your friend is abuse, talk to a trusted adult about it.

Even if your friend does not want you to tell anyone about his abuse, talk to a trusted adult who can help your friend.

Talk to God about it. He loves you and wants to help you heal. When someone has been abused, God has seen every tear. He knows every painful thing that was said or done to that person. He grieves deeply with the person who has been abused.

Teacher Tip: Be prepared to answer questions like these: "I was raped. Does this mean I am a bad person?" "I was touched in my private parts. Does this mean I can never have a baby?" "My mother makes her living having sex. Is she a bad person?" Let the child know that nothing that was done to him makes the child a bad person. In questions about parents, let the child know that God loves each person, no matter what she has done. When adults use sex in wrong ways, God is very sad. This is not His plan.

Listen to these verses that tell of how God cares for each person:

*Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies? Yet not one of them is forgotten by God. Indeed, the very hairs of your head are all numbered.
Don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows.*

Luke 12:6–7

- How would you say these verses in your own words?
- What do these verses tell us about the way God loves us?

If God does not forget the sparrows, He will not forget us. He knows about every detail of our lives, we are of great worth.

If you are using the Memory Verse Poster, show it to the students.

So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.

Isaiah 41:10

- How would you say this verse in your own words?
- What does this verse tell us about the way God will help those who have been abused?

That God is with them, He is their God, He strengthens and helps them.

Teacher Tip: Some children may hear these encouraging verses and have difficult questions about why God did not protect them. Or they may think that God does not love them. These are very difficult questions to answer, questions that all of us have about difficult things that happen. Do not ignore your children's questions and pain. Tell them that you do not understand, but you do know that God does love them. Pray for these children to know God's love and care despite what has happened to them.

God loves His children and wants them to be safe from those who hurt them. He knows you so well that He knows how many hairs are on your head! He is for you. He cares about the painful things you go through. He will give you the strength to begin to heal.

3. Responding: Release painful experiences to God.

Teacher Tip: This lesson may take longer than normal, especially if your children have many questions. If you are running out of time, stop at the end of the Teaching section and close with the blessing at the end of this section.

If you have time, read the following verse slowly 3 times to the children.

*You keep track of all my sorrows. You have collected all my tears in your bottle.
You have recorded each one in your book.*

Psalm 56:8, NLT

God cares deeply when anyone experiences painful things. He is very sad when a child is abused. He loves each one of us so much that He keeps track of every tear we cry. Think about that for a moment—the powerful God who created all the world keeps track of every tear you cry. Whether you are a Christian who loves God or someone who does not yet know Him, He loves you that much!

We will spend a moment thinking about things that have brought us tears. It may be something painful you have experienced, such as abuse, or something such as a hurtful thing someone said to you.

Pause for a moment for the children to think of something painful they have experienced. Be sure that you do this activity along with your children.

Now we will cup our hands together and lift those painful things up to God. He sees every tear. He cares about everything we have experienced. Whenever we have tears, we can lift them up to God.

Pause for the children to lift up their tears to God. Do this with them. As they see you trusting in God, they will be encouraged to trust Him too.

Optional Supplies:

Give the children paper and coloured pencils or crayons. Tell them to draw a bottle. In it they can draw or write about the experiences that have brought them tears. It may be sexual abuse or some other hurt. Let the children know that this is private, between them and God. Read Psalm 56:8 again to them. They can tear their papers up as a signal they are giving it to God.

If you are using the Student Pages, they can do this activity on them.

End of Option

Teacher Tip: Be sure to let the children know you are available to talk with any of them after class. If any share with you about abuse they have experienced, seek help through those in authority over you, if it is safe to do so.

Close your time by praying this blessing based on Psalm 56:8–9 over the children.

Blessing: May you know that God keeps track of every tear you cry. He is aware of each experience that causes you pain. May you know that He is on your side!

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

"What a Beautiful Name" by Hillsong Worship: <https://youtu.be/r5L6QIAH3L4>